



EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

AND

INVITATION TO A ROUND TABLE EVENT: 16TH December, London, England.

The 'Our Voices' Network: Children's participation in preventing sexual violence.

This is a call for an expression of interest to work on the development of an **'Our Voices' network**. The University of Bedfordshire is developing a network of projects in Europe who use child participation as a method of supporting children who have experienced sexual violence. 'Child participation' is the involvement of children in the development of policy and practice. The network will link closely with the work of the Council of Europe 'One in Five' Campaign to stop sexual violence against children (www.coe.int/oneinfive)

It is also an **invitation to a round table event on 16th December in London, England**. The round table event will be focused on identifying aims and objectives and work programmes for the 'Our Voices' network. There will be up to ten places available for representatives from projects in Europe who work using participatory methods with children who have experienced sexual violence. Travel costs and contributions towards accommodation can be made available.

Information on the agenda for the event on 16th December and the selection procedure for attendance will be provided on request to **Jenny.Pearce@beds.ac.uk**

1. The 'Our Voices' Network: Rationale

Children have the right to be protected from sexual violence. Child victims affected by sexual violence have the right to have their voices heard.

However, too often the 'victim' label assumes a passive role for the child, undermining the child's right, and indeed capacity, to play an active role in challenging future abuse, in preventing the abuse of others and in educating adults about the impact sexual violence has had on their lives. This is recognised by projects which employ participatory methods of working with children affected by sexual violence. All too often these projects are poorly funded and isolated from each other so that their experience and knowledge is not communicated and shared, both to each other and to the larger child care community.

The **'Our Voices'** Project will aim to rectify this situation, offering scope to build a European network that will

- encourage and enable communication between projects working in a participatory way with children affected by sexual violence.

- Enable children to share their experience and expertise as active participants in developing policy and practice
- Enable children to play a role in developing child centred services across Europe to prevent sexual violence against children.

2. The 'Our Voices' Project: Aims

- To establish a network of projects in Europe that use participatory methods in their work with children who have been affected by sexual violence
- To facilitate these projects to share methods of practice that support and enable children who have been affected by sexual violence to have their voices heard and to participate in project management, project development, service delivery and in campaign and publicity events.
- To provide a European forum for the voices of children who have been affected by sexual violence to be heard; so that children's experiences of (and growth away from) sexual violence are communicated and shared.
- To set up a specific website for projects working in a participatory way with children affected by sexual violence. The web site to have web pages for: ideas on how to *structure your agency* to enable children to participate; ideas about participatory work *methods and practices* that enable children to play an active role in service delivery, development and campaign activities; awareness and sharing of the *ethical issues* that need to be considered in developing participatory activities and practices with children who have been affected by sexual violence.

3. The Roundtable Event: 16th December in London, England.

The roundtable event will aim to

- Consider and consolidate the ideas for the 'Our Voices' project
- Consider the development of a funding bid to support the work, identifying appropriate agreed activities necessary to secure funding
- Develop a circulation list of projects who are interested and who would contribute to developing a project plan and timetable
- Plan the establishment of a web page for network sharing examples of good practice
- Look to ways for 'show casing' future outputs from the 'Our voices' Network 2011 to 2013
- Create sustainability for network beyond the life of the 'One in Five' campaign

If you would like to be part of developing these ideas, or attending the round table event on 16th December 2011 in London, England, please contact Jenny.Pearce@beds.ac.uk