

SEED Sponsored Research

Children As Researchers

CHILDREN AS RESEARCHERS

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION	5
<i>Key points from this chapter</i>	<i>6</i>
CHAPTER TWO : SETTING THE CONTEXT: BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND RESEARCH 7	
INTRODUCTION	7
THE CHILD PARTICIPATION AGENDA – KEY DEVELOPMENTS, DISCOURSES AND DEBATES	7
<i>Policy, participation and consultation</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>The case for children’s participation</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Building cultures of participation</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Research as a form of participation</i>	<i>12</i>
THE ‘INCLUSIVE’ RESEARCH TRADITION	13
<i>The ‘participation versus rigour’ debate</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>‘Nothing about us without us’: shifting control of the research process</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Key points from this chapter</i>	<i>16</i>
CHAPTER THREE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DOING RESEARCH – EXPERIENCE FROM ELSEWHERE	17
INTRODUCTION	17
EXAMPLES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DOING RESEARCH	17
<i>Overview of the mapping exercise</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Children’s involvement in government social research</i>	<i>18</i>
MODELS OF INVOLVEMENT	21
<i>Child-led research</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Children and young people as part of a research team: a spectrum of activities</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Stages and levels of involvement</i>	<i>22</i>
KEY ISSUES AND LESSONS	23
<i>How young are young researchers?</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>What do young researchers do?</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Justifications and limitations: arguments for involving young people in the doing of research</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Limitations</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Key points from this chapter</i>	<i>30</i>
CHAPTER FOUR: THE PRACTICALITIES OF INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED RESEARCH	31
INTRODUCTION	31
INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE RESEARCH: INSIDER AND OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT PRACTICE	31
INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE RESEARCH: THE PRACTICALITIES	34
<i>Dealing with the basics: time and money</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Which young people?: Issues of representativeness</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Key points from this chapter</i>	<i>42</i>
CHAPTER FIVE: UNDERSTANDING THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED RESEARCH	43
INTRODUCTION	43
INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE RESEARCH: JUSTIFICATIONS AND RATIONALES	44
<i>Key rationales: Empowering – and ‘hearing the voices of’ – young people</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Key rationales: Creating safer knowledge?</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Key rationales: Impacting on decision-makers?</i>	<i>49</i>
UNDERSTANDINGS OF RESEARCH: A SPECIFIC SET OF SKILLS OR A VEHICLE FOR PARTICIPATION?	58
<i>Key points from this chapter</i>	<i>63</i>
CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	64

<i>Ways forward</i>	65
<i>Key points from this chapter</i>	68
ANNEX: RECENT PROJECTS INVOLVING CHILDREN AS RESEARCHERS	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY	85

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

- Recent years have seen a growing focus on children's rights and in ways of involving children and young people more directly in decisions that affect their lives. In research terms, this has been reflected in a linguistic shift from talking about 'research *on*' to research *with*' and now, increasingly, to 'research *by*' children and young people.
- But despite widespread commitment to a participatory agenda, a clear policy focus on issues affecting children and young people, and a proliferation of projects outside government giving young people a more direct role in the research process, such approaches have not generally formed a major part of government funded research in Scotland or the UK more generally.
- The principal aim of this project was, therefore, to explore the problems and possibilities of incorporating a 'children as researchers' perspective into the agenda of government social research in Scotland.
- It had three main elements: a mapping of recent projects in Scotland and the UK more generally; a review of existing literature relating to children doing research; and a series of qualitative interviews with researchers, policy makers, research managers and young researchers themselves.

CHAPTER TWO – SETTING THE CONTEXT: BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND RESEARCH

- Although the notion of children and young people doing research is relatively new, it has clear links to two important other developments: the emergence of the 'participation agenda' relating to this age group; and the broader tradition of 'inclusive' research practices.
- The Scottish Executive (along with a wide range of other public and voluntary bodies) has placed considerable emphasis in recent years on enhancing young people's participation in decisions affecting their own lives. The 'case for participation' tends to draw on arguments relating to 'efficiency' (that participation will produce better outcomes) and on 'empowerment' (that it will improve or change people's lives) – though, in practice, these often overlap.
- But there is an increasing consensus that participation is not an uncomplicated good, and a number of critiques have grown up around issues such as what counts as participation; the dangers of tokenism (i.e. an artificial rather than real inclusiveness); and the need to build not just participatory practices but *cultures*.
- Research by children and young people needs to be seen as potentially contributing to a 'participation agenda', but as not being immune to the potential criticisms of participatory work in general.
- The notion of children and young people doing research is also linked to other social research traditions including emancipatory, user-led and feminist research. Key themes of relevance from these traditions include the 'participation versus rigour' debate and the idea of shifting the locus of power in research relationships away from a professional research community towards the group being researched.

CHAPTER THREE – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AS RESEARCHERS: EXPERIENCE FROM ELSEWHERE

- The mapping work carried out as part of this study identified a proliferation of projects involving children and young people in the doing of research. With a small number of

notable exceptions, these were mostly one-off projects, and many were based within voluntary and community organisations. Most also involved young people aged 13 and over, though a small number worked with younger children.

- Overall, there were few research projects funded directly by central government departments, though a small number of such examples do exist (both in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK). These often involved children and young people in a relatively limited advisory capacity.
- Two main models of involvement can be identified: ‘child-led’ projects and children as part of a bigger research team. The former gives primacy to issues of empowerment and control of the research process; the latter involves a spectrum of involvement from children and young people as full ‘co-researchers’, to ‘peer interviewers’ or simply ‘advisors’.
- Rationales for involving children and young people in the doing of research include the notion that it leads to better research (and hence to better policy-making); that it increases the impact of the research; and that it empowers young people by building skills and self-confidence.
- Other key issues emerging from experience from elsewhere of children and young people doing research include ethical questions, relating to confidentiality, risk of harm, financial recompense, and power in research relationships; and the recurrent question of how to balance young people’s participation with the need for high quality, reliable data.

CHAPTER FOUR – THE PRACTICALITIES OF INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED RESEARCH: STAKEHOLDERS’ VIEWS

- The perception of stakeholders¹ inside and outside government is that there is little evidence to date of Scottish Executive-funded work that has directly involved young people in the doing of research, though there is awareness of a handful of projects that have given young people an advisory role.
- This contrasts with the wide range of consultation activities and mechanisms aimed at this age group and with an increasing emphasis on the involvement of young people in carrying out such work. It also stands in tension with an acknowledgement of the importance and relevance of studies through which young people’s voices have been articulated as respondents.
- Although there was widespread support in principle for projects giving young people more direct involvement in the research process, there was also concern about some practical and ethical issues, in particular around resources and representativeness.
- Such projects were seen as both time- and resource-intensive, since it may involve the use of youth participation/support workers as well as researchers, development of research training programmes and longer timescales to encourage participation at different stages of the research process. It was widely felt that Scottish Executive procurement processes, budgets and time pressures all meant that such approaches would be difficult to accommodate.
- Other issues connected to time and resources included the impact of staff turnover within the civil service as well as the question of how to keep young people involved during the course of a research project and also what, if any, responsibility the government might have to young researchers on completion of the research.

¹ Stakeholders included Scottish Executive policy-makers and research managers, and researchers outside government with an interest in participatory research with young people.,

- Concern about the representativeness of the young people involved in such projects was also evident – in particular, a concern that less able and more excluded young people would not be represented.

CHAPTER FIVE – UNDERSTANDING THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED RESEARCH: STAKEHOLDERS' VIEWS

- The stakeholders interviewed shared similar rationales for involving children and young people in the doing of research to those identified in the research literature – but there was a particular interest in and focus on the potential for such work to impact on decision-making.
- There was considerable doubt expressed about the possibility of having this type of impact, given the less than linear nature of the research-policy relationship, and, therefore, a focus on other ways of impacting on government policy – whether through consultation, concentrating on local issues or finding other means of children and young people shaping the research agenda – was evident.
- There is a spectrum of views, ranging from traditional perspectives concerned with validity and reliability and training in research skills, to perspectives which do not seem to distinguish clearly between research and other participatory skills and which downplay the need for formal research training.
- There was general agreement that what is needed is clarity about what kind of rationale underpins any particular project.

Young people who have been involved in the doing of research –government funded or otherwise – saw it as an opportunity to have their voice heard in policy areas that they have experience of and also as empowering on a personal level. Most of the young people interviewed for this study suggested they did not take part in research because they want to be researchers: most get involved through their existing participation in organisations such as youth clubs, because they are encouraged to do so and/or because they are interested in a particular issue. The experience of researchers and young people in this study suggests, however, that ‘involvement’ framed as ‘hearing the voice of the child’ may be enacted by young people and adults in very different ways. It is worth bearing in mind, too, that young people may feel differently about different projects: they do not necessarily wish to be involved in the same way in each one. Research projects that they initiate or are closely involved in from the beginning may feel different from those that they are simply asked to contribute to. The practical and legal implications of payment also needs to be considered as young people often commit considerable amount of time to research projects.

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to develop a children as researchers’ perspective within the Scottish Executive, there appears to be a need for a shift in mindset within government about the possibilities for children and young people’s participation in relation to research.
- In taking forward their thinking about children as researchers, the Scottish Executive could, first, make explicit at the procurement stage that, depending on the studies’ aims, consultation with young people in the design of studies and, possibly, their involvement in carrying out the research is desirable.
- Second, there may be opportunities for young people to apply for monies through SEED’s existing sponsored research programme, particularly in partnerships with children’s organisations and professional researchers and academics.
- Third, the Scottish Executive could develop its thinking on young researchers by considering them in the context of its volunteering strategy.

- Fourth, the Scottish Executive could examine what opportunities exist for young people to inform its research agendas and consider whether these could be expanded or improved.
- Finally, developing a network of adult and young researchers with experience in this area might be fruitful in developing ideas and practice and would also create opportunities for young researcher to act as mentors to new young researchers.

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

This report describes the findings of a short research project commissioned under the Scottish Executive Education Department's Sponsored Research Programme and conducted by Dr Julie Brownlie of the University of Stirling and Rachel Ormston and Simon Anderson of the Scottish Centre for Social Research.

In recent years, an increased focus on children's rights (UNICEF 1995) and a related concern to involve children in decision-making affecting their lives has led to the participation of children – whether in relation to policy, research or practice – being accepted as a 'good thing'. In relation to research, this participatory focus was, until fairly recently, concerned mainly with ways of involving children more effectively as research participants – a concern reflected in the linguistic shift from reference to 'research *on* children' to 'research *with* children'. Since the mid-1990s, however, there has also been a growing interest in the idea of research *by* children and young people²: there have been several significant peer-research³ projects of this kind in the UK and there is a small but growing body of literature on the subject of children as researchers (Alderson, 2001; Jones, 2003; Lewis *et al*, 2004).

Despite these developments, and the fact that children and young people are amongst the highest users of state services (Hill *et al*, 2004) and constitute a major focus for policy and research, very little has been written about how young people as researchers could inform government-funded social research either in Scotland or the UK more generally. Instead, most examples of young people doing social research have come from one-off projects, usually funded by the voluntary or charitable sector and involving young people in relation to a specific issue or service (for specific examples, see de Winter and Noom, 2003; France, 2000; Hackett *et al*, 1996; Saunders and Broad, 1997; West, 1995).

The principal aim of this project was, then, to explore the problems and possibilities of incorporating a 'children as researchers' perspective into the agenda of government social research in Scotland. In addition, it aimed to map existing or current initiatives in the UK, and in Scotland in particular, which involve young people as researchers; explore the views and perspectives of a range of stakeholders, including researchers⁴, research managers, policy makers and young people who had experience of carrying out the research; and to suggest possible ways of reconciling key tensions and developing resources in this area.

The research itself had three main elements: a mapping of recent projects in Scotland and the UK more generally; a review of existing literature relating to children doing research; and a series of qualitative interviews with researchers, policy makers, research managers and young researchers themselves. In total, 5 policy makers, 3 research managers, 11 researchers and 6

² The term 'children and young people' is used in this proposal to broadly refer to people aged 18 years and under. The lower age range of children who might be involved as researchers is not specified, as this is one of the issues the study aims to explore.

³ A definitional note: 'peer research' can be understood as members of one target group researching others from that target group (De Winter and Noom, 2003). Peer researchers, therefore, tend to share similar experiences and status (Kirby, 1999), including age. Participatory research involving young researchers is where children and young people are involved in designing and/or conducting a piece of research. This research may involve peers but need not necessarily do so.

⁴ While the label 'researcher' is used in the report, some of the respondents were not academic researchers but were involved in research as part of a broader development remit, for example, within children's organisations.

young people were interviewed, using a mix of individual, pair and group interviews. These lasted approximately one hour and all were tape-recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis using QSR. N6, a software package for qualitative analysis.

The report has the following broad structure. Chapter Two sets the issue of children doing social research in the context of broader developments relating to participation, consultation⁵ and related research traditions. Chapter Three investigates the main ways in which children and young people are involved in doing research in and outside government. It also summarises the results of the mapping exercise (a fuller account of this is contained in the annex) and looks at key issues emerging from the existing literature about the practical challenges of involving young people directly in the research process. Chapters Four and Five revisit the themes from Chapters Two and Three but from the perspective of whether it might be possible to develop such approaches in the context of government social research and through the specific lens of the interviews conducted for this study. Chapter Six summarises the main themes emerging from the study and highlights possible ways forward for the Scottish Executive in its thinking about children and young people's involvement in research.

Key points from this chapter

- Recent years have seen a growing focus on children's rights and in ways of involving children and young people more directly in decisions that affect their lives. In research terms, this has been reflected in a linguistic shift from talking about 'research *on*' to research *with*' and now, increasingly, to 'research *by*' children and young people.
- But despite widespread commitment to a participatory agenda, a clear policy focus on issues affecting children and young people, and a proliferation of projects outside government giving young people a more direct role in the research process, such approaches have not generally formed a major part of government funded research in Scotland or the UK more generally.
- The principal aim of this project was, therefore, to explore the problems and possibilities of incorporating a 'children as researchers' perspective into the agenda of government social research in Scotland.
- It had three main elements: a mapping of recent projects in Scotland and the UK more generally; a review of existing literature relating to children doing research; and a series of qualitative interviews with researchers, policy makers, research managers and young researchers themselves.

⁵ There is a more detailed discussion of the meaning of these terms throughout the report. However, a brief outline of how they are broadly used in this report is useful here. While, as Hill *et al* (2004) note, participation can be understood as 'the direct involvement of children in decision-making about matters that affect their lives (...) consultation is about seeking views' (83). Although it has the potential to take the form of a dialogue and, therefore, enable participation, consultation can also become 'a substitute for participation in that decisions are made without the direct involvement of children' (2004:83). In relation to social research and consultation, while they may have features in common, for example, they may share similar methods of data collection and analysis, in practice, social research often involves greater concern with issues of reliability and validity.

CHAPTER TWO : SETTING THE CONTEXT: BETWEEN PARTICIPATION AND RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

Before looking in any detail at the experience of children and young people doing social research, we want to locate this possibility in relation to two related developments: the emergence of what might be termed the ‘child participation’ agenda and the increasing significance of a broader tradition of ‘inclusive research’.

THE CHILD PARTICIPATION AGENDA – KEY DEVELOPMENTS, DISCOURSES AND DEBATES

Policy, participation and consultation

As noted in Chapter One, an increased focus on children’s rights, and a related concern to involve children in decision-making affecting their lives, has led to the participation of children – whether in relation to policy, research or practice – being accepted as a ‘good thing’.

Children and young people’s participation in decision-making has certainly risen rapidly up the policy agenda across the UK in the past decade. In England & Wales, for example, the participation agenda is at the heart of high-level strategies for children and young people emanating from Westminster (*Every Child Matters*, the *Youth Matters Green Paper*), the Welsh Assembly (*Children and young people strategy: Rights to Action*) and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland (*Making it R Wrld 2: Consultation on a Draft Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland*). Following the model provided by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in “Learning to Listen”⁶, which sets out core principles for the involvement of children and young people in the planning, delivery and evaluation of government policies and services, many Westminster departments (e.g. Department for Transport, Department for Constitutional Affairs, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) have produced action plans on involving children and young people in their work. Specific initiatives to support this involvement include the DfES’s Children and Youth Board and the Northern Ireland Young People’s Advisory Forum, both of which involve a small group of young people in providing regular advice and feedback on policies direct to central government. Young trainers from the National Youth Agency also recently led workshops for 75 DfES staff to help them understand and use participation methods with children and young people.

In Scotland, specifically, public bodies are subject to various legislative requirements to involve children and young people in decisions which affect them. The *Children (Scotland) Act 1995* requires a person making a major decision about a child to ‘have regard so far as practicable to the views (if he wishes to express them) of the child concerned, taking account of the child’s age and maturity’⁷. Other legislation which places more specific requirements on bodies to involve children in *public* decisions includes the *Standards in Scotland’s*

⁶ CYPU (2001), *Learning to Listen: Core Principles for the Involvement of Children and Young People*.

⁷ *Children (Scotland) Act 1995* Part 1, Section 6.1.b

Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 2000, which requires pupils to be consulted on all school development plans, and the *Local Government in Scotland Act 2003*, which requires that young people and youth work bodies have a say in the Community Planning Process.⁸ While these legislative requirements all apply primarily to local rather than national decision-making bodies, the principle that children's views should be taken into account in relation to all matters which affect them closely reflects Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child⁹ (UNCRC) and is frequently cited in Scottish Executive guidance on policy and practice relating to children.

At a national level, the *Child Strategy Statement*, first issued by the Scottish Office in 1997 and revised by the Scottish Executive in 2000, sets out the Scottish Executive's aim of 'child-proofing' all policies that affect children either directly or indirectly, to ensure that they identify and take proper account of children's interests.¹⁰ It suggests that 'taking into account the views of children is one important way of doing this' and, referring to Article 12 of the UNCRC, states that:

Ministers believe that the Scottish Executive should be proactive in obtaining the views of children on matters of significance to them in order to comply with the spirit of the article.

Of particular relevance to this study (given the debate over whether children are better placed to access and represent the 'genuine' voice of other children in research), the guidance states that '*a range of ways of taking the views of children might be needed, with care being taken to ensure that the results of the consultation are not an interpretation of children's views by adults*'.

In addition to its Child Strategy Statement, the Scottish Executive's seven point strategic 'vision' for Scotland's children and young people, referred to in many key policy documents and guidelines,¹¹ includes the aim that children be:

Respected and Responsible. *Children, young people and their parents should be involved in decisions that affect them, should have their voices heard and should be encouraged to play an active and responsible role in their community*

The Scottish Executive has also supported (financially or practically) a variety of initiatives specifically designed to provide mechanisms for children and young people's involvement in public decisions. These include the Scottish Youth Parliament, Dialogue Youth, the Trojan

⁸ At the time of writing (January 2006), the Scottish Executive was consulting on advice about how to best involve children and young people in Community Planning -

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/11/17164834/48351>

⁹ Article 12 states that 'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.'

¹⁰ Scottish Executive (2000), *Child Strategy Statement* – available at

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library3/social/css-00.asp>

¹¹ E.g. references in *The Scottish Executive's draft budget for 2006-7* – link

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/09/06112356/24066> and *A curriculum for excellence* – link <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/cerv.pdf>

Project and the Children's Commissioner for Scotland (Further details of these and other initiatives can be found in the annex.).

Voluntary organisations such as Save the Children Scotland and Children in Scotland as well as organisations representing youth workers and young people like YouthLink and Young Scot, also play an important role in ensuring children's views feed into Scottish policy – for example, by conducting research about children and young people's views or co-ordinating their responses to government consultations.

The case for children's participation

The case for participation has been framed in myriad ways (Howard *et al*, 2002). Cleaver distinguishes between arguments based on 'efficiency' – that participation will produce better outcomes (in relation, for example, to policies, services, citizenship, child protection, the meeting of legal responsibilities) – and those based on 'empowerment' (that it will improve or change people's lives) while, at the same time, observing that the mechanisms for achieving the latter are often 'conveniently fuzzy' (2001: 38). The two sets of arguments are, however, far from distinct: if, as Hill *et al* (2004) claim, the focus on the gains that arise from the process of taking part eclipse any actual impact or outcome, the resulting sense of disillusionment could have negative consequences for both the individual young person and society.

Described as 'the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives' (Hart, 1992:5) and as a 'taking part in making public decisions' (Kirby and Bryson, 2002), participation has come to be understood as a crucial aspect of citizenship and as a human right. It is clear that participation activities are widespread – inclusive of both one-off consultations and young people's ongoing involvement in institutions like youth councils or the DfES Children and Youth Board – and that the range of children and young people involved in participation practices is also very varied. Over the years, different models of participation have emerged, perhaps the best known of which is the ladder of participation outlined by Hart (1992), in which he describes a progression from tokenistic involvement of young people to young people developing projects themselves and sharing decision-making with adults (Wade and Badham, 2001). A note of caution has been expressed in relation to many of these models, both in terms of the need to recognise context – different levels of involvement may be more appropriate in some settings than others – and also the need to ascertain how, and indeed if, young people wish to be involved (Liabo *et al*, 2002). In terms of the focus of participation outcomes, these can be individual or community-based (Rochas, 1997 in Howard *et al*, 2002) and public or private. Much of the participation literature refers to participation in relation to public decision-making but it is worth, as Sinclair (2004) does, distinguishing further between participation in relation to (a) particular organisations and services, (b) local or national government policy and (c) the evaluation of or research into these initiatives.

Children's participation: an uncomplicated good?

In the last couple of years, a more critical agenda has emerged in relation to participation generally, an agenda rooted in the unease felt by some over the unquestioning acceptance of how participation is currently framed in the UK (Tisdall and Davis, 2004; Sinclair, 2004):

there is considerable confusion, both about what counts as participation, what participation is for, and exactly how participation impacts on social exclusion (Seminar participants, 2004:103).

This critique has taken a number of forms. There are methodological concerns about the representativeness of many participation practices and, as a result, the validity of some of the claims made by participatory projects, but there are also fundamental questions now being asked – reflected in the above extract – about whether participation has, in fact, had any meaningful impact:

doubts have been expressed about whether children's participation in policy formation actually brings it closer to their lived realities, achieves change or improves the outcomes for them (Hill et al, 2004:83).

While there have been moves to provide standards for statutory and voluntary organisations to assess their practice in involving children and young people (Wade and Badham, 2003), as Kirby and Bryson note, 'anecdotal evidence and untested assumptions about what works' (2002:9) remain pervasive in this area. Although writing in relation to the development field, Cleaver's observation that participation has been reduced to 'an act of faith', to applying certain techniques and avoiding 'divisive' issues of power and politics (2001:36) has, for some, wider resonance. In particular, in relation to young people, there is a concern that the participation agenda has been reduced to ascertaining young people's views as service users. In relation to research, the tendency to justify research with young people only in terms of it having policy relevance could be read in similar terms. Not only does this mean that the broader concerns and interests that inform young people's everyday lives are ignored but, as Walmsley and Johnston (2003) have framed it in relation to the learning disability field, too great an emphasis on service evaluation can channel energy away from challenging existing services and, therefore, away from the possibility of social change. To this extent, participation can come to be experienced less as a participatory than a regulatory process (Prout, 2002). Even remaining within a service orientated framework, however, there are good reasons to look at children's everyday experiences in the private sphere, not least because it is here that young people tend to learn about decision-making (Hill et al, 2004).

But a growing awareness of the need to be critical of the participation discourse, and to be aware that organisations may seek to secure the benefits of participation while avoiding the costs (Mosse, 2001), does not seem – at least in relation to children and young people – to have translated into an 'anti-participation' agenda (Cook and Kothari, 2001: 13). It appears that the commitment to involve young people remains strong, but that part of this commitment is now to reflect critically on the nature and outcome of those same participation practices.

Building cultures of participation

Part of this more critical reflection includes research which suggests that children and young people's active involvement in public decision making works best when participation is *built into* an organisation and where staff have an opportunity to develop skills to work effectively with young people. Increasingly, then, the emphasis is on building 'cultures of participation' within organisations (Kirby et al, 2004). Such cultures, Kirby et al (2004) suggest, depend on committed senior and front-line staff, formal systems for feeding in young people's views, dedicated participation workers, adequate resources and staff, and good multi-agency and team working. Conversely, Kirby and Bryson (2001) highlight that time constraints, output requirements, formality, bureaucracy and complexity can all act as barriers to participation. Negative attitudes of parents and other 'community adults' might also be a barrier. Wade and Badham (2003) have identified seven standards to help secure sustained and beneficial

participation of young people in organisations. These relate to shared values, strategy, structures, systems, staff, elected members and trustees, skills and knowledge, and styles of leadership. For example, key questions for organisations arising from these standards include: Are children and young people involved in developing and reviewing strategies for involving them? Are there structures and systems set up to sustain involvement of a range of children and young people? Are there dedicated people supporting an active involvement strategy? Are staff given training to encourage participation? Is there support to champion all of the above at senior and executive level so that children and young people eventually could hold the organisation to account? These questions offer a useful general context for thinking about stakeholders' views analysed in Chapters Four and Five.

A culture of participation in government: challenges and possibilities

Researchers have also begun to look critically at participation specifically in relation to government structures. For example, in thinking about participation in relation to local authorities, Percy-Smith (1998) noted that negative social attitudes about children's competence, the structure and functioning of authorities (and, in particular, the often paternalistic attitudes of bureaucrats), hierarchical structures and the fact that too few adults receive training on involving young people in decision-making, all contribute to young people's exclusion. He concludes that, in relation to local authorities, there needs to be greater flexibility in funding cycles and reporting structures. Moss and Petrie's work on turning children's services into children's spaces is based on the idea of children's agendas co-existing with adult ones (Moss and Petrie, 2002). These spaces call for fundamental changes so that 'professionals are facilitators rather than technicians and both children and adults are co-constructors of knowledge and expertise' (Hill *et al*, 2004: 84). They do give examples of moving towards this way of working in relation to children's services – including in Scotland – but, in practice, the barriers described above do still make this difficult to achieve on a wider scale.

Kirby and Bryson (2001), too, have looked at governmental structures and in their report make reference to the Scottish Dialogue Youth model as a way of holding local authorities accountable. They also point out that at a national level, it should be easier for smaller countries, like Scotland and Wales, to co-ordinate various participation initiatives. The Carnegie Young People Initiative recently launched a programme entitled 'Making It Count' - Action Learning for Participation. Through a series of pilot projects, this aims to bring together senior officials from government bodies (UK and devolved administrations) and to support them, over 9-12 months, to develop realistic and sustainable ways of building in children and young people's involvement to their business and strategic planning.¹²

Increasingly, then, the focus emerging from this more critical research on participation, and, in particular, on building cultures of participation, is less on how to involve young people in existing structures and more on how these structures have to change to allow for young people's meaningful involvement. Within the participation literature, debates about how children should participate – whether through adult-orientated projects like school councils, youth parliaments etc. – or through more directly participative projects where children are not acting as representatives of other children but rather as actors trying to shape agendas on their own terms (Hill *et al*, 2004; Tisdall and Davis, 2004) – are, as will be discussed later, mirrored in the literature on how children and young people should be involved in research. The latter model in which children act more to promote rather than represent children (Tisdall

¹² See http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/cypi/our_work/organisational_change/making_it_count.

and Davis, 2004) also faces problems relating to inclusiveness and, crucially, because of their potential for unpredictability and departure from the adult agenda, difficulties of attracting funding.

Research as a form of participation

While, as indicated, some of the above literature on young people and public decision-making has relevance for thinking about research by young people, much of it has not engaged directly with this particular issue or more generally with the role of research in the context of policy. Instead, the focus within the policy participation literature has tended to be on consultation.

Nevertheless, if participation is read as any activity which allows young people to influence decision making – at whatever level – then, clearly, research can be understood as one dimension of participation. Clarke *et al* (2001) suggest that young people's involvement in the *doing* of research is 'political' exactly because it has the potential to influence policy – to challenge the power imbalances which mean young people often do not have access to policy makers and the policy making process in the way adults do, for example, through voting and membership of decision-making bodies. They also suggest it is political to the extent that it challenges power imbalances between researcher and the researched and the tendency to 'surrender the power to investigate, interpret and report their lives to other groups' (Dyson and Meagher, 2001: 64).

There are examples of research practice by young people that can be more explicitly linked in with the broader participation agenda outlined above, including research taking place within organisations such as local authorities or schools. Flutter and Ruddock (2004), for instance, bring together aspects of the participation discourses discussed above and research practice when, in describing 'students as researchers' projects, they talk about pupil participation ladders where the top rung of the ladder is 'pupils as fully active and co-researchers'. Policy areas, they suggest, that might look different from the perspective of students include truancy, male underachievement and classroom discipline.

Another way in which research by young people can more directly be thought of as a form of participation is where young people themselves carry out evaluations of policy participation projects (Cutler and Taylor, 2003). Kirby and Bryson's (2002) review of evaluations of young people's participation in public decision-making, however, notes that very few evaluations were in fact carried out by young people, though this has to be set in the context of how few evaluations of these projects have taken place in general. At the same time, however, they also note the need for rigorous research programmes to make comparisons across projects and to rely not just on stakeholders' views but also 'objective measures' (2002:55). This is a point which resonates with the methodological concerns, noted above, that have arisen in relation to some participation projects

In Chapter Three, and in more detail in the annex, we outline a raft of small, often one-off projects involving children and young people as researchers in the UK. These are usually funded by voluntary agencies or local authorities and are focused on issues relevant to national or local policy such as young people's health or housing needs. In practice, however, while these projects may shape local practices, the relationship between research and government policy – regardless of whether or not it is adults or young people who are doing the research – is often far less direct and linear than Clark *et al*'s (2001) account above appears to imply. There are many examples of policy that have little to do with research and a

great deal to do with politics, and also evidence of a relationship between research evidence and public policy which varies across policy areas. In short, as Davies *et al* note, policymaking is rarely a ‘clearly defined event or explicit set of decisions’ (2000: 15) and instead is often far more diffuse and complex, involving parties in and outside of government. While the premise of evidence based (or even ‘informed’ or ‘aware’) policy foregrounds a particular understanding of what constitutes reliable and valid research and relatedly, who counts as a credible researcher, in practice, policy makers look to research to serve a number of functions – ranging from providing ‘robust evidence’ to a more diffuse ‘insight’ role.¹³ While there might be talk of ‘methodological hierarchies’ (Davies *et al*, 2000: 7) informing the government’s approach to research in the context of evidence based policy, therefore – and an assumption that research by children and young people comes fairly low down this hierarchy – in practice, it is unlikely that only one research methodology is in fact drawn upon.

Young people as researchers, however, need to be located not just in relation to research contexts inside government but also in relation to the broader research traditions which exist outside. We conclude this chapter by looking at these traditions and some of the issues they raise for children as researchers.

THE ‘INCLUSIVE’ RESEARCH TRADITION

While children and young people’s involvement in the ‘doing’ of social research can be seen as an extension of participatory research approaches ‘with’ children, these practices are also linked to other social research traditions including – but not exclusively – emancipatory, user-led and feminist research. This history of ‘inclusive research’ (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003), while containing significant differences both of degree and kind – most notably in relation to the question of control (Turner and Beresford, 2005) – points to two themes which have influenced some people’s (though by no means everyone’s) thinking about why young people should be involved in research. These themes are the importance of creating social change – of research being ‘useful’ for those involved – and of research being an empowering process involving those affected by the research. Debates in relation to these themes are present in current discussions about research by children and young people: for example, about how to ‘resolve the tension between research which is academically rigorous, acceptable to funding organisations and publishable, and research which is of use to the people who are subject to it, which is relevant to their needs and can inform and promote social change’ (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003: 9).

The ‘participation versus rigour’ debate

While the recent re-packaging of participatory research approaches as ‘citizen research’,¹⁴ can be collapsed within the broader participation agenda, drawing on the case of children as researchers, Dyson and Meagher describe the dilemma of attempting to conflate the two: ‘the research process has inherent within it certain quality demands which some (perhaps many)

¹³ Sanderson’s (2002) distinction between instrumental and practical rationality in evidence based policymaking is relevant here. Young people doing research might be seen as a contribution to the latter, in other words as a way of generating insight, shifting perspectives and helping to assess not just ‘what works’ but what constitutes appropriate policy and practice.

¹⁴ ‘Mori gives ‘power to the people’ as it launches its participation unit’. *Research Magazine* 27/5/2005. Accessed at <http://www.research-live.com/index.aspx?pageid=30&newsid=1013>

young people find difficult to meet. The more fully they are involved in research, therefore, the less likely it is that the research will meet those demands adequately' (2001:65). They query, given the technical nature of the research exercise, whether young people are further disempowered by researchers demanding they have these skills and/or by researchers only involving those who are most like adult professional researchers.

Responses to the 'participation versus rigour' debate

One response to this dilemma, and one which Dyson and Meagher support, is to have a 'partnership' between young people and professional researchers. The Children's Research Centre (CRC) at the Open University, however, starts from the premise that such partnerships are rarely equal in practice and that research training should remain key to young people carrying out research. (A fuller description of the work of the CRC can be found in the next Chapter.)

Most adults need formal training to carry out empirical research. It seems to me that the barrier to children carrying out research is not their age but their lack of research skills – so why not teach them? (Mary Kellett in Rix, 2004)¹⁵.

The argument here is that giving young people research skills affords us access to children's knowledge – 'in the sense of what it is like to be a child, it is children who are the experts' (Kellett in Rix, 2004). More than this, however, the CRC argue that research skills training is vital to young people being able to identify their own research agenda.

The starting point for others, however, is to question the assumed tests of 'good research' – the meaning of validity/reliability – and, therefore, the need for traditional research training. Clark (2004) notes that a key feature of participatory research is that there is less emphasis on objectivity as community participants are involved in analysing their own reality. Others have gone further, suggesting that engaging young people in research can be seen as a political form of action (Alder and Sandor, 1990) and as challenging dominant orientations to research. Indeed, this has been the justification for the involvement of young people in much action research.

Depending on which starting point is taken, adult researchers are likely to adopt different roles. Hart (1992:19) argues that in relation to participative research, the professional researcher's role is one of technical assistance. Others point out that the professional researcher needs to recognise the pitfalls and limitations of the research study so that young people are not set up to fail (Hetzl *et al*, 1992). For those who focus on the transformative potential of research, there may well be a tendency to underplay the role of the adult researcher and in particular the skills needed to manage both research and support/advocacy roles. Caution has also been expressed in relation to research practice with young researchers about the need to avoid presenting children and young people as more involved in the research than they actually were. Kirby (2004), for example, to compensate for the lack of acknowledgement young people generally are given for their involvement in research, noted how in relation to one study, the adult researcher was described as a 'co-author'. On reflection she concludes 'This was misleading, as it led readers to assume the group (of young researchers) had written all the text and to overestimate their knowledge of its contents'. Supporting inclusive research is a skilled activity. It needs to be recognised as such

¹⁵ Interview with Mary Kellett by J. Rix *The Guardian* 23/3/2004:2

because if it is not, then there is a danger that researchers are silenced and, as Walmsley and Johnson put it, left almost ‘ashamed’ of their skills (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003: 191).

‘Nothing about us without us’: shifting control of the research process

The literature on research involving other marginalised groups has, for some time, debated different research models for including ‘citizen researchers’ and, as a result, there may be lessons that could be applied to the issues of young people as researchers. For example, Walmsley and Johnson’s work on research with and by people with learning disabilities identifies possible models, some of which highlight the need to look beyond the actual doing of the research to the social relations of research production (Zarb, 1992):

the belief that in order to serve the interests of people with learning difficulties all research needs actively to include them is, we believe, responsible for stalling the enterprise as people look for ever more inventive ways to enable people with learning difficulties to ‘do’ research. What we should be seeking, we argue, is ways of enabling people with learning disabilities to influence, even control, research projects which they have identified as being relevant to them (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003: 221).

While it would be clearly inappropriate to equate the experience of people with learning difficulties to all children and young people in research, there are parallels here for all marginalised groups that can be usefully explored. What, for example, might the emancipatory call within the learning disability field of ‘nothing about us, without us’ mean for research in relation to young people? For some, re-shaping the social relations of research production means moving towards a consultant/employer relationship. The role of young people’s organisations would be central here. Groups would need skills in managing research consultants – but such skills, Walmsley and Johnson argue, may be of more generalisable interest than developing specific research skills. The role of the consultant would be:

examining with them the kind of research they want; the questions they would like to see answered; how they want to use it and what (if any involvement) they want in actually doing it (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003:189)

It is an empirical question whether this model would, as the Children’s Research Centre (CRC) approach claims, give young people insight in to how to develop their own research agenda. However, there may well be a trade off here as while the CRC model might encourage young people to develop such agendas, most research that is carried out by children is, by its nature, small-scale, and so unlikely to impact on policy as a result. Tisdall and Davis (2004) ask similar questions about the relationship between adult mediators and children in policy making. Should adults in consultation projects involving young people, for example, be seen as lending skills to enhance young people’s status? And are particular ways of working more likely to lead to the desired impact on policy?

Thinking about research by young people in terms of these complexities – and against a backdrop of the critical participatory agenda outlined above – means asking many of the same questions about young people’s involvement in research as have been asked about their involvement in policy more generally, not least how young people are getting involved and whether or not it has made any difference? In the next chapter we go on to look at particular ways of involving children and young people in the doing of research. In this chapter, we

have argued, however, that to fully understand *how* children and young people can be involved in the doing of research, we need to locate this practice not only in the context of the broader child participation agenda, but also different research contexts, including the inclusive research tradition.

Key points from this chapter

- Although the notion of children and young people doing research is relatively new, it has clear links to two important other developments: the emergence of the ‘participation agenda’ relating to this age group; and the broader tradition of ‘inclusive’ research practices.
- The Scottish Executive (along with a wide range of other public and voluntary bodies) has placed considerable emphasis in recent years on enhancing young people’s participation in decisions affecting their own lives. The ‘case for participation’ tends to draw on arguments relating to ‘efficiency’ (that participation will produce better outcomes) and on ‘empowerment’ (that it will improve or change people’s lives) – though, in practice, these often overlap.
- But there is an increasing consensus that participation is not an uncomplicated good, and a number of critiques have grown up around issues such as what counts as participation; the dangers of tokenism; and the need to build not just participatory practices but *cultures*.
- Research by children and young people needs to be seen as potentially contributing to a ‘participation agenda’, but not as being immune to the potential criticisms of participatory work in general.
- The notion of children and young people doing research is also linked to other social research traditions including emancipatory, user-led and feminist research. Key themes of relevance from these traditions include the ‘participation versus rigour’ debate and the idea of shifting the locus of power in research relationships away from a professional research community towards the group being researched.

CHAPTER THREE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DOING RESEARCH – EXPERIENCE FROM ELSEWHERE

INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter we situated children and young people as researchers in the context of the wider participation agenda and in relation to broader ‘inclusive’ research traditions. We turn now to the specific issue of children and young people doing research. In doing so, we attempt to answer three main sets of questions. First, how much of this kind of work is currently being carried out, both inside and outside government? Secondly, what are the main ways in which children and young people are actually being engaged in such projects? Finally, what are the key practical lessons or implications emerging from experience of this kind elsewhere?

EXAMPLES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DOING RESEARCH

Overview of the mapping exercise

As part of this study, we conducted telephone and face-to-face interviews with researchers working with children and young people in an attempt to ‘map’ recent projects which have involved children and young people as researchers. Key features of the results of this exercise are summarised below – a more detailed account of the projects identified can be found in the annex at the end of this report.

Overall, the mapping exercise identified in excess of 50 projects in which children or young people were directly involved in at least some aspects of the research process. These covered a very wide range of subject areas – health (including mental and sexual health), housing, education, social exclusion, disability, family change, substance use and others –and many were focused on children’s participation in services and on policies aimed at them. Most of the projects identified were one-off exercises, though there were some examples of children being involved in a more strategic and long-term manner. Examples of longer-term projects include:

- Barnardo’s young people’s research group, where young people conduct their own research; the group has also undertaken research for a government department.
- Brighton & Hove young people who have applied for funding to form a Youth Council with an ongoing remit to feed into the work of the local Children’s Trust, including by conducting research with other young people.
- The Children’s Research Centre at the Open University and the Investing in Children Project, Durham, which both provide ongoing resources for supporting children to design, conduct and analyse their own research projects.
- The appointment by the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People of two young (16-21 year-old) participation workers whose remit includes research.

A wide variety of funders have been involved in such projects, including: government agencies like Communities Scotland (in particular, their Scottish Community Action Research Fund) and the Big Lottery Fund; local government bodies (e.g. Children’s

Trusts/Children's Funds in England as well as Local Councils and Health Boards); voluntary sector organisations (e.g. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Edinburgh Youth SIP, Marie Curie); and government departments (including the Scottish Executive, DfES, Department of Health, Home Office and Department for International Development. Of the 50+ projects identified during the mapping exercise, 14 received some funding from central government in Scotland or England. However, as discussed below some of these are perhaps better described as consultation, rather than research projects. Government-funded projects identified by this study are summarized in more detail at the end of this section.

Most of the projects we identified involved teenagers (13+) and 'older young people' as researchers. A small number of projects, however, did involve younger children. Perhaps the best known of these is the Children's Research Centre (CRC) at the Open University. The CRC was established following a pilot study in 2002 and trains and supports children aged 10-14 in the design, conduct, analysis and reporting of their own research projects. Children are fully involved at every stage of the research process – from determining the research questions to presenting the results. At the time this study was conducted, over 45 children had received research training through the CRC.

Other projects working with children under the age of 13 years include:

- the Gloucestershire Children's Fund evaluation, which involved 10-12 year-olds in evaluating Children's Fund projects in their area
- a Joseph Rowntree Foundation-funded study involving children aged 8-13 years in conducting peer interviews and discussing their understanding of disadvantage and exclusion
- the Children and Youth Board, which consists of 25 young people aged 11-19 years and was established by the DfES to feed into their policies, including by conducting research with other children and young people
- Investing in Children in Durham which has involved children as young as 3 and 4 years in exploring issues which concern them.

Children were involved in a wide variety of ways in the projects we identified for this study, including developing or determining the research questions, designing materials or data collection methods, conducting peer interviews or other data collection, involvement in the analysis and reporting of findings and dissemination. However, across many of the projects children appeared to be more likely to be involved in an advisory capacity (e.g. commenting on research questions, materials and reports) and in conducting peer interviews, rather than being involved in determining the initial research questions or in conducting detailed analysis and reporting (though see the annex for examples of projects that did engage young people more fully in the research process).

Children's involvement in government social research

As discussed above, the Scottish Executive has produced a variety of documents describing the importance of *involving* children in decisions and of *consulting* with them. However, the research team for this study did not find any specific Scottish Executive guidance on involving children in research in any way other than as subjects. The same generally applies to the Government Departments in England & Wales, although it is worth noting that the DfES publication *Building a Culture of Participation* states that organisations conducting research about issues relevant to children and young people 'may also choose to include

young people in commissioning, undertaking and disseminating research projects (e.g. on research advisory groups or as interviewers)’.

The mapping exercise and interviews conducted for this study did, however, reveal a small number of central government-funded research studies which have involved children as researchers in some way.

In Scotland, these included:

- *A study on children’s experience of disability* (Connor and Stalker, 2002) – conducted by the Social Work Research Centre at Stirling University and funded by the Scottish Executive. Two girls with disabilities aged 11 or 12 years were involved in this qualitative study as ‘co-research advisors’. They met with the adult researchers three times to discuss the proposal, to assist them in revising research materials for young disabled people and to discuss recruiting samples.
- *The Cool with Change study*¹⁶ – an on-going, three year research study being conducted by the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) in collaboration with Scotland’s Families and funded by the Community Fund and the Scottish Executive. The study explores the impact of family change on children and young people’s lives. Two small groups of 15/16 year-olds who have themselves experienced family change have been recruited to act as consultants to the project. They helped develop topic guides and advised adult researchers on the interview process and ethical issues. It is also hoped that the young consultants will advise on barriers to accessing support and assist in disseminating the findings to other young people.
- *A study on services available for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered (LGBT) youth in Scotland* – funded by Communities Scotland Scottish Community Action Research Fund and the Scottish Executive (who funded some reporting from the project). The idea for this study, which investigated services available locally for LGBT young people in different parts of Scotland came from LGBT young people themselves. Young researchers were trained by co-researchers at Strathclyde University and designed and conducted much of the research themselves, including assisting with questionnaire design, facilitating focus groups and making video diaries.
- *A right to guidance and support in schools*¹⁷ – Young people from Article 12 were involved in conducting this Scottish Executive commissioned research, involving a small-scale survey of 45 young people aged 14-17 years.
- *Patient and Carer Experiences teenage advisory group* – The Cancer Care Research Centre at Stirling University is undertaking a three-year study on patient and carer experiences funded by the Scottish Executive. They are currently in the first year of this and hope to recruit a teenage advisory group who will help set the research agenda for the next two years of the study.
- *The Rural Voices: Action Research Competition* – under this scheme, funded by the Scottish Executive, funding was made available for community action research projects lasting for a period of up to 9 months. Several of the projects involved young people in the doing of research, either by themselves or as part of a wider community team.

The mapping exercise also identified several Scottish Executive-funded projects which are more easily classified as consultation or development work but which involved an element of

¹⁶ See CRFR website for details – <http://www.crfr.ac.uk/Research/coolwithchange.html>

¹⁷ Summary available at <http://www.article12.org/rights/Guidance%20Survey.htm>

research conducted by young people – for example, the Dialogue Youth consultation event with disabled young people and the development of the ‘Talking 2 Ourselves’ mental health website. Further details of these are also included in the annex.

Examples of research projects sponsored by Westminster government departments which have involved young people as researchers include:

- *Building a Culture of Participation* (Kirby *et al*, 2003) – The DfES funded best practice guidance on involving children and young people cited above was the result of a research project involving young researchers (aged 14-19 years) working alongside adult researchers to conduct case studies of organizations working with children. The 8 young researchers were paid as research assistants and were involved in conducting interviews with young people and staff, reviewing the analysis and disseminating the findings to policy makers. The research also involved young people in an advisory group, advising on all the work of the project.
- *Children’s Fund Evaluations*¹⁸ – The DfES’ Children’s Fund includes the participation of children and young people in the ‘design, operation and evaluation of the programme’ as one of its key principles. Accordingly a number of local Children’s Fund programmes have involved young people in the evaluation of their programmes. For example, the Gloucestershire Children’s Fund involved 14 ‘young reporters’ aged 10-12 in visiting local Children’s Fund projects, conducting activities, interviews and focus groups with children using the services, interviewing adult members of staff at the projects and reviewing portfolios provided by each project for evidence of children’s participation.
- *Imprint (evaluation of the Blueprint Drug Education Programme)* – the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) was funded by the Home Office to record the views of children taking part in the Blueprint drug education programme. One of the methods used for the study was to train young evaluators within the schools to record their own experiences through journals and to interview other children using semi-structured questionnaires.¹⁹
- *Involving children in the Medicines for Children Research Network*²⁰ – The Department of Health has funded NCB for 5 years to ensure the active involvement of children, young people and their families at all stages of the research process in the Medicines for Children’s Research Network. The Network is, in fact, primarily concerned with medical research (randomized trials) rather than social research, but we have included it here as an example of the different stages at which government may consider involving children in the research process. According to the NCB website their role will include ‘facilitating the involvement of children, young people and families so they can contribute to: setting the research agenda; assessing the feasibility of trial methodology and participants’ requirements; determining appropriate outcome measures to use in the trials; designing documentation intended for families, parents and children; monitoring trial progress; publicising trials and informing relevant groups; and disseminating trial findings to both the public as a whole, and the research and medical community’.

¹⁸See http://www.ne-cf.org/localevaluation/evaluator_reports_list.asp?section=000100010009 for Local Evaluators Reports

¹⁹ See http://www.ncb.org.uk/projects/project_detail.asp?ProjectNo=305

²⁰ See http://www.ncb.org.uk/projects/project_detail.asp?ProjectNo=340

MODELS OF INVOLVEMENT

From the mapping exercise and the literature reviewed, it is clear that there are different models for involving young people in the doing of research. These are often confusing, not least because the same term can be used to cover quite distinct practices and, conversely, there can be considerable overlap between apparently different models. Bearing this in mind, two broad approaches to young people's participation in the doing of research are apparent: what might be termed 'child-led' research, and children and young people working as part of a wider research team. The latter involves a whole spectrum of activities and some of these are outlined below.

Child-led research

The defining feature of what might be termed the child-led research approach appears to be that children and young people decide what they wish to research and the role of adults is one of facilitating this process. Others have defined this approach less in terms of the focus of the research and more in terms of where decision making power lies: 'a process of joint enquiry with adults but where decision-making lies with children' (West, 1998: 272).

The Children's Research Centre, for example, sees research decision-making as lying with children and young people and sees its primary objective as empowering young people as active researchers.²¹ Another project that describes what it is doing as 'child-led' is the Investing in Children²² (IIC) initiative set up in Durham in 1997 by local government agencies which provide services to children and young people – including, for example, the health and education departments. Part of the work of this project is to support children and young people to identify issues that are important to them. The young people are then given a budget and adult researcher support to research – in the sense of gathering information about – an issue.

But while both the CRC and IIC might describe themselves as 'child-led', the two projects actually operate in very different ways – notably in relation to the emphasis given to formal research skills training. The CRC sees this as a crucial aspect of empowerment, while the IIC would argue that to impose adult-centric methods and approaches on young people might ultimately be *disempowering*.

Children and young people as part of a research team: a spectrum of activities

The second broad model emerging from the literature is one in which children and young people are part of a research team but the research focus has usually been decided by adults prior to the involvement of young people in the team. This covers a whole spectrum of practices.

Children as co-researchers

At one end of the spectrum is the notion of children and young people as 'co-researchers'. Again this term is used in a variety of ways, though it broadly refers to research projects with a high level of involvement by young people, but in which the process as a whole is guided or controlled by adults. For example, the research focus may have been identified by adults but young people are involved from the outset in terms of identifying aims and design and have a

²¹ See <http://childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk/>

²² See <http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamcc/usp.nsf/pws/investing+in+children++IIC+Information+Page>

strong involvement throughout the project (France, 2000). In the HAYS project, the young and adult researchers worked together to design research questions, though Kirby *et al* (2001) noted that when the young people decided to focus on 'identity', they were encouraged to think carefully about the complexity of this subject and the difficulties involved. The young researchers subsequently decided to focus on educational support needs.

Peer interviewers

Further along the spectrum is a situation in which children and young people may not be involved in all stages of the research but are involved in the *conduct* of the research – for example, carrying out interviews, either because they are the same age as people they are interviewing and/or they share same life experiences. This is often referred to as 'peer research' by children. In general terms, peer research involves members of a target group researching others from that target group (de Winter and Noom, 2003). In relation to young people, it involves young people taking on the role of researcher in youth -related projects (Phillips *et al*, 2001). In West's view, however, peer research is 'really a misnomer, both because it is often initiated and resourced by adults' (West, 1998: 272) and also because young people are often only acting in a very limited role as data collectors.

Murray (2006) writes about her experience of using peer-led focus groups with young people. She describes this as 'one of the few research contexts in which young people can speak *collectively* with no adult present'. To date, she has explored the implications of young people facilitating focus groups involving groups of friends without the presence of an adult researcher. Murray argues the peer-led focus groups can lead to fresh insights or to discussion of issues that would not have been discussed with adults present. She recognises that while this form of interviewing may help to address power imbalances between children and adults, there may still be power imbalances within the group between the facilitator and the rest of group. Future research, she suggests, will be needed on the optimum size of peer-led focus groups and the format adopted, as well as on comparing data produced through peer-led and more traditional groups. Again, there is a dearth of knowledge about how young people themselves experience being in groups facilitated by adults or other young people.

Young advisors

Another possibility along this spectrum is an advisory model approach in which young people are not actually directly involved in the conduct of the research but, for example, sit on advisory panels for the project, advising on issues such as accessing hard-to-reach groups, questionnaire design, whether or not to use incentives and, if so, of what kind. This needs to be distinguished from steering group involvement where the young people involved may have a greater say in the direction the research takes.

The spectrum of involvement described above is also captured in Adams and Swain's (2001) distinction between young people as *active researchers* where they have some degree of control over research process and young people as *advisors* where their overall control is usually less.

Stages and levels of involvement

Another way of thinking about the nature of young people's involvement is in terms of the *level* of their involvement in different *stages* of the research process. The fact that a young person is involved in every stage of the research process does not necessarily tell us about the quality of their involvement including the extent of their control in relation to the research. They could, for example, be involved throughout in a tokenistic fashion whereas other young

people may choose or be asked to to only be involved directly in some stages but still have a say in decision-making throughout the life of the project. As Boyden and Ennew (1997:83) note more generally, research is not inherently participatory: it depends on how it is applied. The *level* of participation children or young people could have as researchers (Laws, 2004; Hart, 1992), can, as we have seen, range from tokenistic involvement, to consultation/advisory models to co-researcher or child-directed research.

KEY ISSUES AND LESSONS

Having looked briefly at some examples of the kind of projects that are being carried out and at the broad models of involvement that these involve, we now turn to the practical experience of such projects and, in particular, to lessons that can be drawn from the literature about studies which have actually involved young people as researchers. In particular, we look at the age of the young people involved in previous studies and at the role that they have played in such projects; at the justifications and rationales that are advanced for involving young people in the first place; and at responses to some of the practical and ethical issues that such projects have faced.

How young are young researchers?

Previous studies have involved a wide age range of young people in at least some stage of the research process. Adele Jones's (2003) Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) work on young people with caring responsibilities in black families, for example, refers to working with young people aged 5 to 16 in the design of this research. The Children's Research Centre at the Open University offers children age 10 to 14 years a research training and the Investing In Children (IIC) project in Durham refers to working with children as young as four.²³ As noted earlier, however, definitions are important in this area, and it is worth noting in this context that the IIC has a broad development/participation remit of which research is only a part. Technological developments, too, have implications for the age range of children involved in the doing of research. The use of videos and cameras, for example, have allowed younger children as respondents to shape research projects according to what they find significant (Clark and Moss, 2001); but these technologies could also be used by children acting as researchers.

In practice, however, most research projects in the UK that have been concerned with involving young people in the research process have – as is the case with participation projects in general (Kirby *et al*, 2004) – tended to involve older young people, aged 14 and over. The Triumph and Success Peer Research Project funded by JRF, for example, involved researchers aged 15-21 years and this is not untypical (France, 2000). As this chapter makes clear, the mapping exercise carried out for this research found a similar age range in relation to young researchers in the UK.

What do young researchers do?

We discussed earlier broad models for the involvement of children and young people in the doing of research. But in practical terms, what do they actually do, and what have been the main issues in involving them in different stages of the research process? Laws (2004) identifies various aspects of research design that children and young people may have input

²³ <http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamcc/usp.nsf/pws/investing+in+children+-+IIC+Information+Page>

into, including testing information sheets; piloting research techniques; identifying good methods for reaching hard to reach groups; and deciding about the use of incentives. Coad and Lewis (2004) point out in their review that there is still very little written on children and young people's involvement in analysis and suggest that children and young people could be involved in commenting on or verifying findings. However, they note Mayall's warning that there might be considerable time lapse between data collection and verification of analysis and that children's views may have changed over that period (Mayall, 1996). Children and young people can also be asked to reflect on what they are learning from research as they go along and adult researchers can put ideas in an accessible form and ask for child peer-researchers' views.

For some, the key issue is that without children's input, it is adult voices that dominate the interpretation of research data (West, 1996a; 1996b; Sinclair, 2004). Others, however, are less optimistic about involving children and young people – or indeed any lay person – at the analysis stage (Harden *et al*, 2000), pointing out that this may require types of knowledge (Mayall, 1994) that lay people do not usually possess. Kirby and Bryson (2002) note that young people often find analysis difficult or boring and Kirby's experience in relation to the HAYS project was that young people were initially involved in coding but were then happy for an adult researcher to take this over. For some, the boredom that can accompany analysis could be deemed detrimental to the participation agenda in general (Berry and Campbell, 2001: 19). Others, however, have found young people able to contribute to projects at a level consistent with academic publication (Barry, 2005) though again there are key issues here about which young people are getting involved in these types of projects.

While some researchers may have questioned how involved children and young people can be at the analysis stage, others point out that if children and young people act, for example, only as interviewers for adults and are not party to the thinking behind the research design and the research questions being addressed, then this can have consequences for the process and practice of interviewing and for the research as a whole (Harden *et al*, 2000). There are issues here about maintaining young people's motivation to be involved to the point of analysis and beyond – a problem with young researchers in any case as their lives are often busy and in transition – but one which can be exacerbated if the young people do not identify with or have not been involved in setting the research aims (Clark *et al*, 2004).

Justifications and limitations: arguments for involving young people in the doing of research

The committee emphasises that in many cases only children themselves are in a position to indicate whether their rights are being fully recognised and realised. Interviewing children and using children as researchers (with appropriate safeguards) is likely to be an important way of finding out (Committee on the Rights of the Child (34th session) 2003/5 paragraph 50).

Why involve young people as researchers in the first place? How will research be different if young people are involved? Is it necessary? In considering these questions, it is worth remembering that evaluations of projects which have involved young researchers have tended to be based on the views of the young or adult researchers rather than the people they are researching (Kirby, 2001:75). There remains, then, little or no research on who young people

themselves would like to be researched by and even in relation to the young researchers' perspectives there is not a huge amount published (see, however, Kilpatrick *et al*, 2004; Crane, 2001; Norris *et al*, 2004; Harding, 2001; Kirby, Wubner and Lewis, 2001). Moreover, as much of the impetus for involving young researchers comes from adults, not surprisingly, the rationale for their involvement is frequently framed in adult terms and focused, as noted above, on improving services, promoting 'active citizenship' or valuing children's rights.

Yet, as Edwards and Alldred (1999) noted some time ago, when looking at why children participate in research as subjects, their views of research are likely to be shaped by what meaning research has for their lives at a personal, local and wider societal level. The same appears to be true for young researchers. Harding (2001) when describing his experience of taking part in a 'Students as Researchers' project identified 'intrinsic values' of the research participation – values that might outweigh whether or not recommendations arising from the research are implemented. However, Sinclair, 2004 and Stafford *et al* 2003 comment on young people's wish to see action or at least feedback on their involvement and Kirby (2004) notes that as a minimum young people should be given summaries of research and access to full accessible research reports and other research outputs if they want them. Kirby (2004) also strongly advises that young researchers should be given information on how information is disseminated, how findings have been used and if they have not been, an explanation of why that is the case. There is a more general point here which is how we hear/work with children's views about research which do not sit easily alongside the more emancipatory understandings of adult researchers. If children do not share an understanding of research which is informed by a rights discourse, are they to be viewed as unenlightened or as oppressed? We return to this issue of how young people view research when analysing the data from this research project in Chapter Five.

Better research about young people

The key argument presented in the research literature for involving young researchers is that it makes for better research and, therefore, by implication, better policy. There are several strands to this argument. It is suggested that involving young people as researchers makes for research that is richer and more grounded in young people's experiences and perspectives. Saunders and Broad (1997), for example, concluded that the relevance and reliability of their research was increased by involving young researchers and Alderson (2001) describes data gathered by children as 'fuller' and she points to children being useful in terms of identifying what questions to ask and topics to cover. She cites the example of Roberts *et al* (1995) who were carrying out research with teenagers about accidents and safety. The teenagers had little to say about the kinds of events researchers saw as relevant and so the research team asked the young people what sorts of questions to ask. They responded by suggesting that the team, 'ask us about our scars' (Alderson, 2001). By involving young people in the design of an interview schedule, Saunders and Broad (1997) noted that certain subject areas and nuances (for example the way services were accessed and received) that might otherwise have been overlooked were brought to the fore. To that extent, they argue that using young people as researchers not only accommodates but also facilitates subject diversity in research. Laws (2004), too, in her account of Save The Children's involvement in a UN international study of how to include young people in research relating to violence against children, notes that adults often have less insight into the world of children than they think they have and that children may provide interpretations that differ from those of adult researchers.

This richer, fuller research, in turn, is understood to be rooted in the following advantages of using children and young people as researchers: first, they allow the power differential

between the researched and researcher and between children and adults to be redressed (Christensen, 2004). It would be naïve, however, to assume that power is not an issue when young people are researching other young people or, indeed, adults and this is part of recognising that power is an inevitable part of the research process. Second, they increase the possibility of access to other children and young people and, therefore, of the user voice in research. This, of course, depends on the nature of the study – in some studies, young people may not wish to be interviewed by people ‘like them’ (Laws, 1999; Robson, 2001). Third, they allow for greater understanding of the different language that young people may use (Laws, 2004). Finally, they ease the building of rapport with young people, which some adults, unfamiliar with how to interact with children, may struggle to develop (Punch, 2002). The building of rapport, however, can depend on less obvious identity markers, for example the places where one has lived (see Kilpatrick *et al*). As Harden *et al* (2000) note, we cannot assume that age is the key difference between an adult researcher and child respondent, or the only one which matters. There may be commonalities which can override this difference or other differences which may be, in this context, more significant than age. Moreover, as noted, ‘matching’ cannot necessarily change the inequalities inherent in the interview process. Again there is a dearth of research information about what makes a difference:

There has been little analysis of what characteristics make a good young researcher other than (or even instead of) their youth (Kirby and Bryson, 2002:54).

Increasing the impact of research on children and young people

In research terms, another important potential benefit of involving young people as researchers is that when young people feel a sense of ownership and conviction about the research, presentations by them, at conferences or to local agencies/authorities, can be very persuasive (Kellett *et al*, 2004). In Tisdall and Davis’s (2004) terms, the media’s interest in young people is a resource young people can bargain with to achieve ‘insider status’ in policy terms but it is equally a resource used by governments when wishing to associate their policies with the best interests of children and young people.

Self-confidence and skills for young researchers

Over and above the benefits to the research, there are, of course, the benefits that accrue to the young people themselves from taking part including increased confidence and the learning of new skills (Kirby, 1999). Again these benefits are familiar from the wider participation literature on involving children and young people (Sinclair, 2004).

Limitations

In the last five years or so, researchers have also started to explore some of the possible difficulties of involving young people as researchers. These can be broadly summarised in terms of ethics, financial costs, research relationships and quality issues.

Ethics

There are at least four ethical areas focused on in the literature and these are explained briefly below. First, in relation to confidentiality issues: some young people may be unwilling to share sensitive information with other young people (Kirby, 1998; 2001) and there are also issues around young researchers being fully aware of the need to keep information anonymous and confidential.

Second, avoiding physical and emotional harm to participants: the emotional costs to young researchers arising from the disclosure of private/personal information may be considerable

and at the same time there are issues of physical safety both in relation to the researcher and the research subject. There are child protection issues here both in relation to protecting research subjects but also in terms of the information young researchers may be exposed to and how this might affect them. Equally, there are possible consequences for research participants if researchers are not fully informed, for example, about equality issues (see Norris *et al*'s (2004) comment that young researchers with disabilities on a particular project would have benefited from disability equality training, particularly in relation to impairments they did not themselves have experience of).

Third, there are issues to do with informed consent. Young researchers would need to be skilled in understanding how to secure this and at the same time, adult researchers would have to be sure that young people were informed in their consent about becoming researchers in the first place. This, in turn, raises the issue of what age of children should be involved in any young researchers project. Masson (2000), moreover, notes that where children are acting as researchers and not just as sessional interviewers they are effectively acting as employees and, therefore, subject to laws that regulate children's work. The amount of time young people may have to spend on a project, often after school or during holidays is in itself an ethical issue. Do young people actually want to be giving up their free time to do research when they already have busy lives? Moreover, researchers need to keep in mind that young researchers are no less immune to the pressures of deadlines than adult researcher and these are likely to be exacerbated by working in an adult environment:

I felt pressurised to meet and work within the time frame, budget and procedures designed by adults, professionals' organisations. Trying to adjust to all of this did not allow me to fully participate and learn from the project (quote from young researcher cited in Kirby et al, 2004: 20).

Finally, there are ethical issues around how to offer young people a 'fair return' for participation. While there is a need to recognise young people's contribution, the disadvantages of payment, for example, are not just the legal consequences or the possible impact on benefits, but also the pressure the young person may then feel to participate (Howard *et al*, 2002). Kirby *et al* (2004) offer a range of formal measures for rewarding young people for their involvement including accreditation, certificates of achievement, letters of reference, joint authorship, vouchers, honorium payment or wage and social activities like outings. Save the Children UK have produced comprehensive internal guides to the financial and legal implications for young people being paid to do research (Save the Children, 2004a and b). An illustration of the complexity of the payment issue is the recent example of young people contributing to an academic book. Here the young people who contributed were being offered £30 book vouchers plus a complementary copy of the book. The National Youth Agency advice to the editor, however, was that young people should not contribute their views for less than £7.76 per hour. The editor of this text noted:

In my view, young people should be able to choose whether or not to contribute their views for less. Indeed, all the young people who wrote postscripts said the payment was not a prime motivation compared to the recognition and self esteem they gained from contributing to an academic book (Barry, 2005: xi).

There is also the issue of how to involve children who face discrimination (Morrow and Richards, 1996; Laws, 2004; Alderson, 1995). Morris (1998, cited in Clark *et al* 2001) raises the question of the long 'lead-in' times needed for setting up interviews with disabled

children. Robson (2001) discusses the problems of involving disadvantaged, marginalised young people in research projects – though, in the case of this study, these problems might have as much to do with the fact that these young people were not involved in the whole project as it was to do with their disadvantaged status. Allen (1998) makes the point that too often it is the articulate and mature children who are chosen to take part. This raises the issue of where young researchers should be recruited from and what the access considerations might be. There are advantages of drawing on young people from existing groups – including time and effort saved in finding new young people – but also disadvantages, most obviously that these existing groups may well be over consulted (Kirby *et al*, 2004). At the same time, it is important to ask whether representativeness actually matters. As Sinclair (2004) notes, this depends on what the purpose of the activity is

If it is to give generalised representation to the views of children as a whole then it is important. If it is to broaden the range of perspectives that are informing decision making...then statistical representativeness may be of less relevance. Here it may be more important to focus on openness and inclusiveness, particularly the inclusion of more marginalised groups (2004: 112)

While these ethical issues, and their methodological implications are important, it is perhaps worth being cautious about seeing children as *so* different or special a research group (whether as researchers or as research subjects) that they become ‘othered’ and eventually excluded from the research process (Harden *et al*, 2000, paragraph 2.13). Much recent research with children has concluded, after all, that differences between adults and children in research are often assumed because of adult preconceptions of children and because of the structural position of children within society and not because of inherent differences within children *per se*.

Financial issues

The second set of issues to consider is financial. It takes longer to train, recruit, and supervise young inexperienced researchers than older, experienced researchers. Some recent studies have commented on the need to offer not only research training but also youth support (France, 2000; Kirby *et al*, 2004). An interesting evaluation of one project that involved young researchers highlighted the importance of young people feeling they had been properly trained and briefed about the research project and in particular about whose responsibility it was to do what (Norris *et al*, 2004). Although it is worth recognising that young people do research as part of their everyday life at school and that much of the training and support needs are similar to what many novice researchers might also need, nevertheless a key question is what the resource implications of involving young researchers in research – government funded or otherwise – might be.

Research relationships

Thirdly, there could be problems in relation to the research relationships. We have already discussed possible issues of confidentiality and child protection in relation to young people interviewing their peers, as well as issues of whether children and young people necessarily prefer to be interviewed by people ‘like them’. A related set of issues arise in relation to whether young researchers are to be involved in interviewing adults. Would adults take seriously being interviewed by children or instead feel unchallenged by the experience? And what about the young researchers themselves? Would they feel comfortable interviewing adult respondents? In the HAYs project (Kirby, Wubner and Lewis, 2001) adult researchers

interviewed adult respondents as it was felt adults would be more comfortable being interviewed by other adults and that adult researchers would understand jargon and could use professional knowledge to probe further. A young researcher in this project did, however, accompany an adult researcher on one occasion. There was evidence from the mapping exercise for this project that there can be considerable benefits arising from young people interviewing adults. The Gloucestershire Children's Fund, for example, felt that adults working at children's fund projects were much more honest in their responses to the 'young reporters' than they would have been with an adult researcher and that being visited by the children in this way caused a lot of reflection on their practices on involving children and young people (see the annex). Coad and Lewis (2004) make reference to Gettings and Gladstone's (2001) work on using the internet for online interviews and web based questionnaires. While this may overcome some of these age-based issues, this may be at the cost of ushering in other child protection concerns:

In due course, the web context may generate unique situations for children as co-researchers; for example, their status and identity as children could be masked and fluid, enabling 'age-free' identities to be explored (Coad and Lewis, 2004: 41).

Again, there is a need to be clear what the basis of these difficulties are: power imbalances, developmental differences, adult beliefs about child competencies (Punch, 2002).

Ensuring high quality research

Finally, a key issue emerging from practice to date is the question of how to ensure the quality of research carried out by young people. Most research commissioners, whether inside or outside government, are, as we noted in the last section, seeking robust evidence and there are concerns that, whether or not involving children and young people in research actually affects validity, the perception that this is the case might itself undermine the impact of the research (Lewis and Lindsay 2000). Does the fact that research is carried out by young people rather than adult researchers exempt it from the same degree of methodological scrutiny? If not, what are the implications for young researchers and those who work with them? These questions take us back to the understandings of research being worked with by those inside and outside of government. We explore these further in our analysis of data for this project in Chapter Four and Five.

In this chapter we identified, through the mapping exercise, some of the key features of the UK projects which have recently involved children and young people in the doing of research. In particular, we noted that many of these studies were concerned with services and policies aimed at children and young people and many were one-off projects which tended to involve young people aged 13 and above. While government – at local and national level – was one of the sources of funding for such projects, there was, in fact, little or no government guidance or policy about how best to involve children and young people in research other than as research subjects. In this chapter, we also identified from the existing literature, the range of models and rationales for involving children and young people as researchers as well as highlighting key areas for debate within the literature about this practice. Some of these areas – ethics, finances, research relationships and quality assurance – are revisited in the next two chapters.

Key points from this chapter

- The mapping work carried out as part of this study identified a proliferation of projects involving children and young people in the doing of research. With a small number of notable exceptions, these were mostly one-off projects, and many were based within voluntary and community organisations. Most also involved young people aged 13 and over, though a small number worked with younger children.
- Overall, there were few research projects funded directly by central government departments, though a small number of such examples do exist (both in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK). These often involved children and young people in a relatively limited advisory capacity.
- Two main models of involvement can be identified: ‘child-led’ projects and children as part of a bigger research team. The former gives primacy to issues of empowerment and control of the research process; the latter involves a spectrum of involvement from children and young people as full ‘co-researchers’, to ‘peer interviewers’ or simply ‘advisors’.
- Justifications or rationales for involving children and young people in the doing of research include the notion that it leads to better research (and hence to better policy-making); that it increases the impact of the research; and that it empowers young people by building skills and self-confidence.
- Other key issues emerging from experience from elsewhere of children and young people doing research include ethical questions, relating to confidentiality, risk of harm, financial recompense, and power in research relationships; and the recurrent question of how to balance young people’s participation with the need for high quality, reliable data.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PRACTICALITIES OF INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

The first three chapters of this report situated the issue of children as researchers in the context of (a) current government policies and in particular Scottish Executive strategies and (b) theoretical debates around participation, consultation and research. They also summarised key practical lessons from previous studies that have actually involved children in this way. The next two chapters expand on these themes and focus more explicitly on how they apply to Scottish Executive-funded research through an analysis of a series of interviews with young people who have experience of carrying out research, researchers outside of government who have experience of involving young people in the doing of research, Scottish Executive research managers and Scottish Executive policy makers. Specifically, in this chapter we look at these stakeholders' perspectives on the practicalities of involving children and young people in research and in Chapter Five we consider rationales for this involvement and the understandings of research that inform their accounts – a recurrent, if largely implicit, theme in the interviews for this project.

INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE RESEARCH: INSIDER AND OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT PRACTICE

Before looking in detail at the practicalities of involving young people in Scottish Executive funded research, it may be useful to review briefly perceptions of current practice within the Scottish Executive in relation to this issue. As is clear from the mapping exercise (summarised in Chapter Three and reported in the annex), there is currently a wide spectrum of practices relating to children and young people's involvement in the doing of research in Scotland and the UK more generally, ranging from children and young people being advisers or consultants to acting as co-researchers or taking the lead on child-initiated projects. But it is also clear – from interviews carried out both within and outside the Scottish Executive – that this diversity of practice does not exist within government-funded research in Scotland. Interviewees for this project acknowledged that, in this context, thinking about involving children and young people – even as respondents in research – is at a much earlier stage.

We are just getting to the stage now when we're thinking 'oh wouldn't it be a good idea to have a pupil survey'. (...) The fact is that that's what we're getting to now, so moving beyond that is still something that we need to think about more carefully.

(Scottish Executive Research Manager1)

Although some examples were given of the involvement of children and young people in the 'doing' of Scottish Executive-funded research, this was usually, as noted earlier, at an early stage and usually in a consultative role (see the annex). For example, one policy maker highlighted the way in which children were sometimes involved in advising researchers about how to phrase questions so that other children can understand them, sometimes by participating in focus groups before large studies or surveys start. Other than examples like this where children have limited involvement in an advisory capacity, policy makers and

researchers within the Scottish Executive admitted that children were usually involved as research *subjects* or *consultees* rather than ‘active’ *researchers*.

I think enabling voices of young people to be heard is always important (...) and I would argue that (...), certainly in this division, we’ve more experience of consulting with children to enable their voices to be heard, than using them as researchers.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

Indeed, we only identified one recent Scottish Executive project in which young people were engaged more fully in the research process (the Rural Voices project – see annex), and this took place within a community development rather than research agenda.

This perception of the role of children and young people in Scottish Executive-funded work was, for the most part, shared by interviewees in the wider research community, some of whom felt that they had not been given the impression in the past that it was a priority to involve children and young people in such research. In the extract below, the researcher, drawing on the experience of carrying out a Scottish Executive funded project, is referring to the involvement of young people even as research subjects

Working for the Scottish Executive, that wasn’t a problem, because whenever we approached the idea of young people, like at advisory groups, being involved we received very little encouragement so it was easy not to do it as it were.

(Researcher 3)

There are examples given by non-government researchers of Scottish Executive-commissioned research which did involve children in the research process. However, most of this involved children and young people in an advisory/consultative role of the kind described by the Scottish Executive interviewees cited above.

So they [young people acting as consultants] made quite a lot of suggestions at the time. I made some quite big changes to the wording of things, in particular.

(Researcher 1)

They also advised us about things like how to ensure that we safeguarded the well-being of the participants and made sure that they felt they didn’t have to answer questions if they didn’t want to and stuff like that.

(Researcher 4)

There are also examples of the Scottish Executive being involved in the funding projects which have, in turn, involved children and young people in more imaginative ways – for example, in developing web sites or using video diaries (see work of LGBT Youth Scotland and Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health in the annex). Overall, however, stakeholders’ awareness was less about these initiatives than the raft of consultation initiatives aimed at children and young people, examples of which include the Trojan project, the Debate Project for young care leavers and consultation on the delivery of the Children’s Hearing System. The role of Youth Link, Young Scot and the Youth Parliament are identified

by some respondents within the Scottish Executive as key to these consultation practices and young people are clearly one of the key ‘target groups’ whose voice it is considered important to include. As a result, consultation was a key reference point for Scottish Executive interviewees in discussion of how to involve young people in Scottish Executive practices more generally.

So when big consultation exercises take place, I’m thinking of delivery of the Children’s Hearing system, additional efforts will be made to do something different to try and target groups that are felt to be under represented. So for example there was a youth event, a specific youth event held in conjunction with Young Scot for that.

(Scottish Executive Research Manager 3)

I think the history of anything to do with young people is through just consultation, rather than getting them actively involved in the decision making process other than that. Because of the areas we work in being focused on children and families, there has always been a need to include them, children themselves, as what we term [...] stakeholders.

(Scottish Executive Research Manager 2)

Researchers and policy makers also referred to a few key research projects in which children and young people have been involved as respondents which have shaped their understanding of the importance of accessing such perspectives. In keeping with much research outside government, however, most of these studies have been with older children.

When we undertook the audit and review of child protection a couple of years back, we undertook a research exercise, again using the Voluntary Sector, with individuals and small groups of young people to find out their views of their experience within the child protection system. The learning from that was absolutely huge, not just about child protection but about how difficult it is to engage young people in a very, very difficult matter.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 3)

In the policy area that I work in, particularly in relation to younger children, certainly pre-primary aged children and maybe even primary aged kids, I don’t think researchers tend to go to ask those children about their experiences, they will ask the adult carers or teachers or whoever.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

In summary, then, the perception of stakeholders inside and outside government is that there is little evidence to date of Scottish Executive-funded work that has directly involved young people in the doing of research, though there is awareness of a handful of projects that have given young people an advisory role. This contrasts with the wide range of consultation activities and mechanisms aimed at this age group and with an increasing emphasis on the involvement of young people in carrying out such work. It also stands in tension with an acknowledgement of the importance and relevance of studies through which young people’s voices have been articulated as respondents. In principle, then, there would seem to be much to build on in terms of the development of a ‘children as researchers’ perspective within such a setting. But how is such a possibility viewed by the various potential stakeholders –

researchers, research managers, policy makers and young people themselves? In particular, what do they see as the practical issues relating to the development of such a perspective?

INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE RESEARCH: THE PRACTICALITIES

We have already looked in some detail (see Chapter Three) at lessons emerging from existing research literature about the potential benefits and problems of involving children and young people as researchers. Many of these themes – for example, how to address concerns about quality control, payment, sustainability, funding and ethics – were also present in the interviews conducted for this project and so are not repeated at length here.

Much of what follows is drawn from interviews with adult researchers, but – as will become clear in the next section – just as young people may not share adult researchers’ reasons for becoming involved in research, neither can it be assumed that they have similar concerns about it as a practice.²⁴ Adult researchers’ concerns about anonymity, for example, may be shared by some young people – one researcher, for example, noted that a young researcher did not wish to be publicly identified at a dissemination meeting with Scottish Executive officials where the media were present. However, other young people might wish to be identified as research participants but not necessarily realise that this might lead to them being ‘*used by the media in particular ways that in the end that they’re not very happy with.*’ (Researcher 2)

Rather than reiterate the whole range of potential ethical and other difficulties already noted in Chapter Three, we focus here on two issues that have particular relevance for government-funded research and which were raised by respondents both inside and outside the Scottish Executive: *resources* and *representativeness*.

Dealing with the basics: time and money

The resource-intensive nature of research involving children and young people was repeatedly highlighted by respondents inside and outside the Scottish Executive. The key point being made here is that involving children and young people in research takes time and resources if it is to be done properly, since it may involve the use of youth participation/support workers as well as researchers, development of research training programmes and longer timescales to encourage participation at different stages of the research process. If projects are nationwide, as was the case with the Scottish Millennium Awards project, there are particular time and cost implications associated with travel and accommodation for young people across Scotland. Some of the practical and ethical implications of issues connected to time and resources – particularly in relation to government funded research – are explored below.

Time

As with the research literature, a common theme arising from interviews with respondents with experience of involving children and young people in doing research – particularly if this involved more than just contact at the design stage of the project – was that the whole

²⁴ Is it worth making the point that a similar gap may exist between the concerns of researchers and those of research respondents in general. Current research about respondent perceptions of ethics suggests very different kinds of preoccupations from those presumed by existing ethical frameworks. (Graham *et al*, forthcoming)

process simply took much longer than expected: as one respondent contacted as part of the mapping exercise put it, *'I set aside 6 months for fieldwork and it ended up taking eighteen months'*. This was true even for those organisations that had existing experience of working in a participative way with children and young people. Children in Scotland, for example, noted that – even with pre-existing contacts through their participation networks – the negotiation of access to schools, whether to recruit young respondents or researchers, remains highly time consuming. Some projects working with young researchers within school settings, such as the Liverpool Children's Fund, have, therefore, recommended tying research projects into learning/educational outcomes, though there are issues here about young people's research being assessed as an educational output.

There are also ethical implications linked to the issue of time: partly to do with the level of commitment that can reasonably be expected from children, many of whom already have busy lives; but also to do with asking for input from children and young people at the proposal stage, before it is known whether or not the project will actually happen – an issue which would be particularly pressing if young researchers were involved in a proposal that required to go through Scottish Executive procurement processes.

Keeping going back to young people and negotiating things, but you don't know if you're going to get the funding – I find that's an ethical dilemma.
(Researcher 2)

One way of addressing the time demands placed on young people involved in research might be to have more fluid arrangements where different young people could come in and out of projects depending on their other commitments, rather than the same group being involved over an extended period. However, comments made by an interviewee for this study who was involved in setting up a project involving large numbers of young people suggest there might be problems with both approaches. Setting up a central board of young people to carry out this type of work can lead to the young people having a considerable amount to do and the dangers of overload. On the other hand, while having regional boards with more members who could come in and out of projects as required might spread the workload, it would not address the reality of young people's participation being a developmental process – one in which young people develop *over time* the skills and confidence needed to do the research or consultation work.

One respondent involved in a peer research project funded by DfID argued that the research process should, therefore, be seen through a 'pedagogical rather than purely a research lens' – though, in reality, it is difficult in the case of young researchers to separate the two. However, comments from other (adult) interviewees who have been involved in 'young researcher' projects suggest that there may sometimes be a gap in expectations about time between adults who are facilitating the research and adult commissioners and funders. For instance, one respondent described how members of the body funding a project were frustrated by the length of time young people spent determining how they wanted to work together. From the perspective of the adults facilitating the project, as well as that of the young people themselves, this was a key part of the process of consultation and essential to the young people taking ownership of the project.

The experience of respondents from the voluntary sector who were interviewed for this study suggests that time and resources are a key consideration for them too. Costing realistically for youth support as well as researcher involvement, and for research taking longer than usual,

can be a particular concern for voluntary organisations – some of whom have traditionally disguised their true research costs in order to remain competitive in relation to government research.

The trap the voluntary sector gets into is that they do deliver, whereas they should say the timescale is not realistic.

(Researcher 7)

While research by young people is frequently initiated within the voluntary sector, research is often only one part of the remit of such organisations and, as such, they rarely have the time or money – unless, like the National Children’s Bureau, they are operating on a larger scale – to train and support young people to become researchers or even to develop a research strategy of their own with young people.

So the research stuff was maybe just a quarter, or a fifth, of the workload. (...) So its not like we have got a full-time pool of young folk that we can say ‘right, we will train you to be young researchers’.

(Researcher 6)

This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that young people’s involvement in such organisations is often transient. If, however, the involvement of young people in research is seen as a form of citizenship – a means of ‘*learning to be involved*’ (Researcher 8) – then this sense that projects are re-inventing the wheel with each new group of young people is not necessarily problematic.

Respondents within government, understandably also identified time as a crucial factor. First, and perhaps most obviously, the time demands of training and supporting young people to be involved properly in research does not sit comfortably with the requirement for research information to feed quickly into the policy process.

A big issue with the relationship of policy and research is timing (...) so in terms of actually doing something that’s about children controlling a whole process or more involvement (...) you’re looking at expanding the time. (...) I think it’s naïve to think anything otherwise, particularly if you want to do a good job of involving young people. So I suppose that’s a difficulty in that often (...) you know information is needed by a particular point (...) I think there is an impetus to get the job done, that would be my perception, so I think some of those things would be quite difficult.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 2)

I mean I would say the big difficulty we have is timing, that (...) the policy needs to be developed before you can really reasonably expect a comprehensive research project to have reported (...) A piece of work (...) where you’re developing policy over a longer period of time can perhaps draw more on research but I would say quite a lot of what we’re doing is on a shorter timescale than that.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 4)

From researchers with experience of bidding for government research, there was also an acknowledgement that it would be difficult to work alongside young researchers in

responding to tenders within current tight timescales unless there was a pre-existing pool of trained young researchers that could be drawn upon.

It would seem to me, unless you had a standing group of young people such as CRC [Children's Research Centre], it would be quite a challenge to work to a tender in the time frame.

(Researcher 2)

Researchers interviewed for this study who had experience of working for the Scottish Executive as an external contractor, perceived existing systems and structures as not easily accommodating the more flexible arrangements necessary to involve children and young people as researchers.

For example, it's usual practice at present for them to allow just three weeks between issuing a spec and the deadline for submission of tenders. This means it is virtually impossible to involve young people meaningfully in helping shape the proposal, or even talking to them about how they might be involved during the research. A minimum of 6 weeks would be needed I'd suggest (...) The Scottish Exec would also have to adopt a less rigid approach to managing research projects. (...) If children were to be involved in giving advice or helping make decisions about studies as they develop, the Exec would have to be open to taking these seriously and be prepared to be flexible and responsive which in my, and others', experience, is not always the case. There would also have to be greater flexibility about deadlines, or perhaps more sensibly, more time should be allowed to complete studies from the outset.

(Researcher 1)

A similar view was expressed from a voluntary sector organisation with experience of working with a Whitehall government department in relation to young researchers.

Government departments are interested in ticking boxes and having an output at a particular time and there is an issue about meeting deadlines given what else is going on in young people's lives.

(Researcher 7)

The flexibility often required of adult researchers undertaking government research, for example in responding to issues not included in original specifications, could also add considerably to the time demands placed on young researchers. The tensions between the broad participation aims of government and government's use of young people as a resource, in other words as a means of demonstrating consultation, are to the fore in such situations. The role for children's organisations and/or adult researchers, depending on the nature of the project, in protecting or negotiating on behalf of young researchers in such instances is clear. In general, in describing the structures, systems and values of government research practices, there is a perception among stakeholders outside of government that these fall some way short of the standards discussed in Chapter Three for promoting a culture of participation.

Sustainability

Another issue identified by respondents which is again connected to temporal matters is that of sustainability. This includes the question of how to ensure young researchers' involvement across the lifespan of particular projects.

The length of (...), say, ESRC research projects is three years and if you think about the sustainability for children and young people through that, it's no doubt possible but it's a challenge as people and young people move on.
(Researcher 2)

But perhaps of more relevance in terms of government funded research which, at least in a Scottish context, tends to involve shorter term projects, is the issue of what happens to young researchers at the end of projects.

It's their one opportunity to come and feel part of something and then it comes to an end (...) and where do they go from there because there's still nothing in their local area? So there's real ethical issues there, as far as we're concerned, in terms of trying to sustain some kind of support afterwards.
(Researcher 5)

I think for me (...), the gap for me was no one from the Scottish Executive has followed through on this. They [young people] went down, (...) they said their piece, there were criticisms whatever, positive or negative. And then they had the letter and then that was it. They haven't been kept up to date on that piece of research or anything from that committee meeting.
(Researcher 6)

The last extract raises the issue of keeping young people informed about research outcomes and again there are potential resource implications arising from this. The issue of feedback is also connected to the question of if, and how, young researchers need to be – or should be – treated differently from adult researchers and whether or not young people's research is understood primarily as an exercise in participation, a point we return to when looking at understandings of research in the next chapter.

Sometimes the lack of follow-up with young people who were involved in carrying out research may be a result of the time it takes for some research reports to be cleared by government for publication. In the case described below, however, the researcher notes a share of the responsibility in needing to have re-contacted the young researchers before the end of the study.

They actually sat on it for two years before they cleared it and (...) when we did try to make contact again, through writing, we found that the (young researchers) had moved on (...) and I really had no means of contacting them but really, probably I should have contacted them before we got to the end of the study.
(Researcher 1)

Staff turnover within the civil service may also create issues in terms of the continuity and sustainability of projects involving young researchers. Again, this reflects one of the standards noted in Chapter Two about how to promote a culture of participation: the

importance of staff whose specific remit is to support participation. In relation to Scottish Executive practice, this standard does not seem to be applied to the research context. One non-government researcher, for example, noted that there was initial interest expressed about young people having a greater participatory role in relation to a particular Scottish Executive research project but *'that there was considerable staff change so that sort of died'* (Researcher 2).

Payment

The issue of payment also needs to be understood within the context of debates about the time young people give to research and the reasons why they get involved. Both the researchers outside government and young people themselves highlight payment as a difficult issue. For the young people there were the practical difficulties of being paid cash in hand and not being paid enough.

I would change the amount of money we get paid. A wee bit more for what we have done. (...) You choose to do it. You didn't have to do it. So I suppose it was like a bonus, but at the same time ...

(Young researcher 1)

If it was paid into a bank account you would have been less likely to spend it. Being paid cash in hand in the middle of town, by the time you go through town it is gone.

(Young researcher 2)

The Scottish projects covered by the mapping exercise described a range of reimbursement practices. For those young people whose benefit would be affected by being paid, other rewards were used ranging from gift vouchers, to field trips, to accreditation. In the latter case, the project manager involved recognised that if accreditation for participation had been thought about from the beginning, existing SVQs could have been tailored accordingly. One project described the paying of young carers who had been involved in a consultation exercise for the Scottish Executive *after* their involvement as appropriate, both because it removed, as the manager put it, *'the pressure to perform'* while at the same time recognising what young carers – a group of young people who have had to *'prioritise time their whole lives'* – had contributed to the consultation.

Which young people?: Issues of representativeness

The discussion above about having access to a 'standing group' of young researchers links to the second point we wish to focus on in this chapter: the issue of recruitment of young researchers and the concomitant tensions between the aims of inclusiveness, representativeness and quality assurance. These are, in turn, linked to the justifications for involving young people in research in the first place and to assumptions about the nature of research – both of which are discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Researchers outside government and research managers and policy makers inside the Scottish Executive repeatedly focused on these interrelated issues.

(...) to me someone who is prepared to spend five minutes and tell you their view on something, their view is just as legitimate as someone who is prepared to engage in a six months process to be a peer researcher, so we

have to be very careful that we don't involve a layer of people – young people who choose to be involved at that level – and we neglect the wider needs of other young people.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 2)

There's a really fine line between young people being a voice, their own voice and actually truly a representative voice of young people.

(Researcher 4)

One of the big issues for us (...) is about getting the voices of all young people heard and it being truly representative (...) I mean the criticisms have been made of the youth parliament. Is it only representing a certain sector of young people? So ensuring good representation from minority ethnic groups, from young people living in rural areas, there are obviously particular challenges and the youth parliament is working to address those.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 4)

There would be a wariness about ensuring that it (research involving young researchers) was a sort of representative voice, they weren't excluding any of the young people.

(Scottish Executive Research Manager 2)

One initiative which attempted to attract a wider range of young people from schools to carry out their own research noted that schools still sent their 'most able' pupils because they were concerned that to do otherwise would reflect badly on the school (Researcher 9). Another participation worker contacted as part of the mapping exercise referred to needing to ensure it is not just the 'keen beans' that are recruited. There appears to be a conflation of two concerns in these discussions – reflected in the above extracts: the concern that young researchers themselves should be representative of a larger group of young people and the concern about the representativeness of any research work they may do. As another (non-government) researcher noted:

There are a lot of excuses that are thought up, (...) a lot of objections that I think are just excuses, [...]. For example there's a big thing about representativeness [...] But I mean [...] adults, professionals, we're constantly doing things where we're not representative, we're not representing anyone. It's like a double standard and trying to apply a much high(er) standard to this kind of research involvement than we set ourselves.

(Researcher 1)

While there may be fewer questions asked about the representativeness of adult researchers, it appears to be the idea that research by young people is itself a form of participation which leads to this concern in relation to young researchers. The debate about young researchers then becomes, for some people, either one of promoting inclusiveness and valuing experience or of promoting expertise.

Make it as inclusive as you can. It's great having a group of young folk who can be researchers, but if they're all A grade students who are going to go on and [be] post-graduates, (...) what's the point (...)? For that group of young

folk it's great but (...) unless they [Scottish Executive] want it to be a career development opportunity they need to think about the broader social issues.
(Researcher 5)

For one project this tension was illustrated in a physical way when the first cohort of young researchers, recruited through a local training centre, voted with their feet and 'did a runner' at lunch time during the first day. The project, as a result, then decided to recruit older young people from the local college.

The younger ones didn't come back after they went out for a break. Then they got on to (...) the college.

(Young researcher 2)

The organiser of this research noted that the training was intensive and possibly difficult for young people with more chaotic lifestyles to engage with. He also noted that, although the ideal might have been to recruit people from such backgrounds and offer them enough support and training to enable them to do the research, in practice there was neither the time nor the resources for this to happen.

A researcher from another project that involved young people in evaluating a service they were also users of, noted that, while there was a need to support young people in learning about evaluation research, too much training might lead to the 'creaming off of the most academic youngsters' and, consequently, the loss of innovative ideas that come from experience, in this case, of using a service. To the extent that user-involvement in evaluations is viewed as essential to user-led services, training in this case could be perceived as a 'barrier' rather than an opportunity.

This touches on the fact that how respondents talk about involving young people in research is shaped by what they understand the purpose of the research to be. For example, in the case just noted, the purpose of research is framed in terms of promoting user involvement and improving services for young people as a result. In the next chapter, we explore this further by looking in more detail at respondents' justifications for involving young people in research and at their understandings of research.

In this chapter we explored stakeholders' perceptions about the practicalities and limitations of involving children and young people in research. We highlighted that respondents inside and outside of government both perceived the Scottish Executive, to date, as mainly having experience of involving children and young people through consultation rather than research. We concentrated on two issues in particular - resources and representativeness. In terms of resources, there was a perception among those outside government that the existing systems and structures of the Scottish Executive do not easily accommodate the more flexible arrangements necessary to involve children and young people as researchers, while those within the Scottish Executive were concerned about how the time-intensive nature of research involving young people would sit with the demands of policy makers to work to a tight timescale. Other issues connected to time and resources included the impact of staff turnover within the civil service as well as the question of how to keep young people involved during the course of a research project and also what, if any, responsibility the government might have to young researchers on completion of the research. In relation to the issue of representativeness, there seemed to be a conflation of the concern that young researchers

themselves should be representative of a larger group of young people and concern about the representativeness of any work they do. This touches on whether or not research by young people is itself primarily understood as a participation opportunity and a means of encouraging inclusiveness. We explore further these issues about how to understand the nature of children and young people's research in the next chapter.

Key points from this chapter

- The perception of stakeholders inside and outside government is that there is little evidence to date of Scottish Executive-funded work that has directly involved young people in the doing of research, though there is awareness of a handful of projects that have given young people an advisory role.
- This contrasts with the wide range of consultation activities and mechanisms aimed at this age group and with an increasing emphasis on the involvement of young people in carrying out such work. It also stands in tension with an acknowledgement of the importance and relevance of studies through which young people's voices have been articulated as respondents.
- Although there was widespread support in principle for projects giving young people a more direct involvement in the research process, there was also concern about some practical and ethical issues, in particular around resources and representativeness.
- Such projects were seen as both time- and resource-intensive, since it may involve the use of youth participation/support workers as well as researchers, development of research training programmes and longer timescales to encourage participation at different stages of the research process. It was widely felt that Scottish Executive procurement processes, budgets and time pressures all meant that such approaches would be difficult to accommodate.
- Other issues connected to time and resources included the impact of staff turnover within the civil service as well as the question of how to keep young people involved during the course of a research project and also what, if any, responsibility the government might have to young researchers on completion of the research.
- Concern about the representativeness of the young people involved in such projects was also evident – in particular, a concern that less able and more excluded young people would not be represented.

CHAPTER FIVE: UNDERSTANDING THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN GOVERNMENT FUNDED RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

As Chapter Three and the mapping exercise make clear, a whole spectrum of practices are covered by the description ‘children and young people doing research’. The interviews carried out for this study suggest that possible justifications for these different practices are also wide-ranging. The Scottish Executive research managers and policy makers interviewed for this study were shown Dyson and Meagher’s (2001) table and asked to discuss, drawing on their own experiences and beliefs, the justifications noted in the table: enabling the voices of young people to be heard, generating safe knowledge about young people, the possible impact on decision making and the empowerment of young people. The respondents outside government were not shown this table but it was used as the basis for asking them about the rationales for involving children and young people in research. The research managers and policy makers were also shown examples of different models for involving children and young people in research, including the co-researcher and child-initiated models.

Figure 1: Relationship between aims, tests and involvement (taken from Dyson and Meagher, 2001)

Aim of the research	Tests to be passed	Nature of involvement
Generating ‘safe knowledge about young people’	Traditional tests of ‘trustworthiness’ (validity, reliability, objectivity, etc.)	Young people can be involved only insofar as this does not compromise trustworthiness
Enabling the voices of young people to be heard	Authenticity: the extent to which young people’s voices are free from professional mediation	Young people’s views are central – though professional researchers may need to offer support in eliciting and articulating these
Impacting on decision-makers	The extent to which young people are heard by and influence decision-makers	Young people are involved in communicating findings directly to policy makers
Empowering young people	The extent to which young people are enabled to take control of aspects of their lives as a result of the involvement	Young people control as much of the research process as possible, using it to explore issues of concern to them

In this chapter, drawing on Dyson and Meagher’s categories, we look at how respondents talk about rationales. Not surprisingly, as the focus was on government-funded research, there was a concern to explore the rationale of involving young people in research in order to impact on decision-makers. We also suggest, drawing on Dyson and Meagher’s own description of these rationales as a ‘loosely related family’ (2001:71), that rather than treating ‘enabling the voice of young people to be heard’ as a discrete category, it is perhaps best

thought of as informing the other three rationales. In what follows, we consider it particularly in relation to the empowerment of young people.

INVOLVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE RESEARCH: JUSTIFICATIONS AND RATIONALES

Before looking at these rationales in detail, it is worth noting that when respondents justify the nature and level of young people's involvement in the doing of research they tend to position themselves somewhere on a spectrum that ranges, in the words of the respondent below, from the purely 'ideological' to the purely 'pragmatic', with most people not assuming a strong position at either end.

The better question is, if you were the policy maker, would you involve children and young people at every stage in the research for every study? And my answer to that would probably be no, I would consider (it) but (...) I would have to know why we do consider using them and why we consider using them at different points? Is it just purely ideological, in which case that's easy, (...) you just go for it every time. And I don't think that's where I am and I'd be amazed if the policy makers were there (...) You need to know what this is about, is this ideological, pragmatic or a bit of both?

(Researcher 3)

In general, from the interviews we carried out, there was a concern to link the level and nature of young people's involvement less to an overarching ideological belief that young people should be involved in *all* research about issues affecting them as a right than to the appropriateness of their involvement in relation to the nature of particular projects and the interests of the young people themselves. In the following detailed extract, the respondent illustrates this general approach.

In principle, I can see lots of advantages to all of those models [for involving children as researchers] depending (...) on what it is that you're looking to secure from it. (...). I think if you were looking at something like (...) options for the expansion of out of school care in rural areas. (...) Whether children would necessarily be able to analyse the feasibility of those options? It's a hypothetical example, but I would expect in research not just to have 'and 17thly here is another option'. (...) I would want to see those options appraised, evaluated and an explanation of 'this one is more feasible than that for these reasons'. (...) Depending on the age of the researchers that might be possible, but I think the ability to do that, because of their limited knowledge and experience of that kind of wider world, would limit their capacity to deliver the kind of product that I would want if what I was wanting was something that was virtually an option appraisal (...). I mean if you're wanting to secure something which is about children's perceptions of whatever it might be, then where else to go and who better to access those perceptions than other children it seems to me and that's great. But you could argue that I was unnecessarily limiting the scope for using children as researchers by that example. (...) Presumably if you want to use children you want to use them for a reason, not just so that you can tick the box and say 'hey guys we've used children'.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

For some, however, confusion about why young researchers are being asked to be involved does lead to ethical problems. In one case, for example, researchers had not made it clear that they wished to recruit only those young people as research consultants who shared a similar life experience to research respondents. This led to one young person being disappointed that she had not been picked to become a research consultant.

we did our best to be clear about why we were involving them and what the research was and what it would be used for but just from the discussion we're having now I'm aware that we didn't make that distinction about their own experience rather than as researchers.

(Researcher 4)

For some respondents being clear about what lay people – or in current terminology, ‘citizens’ – are being asked to bring to research, also means being realistic about what they might not bring.

I think also that you don't assume that people have a research mindedness (...) if you drag somebody in off the street with no previous experience of research, you wouldn't expect them to know what to do.

(Researcher 1)

Key rationales: Empowering – and ‘hearing the voices of’ – young people

The rationale that young people should become involved in the doing of research because it gives them a voice and is in itself empowering was one that featured in discussions with the young researchers we interviewed. To some extent, this related to how they perceived adults’ rationales for involving them in research: some young people we interviewed clearly understood adult researchers to feel that involving young researchers would be an empowering experience for the young people who undertook the research and, as the extract below suggests, allow access to young people’s particular life experiences.

Researcher: Why do you think they wanted young people involved in doing the research? I think they did that so they could hear from us and get help from us to hear it from other young ones.

(Young researcher 2)

But when young researchers described the benefits they felt had arisen as a result of their research involvement, it was clear that they, too, *from their own perspective*, saw it both as an opportunity to have their voice heard in policy areas that they have experience of and also as empowering on a personal level.

Because it was to do with ourselves, with our views in housing so we could be heard and hopefully get a job. And it is good on your CV as well.

(Young researcher 1)

I think I have learnt report writing because I wasn't very good at writing reports before...I am still not brilliant but ...ideas of how to start them and stuff. Like putting together a questionnaire, before I wouldn't have known like the rights sorts of questions to put in and how to word it, and how to set it out.
(Young researcher 5)

I could stand up in front of any crowd of young people and feel confident I knew what I was talking about [...] and I know that it's the peer research that made me dead, dead confident of that.
(Young researcher 3)

I was quite pleased with myself that I did stand up and talk especially in front of people like councillors who can make a difference to what I was talking about.
(Young researcher 4)

Interestingly, for at least one young person, the benefits of taking part really only became apparent upon completion of the project – a point which may have implications for how involved young people are in the research process or the extent, as noted earlier, to which they are kept informed of research outcomes.

I didn't realise at the time where it was going to go but when you see it all coming together, the report and the presentation based on the report. It was good to see it. As you are doing it you don't always realise what is going on but as it comes together and there are reports based on your findings that is when you realise how important the research actually was.
(Young researcher 2)

You don't really know if you are going to be going out questioning people if it is going to be used. When you see that it is used, you see that it is not really a waste of time.
(Young researcher 2)

In terms of other possible rationales or justifications for getting involved, as with the lessons from previous studies, interview data from this project suggests that most young people do not take part in research because they want to be researchers: most get involved through their existing participation in organisations such as youth clubs, because they are encouraged to do so and/or because they are interested in a particular issue.

Just through living in this kind of area – that's why when I done the peer research. I was right into the fact that it was drugs and that it was about drug awareness but I didn't really know too much about peer research.
(Young researcher 3)

Interviews with adult researchers support this conclusion

Young people are motivated by issues, not to be researchers.

(Researcher 7)

They've got that specialism and that interest and that's who they are and so it's something that they want to get involved in. (...) there is a line in the volunteer strategy [Scottish Executive's], I can't mind what exactly it says but it's like 'people need to not volunteer for volunteering sake, they need to volunteer because there's something they've got a common goal... a common interest'. So unless you want to be a researcher why would you be a researcher for just being a researchers sake? Why would that excite a young person? (...) in my opinion they would get involved in a particular research project because they are interested in it. The only other reason that they would get involved in, (...) is if there was loads of other really good things happening round about that (...) really good social opportunities.

(Researcher 5)

They'd say 'oh cause I really like everybody and I've got really good pals' and 'yeah we're making a difference but it's really good fun'. And it's the support around that rather than 'well what I really desperately want to do is go and find out the transport issues for young people'.

(Researcher 5)

It's hard to tell why did they choose to become involved. I couldn't say other than perhaps they were interested intrinsically in the sort of thing, in the subject. (...) the way we presented it to them it was very much about us finding out from them so we were very much focusing in on them as the experts, they know what their own lives are like and they can help us and I think that appealed as well. The recognition of them as being the people who we could learn from and that kind of generally turns it on its head doesn't it?

(Researcher 4)

It is also worth remembering that the rationale of hearing the voice of young people may be understood differently by different people. For example, two people interviewed for this study described situations in which the young people they were working with were asked to comment on policies or documents where central or local government required young people's input. However, the young people themselves did not always want to comment on these adult-created policies and were more interested in bringing their own issues to policy makers. In one case, an invitation for young people to join a predominately adult board concerned with policies for children and young people was rejected by young people, who expressed little interest in sitting through the meetings. These situations illustrate the way that 'involvement' framed as 'hearing the voice of the child' may be enacted by young people and adults in very different ways and of the tensions that can emerge as a result.

One policy maker expressed a similar concern that those within government might also be unclear about whose voice they are being given access to. In particular, this policy maker

asked questions about how those models which appear to give children a greater say – such as the co-researcher model – would actually operate in practice.

...the co-researchers, I kind of feel a degree of scepticism creeping over me about that and I wonder to what extent that is truly co-research of equals or whether it's more in the way of guided research, or perhaps even mentored research. (...) If you were talking kids in their young teens, I think there might be some dubiety about the nature of the equality there, frankly, so I can see that there would be value in that but I think I would be sceptical (...) that it is truly co-research, as I would understand that – you know, the sort of community of equals who are sharing the decision making and whose views are given equal weight (...). The imbalance of management and expertise is likely to come to bear anyhow, so even if the adults didn't intend to control the agenda, I can see that unless you had really quite, quite determined and confident children or young people, it would be very easy for them to kind of defer to the adults.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

It is worth bearing in mind, too, that young people may feel differently about different projects: they do not necessarily wish to be involved in the same way in each one. Research projects that they initiate or are closely involved in from the beginning may feel different from those that they are simply asked to contribute to. In the following extract, for example, young people are responding to a question about how they would feel working on a research project designed by someone else.

We kind of felt as though that was our project and we should have input in everything, so I don't think I'd mind so much because it's not my project, it's like somebody else's thing, I'm just kind of helping out wherever they need me.

Aye that's right, it wouldn't bug me if it was somebody else's project but I would definitely do it, I would help them.

(Young researchers 3 and 4)

Key rationales: Creating safer knowledge?

Some of the data above also draws implicitly on the argument that young people's involvement in research necessarily improves the quality of data or makes for 'safer' knowledge because it is directly informed by young people's experiences. Policy makers and research managers also acknowledged that this justification could be important but, at the same time, pointed out that it could not be assumed that involving young people in the doing of research necessarily achieved this. In the first extract, it is interesting to note that 'safeness' is equated with the issue of interviewer bias rather than the more general issue of research being informed by young people's knowledge and 'voice'. In the following extracts, a policymaker acknowledges that where it could be shown that there were significant differences as a result of young people being interviewed by young as opposed to adult researchers, the implications of this could be far-reaching.

I mean, I don't think that the fact that you use young people or you invite young people to act as peer researchers makes the knowledge any more safe.

(...) we know that when we act as interviewers and we know that when we act as respondents that we all kind of respond to the situation that we're in and another young person could have just as much influence over a young person as an adult could. I mean equally there might be issues where maybe having people who have similar experiences does mean that a young person feels more able to express certain things.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 2)

If, say for example, you're asking young people about drug misuse, you may get a different response if the questions are being asked by a young person than if the questions are being asked by an adult but you can't assume that it's safer necessarily, because it's being asked by a young person or that young people are more able to express their views. Some young people will feel safer with adults in doing that than they would with other young people, so it would give a different dimension but it's no less, no more valid than other methods. And if it was found that certain types of research elicited different views when undertaken by young people then that would need to be borne in mind for the construction of any future research because you couldn't continue as business as normal by (adults) asking those sort of questions.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 3)

Key rationales: Impacting on decision-makers?

Having considered how different respondents think about rationales such as empowering young people, creating safe knowledge about young people and hearing the voice of young people, in the remainder of this section we focus on the justification that research by young people could and should have an impact on decision makers. There were a range of perspectives on this issue with some, as a result of their experience, expressing optimism about the possibility of young researchers having such an impact.

[A policy maker] was in tears at the launch because I think two of the young people gave very moving speeches about their experience (...) and their experience of doing the research, and what it meant to them to be involved in it. And she...I think...she went up to them afterwards and kind of thanked them and said that she had never been so moved by something, and she really was going to try and do something about it. And I believed her, yes. So I mean having them there made an enormous impact. I mean I could never get the senior management in tears just from what I say. It really needs to come from the horse's mouth. I think they were surprised, the young people were surprised by how much of an impact they had on them – I mean that was an eye opener for them.

(Researcher 10)

Others were more pessimistic. For some, the fact that policy making in general still has a 'haphazard' approach to the involvement of young people leads them to be sceptical about the potential influence of young people's research. The following observation was made during the mapping exercise by a respondent from a children's organisation

There has been a shift in the Scottish Executive towards taking on the views of young people, but how these should be understood or actioned in the policy making process is still haphazard rather than strategic.

To some extent, this may reflect a misunderstanding about the nature of the relationship between research and ‘evidence’. Ministers and policy-makers have to assess and process evidence from a range of sources, – and research, whether by young people or adults, is only one such source.

I don't think you can really make a generalisation at that level (...). For example, a Minister might be more affected by a five minute conversation with somebody in a school than they are by an entire piece of research.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 2)

This links to the more general theme of how respondents in and outside of government view the relationship between policy and research. Some policy makers, as noted in the above extract, were reluctant to endorse an understanding of the relationship between research and policy as linear and emphasised instead how impact is perceived to be linked to the ‘quality’ of the research. This, in turn, begs the question of how quality is understood – a point developed in the next section.

Impacting on decision makers? The impact would depend on the quality of the information or advice that's generated, I mean that's the reality of it and most decision makers will not necessarily think 'oh this is .. children, therefore, it's absolutely right', they would want it to be kind of reasonable, sensible (...) I think the voice of children, particularly in the development of policies relating to children does impact, but I don't think we should necessarily assume that it has a kind of automatic impact.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

Some adult researchers expressed concern that, given such a context, young people might either see the process of involving them in research as tokenistic or have unrealistic expectations about the likely influence or impact that their research might have.

They [young people] know that it's a tick box exercise. But also a lot of the time with consultation...there is the consultation but then there is no feedback about (...) where that information has went to or anything. And it devalues the whole experience and makes them cynical about it and totally jaded, you know. And I just...I wouldn't like to see that happening with something that was going to involve young people in a more proactive way.

(Researcher 6)

They worried also that they would be...that their work wouldn't be taken on board seriously. And I suppose there was an element of scepticism about tokenistic participation.

(Researcher 10)

The following extract from an interview with a Scottish Executive research manager, however, suggests that an apparent lack of action following a piece of research is a fact of life for adult researchers and something that young researchers may have to accept too.

Nothing may seem to happen in terms of what they've done. I just think that's the way that research is and that's part of learning how to be a researcher – sometimes we're very disappointed.

(Scottish Executive Research Manager 1)

Some policy makers shared a concern that young people's experience of involvement might ultimately turn out to be disempowering because of the less than direct relationship between research and policy. There were also concerns expressed about the risks for young researchers – and for the credibility of their research – if research conducted by young people was to be assessed within a wholly traditional research framework.

You have the issue about whether they're just being manipulated into an adult agenda or whether the research world is really going to change in order to have a different perspective on research (...). I think it would be very easy to pick holes in the research where young people have had a major involvement and I think getting other people to change (...) people like us and people who would use the research and researchers themselves.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 3)

I think that if young people generated research findings that were quite negative and presented them in a way that wasn't traditional I think it would realistically be easier for people in government, (...) to say 'oh well that's very interesting, of course we'll take that into account' (...) and of course [there is] a question about that. (...) I think it's certainly harder to ignore research findings that are generated by a nationally-reputable research company.

(Scottish Executive Research Manager 1)

As a response to this, one policy maker raised the possibility of using a different discourse – one focused on responsibility and citizenship rather than influence or empowerment. This is interesting because, like the earlier extract from a non-government researcher (page 36), it draws on involvement as a form of citizenship – a way of learning about civic life – although, in this case, the focus is on the responsibilities attached to this involvement.

I think it's good to provide children with the opportunity to speak their minds, to express their views, I think arguably that is empowering. It's empowering if children feel that what they have said is then being taken account of and if they don't immediately see it reflected in whatever happens thereafter then maybe that isn't empowering. In any consultation, you don't necessarily end up agreeing with what some of the consultees say and research will often throw up ambiguities which lead you not necessarily to go down a particular route, so I think we have to be careful about this notion of empowering. Because I think if people are consulted or engaged or feel a part of a process but then don't see something at the end of it which reflects the nature of their

engagement or consultation, then that potentially is actually quite disempowering (...) It kind of leaves you with 'oh well who cares', 'why did they ask them if ...' or 'why did I do this if the answer isn't whatever I thought it should be' (...). But also I think giving young people the opportunity – and I don't see this as being about empower[ment] really – but providing children with opportunities to take responsibility and (...) responsibility is the key word here. This kind of notion of citizenship (...), engaging children and young people in the debate about the whole business of developing decisions which impact on civic life.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

The issue of who addresses perceptions of tokenism is an interesting one. If those outside government do not think that involving young people in research – either as respondents or researchers – is taken seriously by government, then the costs of involving young people in a competitive-tendering environment may be deemed too high by adult researchers.

Say the Scottish Executive say 'we'll put this out for tender and you may or may not engage children' (...) you're going to be saying 'oh well that's going to take double the time and they're not going to pay extra and they're going to give it to (name of University) because they only put in 25 percent overheads and they don't go and see children and young people', so I think there are real nitty gritty crunch questions for the Scottish Executive'.

(Researcher 3)

At the same time, some policy makers position the potential for the involvement of young people in research as primarily as a methodological decision rather than a decision about how best to promote participation and, therefore, as more the remit of research managers and researchers.

I suppose one of the limitations here is our procurement process, it's that we tend to decide what we want done and then put that out to tender and there are a limited number of providers that really tender for Scottish Executive research work so our ability to influence is more about determining the outputs of the research than about how it's done (...). I'm not sure how much through that procurement process we can really influence the methodology of the researchers.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 4)

We are quite led by how researchers suggest things are proceeded with, particularly methodology. We're usually pretty clear about the outcomes that we want to the questions that we're concerned about. I think we would be influenced by researchers building into their methodology greater involvement by young people. If they were sure that it would work then we're not likely to argue too much, I think that that's the most likely way rather than us demanding [...] that children are much more active in the process. In fact,

I think we would get a rather rude response from researchers if we suggested that we knew better than they about how they should go about their work.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 3)

I can't imagine that researchers would think, well it would be unacceptable with the Scottish Executive. I think we give quite participatory messages but we couldn't lead it.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 3)

Researchers outside of government, however, might not hear the message coming from the Scottish Executive as being as 'participatory' or open to new ways of conducting research as the extract above suggests some of those inside assume it to be. Alternatively, those on the outside might find that participatory messages are mixed up with – or even drowned out by – louder messages concerned with the evaluation of outcomes. We return to these themes when looking at assumptions about the nature of research in the next section.

While the above concerns about the likelihood of impacting on policy are clearly important, it is worth being cautious about whether all young people share these concerns. Young people not only have their own rationales for being involved which, as we have seen, may or may not sit with adult justifications, they do not necessarily share adult researchers' concerns when adult rationales for involving them in research are not prioritised. For instance, while professional researchers may emphasise the need to see policy consequences arising from research – and having an impact on decision makers is one of the justifications frequently noted in the literature – not all young researchers judge the value of their involvement in those terms. One adult respondent noted, for example, that the young researchers they worked with did not have a clear idea of policy or other changes that they wished to see arising from the research: *'we were more able to generate a good discussion of the findings but not necessarily move to action that they felt that they wanted'* (Researcher 2).

Impacting on policy through consultation or research

Some respondents compared the indirect nature of the research-policy relationship with the possibilities afforded potentially through consultation. One researcher, for example, describing a particular consultation exercise, noted that consultations might allow for particular arrangements to be negotiated with policy makers 'upfront' in a way that might not have been possible through research.

They [Scottish Executive] made agreements (...) that they would have to get back to the young people. The young people were wanting to meet with ministers so the minister would have to meet with them and they would have to have a chance to feedback.

(Researcher 2)

A policy maker interviewed for the study, however, drew a distinction between consultation on 'concrete' or 'tangible' issues and higher level strategic policy development, particularly in relation to younger children.

We undertook a series of focused consultations with children using [a named] service so again (...) the engagement was around what's it like for you? What do you like about what you're currently doing in these services? What would you like to do? What do you think other children who maybe don't come to this club would like to do and why don't they come? So those kinds of fairly concrete questions were explored with children, really quite young children. I mean some of them were only about kind of seven or eight, reasonably successfully. (...). I don't know how readily replicable that might be. That was quite good because we were talking about something at a fairly tangible level. When you're talking at a higher level around policy development, seriously strategic stuff, I think it can become quite difficult as I was saying earlier for that to have resonance particularly for very young children.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

There are also questions raised about the type of research that the Scottish Executive is increasingly interested in commissioning. The move towards using data gathered through the information systems of provider agencies and the increasing focus on evaluation research – with a strong outcome focus – suggests that the opportunities currently for involving young people in research, and, therefore, influencing decision makers, may be restricted. It is worth noting, however, that some of the examples from the mapping exercise of young researchers' involvement in central or local government-funded research involved evaluation research. (See, for example, reference to the evaluation of Children's Fund projects in the annex.)

I mean a significant chunk of the research we fund would be evaluation probably of different funding projects or of different pilots and I suppose there are interesting questions there, I mean in terms of who does the evaluation, at what stage it's done, what's internal, what's external (...) Certainly a significant chunk of what we're doing is looking at different ways of evaluating and how you get the data that's going to help you make long terms funding decisions or decide what's sustainable and what you can rule out.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 4)

Local or national research?

This understanding of research as answering concrete policy questions leads some to argue that there is potentially more value – in terms of policy impact – in young people becoming involved in research at local as opposed to national level.

Increasingly, within policy, there is more interest in things like action research and service user involvement, ways of developing practice locally and there might be something there about looking at more participative ways of working which can help people through projects at local level to develop their practice (...).

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 2)

At the same time, local research might not only provide better opportunities for young people to inform policy, it might also be perceived to be more relevant to young people themselves.

Thinking about what's actually important in a child or a young person's life, quite often it will be what's happening in their area, what's available in this area, what support they're getting and what the school is like, what support they're getting at school. (...) Actually the kind of bit that they need to feed into isn't necessarily the national picture, it may be in that gap between the policy stuff and how that's actually implemented locally.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 2)

Examples of just this sort of impact were found in the mapping exercise, both in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK.

One other piece of work (...) involved supporting 11 youth peer leaders to undertake 7 pieces of peer research exploring what health means to young people in their own right and according to their own terms of reference (rather than policy agendas). This was insightful both as a process as well as what it revealed as findings. We then supported young people in communicating their findings (using visuals) to practitioners and decision makers in a large scale event with 100 people as an alternative approach to policy learning. What was interesting was that whereas professionals were expecting to hear about diet, physical activity, smoking, drinking, sexual health, teenage pregnancy, young people were saying that 'Yes these are issues but what really affects us is pressure and stress'. We then facilitated dialogue between professionals and young people around these issues and started to think about how to respond to these issues. This whole piece of work exposed the policy learning gap between where policy and provision are directed and what matters most to (these) young people, and as such demonstrated the value of alternative forms of research and development involving young people (...). Again the value here was in working with adults, engaging and interacting rather than writing up research in a report.

(Personal communication from a researcher contacted as part of the mapping exercise)

Others pointed out, however, that while change may be more likely at local level, involving children and young people *only* at this local level leaves the national picture dominated by an adult-centric view. In thinking about the experience of Whitehall in relation to involving children in research or consultation, a key development here – and one not replicated in Scotland – is, as the mapping exercise shows, the Children and Youth Board. As noted in the annex, the first board involved 25 young people across a fairly wide age range advising on five specific policy areas. These policy areas were relatively complex and the experience of Children's Express, the organisation responsible for recruiting and setting up the first board, was that it was challenging to consult with quite young children in some cases on such themes. A key issue here was that the policy areas the board was required to explore were identified by the DfES, rather than by the young people on the board.

Another example from the mapping exercise of involvement in central government-funded research came from an organisation that ran a young researchers group. Young researchers from the group were involved in assessing research proposals for a Whitehall department. In this instance, the researchers involved commented on the need for government departments to provide information that is accessible and for them to be clear about what is needed, noting that *'translating government information for young people is very time-consuming'* (Researcher 7).

Shaping the research agenda

Finally, in terms of this question of impacting on decision makers, it is interesting to note that some respondents both inside and outside of government argued that the most significant way children and young people could impact on policy through government-funded research is less through the *doing* of the research than through young people becoming involved in shaping the research agenda.

It doesn't necessarily have to mean peer research but there is something useful I think about involving young people in defining research questions. It doesn't necessarily mean that they have to then go on and do the research but I suppose that's a way of looking at enabling young people's voices to be heard.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 2)

I think the big power is defining the question (...). I think really if you've already set the question, that's the agenda.

(Researcher 3)

In the extract given below, for example, it is recognised by a Scottish Executive policy maker that involvement at the agenda-setting stage might lead to a completely different research agenda within parts of the Scottish Executive.

Adults do have a sort of political process through which they can express a lot of their concerns and then Governments are responsive to that and yes I think that the minority views of children (...) get lost because they are a minority view. But at the moment our criminal justice agenda, of which youth justice is a part, is an adult's agenda, it's what adults are concerned about not what young people are concerned about(...). If [young people] were more involved in setting the agenda on the research side that would then influence policy then we would possibly have a different youth justice and criminal justice agenda.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 3)

In some ways, managing young people's involvement in processes that aim to shape research agendas might be easier – and fairer to young people – than having young people involved in research after projects have already been designed. In one research study covered by the mapping exercise, for example, the researcher discussed the young researchers' decision to talk with other children about issues that they themselves were interested in. On the one hand, this led her to note that *'when you ask children to do research the fun takes over, and why*

not? Why must they act like adult researchers?'. On the other hand, she commented on the 'huge dilemmas' for the researcher in meeting the needs of the funding body for reliable data while also giving children power to do things/pursue things that they are interested in.

Compared to other concerns that young people face, involving young people in the doing of research might not seem, at first, like a key participation issue. Giving young people access to some of the avenues adult researchers have for shaping research agendas – avenues which in the case of adult researchers are already limited – might, however, have a trickle-down effect that means, in practice, research by young people has the potential to be a *significant* participation issue.

If I had to worry on the scale of nought to ten about young people's participation I would be more worried about the 15 years they spent at school than I would be on whether they actually said something at an advisory group in a research study. (...) I was slightly reluctant I think at first to think this was the priority and actually I think participation in much bigger things like pocket money and what school you go to as a young person was probably a bit more important. Although of course they are connected because if they start framing research questions then research might more reflect what they think should be discussed or asked.

(Researcher 3).

The argument of the Children's Research Centre, noted in Chapter Two, that teaching young people research skills is one way of encouraging young people to think about what sort of research agenda they might want is relevant here, as it is not necessarily the case that young people, without support, would be able to identify such an agenda:

*It is a big question to say to young people 'what do you want to research?'.
(Researcher 7)*

In a Scottish context, there are examples of those involved in promoting children and young people's participation in public decision-making increasingly seeing research as a key part of a broader participation agenda. Recent developments at the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People are a case in point (see the annex). There is, however, as the above discussion about rationales has made clear, a balance which needs to be struck between the process of participation and outcomes arising from the research itself:

But if they really and truly want to involve young people and they really and truly are committed to the participation of young people in the whole process (...). There has to be an acceptance that (A) the process will be longer and (B) it may not be that hard and fast (...). But it's still...it's valid.

(Researcher 6)

if you are going to come from it at a purely participation level (...) you are not going to be actually interested in the information. (...) You are not going to be interested in the end product, the report or the evidence itself. You will

just be interested in the fact that the young folk are going through that whole process. So there has to be a balance somewhere.

(Researcher 6)

The above extracts illustrate an emergent point from this discussion: rationales for involving young people in research are inextricably linked to understandings about research more generally. To conclude this analysis chapter, therefore, in the following section we look at respondents' understandings of research in more detail.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF RESEARCH: A SPECIFIC SET OF SKILLS OR A VEHICLE FOR PARTICIPATION?

It is not surprising to find that those respondents working within participatory organisations emphasise different aspects of research from those working within a government setting, a setting which is increasingly influenced by the discourse of evidence-based policymaking.

The advent of evidence based policy-making has really shifted, I think, everyone's understandings of the nature of that relationship between policy makers and researchers in particular. Although the evidence base that we would draw on wouldn't just be research it would obviously involve information from statisticians, from economists and a whole raft of other professional advisors. But I think it has shifted our understanding and certainly we are, I think, taking some pains to try to develop policy on the back of evidence wherever there is that evidence and sometimes that does mean commissioning the research yourself.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

For policy makers and research managers, in relation to young people being involved in the doing of research, this brings with it a renewed focus on the 'robustness' of the data' and 'quality assurance'.

There is an issue of robustness in size of work and things like that which obviously are important as well and to get that level of quality in peer research, unless you're looking at paying people and at a much more formalised process, then you're probably looking at small scale work.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 2)

the problem for me is about skills and quality assurance and I guess those are the things that worry me.

(Scottish Executive Research Manager 1)

Awareness of these concerns led the National Children's Bureau (NCB), in their work with young researchers on the DfES funded projects 'Building Cultures of Participation', to pursue not peer-led research but a model where young researchers were working alongside adult researchers at all times. In other NCB projects, where young people have conducted

telephone interviews, the organisation has used telephone conferencing to allow an adult researcher to listen in and to ask follow-up questions or support the young researcher where necessary. While this was done primarily for support, it also assisted with quality control.

Others working in the participation as opposed to the research field appear less likely to emphasise the need for research skills or training or, at least, are less likely to distinguish these from other skills such as ‘community development’ (mapping exercise respondent), ‘good community work’, ‘citizenship’ (Researcher 8) or, as one respondent framed it, ‘skilling up for life’ (Researcher 6).

there is a set of skills but I think that they are transferable skills. So...they are necessary and obviously if the Scottish Executive or other organisations wanted young people to do a piece of research they would want to know that the capability was there within that group, or the adult supporters or whatever, to go through the process. But I think the issue (...) is not about that boxing of things (...) it would be part of the bigger picture, part of the whole. And I think that's what kind of has to be recognised. So it's about skilling up for life.

(Researcher 6)

Indeed, young people, as one voluntary sector researcher noted, are often involved in finding out about the needs of young people in their area, but this often takes place under the rubric of ‘development work’ and would not necessarily be written up as ‘research’. Some of the young people interviewed for this project, too, described having a vague notion of what research actually is and saw it mainly in terms of getting ‘feedback’. Others who were also involved in peer education work did not necessarily distinguish between the two.

Yet, at the same time, there was a recognition that research can involve many tasks and some young people, it was argued by some respondents, might be better equipped to undertake some of these tasks more than others. Whether experienced questionnaire designers would necessarily agree with the following description of questionnaires as ‘not that big a deal’ is another question.

People make assumptions that young folk are incapable of doing something based on their age, and their experience. I mean for me it's not that big a deal to do questionnaires. It's not like (...) the young folk are doing something that does take a lot of experience (...). Like if you are doing an observation study, or if you were doing some sort of analysis [of] documents, or something like that. That's stuff that you are sort of saying well you should have a skilled person because you need to have that sort of skill level (...). There are ways of adapting research methods so that young folk can (use them).

(Researcher 6)

Another research respondent noted there were distinctions to be made between technical research skills, such as running statistical tests, and skills which are useful in research but which could be better thought of as ‘*accumulated common sense*’ such as knowing that if you ‘ask a leading question you will get a led answer’ (Researcher 2).

Those working in the participation field who did not themselves advocate research training, did not, however, necessarily reject more formal approaches offered by other organisations such as that provided by the Children's Research Centre described in Chapter Three. Indeed several researchers described the need for a diversity of research practices to reflect the diversity of young people who may wish to be involved in doing research. For some, however, there was a concern that structured research training programmes for young people might be experienced as a form of co-option – *'to join in our debate, you have to be like/sound like us'* (Researcher 8). The difficulty, as discussed in Chapter Two is that these less structured, *'more anarchic'* (Researcher 8) approaches might struggle to get the funding necessary for young people to even have the option of becoming 'strategic' players.

While there are differences in understandings of research between those working within participatory and government settings, there is also evidence of a crossover of concerns between the two: some research managers were apparently open to less traditional research approaches – albeit, as illustrated by the third extract, still informed by concerns about 'competence' – while some academic researchers were, like their government colleagues, also troubled by the notion of research expertise.

It's about making sure that [the research] fits the purpose which doesn't necessarily mean to say they look and sound like a researcher. There are many ways of doing research, some of them bear very little resemblance to what we commission on a daily basis and as long as I was confident that the team involved thought very carefully about it and could explain why they were doing what they were doing then I would be very happy (...).

(Research Manager 1)

I think people would have to become less concerned about things like sample size, I think they would have to become less concerned about how questions were asked (...) the language and structure of questions but also the questions being asked in the sort of same way. (...) I think there are probably a number of assumptions already made about how if you engage a bona fide research institution about how they conduct their work (...). If those methods were changed and the people receiving the research would have to understand how those methods had changed and what the impact of those changes was likely to be on the validity and so on and that they would get a different product, which may be great maybe add huge value, but it would be a different product to what they're sort of currently used to. Certainly I think it would add a different dimension.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 3)

I think providing one (...) could be reassured of the competence of the children and young people to undertake the particular task in hand, there shouldn't in principle be any real obstacles (...). It ought to be like any other form of research, you don't let a research contract to people that you think have not got the ability to deliver it. It should be no different whether you're engaging with adult researchers or children and young people as researchers. The kind of notion of competence and confidence in that competence seems to me to be the critical factor.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

I suppose I don't necessarily share the - and this is very non-politically correct - the notion of non expertise. I do actually think I'm better at research than a lot of people cause I've done it for ten years in the same way that I think my plumber is better than I am [at plumbing].

(Researcher 3)

Relatedly, respondents noted there are points of divergence and convergence between young researchers and adult researchers commissioned to do Scottish Executive research.

My guess is that the challenges are no different to any other form of research – sort of authority, validity and all the rest of it – but trickier to achieve I suppose.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 3)

You probably wouldn't be looking at their track record in quite the same way, but I would be looking to identify an understanding of what the aims of the research were so not just 'it will be fun doing this' but 'what is it we're trying to get out of this and why'. So an understanding of that to inform the nature of the work that was then undertaken and I think you would want to talk to them (...) in the first instance and suss that out and suss them out in the same way that we invite researchers in to give us a presentation. I mean you might tackle that in a slightly different way, you might not want to do it in that kind of formal way that we do with experienced adult researchers. You would want to engage with them before you commission them to do it and reassure yourself in various ways that they have a notion of what they were going to do, how they were going to do it and why they were doing it. I think those are the fundamental elements of it to me.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

It would seem, then, that there might be a danger in conceiving all research done under the rubric of evidence-based policy as highly concrete and geared to the provision of definitive answers to specific questions and adopting a particular method. The above discussion with policy makers and research managers would suggest not only that research is not the only form of evidence drawn on by policy makers, but that even within the research arena, work is commissioned that is concerned with exploring new issues or generating fresh insights, rather than answering very narrow and specific questions. As a result, there might be room for methodological pluralism, and even for less focus on rigour, as long as the role and limitations of such approaches are acknowledged. As one research manager summed it up:

It's the justification of doing what they're doing, and that doesn't necessarily have to be a traditional research justification, it just has to be a justification that can convince.

(Scottish Executive Research Manager 1)

In summary, this chapter continued the analysis of the qualitative data for this study beyond that of the practicalities of involving children as researchers in government funded research – the focus of Chapter Four - to look at the justifications for this practice and the understandings of research that these are based on. It is clear from this that the stakeholders interviewed share similar rationales for involving children and young people in the doing of research to those identified in the research literature. Given the concern with government-funded research, however, a focus on the potential for such work to impact on decision-making was, not surprisingly, a key consideration. There was considerable doubt expressed about the possibility of having this type of impact, given the nature of the research-policy relationship, and, therefore, a focus on other ways of impacting on government policy – whether through consultation, concentrating on local issues or finding other means of children and young people shaping the research agenda – was evident. Young people interviewed for the study did not necessarily share adult concerns about impacting on policy or at least they also expressed other justifications for still wanting to be involved in doing research.

In terms of the understanding of research that is informing these positions, it is clear there is a spectrum of views, ranging from traditional perspectives concerned with validity and reliability and the training of research skills, to perspectives which do not seem to distinguish clearly between research and other participatory skills and which downplay the need for formal research training. While these differences in views, for the most part, reflect whether a respondent is informed by a government, academic or participatory background, there was some blurring of perspectives across these contexts – not least, perhaps, because respondents have moved between different settings in the course of their careers – and an acceptance that what was needed was clarity about what the justification for research was and what it can and cannot reasonably be expected to do.

Key points from this chapter

- This chapter looked at the justifications stakeholders offered for involving children and young people more directly in the research process and at the understandings of research that these are based on.
- The stakeholders interviewed share similar rationales for involving children and young people in the doing of research to those identified in the research literature – but there was a particular interest in and focus on the potential for such work to impact on decision-making.
- There was considerable doubt expressed about the possibility of having this type of impact on decision-making, given the nature of the research-policy relationship, and, therefore, a focus on other ways of impacting on government policy was evident – whether through consultation, concentrating on local issues or finding other means of children and young people shaping the research agenda.
- There is a spectrum of views, ranging from traditional perspectives concerned with validity and reliability and training in research skills, to perspectives which do not seem to distinguish clearly between research and other participatory skills and which downplay the need for formal research training.
- There was general agreement that what is needed is clarity about what kind of justification or rationale underpins any particular project.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study we argued that to understand the possibilities and limitations of involving children and young people in the doing of government funded research, we first needed to locate this practice within the broader child participation agenda as well as a tradition of inclusive research. In thinking through what the implications of this exercise are for involving young people in the doing of research, it is worth considering an observation made by Pole *et al* in 1999. They argued that, if age is viewed as a form of ‘research capital’, children ‘simply lack the required amount of capital which would give them a greater stake in the research process’ (1999: 51). Children as researchers do not have the same legitimacy as children as research subjects now have and this study would suggest that, seven years on, Pole’s observation that ‘the prospect of giving over large amounts of public money to children to conduct their own research is likely to halt even the most committed child-centred researchers in their tracks’ (50) still holds true.

While young people may not as yet hold research capital, the findings from this project suggests they do, because of media and government interest in them, already hold another form of capital – which might best be described as participation capital. Tisdall and Davis (2004) note that the prominence of participation within government ideology means that children’s involvement in policy participation has become a ‘strategic’ as well as ‘knowledge’ resource. In other words, governments not only need access to children’s experiences as knowledge, they now also need, for political reasons, to be *seen* to be accessing this knowledge. This could work in two ways for children and young people. On the one hand, if children’s direct involvement in research, as participants never mind as researchers, comes to be perceived as a ‘tick box’ exercise – pursued for political reasons and, therefore, not properly integrated into research design and planning – then little has been gained and, indeed, the cynicism that could result from such an exercise might lead in the long term to a worse outcome than young people not being involved in the first place. On the other hand, it is this same participation capital which offers young people the potential not only to become involved in the doing of research but perhaps, more significantly, to become part of the community that negotiates the shaping of the research agenda.

Interviews with a range of stakeholders for this study suggest that the government – both at devolved and UK level – does appear to be committed to enabling the voices of young people to be heard through its broader participatory agenda. The rationale for involving young people in the doing of research is, however, still understood, within government in particular, less in terms of inclusiveness and more in terms of the requirements of needing ‘robust’ data to inform an evidence based approach to policy. In other words, interviewees’ understandings about the limits of and rationales for involving young people in research are shaped by broader understandings about the nature and purpose of research.

There is, then, an interesting tension here. Government agencies, including the Scottish Executive, may be pushing forward a participation agenda in policy terms in relation to young people - but in relation to research specifically, the strength of the evidence-based approach, ideologically if not always in practice, means that young people’s participation in research may be fairly tokenistic. And there are other tensions too: those outside of government who are working with/for children, may (as we saw when looking at the participatory research tradition) invest in the rationales of impacting on decision making and empowering young people - but young people themselves may not share all or indeed any of

these rationales. Equally, these goals, in any case, may not always be best met through young people's involvement in research. There is, for example, some evidence in Scotland to suggest that young people may be more likely to influence policy makers through their involvement in consultation than research or at the very least, an indication that involvement in the latter helps establish a 'foothold' for young people in the policy community and moves them closer to the possibility of self advocacy (Tisdall and Davis, 2004).

Ways forward

In Chapter Two we considered recent work looking at how government departments and other public bodies can develop participatory cultures within their organisations and referred to standards for evaluating the extent to which such cultures exist. In so far as the mapping exercise and interview data for this study suggests that Scottish Executive is at an early stage in relation to all or most of these broader participation standards, it is not surprising that the role of children and young people in relation to research practices is fairly limited. In considering findings from this feasibility study in light of these standards, however, five potential ways forward emerge for the Scottish Executive, and for SEED in particular, in thinking about children and young people as researchers in relation to government-funded research.

1. The Executive could consider making it clear in research procurement that, where appropriate, consultation with children and young people in the design of research is desirable.

Given that it is not clear that the wider research community shares the perception of some policy makers that the Scottish Executive would be open to hearing about more inclusive research practices with children and young people, there is the possibility for the Scottish Executive, like other funding bodies such as Carnegie, to make it explicit at the procurement stage that, depending on the aims of the study, consultation with children and young people in the design of research studies, is desirable. This could – again, depending on the nature of the study – allow for the possibility of young people becoming part of the research team. Given the Scottish Executive's focus on evaluation research, it might be useful to think in particular about how at the procurement stage, evaluation research concerned with children and young people could involve children and young people themselves in the carrying out of such research.

One obvious way would be for us to increasingly specify in our research outlines, an expectation that there will be some kind of engagement with or of children in the research. Again I think whether that's with, or of, would be dependent on the nature of the work (...). If nothing else it would begin to shape understandings in here of the potential for engaging in different ways with children and involving them in our research programme in rather a different way from what we currently are doing. So I think that would be the kind of biggy, the obvious one and I suspect you would take it from there.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

2. Tendering procedures could be reviewed in order to identify features (relating to timing or other factors) that militate against the involvement of young people in the research process

To make the involvement of children and young people a realistic possibility at this stage of the research, this study suggests there would also need to be greater flexibility, particularly around timing, in relation to tendering for projects.

3. The Executive could use its non competitively-tendered research to encourage specific applications from children and young people or professional researchers working alongside them

In terms of pre-existing structures, there could be opportunities for children and young people to become involved in applying, particularly in partnerships with children's organisations and professional researchers and academics, for monies through the sponsored research programmes. Indeed, using the sponsored research programme in this way could be a useful discreet pilot study for SEED on how to work with young researchers. In terms of pre-existing models outside of the Scottish Executive that might be usefully drawn on, the mapping exercise suggests that the research mentoring format adopted by SCARF (Scottish Community Action Research Fund) could be adapted by SEED. A couple of SCARF's projects, detailed in the mapping exercise, involved mentors working with peer researchers and there might be possibilities for research mentors to work in a similar fashion alongside children and young people to develop research proposals and to apply for sponsored research monies.

4. The involvement of young people in research may have useful parallels with other forms of voluntary engagement

In order to inform the above two points, it might be worthwhile looking to the Scottish Executive's current volunteering strategy as a way of developing thinking about young people as researchers. Not necessarily in terms of if and how young researchers should be paid, but rather in terms of recognising the need for SEED to look at its value basis in terms of involving young people in the doing of research.

Research is a volunteering opportunity (...). I mean it depends if you want to pay them but it's an opportunity for young people. The Scottish Executive need to read their own strategies (...). If it excites the young people, if they're going to get something out of it, you need to provide all of those things that they said in the volunteer strategy. They should provide information and support and accreditation and development and all those kind of things and training.

(Researcher 5)

5. There may be opportunities for children and young people to shape the broader research agenda within government – even if the research that results is subsequently carried out by adult researchers.

There is a need for the Scottish Executive to look at what opportunities there are for young people to inform government research agendas. As young researchers, these opportunities appear to be fairly limited at present. While the same could also be said to be true of adult researchers, they do, at least, have the possibility of using the sponsored research programme, becoming involved in policy appraisal work or – if anxieties about intellectual property rights

do not get in the way – sharing research ideas directly with research managers. This study has suggested that it does not make sense to think of research by young people as separate from broader participation debates and agendas. Interviews within and outside the Scottish Executive suggest that there would be considerable advantages in the Scottish Executive reviewing, perhaps in a similar format to SEED's recent stakeholder meeting, how its participation strategies in relation to children and young people currently relate to its research priorities. In part, this could involve looking at the relationship between the Scottish Executive and other organisations - such as the office of the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) – which are involved in thinking about young people's role in relation to policy and research – and thinking about how children's organisations, alliances or coalitions could work alongside academic researchers to involve young people in shaping the research agenda. The experience of Children's Express and the Children and Young People's Board, as well as that of Coalition4Youth, suggests that for young people to feel it is worth consulting with other young people on policy issues, they have to have some say, in the first place, in deciding what these policy issues should be. There may also be scope for learning from the work of the Carnegie Young People Initiative about models of more securely embedding children and young people's participation in the working practice of government organisations.

6. There is a need for consolidation of practice and experience in this area

In term of practice outside the Scottish Executive, the feasibility study suggests that while there is a considerable range of practices involving young people in research in Scotland, much of this practice is taking place in isolation and in a piecemeal, one-off fashion. Developing a network of researchers with experience of this area might be a fruitful way of taking forward practice in this area not least because it would give young people with experience of doing research the further opportunity to act as mentors to newer younger researchers.

In thinking about all of the above, this study provides some evidence that there are considerable lessons to be learnt both from how other 'citizens' have become involved in research and how children and young people have been involved in government-funded research in other parts of the UK. It would also be useful for the Scottish Executive to look at how programmes such as Investing in Children have worked alongside local authority departments, such as police, education and health, to involve young people in the doing of research relevant to local policy. In this context, it is relevant to note that Investing in Children are currently in the process of 'rolling out' their initiative beyond Durham.

As the leading public body in Scotland, the Scottish Executive has a role in modelling best practice in terms of involving children and young people. Involving young people as researchers is just one part of this bigger responsibility. The findings from this study suggest that as much as systems and structures need to change, more fundamentally there is a need for a shift in mindset within government about the possibilities for children and young people's participation in relation to research.

I think probably the only reason in practice is because we haven't really thought about it, and there would be limitations around who you were able to access, which children [you] can access and when, which might mean that you couldn't kind of move as quickly as you might otherwise have wanted and that's always an issue. But I don't think any of those problems are

insurmountable. I think as much as anything it's about really kind of shifting mindsets in here towards thinking that recognises increasingly the potential for involving children and young people. I think we've got quite a long way to go in shifting that mindset.

(Scottish Executive Policy maker 1)

Key points from this chapter

- This chapter summarised some of the key issues that will need to be considered in any move to introduce a young people as researchers' perspective to Scottish Executive Social Research and outlined five possible ways forward for the Scottish Executive in thinking about children and young people as researchers.
- In order to develop a children as researchers' perspective within the Scottish Executive, there appears to be a need for a shift in mindset within government about the possibilities for children and young people's participation in relation to research.
- In taking forward their thinking about children as researchers, the Scottish Executive could, first, make explicit at the procurement stage that, depending on the studies aims, consultation with young people in the design of studies and, possibly, their involvement in carrying out the research is desirable.
- Second, there may be opportunities for young people to apply for monies through SEED's existing sponsored research programme, particularly in partnerships with children's organisations and professional researchers and academics.
- Third, the Scottish Executive could develop its thinking on young researchers by considering them in the context of its volunteering strategy.
- Fourth, the Scottish Executive should examine what opportunities exist for young people to inform its research agendas and consider whether these could be expanded or improved, perhaps by exploring how the participation strategies of the Executive for young people currently relate to its research priorities.
- Finally, developing a network of adult and young researchers with experience in this area might be fruitful in developing ideas and practice in this area and would also create opportunities for young researcher to act as mentors to new young researchers.

ANNEX: RECENT PROJECTS INVOLVING CHILDREN AS RESEARCHERS

This annex briefly summarises recent projects involving children as researchers identified by the mapping exercise and interviews conducted for this study. This is based largely on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted for this study and references to projects provided by interviewees. It is **not** intended to be an exhaustive list of UK-based studies involving children as researchers. However, it does provide a good indication of the types of studies currently or recently undertaken and the ways in which young researchers have been involved in these.

In Chapter One of this report, we discussed the ways in which projects can be grouped – for example:

- By **funding source** - central government, local government/other government body (e.g. NHS), charity or other (e.g. ESRC)
- By whether the research (and young researchers' involvement) is **one-off** or part of a **continuous** project
- By the different **stages of young people's involvement** – advisory role, developing/determining the research questions, designing materials/data collection methods, conducting peer interviews or other data collection, analysis and reporting, and dissemination
- By the **age** of the children and young people involved.

In this Annex, projects are listed alphabetically, and where known, we have noted the funding source, age of children involved and the nature of their involvement.

Details of projects

A strategy for participation: involving children and young people in the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

NCB trained four young people to conduct interviews with other young people and to help draft a strategy for involving children in the work of the Royal College.

Funding: *Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *peer interviews, reporting*

Ages of children/young people: *15-16 years*

Publications/further details:

http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/publications/recent_publications/Involving.pdf

A right to guidance and support in schools

Young people from Article 12 were involved in conducting this Scottish Executive commissioned research, involving a small-scale survey of 45 young people aged 14-20 in Scotland.

Funding: *Scottish Executive*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *designing materials, data collection, reporting*

Ages of children/young people: *15-17*

Summary available at <http://www.article12.org>

Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit (PRU) Young People's Research Group

Barnardo's have established a Young People's Research Group in Yorkshire, funded by their Policy and Research Unit and an in-house grant. The group carried out research on bullying, controlling all aspects of the process from planning and design, to dissemination, which included a presentations to senior staff at Barnardo's and a local school. In addition to conducting their own research, young people from this group were funded by a government department to review research proposals for evaluating a new diploma, for which they were paid at the same rate as adult reviewers. Two of the young people were then invited to join a steering group for the government department

Funding: *Barnardo's Policy and Research Unit/Internal grant*

One-off or continuous: *Continuous*

Stages of involvement in research: *Varies – in relation to the government department, they were involved mainly as advisors, but in their own research they were involved across the whole process.*

Ages of children/young people: *14-20 (currently the group are all aged 16-20)*

Brighton & Hove Children's Trust – proposed Youth Council

Young people from a variety of Children and Young People Groups have applied to Brighton & Hove Children's Trust for funding to run a Youth Council to feed into and influence the trust's work. While the remit of the Youth Council will be much broader than research, it is intended that they will consult with other young people to inform their workplan.

Funding: *Brighton & Hove Children's Trust*

One-off or continuous: *If funded, would potentially be continuous*

Stages of involvement in research: *Not known yet, but potentially conducting peer interviews*

Ages of children/young people: *Unknown*

Building a culture of participation

A two-year, DfES funded study about what leads to effective participation by young people. Young people aged 14 and over worked alongside adult researchers from National Children's Bureau (NCB) and PK Consultancy in conducting interviews with young people and adult project staff at projects working with children and young people. The young researchers were employed as research assistants, and although they did not write up the research they were involved in reviewing the analysis and commenting on the findings. They were also heavily involved in dissemination. There was also a young steering group for the study.

Funding: *Department for Education and Skills*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *co-researchers (peer interviews, analysis, dissemination). Also advisory role.*

Ages of children/young people: *14 and over.*

Publications/further details:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/93044411E35345F240C66D411CA0270D.pdf>

Challenging transitions – young people’s views and experiences of growing up

Between 1998 and 2000, with financial support from JRF, Save the Children (UK) undertook a study of young people’s views about the transition from childhood to adulthood. Four groups of young people, aged 14 to 27 and with different life experiences, were interviewed across the UK. Young people sat on various advisory and steering groups and had a consultancy role in relation to designing research instruments, commenting on findings, developing recommendations and dissemination.

Funding: *Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Save the Children*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *consultancy role in relation to all stages of the research process*

Ages of children/young people: *14 -25 years*

Publications/further details: <http://savethechildren.org.uk>

Children’s Commissioner for Scotland consultation on priorities

The Children’s Commissioner for Scotland has recruited two young participation workers aged 16-21 who have been involved in leading a focus-group based consultation exercise with other young people to establish priorities for the Children’s Commissioner. It is anticipated that they will be involved in conducting other research projects as the SCCYP’s programme evolves. The Office also plans to recruit a “Reference Group” of young people to support the governance of the office by monitoring of the extent to which it meets its objectives. Once established, this reference group may also become involved in conducting other research.

Funding: *Non-departmental public body, funded through the Scottish Parliament*

One-off or continuous: *Continuous*

Stages of involvement in research: *co-researcher (designing materials, conducting focus groups, analysis and reporting) and advisory roles*

Ages of children/young people: *16-21*

Publications/further details:

<http://www.cypcommissioner.org/>

Children’s Fund Evaluation in Gloucestershire

Fourteen children aged 10-12 were recruited by the Children’s Fund Participation Team to assist in the evaluation of the Children’s Fund in Gloucestershire. The young people, supported by participation workers from the Children’s Fund and researchers from Merida Consulting, developed questions they wished to ask other children and project staff and then visited each Children’s Fund project in the area. They interviewed children at the project, using a pin-board exercise to explore key questions as well as a more detailed group discussion, interviewed staff at the project, and reviewed portfolios of evidence from each project to look for evidence of children’s participation. After each visit, the young people wrote up their own report and had a debrief with a participation worker who added additional notes. They also presented their findings direct to the Children’s Fund Board.

Funding: *Gloucestershire Children's Fund*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *designing materials, peer interviews, other data collection, analysis, dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *10-12*

Publications/further details: [http://www.ne-cf.org/core_files/report\(87\).doc](http://www.ne-cf.org/core_files/report(87).doc)

Children's Research Centre, Open University

The CRC was established following a pilot study in 2002. It trains and supports children aged 10-14 to design, conduct, analyse and report their own research projects. Children are fully involved at every stage of the research process – from determining the research questions to presenting the results. At the time this study was conducted, over 45 children had received research training through the CRC.

Funding: *Open University*

One-off or continuous: *Continuous*

Stages of involvement in research: *Involved in all stages, from determining initial research questions to dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *10-14*

Publications/further details: <http://childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk/>

Children's perspectives of social difference

An ongoing study funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and being conducted by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University with support from Save the Children UK. The study, which looks at children's understanding of social difference, inequality and social exclusion, involves 40 children aged 8-13 from an affluent and a disadvantaged area. The children were asked about what sort of methods the research should involve. One of the methods chosen was peer interviewing, where the children interviewed their peers using tape recorders. Some also chose to interview other children and adults about issues that were important to the children themselves.

Funding: *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Peer interviews and other data collection*

Ages of children/young people: *8-13*

Clydebank LHCC Youth Project

Peer researchers carried out surveys and video interviews with local young people to explore barriers young people face when accessing health services. Young people were interviewed and paid for the work they did on the project.

Funding: *Clydebank Local Health Care Cooperative in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council, the local SIP, and Greater Glasgow NHS Board Health Promotion Department*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Peer interviews and other data collection*

Ages of children/young people: *16+*

Communication 2004

Liverpool Children's Fund and Liverpool Children's Services funded Merseyside Action for Play to employ four young disabled people to explore the views of disabled young people on issues around communication. The young researchers visited projects working with disabled children and young people, led a consultation event where they discussed emerging themes with other disabled young people and presented at an event for decision-makers in key agencies. The four young people have since become involved in evaluating inclusive play projects in Liverpool using similar methods.

Funding: *Liverpool Children's Fund and Liverpool Children's Services*

One-off or continuous: *One-off, but the young researchers have become involved in other studies*

Stages of involvement in research: *Data collection, analysis, dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *16-18*

The Cool with Change study

An ongoing, three year research study being conducted by the Centre for Research in Families and Relationships in collaboration with Scotland's Families and funded by the Community Fund and the Scottish Executive. The study explores the impact of family change on children and young people's lives. Two small groups of 15/16 year-olds who have themselves experienced family change have been recruited to act as consultants to the project. They helped develop topic guides and advised adult researchers on the interview process and ethical issues. It is also hoped that the young consultants will advise on barriers to accessing support and assist in disseminating the findings to other young people.

Funding: *Community Fund and Scottish Executive*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role, designing materials, planned assistance with dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *15/16*

Publications/further details: <http://www.crfr.ac.uk/Research/coolwithchange.html>

DfES Children and Youth Board

Children's Express, a charity helping children and young people learn through journalism, was commissioned by the DfES to recruit, train and support a panel of 25 young people aged 11-19 to advise them on policy and to assist in the recruitment of a children's commissioner for England. The young people and staff from Children's Express ran over 12 regional consultation events to gather the views of other children and young people on the children's commissioner and on designated policy areas. Young people used various participatory techniques such as role-plays to gather views. Other young people from Children's Express (who were not on the CYB) compiled a DVD about the CYB and a magazine summarising findings from the consultation events. A new children and youth board is now being facilitated by NCB and the British Youth Council.

Funding: *DfES*

One-off or continuous: *Continuous – NCB are recruiting a new CYB*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role, designing materials, peer interviews, reporting, dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *11-19*

Publications/further details:

http://www.ncb.org.uk/projects/project_detail.asp?ProjectNo=327

<http://www.childrens-express.org/>

Dialogue Youth consultation event with young people with disabilities

Dialogue Youth and COSLA were commissioned by the Scottish Executive Equalities Unit to consult with young people with disabilities about the issues that are important to them. They organised an event which brought together 30 young people and their carers to discuss these issues and the young people then agreed to consult with other young people with disabilities to check their findings and to gather supporting information about young people's experiences. The young people presented their findings to the Minister for Communities.

Funding: *Scottish Executive*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *peer interviews, dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *Unknown*

Don't leave us out

This qualitative study conducted for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation explored the views of young disabled people about the provisions and plans made for them by local authorities and others. A reference group of disabled young people was involved in advising the adult researchers.

Funding: *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role*

Ages of children/young people: *Unknown*

Drumchapel peer research project

Young people were trained to conduct peer interviews with young people in the Drumchapel area about their substance use. The study was funded by Drumchapel LIFE and the Health Board and involved interviews with 180 young people overall. The young researchers were also involved in the analysis and reporting of the project.

Funding: *Drumchapel LIFE and Glasgow Health Board*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *peer interviews, analysis, reporting*

Ages of children/young people: *19 (average)*

Edinburgh Commission for Children and Young People

There are plans for Edinburgh Youth SIP to move from their present structure to develop a commission. It is envisaged that young people will be involved in consulting with other young people about priorities for this planned Commission for Children and Young People.

For further details - <http://www.youthinclusion.org/>

Evaluation of Chase Millennium Awards Project

Clarity was commissioned to evaluate a scheme established to support excluded Scottish young people in receipt of Millennium Awards. The scheme requested that young people be involved in this evaluation. Young people aged 15-25 from across Scotland were recruited at a conference. They attended three training workshops on basic research skills and subsequently were involved in conducting three focus groups with other young people who had received Millennium Awards and advised on the wording and layout of a self-completion questionnaire sent to all young people who had received an award.

Funding: *National Lottery*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *attending training, design of materials, facilitating focus groups*

Ages of children/young people: *15 to early 20s*

Girlz, Girlz, Girlz!

This study involved young researchers in looking at the health and well being of LGBT women in Edinburgh. The broader health project was initiated through a half-day consultation to identify the key issues, and a group of young women aged 17-24 became involved in further research on LGBT women's health needs, including helping facilitate video diaries with other young women, helping develop questions and helping run a conference on women's health.

Funding: *Edinburgh Youth SIP*

One-off or continuous: *One-off, but as part of a longer-term young women's health project*

Stages of involvement in research: *developing research questions, design of materials, data collection, dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *17-24*

Publications/further details:

<http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/content/resources/download.asp?id=52>

Growing up in Cities project

Children, as well as adult residents and workers were involved in evaluating and improving their environments for this UNESCO supported project.

Publications/further details: <http://www.unesco.org/most/guic/guicmain.htm>

Having your say

In response to the Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee Inquiry into the way Gypsy/Travellers are treated by public bodies, Save the Children Scotland conducted a study about gypsy/travellers using peer interviewers. In 2000, fourteen young Gypsy/Travellers carried out interviews with their peers across Scotland and helped with the design of the questionnaire.

Health research projects involving young service users

The **Involve research database** cites a number of mainly Lottery or Charity-funded studies which have involved children and young people who are patients or health service users in some way other than as subjects. Examples of projects cited in the Database which fall under the different models/stages of involvement for young researchers discussed elsewhere in this report are given below. Each entry in the database also provides interesting examples of the ways in which consumers' (in this case young people's) involvement in the study made a difference to the research.

- **Young person-initiated** projects – e.g. *Young people, residential care and food*, a Save the Children funded study conducted and initiated by young care-leavers in partnership with adult researchers. The young people were involved in all stages of the study, from determining the issues to report writing. See also Involve database entries on *Right Fit: the GlaxoSmithKline and Barnardo's health partnership with young people*.
- Projects involving young people as “**co-researchers**”, where young people are involved in all stages of the research though it remains adult-initiated – e.g. A national evaluation of the NSPCC's Young People's Centres by young people, an NSPCC funded study where young people were recruited and trained as 'co-researchers' to interview young people and staff and analyse secondary data. There were also involved in analysis, reporting and dissemination. See also Involve database entry on *Youth Input*.

- As research **advisors** - e.g. *The mental health needs of children and young people during the transition years from primary school to secondary school*, funded by HertNet and conducted by CRIPACC at the University of Hertfordshire. 10-12 year-olds are involved in a special co-researcher reference group and will also be involved in dissemination. See also Involve database entries on *Meeting the mental health needs of young people with learning difficulties*.
- In helping **design research materials** - e.g. *Befriending: more than just finding friends?* A National Lottery funded project conducted by a researcher at the Norah Fry Research Centre which involved young people with learning difficulties who use befriending services in designing leaflets and interview schedules for other people with learning difficulties. See also Involve database entries on *Improving the Health and Well-being of Socially Excluded Young People*.
- As **peer interviewers** - e.g. *Improving the Health and Well-being of Socially Excluded Young People*, a National Lottery funded project conducted by the Children and Families Research Unit at De Montfort University, where young people decided on the topics which affected their health, designed and drew up the interview schedules and interviewed each other.
- In **analysing data** - e.g. *Involving children and young people in clinical audit*, a self-funding study conducted by Anglia Polytechnic University where young people will participate in data analysis of the questionnaire they devised and in writing brief findings reports and making decisions about dissemination.

For further details of these and other projects see the Involve Database:

<http://www.invo.org.uk/Database.asp>

Quarriers' research on social networks of young homeless people

A PhD project funded by Quarriers exploring the nature of the social networks of young homeless people. The researchers trained seven young people living in supported accommodation as peer researchers. Pairs of peer researchers interviewed other young homeless people and encouraged them to keep diaries. They were also involved in commenting on the data and it is intended they will be involved in dissemination.

Funding: *Quarriers*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Peer interviews, commenting on the data, dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *Majority were 16-25*

Imprint (evaluation of the Blueprint Drug Education Programme)

NCB were funded by the Home Office to record the views of children taking part in the Blueprint drug education programme. One of the methods used for the study was to train young evaluators within the schools to record their own experiences through journals and to interview other children using semi-structured questionnaires.

Funding: *Home Office*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *peer interviews*

Ages of children/young people: *Unknown*

Publications/further details:

http://www.ncb.org.uk/projects/project_detail.asp?ProjectNo=305

Look who's talking housing – action research report

Communities Scotland Scottish Community Action Research Fund funded Inverclyde Council's Housing and Young Person's Task Group to conduct research on how to involve young people in housing decision-making and to explore young people's tenancy and support needs. Eight young researchers were recruited and trained to conduct research in schools with S4-S6 pupils. They used task-based techniques to explore pupils' perceptions of housing issues. They also carried out a best practice visit to another council where they interviewed professionals about their policies for young people. The young researchers wrote the report themselves (with support from the task group) and presented findings to an audience of 60-70 professionals at the research launch.

Funding: *Communities Scotland and the Scottish Community Action Research Fund*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *peer interviews, other data collection, reporting, dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *18-23*

Investing in Children Project, Durham

A multi-agency project established and funded by Durham County Council and County Durham Health Authority which provides support to children and young people to research the issues which concern them and to campaign for change. Young people are involved both in developing, designing, conducting and analysing their own research projects, and in conducting research on behalf of the partner agencies involved in Investing in Children. They also hold "agenda days" where young people involved in an issue meet and discuss what the key issues are. At the time of the mapping exercise, 700-800 young people had been involved in Investing in Children.

Funding: *Durham County Council and County Durham Health Authority*

One-off or continuous: *Continuous*

Stages of involvement in research: *developing research questions/agenda setting, research design, data collection, analysis*

Ages of children/young people: *All ages (3-4 year-olds have been involved in IIC projects)*

Publications/further details: <http://www.iic-uk.org/>

Involving children in Medicines for Children Research Network

NCB are being funded by the Department of Health to ensure the active involvement of children in all stages of medical research about medicines for children. Children will be involved in a shadow advisory group which will input into the research design.

Funding: *Department of Health*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role, research design*

Ages of children/young people: *Unknown*

Publications/further details:

http://www.ncb.org.uk/projects/project_detail.asp?ProjectNo=340

Learning from their Lessons - A Study of Young People in Residential Care and their Experience of Education

Young people were involved in the dissemination of this research, funded by Marie Curie and undertaken by the Children's Research Centre at Trinity College, Dublin. The research focused on the experiences of young people in residential care, and looked-after young people produced a handbook, aimed at other children in residential care, to accompany the research report.

Funding: *Marie Curie*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *8-18*

Listen up! Surveys of looked after young people

Brighton Children's Rights and Coalition4Youth supported a forum of looked-after young people to plan and conduct a survey of other looked-after young people. The young people were trained as interviewers and, under strict supervision, conducted telephone interviews.

Funding: *Unknown*

One-off or continuous: *One-off, though has been repeated more than once*

Stages of involvement in research: *peer interviews*

Ages of children/young people: *Unknown*

Looked after young people's views on the review process

Edinburgh Youth SIP supported young people aged who had been through the care system to interview younger looked-after teenagers about their views on the review process. The young researchers facilitated focus groups, with support from adults. An adult researcher wrote the report but the young researchers commented on the findings and suggested revisions.

Funding: *Edinburgh Youth SIP*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *facilitating focus groups*

Ages of children/young people: *19-21*

Mind the gap: health futures for young people in Hounslow

SOLAR (Social and Organisational Learning as Action Research) and Hounslow Community Health Council supported a group of 11 peer leaders to design and conduct research with other young people to explore what health means to them. They were free to choose their own research methods – some used questionnaires, some used discussion groups and one group produced a video. The young people were then supported to present findings to a large-scale event (around 100 practitioners and decision-makers) and to engage in dialogue with professionals about the issues the research revealed.

Funding: *Hounslow Community Health Council*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Designing materials, data collection, dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *13-21*

Patient and Carer Experiences – teenage advisory group

The Cancer Care Research Centre at Stirling University is undertaking a three-year study on patient and carer experiences funded by the Scottish Executive. They are currently in the first year of this and hope to recruit a teenage advisory group who will help set the research agenda for the next two years of the study and *may* become involved in their own research projects with ongoing support and training from other organisations.

Funding: *Scottish Executive*

One-off or continuous: *3-year programme*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role, but also involved in setting research agenda*

Ages of children/young people: *Teenagers*

Publications/further details: http://www.cancercare.stir.ac.uk/projects/pce_intro.htm

Peer educators research study (South Africa)

A researcher from the Institute of Education collaborated with peer educators (aged 16-22) in South Africa who wished to evaluate their own programme. The 12 month study was funded by the Department for International Development. The peer educators were involved in the design, data collection and initial analysis of the survey, which eventually collected information from 1,500 learners.

Funding: *Department for International Development*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Development of research questions, design of materials, data collection, initial analysis*

Ages of children/young people: *16-22*

Royston Youth Action Research Peer Researchers Project

In 2004, nine young people conducted a research project coordinated by Royston Youth Action and funded by North Glasgow Social Inclusion Partnership. They developed a questionnaire to find out about 11-24 year olds leisure activities, alcohol and drugs misuse, gang activity and 'wish lists' for improving the local environment. The young researchers distributed the survey to 250 young people and developed a drug awareness workshop

Funding: *North Glasgow Social Inclusion Partnership*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role, questionnaire design, fieldwork and dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *over 16/17 years*

Publications/further details: see Royston Youth Action (2005) *Peer Researchers Project*
Available from Royston Youth Action, 325 Royston Road, Glasgow. Tel no. 0141 572 0986

The Rural Voices: Action Research Competition

Under this scheme, funded by the Scottish Executive, funding was made available for community action research projects lasting for a period of up to 9 months. Several of the projects involved young people in the doing of research, either by themselves or as part of a wider community team.

Funding: *Scottish Executive*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: : *Developing research questions/agenda setting, research design, data collection, analysis*

Ages of children/young people: *Unknown*

Satisfaction survey of young people using residential care

Brighton Children's Rights and Coalition 4 Youth are planning to involve teenage users of residential care units in planning a survey of other units. The intention is that young people will determine what is most important to them to ensure the survey focuses on the right issues, as well as contributing to the wording of the questionnaire.

Funding: *Unknown* One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Development of research questions, design of research materials*

Ages of children/young people: *Unknown*

Serving Children? The impact of poverty on children's experiences of public, private and voluntary services

An ongoing project funded by the Big Lottery Fund and being conducted by Save the Children, the Centre for the Child and Society and the Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice. The study seeks to explore the effect of poverty on children's access to, perceptions of and use of public, private and voluntary services. A young person's advisory group for the study is running parallel with an adult professionals advisory group. The young people's advisory group has 5-6 active members that will meet regularly for the duration of the project to advice on methodology, data interpretation and dissemination. The project aims to involve young people not only in the design of the materials, but also in the interpretation of data and most importantly at the dissemination stage, through events organised by and for young people and a young people's summary and materials for dissemination (possibly including a video) to be produced mainly by young people.

Funding: *Big Lottery Fund*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role, may be involved in design of materials*

Ages of children/young people: *13-16*

Sexual Health Service Mystery Shopping

Brighton Children's Rights and Coalition 4 Youth supported young people to conduct "mystery shopping" research into the sexual health services available to young people in Brighton and Hove.

Funding: *Unknown*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Data collection*

Ages of children/young people: *14-17*

Skye and Lochalsh Young Carers' Project

Children and young people participating in this project have been involved in the design of evaluation tools for the project. They participate in monthly evaluations of the project and are consulted on the final reports (adults draft the initial reports but young people "put meat on the bones"). Older young people may also support younger people to complete their evaluation forms.

Funding: *Highland Council, NHS Highland, BBC Children in Need. Additional funding from Big Lottery and European Union.*

One-off or continuous: *Continuous – involved in ongoing monitoring and evaluation*

Stages of involvement in research: *Design of materials, commenting on reporting*

Ages of children/young people: *5-18*

A study on children's experience of disability

Conducted by the Social Work Research Centre at Stirling University and funded by the Scottish Executive. Two girls with disabilities aged 11 or 12 were involved in this qualitative study as "co-research advisors". They met with the adult researchers three times to discuss the proposal, to assist them in revising research materials for young people with disabilities and to discuss recruiting samples.

Funding: *Scottish Executive (via core funding of Social Work Research Centre)*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role, Design of materials*

Ages of children/young people: *11-12*

Publications/further details: *Connor, C. and Stalker, K. (2002) Children's experiences of disability: a positive outlook, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Education Department.*

A study on services available for LGBT youth in Scotland

The idea for this study, which investigated services available locally for LGBT young people in different parts of Scotland, came from LGBT young people themselves. Young researchers were trained by co-researchers at Strathclyde University and designed and conducted much of the research themselves, including assisting with questionnaire design, facilitating focus groups and making video diaries.

Funding: *Communities Scotland Scottish Community Action Research Fund and Scottish Executive (who funded some further reporting on the project)*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Idea for the project came from young people, who were involved in the design and data collection*

Ages of children/young people: *15-25*

Take my advice: involving young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of health services

A partnership project between Edinburgh Youth SIP, Lothian NHS Board, Healthy Respect and young people, this study involved a small team of young researchers in conducting peer interviews and interviews with adult health professionals about young people's access to health services.

Funding: *Edinburgh Youth SIP*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Peer interviews and interviews with adults*

Ages of children/young people: *Unknown*

Talking 2 Ourselves website

The Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health and Penumbra have supported a group of 15-25 young people aged 13-19 years to develop a website to provide young people with information and advice about mental health. The website development project is being funded by the Scottish Executive through NHS Health Scotland. The young people carried out desk-based research to inform the content of the website and one of the group conducted interviews at her school to inform the site-design. They have also been involved in presentations about the website.

Funding: *Scottish Executive/NHS Health Scotland are funding the website, which the research is contributing to the development of*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Peer interviews and other data collection, dissemination*

Ages of children/young people: *13-19*

Telling it like it is

Article 12 have produced a training document, *Telling it like it is*, on involving young people in peer education projects. This training document was utilised across Europe to promote the European White Paper on Youth and in Scotland by a number of organisations, including the Electoral Commission, to promote young people's involvement in democratic processes.

Funding: *The European Commission*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Young people involved in the design and implementation of the paper*

Ages of children/young people: *16-22*

“Telling Reg and Al where to get off” – Fast Forward peer-led smoking cessation research

Young volunteers were trained to conduct interviews with other Scottish young people aged 11-18 about smoking cessation.

Funding: *Unknown*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Peer interviews*

Ages of children/young people: *16-25*

Triumph and Success project

The Triumph and Success project explored youth transitions in Sheffield. It involved 8 young people in designing questionnaires, undertaking a survey of 750 young people and conducting 60 face-to-face interviews. The young researchers were supported by youth workers and professional researchers.

Funding: *Joseph Rowntree Foundation*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Designing materials, peer interviews*

Ages of children/young people: *15-21*

Publications/further details: The study and the experience of using young researchers in this way has been evaluated by the JRF:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/pdf/D30.pdf>

Understanding the impact of Connexions on young people at risk

Primarily a qualitative study exploring young people's experience of the Connexions process and the impact of Connexions on different groups of young people. A small panel of peer researchers were trained in each Connexions partnership area and fed into the research by providing local knowledge of youth issues, commenting on the research design and feeding back on Connexions marketing and branding from a young person's perspective. Young people were paid and received accreditation for their role in the study.

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role and observational work*

Ages of children/young people: *Not known – but Connexions is aimed at 13-19 year-olds*

Publications/further details: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR607.pdf>

A view from the girls: exploring violence and violent behaviour

Research on teenage girls' attitudes, perceptions and experiences of violent behaviour funded by the ESRC Violence Programme and conducted by researchers at Glasgow University and Children in Scotland. A group of teenage girls who participated in a pilot study for the project acted as an advisory group for the main study. Their advisory group ran in parallel to the adult advisory group.

Funding: *ESRC*

One-off or continuous: *One-off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role*

Ages of children/young people: *Approx age 13-16 years*

Publications/further details: *see link for ESRC summary paper - <http://www1.rhbc.ac.uk/sociopolitical-science/VRP/Findings/rfburman.PDF> - <http://www.gla.ac.uk/girlsandviolence/publications.htm>*

Viewfinder Survey

The Edinburgh Council-funded Viewfinder survey is conducted every three years to find out what young people aged 11-18 think about Edinburgh. Young people have been involved in questionnaire design by helping determining what questions should be asked and in interviewing tenderers for the survey. They were supported by the Young Edinburgh team.

Funding: *Edinburgh Council*

One-off or continuous: *One-off (but survey has now been repeated several times)*

Stages of involvement in research: *Advisory role, assisting in designing materials*

Ages of children/young people: *11-18*

Young people's perceptions of mental health (Glasgow)

An ongoing study being conducted by Greater Glasgow NHS. At the time the mapping exercise was conducted, this study was at a relatively early stage. The intention was that young people (aged 16+) would be involved in designing a questionnaire and carrying out structured interviews with other young people. The young people were to be trained in research methods and mentored by young people who have already been involved in peer research through Royston Youth Action.

Funding: *Greater Glasgow NHS*

One-off or continuous: *Continuous*

Stages of involvement in research: *Designing materials, peer interviews*

Ages of children/young people: *16+*

Young resisters and desisters (PhD thesis)

Cathy Murray, Lecturer in Social Policy at the University of Stirling, is near completion of her doctoral thesis. She is doing secondary analysis of 112 interviews with young resisters (who have never offended) and young desisters (who have ceased to offend). The participatory aspect of the study is peer led focus groups with 52 resisters aged 14-18 conducted in 2003-2005. This innovative methodological approach involves the young person or 'peer' facilitating the focus group - in this study, with friends of the same age and gender.

Funding: *Unknown*

One-off or continuous: *One-Off*

Stages of involvement in research: *Peer-led focus groups*

Ages of children/young people: *14-18*

Publication: Murray, C. (2006) 'Peer led focus groups and young people', *Children and Society* (earlybird copy of the paper at <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/112095383/PDFSTART>)

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