

Chapter 6: Charter Mark criteria, indicators and examples of good practice

Criterion 1: Set standards and perform well

Indicators

- Children and young people are regularly involved in designing, reviewing and raising standards.
- Standards that children and young people can expect and which are relevant and meaningful to them are displayed in a way that is visible and attractive, for example, using lively posters, video, lots of pictures.
- Children and young people are supported and given suitable ways to comment on how your service performs against the standards and how relevant the standards are to children and young people.
- Children and young people are informed when standards are not met and know what is going to be done to put things right.
- The organisation bench-marks its consultation and participation processes against good practice within and, if necessary, outside its sector in order to identify ways to match and improve on existing practice.

Examples of good practice

- Seven-year-olds in school were given large sheets of paper on which a speech bubble was drawn. They worked in groups to write down their ideas for their ideal playground. The concerns that emerged about their actual playground then became the basis for standards of supervision in the playground.
- A swimming and sports centre has introduced a special children's comments form to help them include children's views when developing standards for the service.
- A secondary school conducts surveys to find out the views of students on all aspects of school life. The students' council discusses the outcomes of the survey and their views then inform the school development plan.

Criterion 2: Actively engage with customers, partners and staff

Indicators

- You have developed a knowledge base of children and young people in the area who are users and potential users of services.
- Children and young people are regularly consulted about your services and they have made a direct contribution to relevant decisions.
- There are structures and systems in place to enable children and young people to make their views known.
- You provide staff who have contact with children and young people with appropriate training and support in listening to children's views on services and ensure routes are available for feeding these into service plans.
- You ensure that the views of all children and young people who use the service are included and consultations are appropriate to children of all abilities, backgrounds and ages. Suitable methods are used, such as presenting information at an appropriate height and in a variety of formats (see chapter 7).
- Where possible you work directly with groups or individual children and young people to find out their views.
- You attempt to collect the views of children and young people who are potential users, but do not currently use your services.
- If your organisation does not work directly with young people, you have set up working relationships with other organisations that have that expertise, to ascertain their views on relevant services.
- Children and young people are informed promptly about the results of consultations and any action planned.

Examples of good practice

- A youth and community service has produced an information-providing website that was developed in consultation with young people.
- A group of 'looked after' young people ran their own conference for young people after one local authority hired a group of trainers to train young people in planning and facilitating an event.

- In order to encourage children and young people to give their views at quarterly customer forums, a leisure centre offered a free skate. This popular session encourages children and young people to attend and give their views.
- A patients society has worked with several NHS trusts to establish a multi-disciplinary team to enable children, young people and parents to be fully involved in all decisions about treatment.
- A play centre consulted its young members about the planning of the summer play scheme, which was then organised by the children.
- A community college regularly consults students about specific issues related to teaching and learning as well as pastoral care.
- A health promotion service set up young people's focus groups to establish, develop and implement its anti-drugs action plan.
- A city libraries service commissioned a children's and young people's user survey of 8000 children and young people and used the results to re-focus the service.
- The Office of the First and Deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Assembly, with support from the children's voluntary sector, carried out a consultation with children to find out what they wanted from a Commissioner for Children for Northern Ireland. Children were also involved in the appointment of the new Commissioner, and helped create a children and young people's guide to the post.
- Four-year-old children across the UK were asked about their experience of starting school. Life-like dolls were used to do the interviews. A pack was then developed, incorporating examples of children's experiences, for teachers and parents to support children in their transition from nursery to primary school.

Criterion 3: Be fair and accessible to everyone and promote choice

Indicators

- Children and young people are given the opportunity to make choices about services that directly affect them.
- Children and young people are consulted on how your services take into account the needs of all abilities and backgrounds.
- Flexibility is offered to enable children and young people to participate in making choices and resources are put in place that enable all children and young people to participate in consultations, for example, providing transport for disabled children, arranging signing or augmented communication.
- Children and young people are consulted about what information they want or need and are involved in producing this information.
- The choices given to children and young people and their means of making these choices are related to their age and ability.
- Children and young people are able to have their needs met in a co-ordinated way and receive clear information about how services are run and who to go to for assistance.

Examples of good practice

- A school for blind and visually impaired children uses a wide variety of strategies to ensure that the children have the information they need to make decisions. These include Braille, Moon, large print and tape. In addition, two of the team are able to speak a range of sign languages from the Indian subcontinent for those children who speak those languages.
- A nursery consulted a four-year-old with behavioural difficulties who was about to go to school, asking what would help him to make the transition to school. He suggested a book about himself that he could show to his new teacher and friends.

- A paediatric diabetes service uses a variety of techniques to help children and young people think about their diabetes. These range from drawing pictures to playing interactive CD-ROM games on a dedicated laptop. A special booklet is used with the youngest children to help them think about their experiences of diabetes.
- A community paediatric service for disabled children and young people, runs regular 'independent stay overs'. The children and young people plan every aspect of the stay over, including menus, leisure activities and modes of travel. As many of the children and young people cannot communicate fluently with spoken language, the staff use a variety of methods to ensure that their views are fully considered. Examples include signing, augmented communication systems, pictures or facial expression.
- Children in a nursery school between the ages of $2\frac{1}{2}$ and $3\frac{1}{2}$ planned an outing to a city zoo. They chose the day they were going, the mode of transport, what kind of sandwiches they wanted to take with them and whether they wanted to make the sandwiches themselves. (They did!)
- An organisation that supports the education of children in care has extended its operational hours so that children and young people can telephone them after school.
- In a nursery there is an ethos of fairness – children are treated with respect and always encouraged to behave respectfully to others in the nursery. There are images of ethnic and cultural groups of children who live in the UK on the walls. Resources in the centre reflect the diversity of the intake and make available materials for imaginative play for children from a wide range of backgrounds, abilities and languages.

Criterion 4: Continuously develop and improve

Indicators

- Results of consultation with children and young people are analysed and used to improve the services available to children and young people.
- Staff are trained and supported to involve children and young people creatively in regular reviews of services and service development.
- Children are given the chance to make their complaints in an appropriate and confidential way if they are nervous of the repercussions for themselves (prepaid postcards or suggestion boxes that are regularly reviewed may be useful).
- The child or young person is entitled to support from an advocate to make a complaint. This entitlement is made clear to children and young people, as well as how to go about getting this support.
- Children receive information about how their complaint was treated. If the child is the complainant the response is made directly to the child.
- You keep records of particular areas of concern or satisfaction for children and young people and make these known along with the improvements made.
- The proportion of children who complain is related to the overall number of children and young people using the service and also to the proportion of adult complaints. If few children are complaining the complaints procedure is not working for children.

Examples of good practice

- Children in a children's home have a mentor who supports children who have a complaint to make. The mentor supports them through the complaints process.
- In one school, seven-year-olds were asked to describe their ideal school. The majority said it would have no bullying. They reported that most of the bullying was occurring in the playground. As a result, the school improved the playground supervision.

- A local play services department runs an annual children's satisfaction survey and has developed a child-friendly format to ensure that children are able to respond. All children who complete the survey are sent the results.
- The motto of an upper school, 'Everyone matters', has led to the school council and house councils getting involved in decisions related to: subject options at 14 and 16; school expenditure; staff appointments; peer-led activity, including sex and drugs education; befrienders and student mentors. Each year 25 per cent of the students complete a satisfaction survey and the outcomes inform the school improvement plan for the following year.
- Children aged 5–11 took part in a summer play scheme and over a six-week period expressed their views through a variety of creative activities on plans to set up a children's discovery centre. The children's suggestions informed the children's discovery centre, as well as other local agencies with responsibility for play.
- A civic reception service consulted homeless children and carers who were waiting for long periods in the reception centre. As a result of the consultation, they set up a special children's corner with toys and provided videos for older children and young people.
- Social services in one authority brought in a team of consultants to find out the views of young people who receive respite care. The report *Safe in our Care* made several recommendations adopted in full by the department.

Criterion 5: Use your resources effectively and imaginatively

Indicators

- You analyse the way you allocate resources between users of different ages and inform children and young people about this allocation.
- You take children and young people's views into account when allocating resources.
- Resources are used to train and support staff who have direct contact with children, to ensure that all children are regularly involved in service review and development initiatives and generally receive a high quality service.

Examples of good practice

- In one nursery children were invited to choose the equipment for the following year. They used catalogues to select the equipment and were given an overall 'budget'. Each item in the catalogue was given a colour code relating to different areas of budget spending, for example, 'outside play equipment', 'indoor games'. The children could then choose items to the value of the budget headings.
- A school with a vandalism problem costing £12,000 per annum told the school council that if they reduced the cost they could keep the balance and spend the money on whatever improvements they prioritised. The school council managed to reduce the annual cost to £4,000.
- An information, advice and counselling service for young people increased their number of users from 200 to 400 after asking young people to redesign the publicity for the project.
- A library and information service has set up teenage reading groups and is involving young people in the selection of books through visits to book suppliers and participation in the book review and selection panel.

Criterion 6: Contribute to improving opportunities and quality of life in the communities you serve

Indicators

- You have worked to ensure that children and young people are taken into account as members of the community.
- You have involved young people in looking at how the lives of children and young people in their communities could be improved.
- You have consulted children and young people on the facilities that could be made available to them, for example, by using mapping or peer research.
- You have asked children and young people how your organisation contributes to improvements for them, and shared these views with other organisations to achieve further benefits for children and young people in the community.
- You have made efforts to support local community or voluntary organisations that provide services to children and young people, for example, by shared use of facilities, offering placements, and participating in open days, fundraising, etc.

Examples of good practice

- A voluntary organisation set up a full day's visiting session for children visiting their mothers at a prison. The resources of the prison educational and recreational facilities were made available and volunteers played with the children and supported the mothers.
- A county council set up a schools liaison group within the environmental design department so that all the links that individuals make with schools could be brought together and their ideas and experiences shared.
- Some district councils have now established shadow youth councils – elected members of the youth population – in an attempt to make the work of the councils more responsive to their young citizens.