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Who are we?



MILLION

11 MILLION is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner, Professor Sir Al Aynsley-Green. The Children's Commissioner is a position created by the Children Act 2004.

Our mission



We will use our powers and independence to ensure that the views of children and young people are routinely asked for, listened to and that outcomes for children improve over time. We will do this in partnership with others, by bringing children and young people into the heart of the decision-making process to increase understanding of their best interests.

The Children Act 2004

The Children Act requires the Children's Commissioner to be concerned with the five aspects of well-being covered in *Every Child Matters* – the national government initiative aimed at improving outcomes for all children. It also requires us to have regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC underpins our work and informs the areas and issues on which we focus our efforts.



Our long-term goals

Children and young people see significant improvements in their wellbeing and can freely enjoy their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).



Children and young people are more highly valued by adult society.

What is this document about?



This document describes how 11 MILLION is going to work in partnership with others to achieve our goals. We will involve children and young people using an idea called 'Buddy Groups'. Before we start, we need to explain a few words and phrases that we will use in this document:

Participation

Children and young people taking an active part in a project or process, not just as consumers of a service, but actually shaping it.

Spotlight areas

Every year, 11 MILLION will focus on between six and ten themes which cover different aspects of children and young people's lives. We call these 'Spotlight' areas. Children and young people will play a central role in choosing what these Spotlight areas are.

Currently our six Spotlight areas are:

- Youth justice and anti-social behaviour
- Asylum and trafficking
- A fair life
- Mental health
- Enjoying education and leisure
- Staying safe

Policy

A 'policy' is a group of ideas, or a plan for how things should be done. For example, schools usually have a uniform policy which says what you should or should not wear. The Government has policies about lots of things. For example, it says that all schools should have their own policy on how to deal with bullying. A school's bullying policy will say what it thinks bullying is, and how the school plans to stop it.

Policy Team

The role of 11 MILLION's Policy Team is to assess whether or not policies made by adults take into account the views and interests of children and young people. We do this in consultation with children and young people themselves, as well as people like teachers, social workers and experts at universities to name just a few. If research and evidence show that certain policies are not good for children and young people, we will communicate this to the Government and try to persuade them and others to see things more from the point of view of children and young people. Sometimes adults do not understand what it is like to be a child affected by particular policies, so achieving change can take a long time.

Buddy Groups

11 MILLION will actively involve children and young people in our Spotlight areas through Buddy Groups. These groups will be a partnership between external projects, organisations, agencies and 11 MILLION. We will work with children and young people already working on, or affected by, one of our Spotlight issues. These groups will act as advisors to our Policy Team. We will work together for up to one year. 11 MILLION will invest considerable staff time in the Buddy Groups, but we do not have additional funding to give or carry out this piece of work (see page eight for more information on this).

Our promise



In 2007/08, 11 MILLION will have at least 300 children and young people actively participating (more than just being consulted) in our work. We aim to reach 100 of these children and young people through Buddy Groups.

11 MILLION Policy Team

The 11 MILLION Policy Team will actively involve children and young people through the work of Buddy Groups. The Policy Team will gather the views of children and young people around the Spotlight areas on which they are working. Children's views, experiences and opinions will inform our thinking, the way we work and how we respond to the Government as well as our general recommendations. To make this possible, each of our policy officers is responsible for a Spotlight area and will work in partnership with children and young people from at least two Buddy Groups.

Value base

We need a strong value base to underpin our participation work. All contact that children and young people have with 11 MILLION should be positive, sustainable (long-term) and memorable. We don't want to be just another adult organisation that asks for their views and walks away.

11 MILLION's values are:

- **empowerment**
- **equality**
- **courage**

Partnership

Our independence is invaluable but, in order to ensure and support the involvement of children and young people in our work, we also need to work in partnership.



Buddy Groups

Buddy Groups will benefit children and young people, partner organisations and 11 MILLION.

Buddy Groups provide an opportunity for 11 MILLION's policy officers to gain a wider understanding of how children and young people experience particular issues. They will inform our thinking and help us to develop our work in order to have a bigger and better impact on the lives of children and young people.

Benefits for the children and young people

- being part of a change making process that can improve the lives of children and young people
- national recognition for local activities
- increased self-confidence and self-esteem through being involved and taking up different opportunities
- being featured on 11 MILLION's website
- potential opportunities for accrediting work and achievements
- getting involved with and having ownership over the work of 11 MILLION and the Children's Commissioner
- recognition from 11 MILLION and the Children's Commissioner
- learning about how policies are made and being kept up to date about opportunities to influence
- knowing someone from 11 MILLION to invite to events
- social activities and opportunities to get to know other children and young people working on the issue
- potential opportunities for travel

Benefits for partner organisations and agencies

- raised profile of existing work
- a potential national platform for local or regional issues
- additional personal development opportunities for the children and young people involved
- personal development opportunities for individual staff members
- opportunities for endorsement of work (where appropriate)

Benefits for 11 MILLION

- policy officers have regular contact with children and young people either affected by or already working on issues related to their Spotlight area
- an understanding of how some children and young people experience Spotlight issues - a 'reality check'
- advice for policy officers from children and young people about the best way to develop further research and engagement with other children and young people

- opportunities to hear about the views, experiences and ideas of children and young people
- young spokespeople who can support 11 MILLION staff on the Spotlight issues
- content for the 11 MILLION website around the Spotlight areas
- a greater chance of children and young people taking up opportunities at short notice, for example:
 - helping to plan a consultation that needs to be carried out quickly
 - acting as a 'focus group' to look at specific questions
 - becoming involved in press or media work.

11 MILLION will invest considerable time in Buddy Groups, but we do not have funding to offer those wanting to be part of a group. However, we will cover any additional travel or other expenses to ensure that children, young people or partners are not 'out of pocket' as a result of being in a Buddy Group.

Partner organisations/agencies will be responsible for the day to day support of the children and young people involved. Partners will be invited on the basis that they already have funding and are supporting children and young people affected by one of our Spotlight issues. We don't want to create lots of additional work for local workers - becoming a Buddy Group should compliment and add value to existing local activities. We cannot offer any funding to support this ongoing work.

By developing a relationship over the course of a year, children and young people will be able to develop a greater sense of ownership over the work of 11 MILLION. They will be able to influence change in an area they are already attempting to influence or are affected by. Children and young people will be given the opportunity to work on an England wide level, meet new people and travel.



How will the Buddy Group relationship work?

First contact

11 MILLION will make an initial visit to potential Buddy Groups. This is an opportunity to informally find out what you are doing and give you more information about 11 MILLION. Both sides can then make decisions about whether a longer-term partnership would be worth pursuing. We want a good mix of Buddy Groups - we need to work with children and young people from different age-groups, regions and backgrounds. Buddy Groups are never going to be representative of all children and young people, they are more like groups of 'young advisors' who have experienced a particular issue and are going to work with us to develop our advice to decision makers.

Getting going

All Buddy Groups will be different, so we will work together in different ways.

One big difference will be between those groups who are affected by the Spotlight issue, and those groups actively working on an issue. For those groups who are affected by the issue, but haven't yet worked with other children and young people to think about what changes they would like to see, more support will be needed. For those who have already started to think about and work on the issues we may not need to run formal sessions, we may observe or get involved in existing activities. Either way, children and young people will need time to think through and explore the policy issues and implications in more depth. To make informed decisions, children and young people need information and time to reflect on their experiences.

The 11 MILLION Policy Team will invest time with children and young people to explore how policies are made and how they can be influenced. Once children and young people understand this, they will have their own ideas about what changes they want to make and suggestions for achieving this. This will take time and will need to be supported. Policy officers or children and young people themselves may then initiate and develop projects to begin working together on a particular issue (budget, fundraising and capacity allowing).

As a minimum all of the groups will need an early session on what makes 11 MILLION unique. During the early stages, our policy officers will visit Buddy Groups at least once a month.

Making sure that Buddy Groups shape our work

11 MILLION believe that children and young people should have ownership over the consultation work they are involved with. Without this, it can feel like a one-way process from which children and young people don't benefit. Buddy Groups will ensure that children and young people inform our event planning, shape our research and consultation approaches, and contribute to areas on our website. Children and young people from the Buddy Groups will have an active presence in our work - from attending events, visits or meetings, to speaking publicly about the issues on behalf of 11 MILLION.

11 MILLION's policy officers will record children and young people's experiences of and views on a particular Spotlight area. Policy officers will then ensure that these are reflected in our work at all levels: in reports, briefings, responses to government and on our website.

The annual event

Each summer 11 MILLION holds an annual event, organised by children and young people, for children and young people. At this event, children and young people will decide 50% of the available project budget for 11 MILLION and the Children's Commissioner. This will include some of the Spotlight areas for the coming year. All of the information we receive through the Buddy Groups, website, by post or by phone will help children and young people make this decision.

Our Spotlight areas will also be reviewed every three months, and children and young people can feed their views and experiences into this process. A link should emerge between the Buddy Groups and 11 MILLION's planning cycle through the summer annual event. Buddy Groups will be invited to participate in the annual event. This should ensure that children and young people feel some ownership over the decision-making process, so that any changes aren't adult imposed.

Buddy Groups will run for up to one year, or until the end of March 2008. The length of time for which each Buddy Group runs will depend on the time of year at which they are formed – so as to make sure the process fits in with our planning cycle and annual event. 11 MILLION will clarify this with each group from the start.



Roles and responsibilities

Partner organisations and agencies are responsible for

- being a point of contact for each Buddy Group
- the pastoral care for children and young people in each Buddy Group and signposting to other local support services if needed
- keeping our policy officers informed of dates, times and venues for meetings and events
- keeping our policy officers informed of children and young people's views and activities between contact time
- being present and involved in all sessions with children and young people and 11 MILLION staff
- accompanying children and young people to any 11 MILLION activity or event that Buddy Groups attend (travel and subsistence costs would be met)

11 MILLION's policy officers are responsible for

- developing a relationship with at least two Buddy Groups. This will include a monthly visit and keeping in touch in between if needed
- running or co-running sessions with the children and young people from the Buddy Groups
- writing down and recording contact/correspondence with children and young people including filling out our participation log
- making sure that children and young people's involvement informs the Spotlight area of work
- feeding back to children and young people about the impact of their work
- providing easy to understand information to children and young people on policy developments and changes
- making sure the Children's Commissioner is regularly updated about the views and experiences of the children and young people in each Buddy Group
- making sure the views and experiences of children and young people are represented on the website (this could include written, visual and audio content)
- creating opportunities for all Buddy Groups within a Spotlight area to come together to meet each other and share experiences

11 MILLION's participation officers are responsible for

- supporting policy officers in identifying and starting the relationships with Buddy Groups
- helping policy officers maintain high standards of practice; develop session plans and co-running where possible
- making sure policy officers keep accurate records

- making sure policy officers make effective use of the views and experiences of children and young people
- monitoring the groups of children and young people we are working with to ensure equality and inclusion

11 MILLION staff will be required to follow our safeguarding policy as well as our equality and diversity procedures should they witness an incident of concern. Staff from partner organisations should be made aware of these and will also be expected to work within the guidelines provided by their own organisation. All 11 MILLION staff will have undergone enhanced CRB checks.

Further Information and support

For more information see our Frequently Asked Questions which can be found at www.11million.org.uk or contact Sara Bryson, Senior Participation Officer for 11 MILLION, at sara.bryson@11MILLION.org.uk



Action and dates

Dates	Action	Responsible 11 MILLION staff member
25 May 2007	E-mail circulated (via Participation Works) inviting potential Buddy Groups to come forward	Senior Participation Officer and relevant policy officers
Mid June 2007	A grid containing list of potential Buddy Groups for each area produced	Senior Participation Officer
End June 2007	At least one initial visit to have taken place for each area	Senior Participation Officer and relevant policy officers
End June 2007	A planning meeting to have taken place following each initial visit	Senior Participation Officer and relevant policy officers
Ongoing	All participation logs and monitoring forms to have been completed for each visit	Relevant policy officers
July 2007	Initial visits to other Buddy Groups conducted	Relevant policy officers
By 1 August 2007	At least two Buddy Groups established for each Spotlight area	Senior Participation Officer and relevant policy officers
21-23 August 2007	Children and young people's annual event	Participation Team
7 September 2007-8 March 2008	Monthly visits to each Buddy Group	Relevant policy officers
March 2008	Work on new Spotlight areas to begin and new Buddy Groups to be established	Senior Participation Officer and relevant policy officers



**“The 11 MILLION children
and young people in
England have a voice”**

Children’s Commissioner for
England, Professor Sir Albert
Aynsley-Green



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