

Embedding participation



the **Howard League** for **Penal Reform**

U R Boss second Interim evaluation report

The Howard League for Penal Reform's U R Boss project was established to enhance its legal service for children and young people in the penal system; to campaign to change national and local policy and practice in the statutory and voluntary sectors working with children and young people; to change public attitudes to children and young people in the penal system; and to come up with new ideas about children and young people in the penal system. The views and experiences of young people are seen to be fundamental to achieving these aims and the reason for having a range of activities focusing on 'participation'.

The Big Lottery Fund (BIG) funds U R Boss.

The evaluation undertaken by De Montfort University has a range of objectives, among them:

- To document the development of the Howard League for Penal Reform's U R Boss project.
- To evaluate the charity's work to achieve each of the six identified outcomes for U R Boss, with particular reference to the development and application of youth participation strategies.
- To assess the impact of youth participation on the charity's practices and outcomes.

This report seeks to capture a sense of progress on these objectives between the commencement of U R Boss in July 2009 and Autumn 2011. Inevitably, further developments are in train, and will naturally supersede some of its findings.

Data Sources

This analysis is based primarily on a review of documentation within the Howard League which was supplemented by discussions with key staff. Reports and minutes of meetings give a limited picture of events, but do offer an overview of main developments and an indication of priorities within the U R Boss project and the Howard League. The minutes of the Executive Management Team (EMT), which meets on a weekly basis and is responsible for the strategy and day to day management of the Howard League, were not available for this work. Young people have not been involved in the production of this report as it was not felt appropriate at this stage.

Development of the U R Boss project

Origins of U R Boss

U R Boss is built on the work of the Howard League's legal service. It is founded on the principles of protecting the legal and human rights of young people in custody, and in ensuring the full participation of the young people in their own case, having a say in what and how things happen (Smith and Fleming, 2011). These two principles created the central tenets of the U R Boss programme.

The funding for U R Boss enabled the Howard League to appoint additional legal staff, which has in turn increased the number of young people assisted by the scheme. This work and its success were discussed in the first interim evaluation report 'Welfare + Rights' (ibid.).

Developing policies and procedures

The foundations for the project were well laid by the Howard League's Executive Management Team (EMT) which worked out the structure and resources needed for the project during the bidding process, and subsequently spent

considerable time in identifying changes that would be needed to the charity's internal structures and processes to support the project. Minutes of special EMT U R Boss meetings before the formal start of the project show a commitment to three principles: to involve as wide a range of young people as possible, including the most challenging young people; to have a variety of participation opportunities for young people; and to create a shadow management committee.

The need to address a range of issues in the organisation was acknowledged at this early stage, such as including support and supervision for young people involved in participation activities; a rewards scheme for young participants; staff training; and, information systems. Existing Howard League protocols were reviewed to assess their appropriateness for U R Boss, including policies for information sharing and confidentiality, consent and anonymity, risk assessment and safeguarding children. Work began on policy revision or creation as necessary.

The development of policies, protocols and systems has been central to establishment of the project. Much work was undertaken internally but where appropriate this was outsourced to other 'expert' organisations. For instance, in January 2010 an expert organisation was invited to develop a safeguarding policy and code of conduct for the U R Boss project and the Howard League. Policies have been developed in liaison with Howard League staff and the involvement of young people has been central. This has meant that many policies have only recently been finalised, though principles from the developing policies have been implemented in the interim.

The information system for work with legal clients has been the subject of regular review and modification to ensure that the participation work is properly recorded and available for analysis and reporting to BIG.

Staffing of U R Boss

The U R Boss funding allowed the appointment of nine staff during the first three years of the five year project: two additional lawyers and seven staff to support participation by young people. A further three staff were planned to support the wider U R Boss project in the next two years. The planned staff have been amended as U R Boss has rolled out. The first solicitor was appointed in February 2010, and following review of the needs of the legal team and negotiation with BIG, the second lawyer post was converted to two paralegal posts. The first was appointed in June 2010, and the second in July 2011.

There has been substantial turn-over of staff within the participation team during the life of the project so far, and it has rarely had a full complement of staff. This is perhaps inevitable in the development and establishment of such an innovative project. The first advice/advocacy officer, now called a youth participation officer, resigned soon after taking up post feeling the job was not as expected. A further appointment was made in April 2010, and this person subsequently resigned and was replaced in February 2011. The Project Co-ordinator resigned in July 2010 following which the post was re-graded to a Senior Project Co-ordinator, who was appointed in December 2010. The revision of this post followed a reassessment of the staffing needs of the participation team in the light of the series of resignations. These staff changes have had a mixed impact on the development of the project. On one hand, progress has stalled when the team has been under-staffed and new staff were being inducted, but on the other, new staff have injected fresh ideas into the project. The Policy Officer has played a crucial role in maintaining activity and consistency during these times.

Organisational growth

Discussions with the EMT highlighted the substantial growth in the size of the charity since the introduction of U R Boss and highlighted its significant impact on their work. They described moving from a small organisation with around 18 staff where

information flows are relatively easy and informal, to a medium sized organisation requiring more formal structures of management and communication.

The current staffing complement (31 October 2011) is 31 people. The 2006 Annual Report showed staff totalling 25: six fewer, but included seven graphic designers working on the 'Barbed' project, most of whom were prisoners and not based at the Howard League office. Thus the reality of the increase in staff numbers based at HQ was much more than is apparent from a simple comparison of numbers in annual reports. Staff numbers at HQ were stable at around 18 until 2009, when nine additional staff were appointed as part of U R Boss. At about the same time as U R Boss was established, the charity received a substantial donation from Lord Parmoor. Some of this was used to appoint new staff: a press officer and public affairs officer. Both these posts support the work of U R Boss as well as the wider work of the Howard League.

The increase in staff numbers has brought with it changes in skill sets, which has created new issues for recruitment processes, as has the increase in staff turnover which inevitably accompanies greater numbers of staff. The increase in volume and diversity of staffing led to a review of staff employment contracts and conditions, and following liaison with staff, a new contract and office handbook were introduced in 2011.

Drawing in expertise

Whilst the Parmoor legacy has allowed the Howard League to increase its staffing and the range and amount of work, the Board and EMT have considered their needs carefully and decided to make effective use of external resources and expertise wherever possible. A number of consultants and organisations have been employed to support U R Boss' development, such as a partnership agreement with a media development company and the contracting of a website developer. This approach has been adopted to give greater flexibility to respond to organisational needs rather than directly employing staff. However

this has not been without its difficulties. For instance, the external provider appointed to develop a safeguarding policy proved to be problematic and took much longer than anticipated.

The Howard League is also very successful in developing partnerships for campaigning activities and engaging support for particular pieces of work. In this way the charity is connecting with many external organisations, enabling them to spread the word of participation. This has drawn in specific expertise as needed and also widened knowledge and interest about U R Boss, as have specific briefings and presentations to a range of bodies such as the Youth Justice Board. Plans for leaflets, bulletins and a project website were set in motion towards the end of the first year of the project (June 2010) and reached fruition just over a year later.

U R Boss' participation work has generated interest from other organisations wanting to learn from its experience. One of the earliest requests came from the Metropolitan Police who wanted some input about young people's experiences of their treatment in police custody.

U R Boss as part of the Howard League

Initially the management responsibility for the U R Boss project lay with the Chief Executive. In January 2010 this was transferred to the Legal Director; although the Chief Executive clearly retained a keen interest.

U R Boss was located within the legal team because it was so closely linked to the legal work with young people. The potential tension between undertaking the legal work and recruiting young people for U R Boss participation activities was discussed and procedures for maintaining separateness in paperwork and the mind of the client developed. This worked well initially, but as the project developed and its work required greater involvement of other agencies and non-legal clients structural problems emerged. In the autumn 2010 the EMT decided to move the U R Boss management to the public affairs and policy

arm of the charity and day to day management of the project to the Director of Campaigns.

The Board of Trustees and the EMT determines the strategic direction of the Howard League. The structure of the Board of Trustees has been reviewed during the life of the U R Boss project, though not as a direct consequence of it. It currently has four sub-committees: the Campaigns Committee, the Legal Committee, the Research Committee, and the Finance and Personnel Committee. These mirror the three internal staff teams: the public affairs and policy team, the legal team and the finance and corporate affairs team. There is no internal research team, but this work is supported across the organisation and has the external support of a separately organised Research Advisory Group. The Campaigns Committee oversees U R Boss.

The U R Boss business plan stated that a staff structure had been developed to integrate U R Boss workers in each of its three existing staff teams, with a common managerial focal point at senior (assistant director) level giving the project both a sense of legitimacy and a coherent structure within the organisation.

Despite the intention to integrate, minutes of U R Boss meetings and reports to BIG suggest that it is understood and managed essentially as a separate project. U R Boss is reported as a standard item at the weekly EMT meeting, and reports to the Board of Trustees from the Chief Executive include U R Boss as a distinct item. This separation ensures a focus on the project and its needs, but at the same time tends to reinforce the separateness of the project and may impede integration and U R Boss processes becoming a normal way for the charity to work in the future. It is difficult to assess how staff, outside the U R Boss participation team, have been involved in participation work.

The initial location of daily management responsibility for U R Boss within the legal team made the link with legal work clear, but also reinforced the notion that the expansion of the legal work was a dominant aim of the project. The work of the legal team historically

tended to be seen as separate to rest of the Howard League's work, as reflected in staff comments in the first interim report (Smith and Fleming 2011). The initial placing of U R Boss in the legal team may have contributed to its separateness. Since the move to the public affairs and policy team, the focus of U R Boss has shifted to developing participation activities. While this has generated greater co-ordination between participation activity and the Howard League's wider work, it seems to have simultaneously led to a separation from the legal work of the project. U R Boss and legal team meetings minutes suggest these teams are currently working fairly separately. This was reinforced by two independent reviews recently commissioned by the Trustees: the Review of Communications Function and Capability (April 2011), and the Review of Legal Work (July 2011)¹. The U R Boss team acknowledges the need for some re-integration of the legal and participation elements of the project.

Board of Trustees minutes suggested little direct involvement in U R Boss. Trustees receive a project report at each of their quarterly meetings, and a member of the Board is designated liaison for the project, but there is little evidence of active involvement of the Board in the development of the project. The success of the bid is noted in the January 2008 minutes, with no further discussion recorded about its work, potential or likely impact. In October 2010 the Board minutes note that day to day management of U R Boss had moved from the legal to the public affairs and policy team. Again no discussion was noted though the issue was discussed in more detail by the respective Trustee sub-committees. This was generally felt to be appropriate during U R Boss' developmental stages and greater involvement of the Board was planned over the next phase.

There have been other structural changes at the Howard League during the life of U R Boss, including expansion and changes in the Board of Trustees and more formalisation of meetings and communication structures. These have arisen for a variety of reasons. Receipt of the aforementioned legacy has given long term security to the organisation and

the ability to expand its work. The Board has increased its membership, partly in response to Charity Commission requirements and partly to strengthen support for the legal work. They have also restructured their sub-groups and meetings to respond to the growth of work of the Howard League, and in particular have established a committee to support an increased research agenda which will be funded from the legacy.

Participation and campaigning

The notion of participation, and what it means for a campaigning organisation such as the Howard League, is an ongoing development. The aim is to involve young people in as much of the Howard League's work as possible including having a role in the organisation's strategic management. This has been attempted since the start of the work, though it has not been without its challenges and hiccups. For instance, young people have been involved in U R Boss staff recruitment by being consulted about job descriptions for participation staff. When asked about the job title for the advice/advocacy worker, their suggestion was 'Agent' to emphasise the role in supporting young people. This was agreed and attributed to the first person appointed, but it soon became clear that the job title had led to confusion about the nature of the role, and may have put off some potential applicants. The EMT decided to change the title to 'Youth Participation Officer' upon re-advertisement, which led to substantially more interest in the post.

More recently there has been some tension between campaigning work and service delivery. In earlier annual reports emphasis is placed on campaigns built upon the legal work service delivery, but the 2011 Review of Legal Work highlighted how opportunities for campaigning had not always been taken up. A Trustee meeting (late 2010) triggered this review as concerns were voiced about the impact of U R Boss on campaigns. The report identified that the legal team focused on service delivery rather than campaigning and education, that opportunities for cross departmental collaboration and strategy

¹ Both these reports are unpublished.

development were being missed, and that there was limited planning. The report offered a range of suggestions, arguing that “success of the organisation is built almost entirely on its ability to communicate, persuade and create understanding”. The interim evaluation report, ‘Welfare + Rights’, also found “there were no signs from young people’s responses of a clear connection between the legal service and the other activities involved. One young person thought he might have been involved in ‘something else’, but he was vague about the details”.

The value of U R Boss within a predominantly campaigning organisation is apparent as it ensures that the wider messages that emerge can be disseminated to achieve greatest impact. The recent food campaign (see below) is a good example of how work from young people can be taken forward, recruiting appropriate campaigning partners such as the Schools Food Trust and producing published articles which add a range of other evidence to the views and experience of young people.

A more service delivery oriented organisation would have been less likely to achieve this. Within the Howard League generally, the legal service and participation activities are also seen as a means to an end. They provide material for high profile cases and campaigning which is aimed at providing good outcomes for individual young people and young people generally. Indeed, it was anticipated that the voice of children would enhance the Howard League’s campaigning messages. Although the messages emerging from young people’s participation may be different to those that might be identified by adults or the Howard League itself, they can have greater impact. For instance, the food in prison campaign may seem a mundane issue for the Howard League, but in the words of the Chief Executive such a message is more insidious and powerful, “... it’s like Dickens, and shocking. It’s a powerful statement to say we’re not feeding children in prison.”

Food campaign

During participation activities which led to the report ‘Life Inside’ young people raised concerns about the use of breakfast packs in prisons. This led to the paper ‘Enough on their plate’. Many prisons issue these packs in the evening ready for the next morning. Some even gave out a week’s breakfast packs in one go to children in their cells. The children told us they were so hungry that they ate the contents straight away, leaving them without any food in the morning, which in turn affected their ability to concentrate and behave in education sessions.

Ostensibly this issue might be seen as contradictory to the Howard League’s radical aims in rethinking the use of imprisonment. Certainly the charity would not have considered such a subject for attention without the participation of the young people involved with ‘Life Inside’. But on consideration, staff took the position that poor diets and the damaging effects it had on children epitomised the conditions children face and the inability of prison to meet their needs. This was regarded as a spring-board to open a discussion on such wider issues.

The U R Boss team met with the Deputy Children’s Commissioner for England to raise these concerns and managed to gain the support of the School Food Trust. In June 2011, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner published ‘*I think I must have been born bad: emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people in the youth justice system*’, which contained the recommendation to end the practice of issuing breakfast packs in the evening. In November 2011 the government response to this report agreed to this recommendation. In addition, they committed to working with the School Food Trust with a view to discussing potential initiatives to enhance food provision in the entire secure estate.

Meeting youth participation targets

The targets and milestones in place for BIG are challenging, and the extent to which the project has been able to address the milestones is impressive. Progress reports to BIG identify how these objectives are being achieved, and feedback from the funders shows they are happy with the way in which the project is developing.

The design of U R Boss allows several milestones and targets to be addressed simultaneously. The BIG reporting requirements have ensured reflection, focus and planning within the project, but while helping project development these targets may blinker thinking about identifying other achievements and learning points. To this end, the project milestones have been renegotiated with BIG to bring them more in line with the wider work and aspirations of the project.

The original targets placed great emphasis on the enhanced provision of legal and welfare services for young people, with the title of the project being 'U R Boss: legal service shaped by young people in custody'. While funding for the legal service is derived from a mix of BIG, the Legal Services Commission and charity sponsors, all the work of the legal team is understood as U R Boss work. This approach is endorsed by BIG. The BIG funding enabled the Howard League to appoint additional legal staff, though there have been gaps in provision caused by vacancies and maternity leave. Nonetheless, much effort has gone into making the legal service more widely known and in extending the support offered through the helpline as well as helping individual young people with their specific legal cases. However, there has not been the anticipated increase in new clients or cases accepted by the team. There has actually been a slight decrease, with 45 new clients bringing 151 new cases in the first year of the project and 39 new clients bringing 145 new cases in the second year of the project. These legal cases often take a long time to resolve and the number of new cases may have been limited by the existing ongoing caseload of the solicitors. These figures also say nothing about the nature and complexity

of the cases, or of the breadth and intensity of the work undertaken with and for these young people, but they are potentially worrying and worthy of attention. In terms of welfare support there are no figures available. The reports to BIG explain that the support "process is not formalised as a client support plan, but effectively functions as such" (Project Outcome 6, Year 2 report).

The focus of the project was presented as the legal service and accompanying pastoral care and the first interim evaluation report highlights the expectation that it would be the 'hub' of U R Boss. This does seem to have diminished as a focus, with the greater part of discussion and strategy-making now focusing on participation activities for young people. This shift in the emphasis is not formally acknowledged in documentation. It may be that the project is working as intended, and the BIG reporting requirements led to the presentation of U R Boss achievements in a relatively limited format. On the other hand, the original bid documents commit the project to substantial service delivery targets, which may prove to be unrealistic and could draw its work in an unintended direction, towards service delivery and away from campaigning. Tension between these aspects of UR Boss is to be expected and if used constructively can be productive for both elements. However, there are suggestions that the tension has proved to be counter-productive at some points and this does need to be managed carefully. Clear communication between the legal and U R Boss teams and their directors and shared objectives will enhance the positive.

Impact of youth participation on the charity's practices and outcomes

The aspiration for the project is that participation, particularly young people's participation, becomes embedded within the whole of the work of the Howard League. There is evidence that Howard League staff not directly part of the U R Boss team are starting to think in this way, and resources such as the Voice and Influence database are being developed to facilitate their use of young people's perspectives.

Participation by young people can potentially impact at a range of levels within the U R Boss project and within the Howard League more widely. There are a number of areas where the role of participation² can be charted:

Individual service delivery through the legal work: The first interim report (Smith and Fleming, 2011) considered individual young people's participation in their legal cases, and it was clear that young people appreciated the person centred approach of the service, the effort that was made to help them to understand the issues and the process, and that they very much felt themselves to be a part of the process and decision making in their individual case.

Policy campaigns: Young people have had substantial impact identifying messages for U R Boss campaigns as well as being very much involved in designing and producing the delivery mechanisms for these campaigns (e.g. reports, films). However the extent to which they participate in decisions about the ways in which those messages are delivered (e.g. type of events and attendance) is less clear, especially where the intended audience comprised of powerful adults such as policy makers and practitioners in the criminal justice system.

Staff have described how the issues young people have identified as important themes for campaigning are different to those the Howard League would have identified (see case study regarding food above). It is perhaps inevitable that the young people who have lived day to day experience of custody would identify more everyday issues, and this is a strength of the participative approach: the young people's lived experience and their stories make the issues real. Whilst there is a potential tension as such, issues could be seen as part of the Howard League agenda for radical change in the criminal justice system, critical review of the reflections of young people can reveal the synthesis between children's views and the aims of the organisation.

The Howard League's campaigning activity addresses the well-being of all involved in the

criminal justice system, and many campaigns and projects relate to adults. So far young people have not been invited to participate in developing such campaigns, but this is a question under review.

Strategic: In the early planning of U R Boss there was a strong commitment to involving young people in the recruitment processes for U R Boss staff, and in the review, revision and creation of internal policies to ensure they were appropriate to support young people's participation. Young people were involved in this early work, but the revision and creation of policies has taken some time and it is not clear to what extent young people have been involved in the latter stages of the work. This question highlights one of the dilemmas for young people's participation on an ongoing basis.

The reality of these young people's lives mean that contact is frequently lost or they want only short-term involvement with the project, which raises an important question about participation. If the young people who originally contributed are no longer available to participate, should a different group of young people be recruited to continue the work? This could potentially create problems if their views are different to the initial contributors, although effective participation in any context should be designed to accommodate, and where possible resolve, differences of opinion.

U R Boss has impacted upon the work of the Howard League more generally through the range of policies that have had to be introduced or modified to support its work. The safeguarding policy and information sharing/confidentiality policy are two examples of policies that now apply to the Howard League as a whole not just to the work of U R Boss.

Structural: Young people have had little input into the structures of U R Boss or the legal team. Several changes have occurred here: staff changes, role and responsibility revisions, and movement of U R Boss from the legal team to the campaigns team, but there is no evidence that young people have been involved

in any of these decisions. Their involvement may not have been appropriate, but the extent to which young people could have a role in these processes should be discussed.

Governance: A young people's advisory group is regularly discussed as a means of enabling young people to contribute to the governance of U R Boss, but establishing this group has proved more difficult than anticipated. This is partly linked to staff changes at crucial times and to the challenges of finding young people willing and able to make a commitment to such activity. There are also issues in selecting and equipping young people to be able to effectively and fully participate in such work. However, there is no record of any discussion with young people about their participation in an advisory group or whether it is the best means to achieve this aim. Young people may have alternative suggestions. To ensure diverse and geographic input, as well as to encourage continuity of contact, satellite groups are planned to link with the advisory group.

U R Boss aims to work in partnership with young people through meaningful participation. Structures for participation are purposely not definitive or finalised as they will be "developed in partnership with, led and guided by young people" (Participation Strategy). However, staff need to be clear about the limits of participation; being aspirational but not overambitious. The space for flexibility to respond to young people's participation needs to be balanced with clarity about objectives.

Participation by young people is a clear objective for the Howard League alongside its legal service and campaigning activities. The participation and voice of young people is valued and actively sought on many issues, though this can create a tension with the Howard League's ability to respond quickly. The recent development of a Voice and Influence database is one way of enabling young people's experiences and opinions to be incorporated into campaigning activities at short notice. This database also helps to ensure that stories and voices are not lost when participation is difficult.

The Howard League is not primarily a service delivery organisation. This raises issues for developing participation structures as young people do not routinely visit the offices or have regular contact. The team has been reliant on criminal justice agencies, primarily custodial institutions and youth offending teams for contact with young people. Given the Howard League's critical campaigning stance, it is not always welcome in these environments. These issues are exacerbated by the current economic and structural pressures on criminal justice agencies. The terms of young people's involvement with the criminal justice system, such as licence conditions, also impact on young people's availability for participation. Alternative avenues have been explored such as community groups.

The U R Boss team acknowledges that participation should be a symbiotic relationship, offering benefits to the young people and to the organisation, and a rewards policy has been created to reflect this. However it is not clear to what extent the participation work is structured to allow adults to learn from young people and to act on that learning. It is not easy to avoid the conundrum that adults know best what young people need to enable them to participate, particularly about the 'how' of doing things. It cannot be expected that young people would have ideas about campaigning activities without some prior knowledge of what these might entail, which means that these activities are usually adult led in consultation with young people. On the other hand, the recent food in prison campaign suggests that sometimes young people are able to take the lead in setting the agenda, with support from practitioners with more experience of the 'nuts and bolts' of effective campaign activity. Staff described the mutuality of the relationship as having a responsibility to introduce issues to young people as well as having space and flexibility for issues raised by young people. This does not mean accepting everything that young people raise at face value, but exploring the issues with them in depth to see how they fit with the charity's principles and that there is a practical means to take them forward.

Conclusion

U R Boss has been cast as a dedicated legal service with pastoral care and advocacy together with building capacity for young people's participation to comment on and influence wider policy and practice. It also aims to be educational for policy makers (national and local), practitioners working with young offenders, and the general public. These three strands of work have been the focus for the development of the project since its inception.

The legal service has expanded and maintained its commitment to young people being in control of their case. Across U R Boss and the Howard League there is clear commitment to young people and their participation to address concerns about the criminal justice system. Despite some setbacks U R Boss has, to date, substantial achievements in all aspects of the project. The regular report to BIG highlights U R Boss' success in the 'what' of the project (i.e. engaging young people and developing campaigns). However, it appears that valuable learning from the 'how' U R Boss is achieving its aims and what approaches are most successful have yet to be demonstrated. This reflects BIG's reporting needs. Howard League staff, as well as other organisations, would value learning from the experience of the U R Boss team about the most effective ways to engage young people and the negotiation processes to achieve balance within the relationship.

U R Boss has led to a range of organisational change, but this change has also been driven by the Howard League's increased financial capacity, the Legal Services Commission's expectations, and the Charity Commission's requirements. It is not easy, nor necessary to separate out these changes, but the Howard League's increased size has meant that the informal ways of the past have had to be replaced by more formal internal structures. There is some concern that this has reduced the organisation's ability to be responsive, but so too has the central commitment to young people's participation which has a tendency to increase timescales, for perfectly understandable reasons.

The 'Hear by Right' standards framework (Badham and Wade, 2010) could be used to review the extent to which participation is embedded in the working of U R Boss and the whole organisation; and to identify areas for further development. The framework was developed for service delivery organisations, and discussions with staff highlight how difficult participation is for a non service delivery organisation. It is important that the range and outcomes of young people's participation are fully discussed both with young people and within the Howard League. A review of the framework could provide a useful structure for considering the appropriateness of young people's participation in all aspects of the Howard League's work, which has a wider range of stakeholders than children and young people. Consideration could also be given to the extent to which the participation of other groups may be appropriate for Howard League activities.

There have been tensions in the development of U R Boss, some of which are unresolved, but much has been established and the time is right to reflect on the aims of the Howard League and the role of U R Boss. U R Boss is a ground-breaking project that has sprung from the innovative legal service which is continually developing, changing and learning. This is guided by clear annual implementation plans. This report reflects on 'work in progress' in terms of both U R Boss and the Howard League as a developing organisation, and in noting some of the challenges encountered, and not always fully addressed, it acknowledges that progress has been made. Continuing developments show a genuine commitment to pursuing a creative approach to embedding participatory principles at the heart of both the project and the organisation, notwithstanding the inevitable difficulties to be faced in realising these ideals in practice.

The Howard League for Penal Reform is the oldest penal reform charity in the world, working for less crime, safer communities and fewer people in prison. Staff are justly proud of its

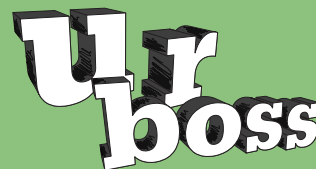
radical campaigning traditions. Its campaigning demonstrates a long-standing commitment to involving the people it supports and the representation of their views wherever possible. This has been particularly true of campaigns related to the penal treatment of young people, such as violence in penal institutions for teenagers under 18 (Howard League, 1995). The U R Boss project was designed to enable this participation to become more focused and integral to all the Howard League's work. The young people on behalf of whom the Howard League campaigns are doubly disadvantaged, not only in being unable to have a voice about the situations in which they find themselves, but also in not knowing or being able to access their rights in such circumstances. The Big Lottery funding has enabled the Howard League to accelerate and expand its work in addressing these disadvantages. It has also allowed the development of its participation activities in a more structured and informed way that ensures the quality and impact of participation for both the young people and the organisation. This experience and the learning it is generating will be invaluable for other organisations wanting to follow a similar path.

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The Howard League for Penal Reform appointed a team from the Centre for Social Action at De Montfort University to evaluate U R Boss. This is the second of five interim reports. This report was prepared by Jean Hine, reader in criminology; Jennie Fleming, Director of Centre for Social Action and reader in participatory research and social action; and Professor Roger Smith.



U R BOSS is a project led by young people for young people that is part of the Howard League for Penal Reform. It offers legal support and participation opportunities for children and young people aged 10 to 24 years old in the penal system, and those recently released into the community.

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