

Q: What was the challenge?

The Leadership Team of the Scottish Executive Children and Young People's group wanted to engage all staff in identifying the vision and values for the group and engage with their diverse stakeholder organisations in innovative and collaborative ways. Recent re-structuring within the Scottish Executive meant that the Group had increased in size and remit which meant that many of the staff did not know each other or have a good understanding of what the group did to support people in Scotland.

Q: How did we work together?

There were a number of phases involved in this programme:

- Working with the Leadership Team to identify the purpose and outcomes they expected from the work and how to engage staff
- Facilitation of a working group of staff from diverse areas and grades who contributed to all of the steps in the process
- Preparation of staff for a staff away day through pair conversations and team events to ensure that the day was engaging and useful for all
- Development of internal facilitators to assist in the away day as well as bringing facilitators from other Questions of Difference client organisations to assist
- Agreement of a process to engage over 500 stakeholders in conversations about their vision for the Children and Young people of Scotland
- Design of a major Stakeholder event for over 300 people including staff from the Scottish Executive and external organisations – a team of internally trained people and representatives from the Royal Bank of Scotland and the Government Office for the North East facilitated this event.

Q: Did the outcome meet expectations?

- The CYPSPG won the Scottish Executive Excellence – People Category Award for 2005
- The Leadership Team challenged their views about methods for engaging with stakeholders and took the opportunity to enable staff to lead the process thereby maximising the engagement of stakeholders
- Other departments within the Scottish Executive are engaging in similar processes and being assisted in doing this by staff from the CYPSPG therefore spreading best practice without requiring the ongoing support from external consultants
- The Scottish Executive have a team of facilitators who are able to work with large groups of people to achieve a common vision and understanding of how their work contributes to each other's successes
- All members of staff rated the staff engagement process as highly effective and continue to develop informal networks within the group
- Stakeholders have provided positive feedback on the process of engagement and commitment of the Scottish Executive
- An internal working group has been developed to be able to continue the process without the ongoing support of Questions of Difference

Q: What did the Scottish Executive learn from the relationship with Questions of Difference?

That public sector organisations can engage with a diverse range of stakeholders in an environment that does not need to be highly controlled and stage-managed. When staff are given the opportunity to use their passion for making a difference and the freedom to be creative, everyone becomes able to understand how their individual roles contribute to achieving collective goals. Questions of Difference learnt from the Leader of the CYPSPG that when a leader has a strong vision, they can create environments where people feel safe to journey into the unknown.