

A Guide to  
**The Effective Involvement of  
Children and Young People**  
Resource Pack

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## 1.WHY?

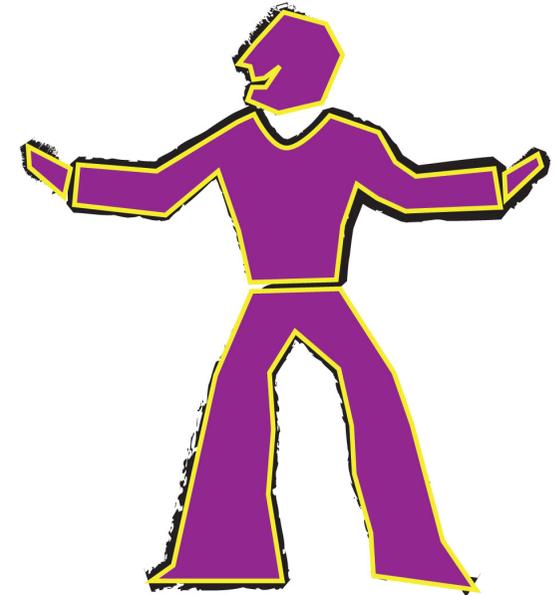
# Why are we asking children and young people their views?

Every child, young person or parent/carer is a member of society. Organisations provide services for people living in that community or society so it's important that they are consulted and involved in the provision of services. Services need to be inclusive, relevant, cost effective, meet their users needs, improve things, and be accessible. You will be able to check all these things by involving children and young people & their families. Although reference is made to parent and carers views and involvement, this guide is primarily concerned about the effective involvement of children and young people.

Since the passing of the Children Act in 2004, there has been a growing emphasis on services actively involving children, young people and parents/carers in the commissioning, development and evaluation of services.

Increasingly Central and Local Government is interested in measuring outcomes rather than focussing on performance measures. They want to know about users' perceptions of the services they receive and their views on how things can be improved. Particular attention will be given to how services are implementing the five Every Child Matters outcomes:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Achieving Economic Well Being



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### Parental participation

Parents, carers and families play a vital part in the development and delivery of services. This will ensure that a service is developed reflecting local needs and hopes and supports families to access the service. Parents and carers are the experts and their child's primary educator.

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This convention contains 52 standards that set out the Rights of a Child. Most countries including the United Kingdom have signed up to the convention. Many countries use the standards wholly or in part to promote children and young people's involvement. The standards of most relevance to the participation of service users are:

Article 12: Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13: Children and young people have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others.

Article 17: Children and young people have the right to receive, seek and give information.

Article 23: Disabled children and young people have the right to active participation in their community.

Article 2: Requires all of the rights in the convention on the Rights of the Child to be implemented for every child, without discrimination.

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### Benefits to participation

The benefits of participation can be seen from two aspects:

- **Benefits for children and young people and parents**
- **Success of projects and initiatives develop sustainability.**

Improved skills and knowledge ranging from practical skills such as presenting ideas, speaking in and to groups, writing and preparing reports, newsletters, letters, posters, negotiation and public speaking.

Improved confidence, in feeling valued, being of some worth to friends and peers, and feeling successful (not all young people can be academically successful, arty or sporty).

- Developing relationships with other children and young people and parents/carers.
- A feeling of ownership over the services they access.
- Greater awareness of children and young people's rights.
- Greater awareness of participation and decision making
- Benefits for projects, organisations and management boards.
- Improved, better targeted and more effective services for children and young people, and their families.
- It supports and complements service planning, development and evaluation.
- Meets user's needs more effectively.
- Improved partnership working.
- Best use of financial resources.
- Meets government objectives and inspection processes.

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### Barriers to Participation

Involving children and young people and parents/carers in decision-making makes good sense but can become difficult for a variety of different reasons. These may include:

- Children and young people and parents/carers not wanting to get involved.
- Lack of staff, resources, motivation or time within your organisation or project to involve children and young people and parents/carers
- Communication barriers such as language and cultural differences.
- Lack of skills to listen, and work with children and young people and parents/carers.
- Lack of knowledge on safeguarding and concerns over ethical constraints of involving children and young people and parents/carers.
- Working flexibly with children and young people and parents/carers. Some issues are: access, time, venues etc.
- Lack of confidence in knowing how to involve children and young people and parents/carers meaningfully.
- Lack of awareness of the benefits to be gained.
- Over enthusiasm by workers who believe they know what is needed and how it should be delivered due to their experience.



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## 2.WHAT?

# What do we want to find out from children and young people?

**The Council need to identify and to be clear exactly what they want to involve children and young people in and the required outcomes.**

1. Be clear about what you want as a Council, and be open with children and young people as to the level of influence that they can expect to have in the services that are provided for them.
2. Once you have set your objectives, consider and experiment with a range of options and methods.
3. Use information to raise awareness and encourage support - do not do anything without publicity within the organisation, and externally if possible
4. Try to involve everybody but do not assume that children and young people are a homogenous group
5. Consider what resources your organisation has to offer and how other organisations may be able to support you in terms of staffing, transport, equipment etc.
6. Ask young people where and when they want to meet - ask them to advise YOU
7. Remember that children and young people have busy lives and develop new interests. They can become disillusioned by the time wasted on process and lose interest.
9. Take into account children and young people's previous and current relationships with your organisation
10. Be prepared for mistakes, acknowledge you are learning and accept criticism
11. Acknowledge that initiatives and projects can be established by children and young people themselves
12. Feedback to the children or young people you are working with how their information has impacted. If you don't they will be less willing to get involved in the future.

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The tables below provide a helpful guide and checklist.

Children and young people could be involved in a wide range of decisions, for example setting and reviewing policy, recruitment, budget, the environment, local planning etc. Addressing the following questions will help to ensure that both the process and outcomes are positive. This list is not exhaustive but only a start as there are likely to be other considerations linked to the circumstances of the Local Authority, its demographic and social background affecting children and young people.

Consider	Example
<b>What are we consulting about?</b>	
<p><i>It is important to be clear about the objectives and the boundaries.</i></p> <p>By identifying the benefits that you are primarily interested in achieving through children's and young people's participation you will be able to set clear objectives and success criteria on which to base and evaluate their participation.</p> <p><i>Involve children and young people in important decisions.</i></p>	<p>New recreational facilities in the community? Sports and leisure opportunities? Places to go and things to do? Improving community cohesion and anti-social behaviour? How to reduce graffiti and litter problems? How to feel safe within the community?</p>
<b>Whom do we consult?</b>	
<p>The answer to the 'what' question above will inform this, so that children and young people who will be impacted by the service can contribute to its design.</p>	<p>All children and young people in the Borough? In a specific part of town? In specific types of neighbourhoods/schools? Specific groups or ages?</p>

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Consider	Example
<b>At what stage?</b>	
<p><i>This will be informed by the 'what' and 'whom' questions above.</i></p> <p><i>Getting this right will impact on the level of children and young people's commitment to the process and the amount of learning they get out of it.</i></p> <p><i>Bring them as close to the decision-maker as possible.</i></p>	<p>It may not be possible to involve children and young people at all stages of the decision-making process. However, as a general rule, it is best to involve them as early as possible. The earlier they get involved, the clearer their understanding of all the issues: required outcome, limitations on outcomes and their own involvement, time requirements and their rights and responsibilities in the process.</p>
<b>How much power do children and young people have?</b>	
<p><i>Set out clearly their role in the decision-making process. Be open about the limits to ideas and recommendations e.g. how their role relates to that of others involved in the process.</i></p>	<p>It is crucial to be clear about the level of control to give to children and young people to see the process to the end. Some decisions may require greater involvement of adults than others. So identify the powers being shared as well as those being completely delegated. Make it clear how each stage of the decision-making process relates to the next.</p>
<b>Are there any equal opportunities issues which need to be considered?</b>	
<p><i>Consider the diversity of those being involved and ensure it is representative. The children and young people involved in decision – making must be representative – in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, disability, culture, religion, language or the area in which they live.</i></p>	<p>Are we talking to children and young people with special needs? Are boys and girls fairly represented? What about children and young people in rural areas? Are we only talking to articulate youngsters and not enough to the less vocal, or less motivated? What more can we do to provide opportunity for all?</p>

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Consider	Example
<b>Which method, or combination of methods, is most appropriate?</b>	
<p><i>Select the method carefully to involve hard-to-reach groups and the very young. *Involve children and young people in choosing the method where appropriate.</i></p> <p>By offering different kinds of opportunities for participation a local authority or school will help to facilitate and encourage the participation of a wide range of children and young people</p>	<p>Youth councils/forums? School councils? Web-based intranet surveys? Videos? Questionnaires? Peer-support systems? Voting? Informal workshops? Role play?</p> <p>The method used will be partially determined by the answer to 'How much power do children and young people have?'</p> <p>Make ways of participating relevant to the group of children and young people.</p>
<b>Who will manage and conduct the process?</b>	
<p><i>Involving children and young people in managing the process will command their trust.</i></p> <p><i>Use existing mechanisms, e.g. youth councils/forums, to do this.</i></p>	<p>Is it appropriate and necessary for an adult alone, or working with some children and young people to be responsible for the process?</p>
<b>What resources do we have to do this?</b>	
<p><i>Think about budgets and training</i></p>	<p>Consider the financial, material and staff resources you need. Which resources already exist within the authority? What more is needed? Can we work in partnership with any other organisations?</p>

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Consider	Example
<b>Do children and young people understand the decision-making process?</b>	
<p><i>If children and young people are to influence decisions, they need to understand how they are made.</i></p> <p>Training for children and young people to enhance their participation skills is crucial. All children and young people should be able to benefit from this training, not just those currently directly involved in offering their views or representing their peers.</p>	<p>Do the children and young people know who is involved in the process? Who has the final say? Who else is being consulted? What procedures have to be followed?</p>
<b>Are there any challenges and risks?</b>	
<p><i>Consider the organisation's needs.</i></p>	<p>Consider what might go wrong to either delay or stop the process. Establish fall-back plans. Ensure that children and young people are aware of the challenges and risks.</p>
<b>When?</b>	
<p><i>Flexibility is the catchword. Convenience for children and young people is important.</i></p> <p><i>Use what works best for you.</i></p>	<p>If planning a one-off consultation, think about timing and if it can be combined with anything else e.g. local surveys, adult consultations or mock elections during local elections. Consultation need not happen during school hours or when children and young people are likely to be engaged in social events.</p>
<b>What about feedback?</b>	
<p><i>Feedback needs to be timely to avoid children and young people becoming disillusioned.</i></p>	<p>Children and young people naturally want to know how their views have been taken into account, and if not, why not. So identify what has changed as a direct result of the process and inform them. This needs to be presented in an easy-to-understand format.</p>

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Consider	Example
<b>Where do we meet?</b>	
<p>Consider arranging meetings on children and young people's own territory, or more comfortable settings for them.</p> <p>Convenience helps the smooth running of the process.</p>	<p>Accessibility and transportation in terms of distance and mobility/special needs are critical. If meetings are required, consider accompanying children and young people to venues, especially those not likely to be familiar with the area.</p>
<b>Is it fun and interesting for children and young people ?</b>	
<p>Keep a balance between having fun and serious work.</p>	<p>Ensure work is attractive so that children and young people can enjoy doing it. If children and young people feel they are not being challenged by the process they are likely to lose trust in its importance.</p>
<b>What rewards for children and young people?</b>	
<p>Do not assume that because 'it is good for children and young people, there is no need to tell them what the rewards are.</p>	<p>Why should they be involved, what's in it for them? For example, sitting on the school council or youth council for the local council contributes to aspects of citizenship education and can be recorded in a pupils' Progress Files, or as part of the course work for the GCSE (Short course) for Citizenship studies. The Hear By Right standard recognises that alternative types of rewards can be offered such as certificates, good news in local press.</p>
<b>Are we sharing good practice with other organisations?</b>	
<p>Learn from other people's mistakes and successes.</p>	<p>There is some excellent work taking place. It is useful to visit some of the websites identified for some good practice.</p>

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## 3.WHO!

# Who do we want to engage with?

**Do we want to find out the views of all children and young people?**

**Is there a particular target group such as teenage parents, those from an ethnic minority background, those children and young people with disabilities?**

Depending on who you want to engage with, in regards to age and ability will depend on the type of approach to take.

It is important to understand that a one size fits all approach is not suitable for different age groups and those who have additional needs. Questionnaires for example may be helpful if you want to obtain a general consensus of opinion with a large group of children and young people but the style will need to be adapted. Where more qualitative data is required on a specific topic such as issues facing teenage parents or those who are in the care of the Local Authority, focus groups may be more appropriate.

The appendices contain some useful resources which will guide users to effective methods for engaging with different groups of children and young people. This ranges from engaging with:

- Babies
- Young children
- Children and young people from different faiths and cultures
- Those with communication difficulties
- Disabled children and young people

The documents within the appendices are a sample of the different guidance that is available and further information can be obtained from organisations who have particular insight into the most effective methods of involvement for specific groups of children and young people.

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## 4. WHEN?

# When do we want to get the information by?

**The Children and Young People's Officers Group need to be clear and develop a plan detailing the consultation/involvement requirements of all the different departments within the Council.**

There needs to be at least a 3 month build in time depending on the extent of the required involvement of children and young people. Where the Council wants to develop a questionnaire or survey for example that is distributed through schools and other community groups, time will be needed to develop a questionnaire that is suitable to the different levels of age and ability of children and young people. Although an original draft of the questionnaire can be drafted by an adult, it would be advisable to discuss the wording and the style of the questionnaire with a group of young people.

Thought will also have to be given as to how you want to publicise the opportunity for children and young people to be involved.

You will also need to think about school holidays and busy exam times for children and young people. Although the school holidays may not be the best time to obtain quantitative data, with the provision of school holiday activities, there may be the opportunity to obtain some valuable qualitative material. But again, staff resources within the Council are limited and you need to think about whether other agencies could support you in gaining the information that you require.



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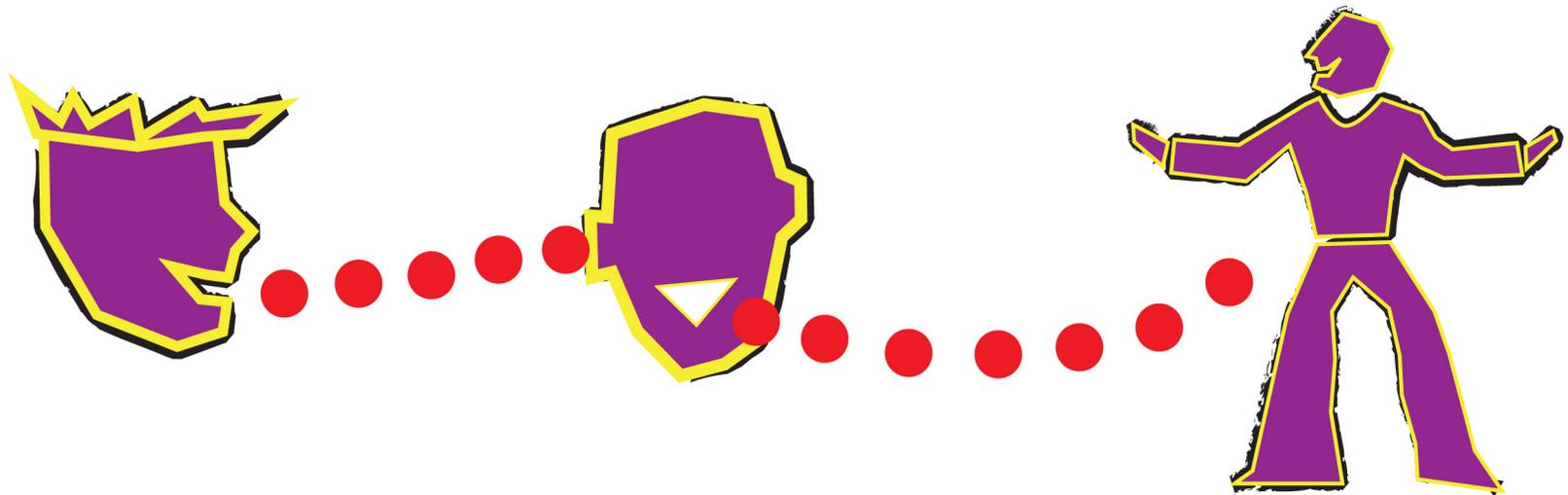
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One key question is whether there is the opportunity to link with other organisations and agencies within the District or even at a County level. Many organisations need to involve children and young people are part of their reviewing and service planning arrangements. There is a danger over loading children and young people with consultation documents. There is the potential in gaining a greater understanding of the links between different aspects of a young persons' life. For example, how could the promotion and encouragement of children and young people to participate in sporting activities have on their health and emotional well being?



Once you have obtained the information, you will need to think about how you are going to let children and young people know what you have done with the information.

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## 5. HOW?

# How are we going to do it?

Involving children and young people in planning participation and consultation events or holding an event for children and young people requires careful planning. You should consider the following guidelines before the event.

All events taking place within an organisation are capable of being planned and delivered through participative methods and sharing the decisions and responsibility of the event itself. Children and young people and parents/carers can be involved right from the idea of an event itself in terms of:

- what would go down well with the “Target” group;
- when, where, cost, time,
- making the telephone calls
- visits to explore possibilities
- deciding on the event and its promotion: posters, local radio, press, school assembly, word of mouth, selling tickets, etc
- ensuring any licensing requirements are considered
- through event delivery: staffing,
- the evaluation itself - not only of the event but how they have managed and what they have learnt for next time because if the adults involved have supported the children and young people or parents/carers there will be a next time and probably pressure from other people to want who become involved and plan their “event”.

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Many organisations/projects or workers are worried about setting up and planning safe events/ activities for children and young people and their families. There is no specific guidance that suggests one approach will suit all organisations due to the nature and specific group you will be working with.

The Children and Young People's Officers Group planning the consultation and participation event/exercise should be clear about the purpose, aims and objectives.

They will need to determine:

- Methods for involving children and young people in the planning process taking into consideration their age, experience and needs of the group, in other words, realistic involvement. The attachments contained to this document will provide you with different ideas of how to engage with children and young people. Using non traditional methods as well as forums and surveys.
- Management of the event

### MANAGEMENT OF THE EVENT

Set up a **planning group** representing all the interested parties and support. This should include where appropriate, young people, staff, community heads, and service providers.

There are a number of key challenges that will need to be decided right at the beginning of the discussion which will include a list of tasks which need to be completed. Encourage lots of ideas. Use post it notes so everyone has a say.

- Put ideas onto a time line working from the event back to NOW. See the setting up of the event as a 'project'.
- Group the ideas together such as food, entertainment, stalls, games, paper work. Staff and volunteers can be grouped and take responsibility for an area which interests them.

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- Clearly plan your event allocating everyone tasks and deadlines.
- Publicity for the event - ensure that you include all the details about the event.
- Ensure you have the right staff for the event.
- For events you may need to obtain permission to use open space land and/or a licence depending on the type of event.
- A risk assessment of the venue should be undertaken.
- When you know everything that will be happening on the day you should then put all this detail together in a schedule for the day. This can be given out to inform people about what is happening on the day or for staff to know where and when they will be needed.
- At all events a health and safety briefing is important, this can be spoken or written. At events you should point out fire and first aid information, toilets, stewards and any other rules about alcohol or drugs.
- Documentation and Evaluation for your event must take place. Involve as many people as possible, the community, the stall holders and service partners and all those people who have planned and put together the event. This information and documentation will help you to improve in the future.

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### The practicalities of the event

There are 3 main stages:

#### 1. It's about making changes for children and young people

- Aims of the session, are they clear?
- Age of the group
- Relevant background of the participants
- Any specific needs to be taken into account to aid inclusivity e.g. accessibility, dietary, cultural needs
- Timing for the session and any breaks
- That you and the children/young people are not being used in any way that may be defined as tokenistic
- Who is responsible for what?
- That the children and young people are clear about what they are coming for
- Transport for children and young people
- Expenses are available in cash if required
- Are the refreshments suitable for children and young people?
- Can children and young people be involved in the facilitation?
- Are there enough breaks?
- Is the methodology appropriate for the age group?
- Is the time and day appropriate?
- Children protection procedures and confidentiality levels
- If appropriate, make sure the children and young people are aware of the level of confidentiality
- Any cultural barriers e.g. diet, customs

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### 2. Venue

- The space available you have to work in
- Is the venue accessible – what transport will you need, disability access?
- What equipment do you require – projector, induction loops?
- Is the venue young person friendly?
- The layout of the room
- Is the room comfortable including adequate heating, lighting and refreshment facilities?

### 3. Follow up

- How will the information be fed back and to whom/when?
- If long term, is the initiative sustainable
- How will the process be evaluated?
- Where will the information go and in what form
- How will the young people be able to follow up what happens

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### Safeguarding guidance in participation and active involvement

This document should be read in conjunction with the Leicestershire Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy of March 2008. That policy contains the broad explanation and duties of staff to report any areas of concern relating to the safety and welfare of children and young people.

This document provides guidance for staff on how to ensure the safety and welfare of children and young people during participation events as based on recommendations from Participation Network for England.

Safeguarding policies should be used to create an environment where there is no negligence or unnecessary exposure to avoidable risks. Where risks do need to be taken, safeguarding policies will ensure that they are calculated, carefully managed and communicated to both children, young people, their parents or carers and to paid staff and volunteers. They are not designed to stifle activities, eradicate all spirit of adventure from work programmes, or to replace the trust between the people in your organisation with that of suspicion.

The following is a practical list of things to consider in helping to plan any event that children and young people will be part of.

For a residential exercise you might need to look at all the headings but for an evening meeting you might only use a few. This list is not exhaustive but should provide you with a starting point for your planning and discussions:

(This information to be gained through conversations with the staff at the venue and associated paperwork).

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### 1. Venue

- Accessibility
- Fire procedures
- Additional facilities (is there a prayer room?)
- Staff resources (do they have a computer or phone lines?)
- Locks/ security arrangements
- Risk assessments (ask to see existing ones)
- Facilities: bedrooms, bathrooms (are they separate for boys and girls?)

### 2. Issues affecting individual children and young people

You must obtain this information from a consent form, either completed by the parent or carer if under 16 or by the young person.

- Allergies
- Illnesses/ medical conditions
- Medication
- Dietary requirements (medical/ religious)
- Disabilities
- Emergency contact details
- Knowledge/ history of the group, relationships, conflicts
- Ability to swim
- Other conditions e.g. vertigo, claustrophobia
- Permission to take and use photos/ video
- Event timings

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### 3. Activities

- Does the activity centre have an AALA licence (Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority)?
- What insurance arrangements are there?
- Are all the planned activities available/ possible?
- Are they appropriate to the group?
- How much will it cost?
- Is there a qualified leader?
- How long will each activity take?
- Where will they take place?
- What is the purpose of each activity (learning outcomes)?

### 4. Transport

- What method of transport is most appropriate?
- What is the capacity?
- What staff ratio is needed when travelling?
- If using a minibus, is the driver licensed/ MIDAS trained?
- Is the minibus's MOT, insurance and breakdown cover up to date?
- Find this information through the organisation you are hiring a minibus from, or decide if other transport is more appropriate.

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### 5. Staff and volunteers you are taking with you

NB You may know this information already but if the staff or volunteers are unknown to you and joining you for this activity, you will need to find out the following:

- What will their role be on the activity?
- What is their experience of residential?
- Are they qualified/ sufficiently experienced to lead the activity or take on their assigned role?
- Do you have a satisfactory CRB check on them?
- Have you received and checked satisfactory references for them?
- Do they have any knowledge of the group?
- Do you have a designated qualified first aider?
- Do you have their next of kin/ emergency contact details?
- Do they have a clear understanding of the organisation's policies and procedures and how to implement them? (If not, ensure that they are told where to find them e.g. have a poster/handbook for people not based within the organisation or coming in from a different area).

### 6. Undertaking a risk assessment

Risk assessment is an important factor in keeping children and young people safe.

The Council is under a legal obligation to take all reasonable steps to ensure a child's or young person's safety. Risk assessing all your working practices will provide an opportunity for you to enable wider safeguarding to be established.

Risk assessments should include any activity that might be taking place within your organisation or project, as well as those that will take place away from your usual meeting place.

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## 5 step guide

This guide should be used in conjunction with the Risk Assessment Form on Page 44.

1. Identify the potential hazards
2. All the people who might be affected by the hazards
3. All the necessary safety measures needed to be taken to address the potential safety hazards
4. What existing safety measures are in place and what else could be put in place
5. What steps will be taken in an emergency

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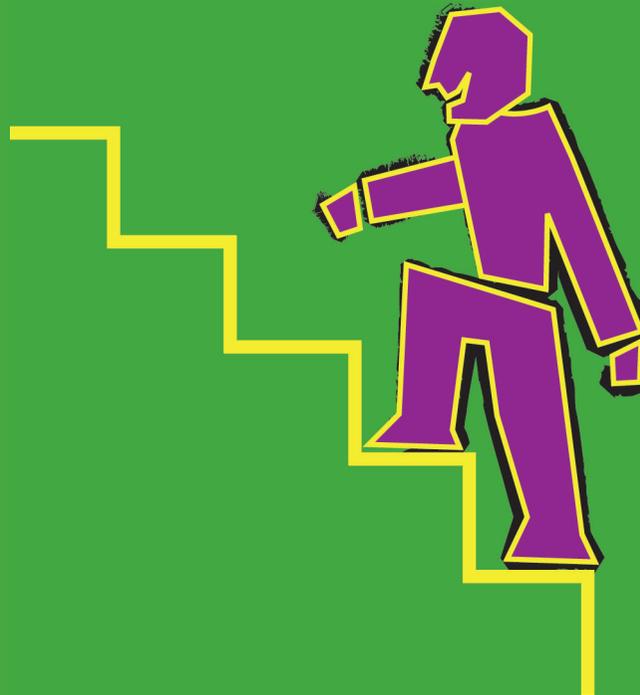
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# Frequently Asked Questions

### **What's in it for me and my users?**

There are lots and lots of benefits from involving children and young people and the wider community in decision making. For instance the Council will benefit by understanding and increased awareness of your user's needs which ultimately will mean better targeted and more effective services for children and young people, and parents/carers. Most of all, your relationship with those who use your service will most definitely improve. Those involved will benefit by having greater confidence, in feeling valued, being of some worth to friends and peers, and feeling successful.

### **Do I need consent for involving children and young people and parents/carers in decision making?**

Not normally if you're involving children and young people or parents/carers within your own organisations. Consent for their general involvement from their parents will be via their initial joining forms. The only time you would need consent for their involvement is for use of images such as photo's or any off-site activities.

If you are involving the wider community or children and young people, parents/carers not from your organisation then consent is required. There is no general consent therefore organisations consent forms will vary. It is worth adding a paragraph around consent for images on your particular forms if not already on there.

### **Is there a legal age by which children and young people or parents/carers can make decisions?**

Usually no, however take into account whether you are asking those involved what they think or whether they are actually making decisions about certain things. For instance you need to think about the appropriateness of a young child making a decision about services funding/money etc. Please note that usually a person needs to be a 16yrs+ to be a signatory on a committee bank account.

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### **What is the easiest way of involving children and young people or parents/carers?**

Start by asking them! - They will tell you how they wish to be involved. This will build up a relationship between you both, and then genuine involvement will become easier. Again you need to be clear about how much influence they will have and always feedback to them. There are many groups already set up within the district that you can use a potential resource such as parenting groups. The Bridges Directory will provide you with details of parents groups. Most schools have school councils which can act as a source for involving children and young people.

### **Can we pay for children and young people and parents'/carers involvement?**

Payment is a delicate issue and should be avoided. It is better for those involved to gain recognition via accreditation rather than a specific payment. There are many accreditations that those involved could achieve i.e., Millennium Volunteers, Youth Challenge Awards.

### **Are there pathways for those participating to be involved in wider democratic structures?**

Yes, more so for young people than for children and parents/carers. If you have a young person aged 12+ who wants to get involved in other things, locally, there are area youth forums in each district. From this young people can be elected onto the County Youth Council. Young people can then be elected onto the Members of Youth Parliament for the United Kingdom and have the opportunity to sit regionally and nationally.

For children and young people, there are opportunities to get involved in local and regional structures for consultations and the commissioning of services. Leicestershire have recognised that building pathways for all those that get actively involved in decision making is important and are looking at a coordinated approach to ensure pathways are developed.

### **How do I know I'm getting it right?**

There is no right or wrong way around involving children and young people and parents/carers. Those who want to get involved will determine this. However there are general principles and frameworks locally and nationally that can help you.

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### Where can I get support and advice?

There are lots of local and national organisations out there that can assist you in supporting users to be more actively involved. In the useful links and resources page there is a list of organisations and resources that also may be able to help you.

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Appendix A

# Introduction to practice standards for staff in children and young people's participation

## What are practice standards?

Practice standards are statements that describe an expected level of performance. These practice standards state what children and young people and others can expect of the Council in children and young people's participation practice. They are designed to apply to all the Council's participation work and represent minimum expectations of the ways in which staff will behave and operate. (These standards should be used in conjunction with the National Youth Agency Hear By Right Standards)

These practice standards have been developed through years of experience supporting children and young people's participation at both the local and global levels.

## Why practice standards?

The primary purpose of these practice standards is to ensure consistent, high quality children and young people's participation practice throughout the Council's programmes. They aim to provide a framework that gives guidance and direction first and foremost to field staff in continuously improving their participatory practice.

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*The standards can be used to:*

- assist the Council's staff in assessing their practice in children and young people's participation and identifying areas of improvement
- inform training and other approaches to competency that ensures that staff working with children and young people have the attitudes, skills and confidence required to deliver the practice standards
- provide a basis for accountability and challenge if practice falls below a certain standard
- review and evaluate current practice and identify goals for the future
- establish a safe and meaningful environment for the participation of children and young people and minimise the risk to children and young people from involvement in participatory practice
- share the Council's understanding of meaningful children and young people's participation with other organisations.

### **Using these practice standards**

These practice standards are intended to guide the practice of staff working to support children and young people's participation. Each standard is accompanied by a set of criteria that can be used as indicators to see whether or not the standard is being met.

The standards are designed to be relevant and achievable. The Council's staff should use these practice standards in conjunction with the Council's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult Policy 2008.

### **Guiding principles**

The Council supports meaningful, good quality children and young people's participation that gives children and young people a genuine opportunity to express their views, be involved in decisions or take action.

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The practice standards should be interpreted within the context of the following general principles derived from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Children and young people have rights to be listened to, to freely express their views on all matters that affect them, and to freedom of expression, thought, association and access to information.
- Measures should be put in place to encourage and facilitate their participation in accordance with their age and maturity.
- Participation should promote the best interest of the child/young person and enhance the personal development of each child/young person.
- All children and young people have equal rights to participation without discrimination.
- All children and young people have the right to be protected from manipulation, violence, abuse and exploitation.

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### Standard 1 - An ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability

#### What

Adult organisations and workers are committed to ethical participatory practice and to the primacy of children and young people's best interests.

#### Why

There are inevitable imbalances in power and status between adults and children and young people. An ethical approach is needed in order for children and young people's participation to be genuine and meaningful.

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### How to meet this standard

- Girls and boys are able to freely express their views and opinions and have them treated with respect.
- There is clarity of purpose about children and young people's participation and honesty about its parameters. Children and young people understand how much impact they can have on decision-making and who will make the final decision.
- The roles and responsibilities of all involved (children and young people and adults) are clearly outlined, understood and agreed upon.
- Clear goals and targets are agreed upon with the children and young people concerned.
- Children and young people are provided with, and have access to, relevant information regarding their involvement.
- Children and young people are involved from the earliest possible stage and are able to influence the design and content of participatory processes.
- 'Outside' adults involved in any participatory processes are sensitised to working with children and young people, clear about their role and willing to listen and learn.
- Organisations and workers are accountable to children young people for the commitments they make.
- Where the process of involvement requires representation from a wider group of children and young people, the selection of representatives will be based on principles of democracy and non-discrimination.
- The barriers and challenges that participating children and young people may have faced in other spheres of their lives are considered and discussed with the children and young people involved to reduce any potential negative impacts from their participation.

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### Standard 2 - Children and young people's participation is relevant and voluntary

#### What

Children and young people participate in processes and address issues that affect them – either directly or indirectly – and have the choice as to whether to participate or not.

#### Why

Children and young people's participation should build on their personal knowledge – the information and insights that children and young people have about their own lives, their communities and the issues that affect them.

Recognising their other commitments, children and young people participate on their own terms and for lengths of time chosen by them.

#### How to meet this standard

- The issues are of real relevance to the children and young people being involved and draw upon their knowledge, skills and abilities.
- Children and young people are involved in setting the criteria for selection and representation for participation.
- Children and young people have time to consider their involvement and processes are established to ensure that they are able to give their personal, informed consent to their participation.
- Children and young people's participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time they wish.
- Children and young people are involved in ways, at levels and at a pace appropriate to their capacities and interests.
- Children and young people's other time commitments are respected and accommodated (e.g., to home, work and school).

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- Ways of working and methods of involvement incorporate, and build on, supportive local structures, knowledge and practice and take into consideration social, economic, cultural and traditional practices.
- Support from key adults in children and young people's lives (e.g., parents/guardians, teachers) is gained to ensure wider encouragement and assistance for the participation of girls and boys.

### Standard 3 - A child-friendly, enabling environment

#### What

Children and young people experience a safe, welcoming and encouraging environment for their participation.

#### Why

The quality of children and young people's participation and their ability to benefit from it are strongly influenced by the efforts made to create a positive environment for their participation.

#### How to implement this standard

- Ways of working build the self-esteem and self-confidence of boys and girls of different ages and abilities so that they feel they are able to contribute and that they have valid experience and views to contribute.
- Methods of involvement are developed in partnership with children and young people so that they reflect their preferred mediums of expression.
- Sufficient time and resources are made available for quality participation and children and young people are properly supported to prepare for their participation.

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- Adults (including children and young people's own parents/ guardians) are sensitised to understand the value of children and young people's participation and are enabled to play a positive role in supporting it
- Child-friendly meeting places are used where girls and boys feel relaxed, comfortable and have access to the facilities they need. The meeting places must be accessible to children and young people with disabilities.
- Organisational or official procedures are designed/modified to facilitate (rather than intimidate) children and young people and make less experienced boys and girls feel welcome.
- Support is provided where necessary to share information and/or build skills and capacity to enable children and young people, individually and collectively, to participate effectively.
- Children and young people are asked what information they need and accessible information is shared with children and young people in good time, in child friendly formats and in languages that the children and young people understand, including children and young people with visual or hearing impairments.
- In situations where children and young people meet with different native/first languages, access to written information and professional interpretation is provided that allows for children and young people's full participation in discussions.
- Non-technical language is used in all discussions involving children and young people and/or all jargon or technical terms are clearly explained.

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### Standard 4 - Equality of opportunity

#### What

Child participation work challenges and does not reinforce existing patterns of discrimination and exclusion. It encourages those groups of children and young people who typically suffer discrimination and who are often excluded from activities to be involved in participatory processes.

#### Why

Children and young people, like adults, are not a homogeneous group and participation provides for equality of opportunity for all, regardless of the child's age, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (or those of his or her parents/guardians).

#### How to implement this standard

- All children and young people have an equal chance to participate and systems are developed to ensure that children and young people are not discriminated against because of age, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
- Children and young people's involvement aims to include all rather than a few, this could mean reaching out to children and young people in their local settings rather than inviting representatives to a central point.
- Participatory practice with children and young people is flexible enough to respond to the needs, expectations and situation of different groups of children and young people – and to regularly re-visit these concerns.
- The age range, gender and abilities of children and young people are taken into account in the way participation is organised (e.g., in the way information is presented).
- Those working with children and young people are able to facilitate an environment that is non-discriminatory and inclusive.

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- No assumptions are made about what different groups of children and young people can and cannot do.
- All children and young people are given an equal opportunity to voice their opinions and have their contributions reflected in any outcomes of a participatory process, including in processes that involve both children and young people and adults.
- If there is a limit to how many children and young people can participate, children and young people themselves select from among their peers those who will represent them in participatory initiatives based on the principles of democracy and inclusion.
- Influential adults are engaged to gain family and community support for the participation of discriminated-against groups.

### Standard 5 - Staff are effective and confident

#### What

Adult staff and managers involved in supporting/ facilitating children and young people's participation are trained and supported to do their jobs to a high standard.

#### Why

Adult workers can only encourage genuine children and young people's participation effectively and confidently if they have the necessary understandings and skills.

#### How to implement this standard

- All staff and managers are sensitised to children and young people's participation and understand the organisational commitment to children and young people's participation.
- Staff are provided with appropriate training, tools and other development opportunities in participatory practice to enable them to work effectively and confidently with children and young people of different ages and abilities.

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- Staff are properly supported and supervised, and evaluate their participation practice.
- Specific technical skills or expertise (e.g., in communication, facilitation, conflict resolution or multi-cultural working) is built up through a combination of recruitment, selection, staff development and practice exchange.
- Relations between individual staff and between staff and management, model appropriate behaviour, treating each other with respect and honesty.
- Support is provided for managers and staff for whom children and young people's participation represents a significant personal or cultural change, without this being regarded as a problem.
- Staff are able to express any views or anxieties about involving children and young people in the expectation that these will be addressed in a constructive way.

### Standard 6 - Participation promotes the safety and protection of children and young people

#### What

Child protection/safeguarding policies and procedures form an essential part of participatory work with children and young people.

#### Why

Organisations have a duty of care to children and young people with whom they work and everything must be done to minimise the risk to children and young people of abuse and exploitation or other negative consequences of their participation.

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### How to implement this standard

- The protection rights of children and young people are paramount in the way children and young people's participation is planned and organised.
- Children and young people involved in participation work are aware of their right to be safe from abuse and know where to go for help if needed.
- Skilled, knowledgeable staff are delegated to address and coordinate child protection issues during participatory processes.
- Staff organising a participatory process have a safeguarding strategy that is specific to each process. The strategy must be well communicated and understood by all staff involved in the process.
- Safeguards are in place to minimise risks and prevent abuse
- Staff recognise their legal and ethical obligations and responsibilities
- Child protection/safeguarding procedures recognise the particular risks faced by some groups of children and young people and the extra barriers they face to obtaining help.
- Careful assessment is made of the risks associated with children and young people's participation in speaking out, campaigning or advocacy. Depending upon the risks identified, steps may be needed to protect children and young people's identity or to provide follow-up measures to give protection (e.g., to ensure their safe reintegration into their communities).
- Consent is obtained for the use of all information provided by children and young people and information identified as confidential needs to be safeguarded at all times.
- A formal complaints procedure is set up to allow children and young people involved in participatory activities to make a complaint in confidence about any issue concerning their involvement.
- No photographs, videos or digital images of a child can be taken or published without that child's explicit consent for a specific use.
- Responsibilities relating to liability, safety, travel and medical insurance are clearly delegated and effectively planned for.

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### Standard 7 - Ensuring follow-up and evaluation

#### What

Respect for children and young people's involvement is indicated by a commitment to provide feedback and/or follow-up and to evaluate the quality and impact of children and young people's participation.

#### Why

It is important that children and young people understand what has been the outcome from their participation and how their contribution has been used. It is also important that, where appropriate, they are given the opportunity to participate in follow-up processes or activities. As a key stakeholder, children and young people are an integral part of monitoring and evaluation processes.

#### How to implement this standard

- Children and young people are supported to participate in follow-up and evaluation processes.
- Follow-up and evaluation is addressed during the planning stages, as an integral part of any participation initiative.
- Children and young people are supported and encouraged to share their participatory experiences with peer groups, local communities, organisations and projects with which they may be involved.
- Children and young people are given rapid and clear feedback on the impact of their involvement, the outcome of any decisions, next steps and the value of their involvement.
- Feedback reaches all children and young people involved.
- Children and young people are asked about their satisfaction with the participation process and for their views on ways in which it could be improved.

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- The results of monitoring and evaluation are communicated back to the children and young people involved in an accessible and child-friendly way, and their feedback is taken into account in future participation work.
- Mistakes identified through evaluation are acknowledged and commitments given about how lessons learned will be used to improve participatory processes in the future.
- Adults will evaluate how they have translated and implemented children and young people's priorities and recommendations into their policies, strategies and programmes.
- Sustainability of support is discussed with children and young people. Adults will provide clear feedback to children and young people regarding the extent/limit of their commitment to support children and young people's ongoing initiatives and organisations. If ongoing support is not possible, adults will provide children and young people with resources and support to make contact with other agencies who can support them.

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Appendix B

## Example Forms

- Consent Form
- Consent Form for the use of cameras and other recording equipment
- Risk Assessment Form

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# Consent Form

All information will be treated in strict confidence

Event / Activity	Date:
Name of child:	Date of birth:
Home Address:	
Home Telephone Number:	Mobile Telephone Number:
Medical conditions (if any) asthma, diabetes, allergies:	

- I confirm that my son/daughter/ is in good health and I give consent for my son/daughter to participate in the above event/activity
- I consent to any emergency treatment required by my son/daughter during the course of the event/activity
- I give consent for my son/daughter to be photographed during the course of the above event/activity and I consent to the photographs being used by District Council Name for bona fide promotional purposes. This also includes the use o the World Wide Web (internet).
- The information you provide will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, to ensure the safety of all participants and may be shared with other people/organisations involved in the delivery of the above event/activity, if appropriate. By signing this form you are consenting to the Council using the information, which you have supplied in the manner stated above.

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Consent Form for the use of Cameras and other Image Recorders

Venue/area:	Ref No:
Description of equipment:	
Surname:	Forenames:
Address:	
Tel No:	Mobile Tel No:
Fax No:	E-mail address:
Name(s) of the subject(s)	
1	5
2	6
3	7
4	8
Relationship of the photographer and subject(s)	
Reason for taking photographs and/or uses the images are being, or are intended to be put to (i.e. family record/advertising etc)	

- **I declare that the information provided is true and correct and that images will only be used for the purposes stated.**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorised by:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position held:** \_\_\_\_\_

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 the information that you have provided will be used only for the purposes monitoring camera and image recorder use and will be destroyed at the end of a year.

# Risk Assessment Form

Occupation:	Assessment Date:
Project:	Review Date:
Assessor(s):	

Task or Activity	Potential Hazards	Who may be affected	Necessary Safety Measures/ Controls Present	What existing safety measures in place and what else could be put in place	Severity/ Likelihood of Harm	What steps will be taken in an emergency

Comments / Action Required
Time Scale:
Training needed:
When:
Dates equipment needs a check:

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Person doing assessment:** \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C

## Useful websites and organisations

Name of Organisation	Website
<b>Article 12</b> Organisation run by and for children and young people and young people under 18, campaigning on children and young people's rights. Tel: 020 7278 8222.	<a href="http://www.article12.org">www.article12.org</a>
<b>Bridges Directory</b> The Bridges service directory holds over 1000 local, national and web-based services for children and young people. The service directory can be searched by keyword/category. There is also an A-Z listing.	<a href="http://www.bridgesdirectory.org.uk">www.bridgesdirectory.org.uk</a>
<b>British Youth Council</b> Independent charity and coalition of 150 organisations run for and by young people, in order to represent their views to government, the media and others. It organises and facilitates consultations with young people, supports local youth councils, and runs a participation training programme for young people and practitioners. Tel: 020 7422 8640.	<a href="http://www.byc.org.uk">www.byc.org.uk</a>

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Name of Organisation	Website
<p><b>Carnegie Young People Initiative</b></p> <p>Promotes the involvement of young people aged 10 to 25 in public decision making. Its 'Taking the Initiative' series of reports maps activity to promote young people's involvement in public decision making in the fields of national and local government, education and health in the UK and Ireland, and overseas. Tel: 020 7401 5460.</p>	<p>Reports available on <a href="http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk">www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Children and Young People's Rights Alliance for England</b></p> <p>An alliance of over 180 organisations committed to children and young people's human rights through the fullest implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Publications available online include State of Children and young people's Rights in England (2002), Children and young people's Rights Bulletin (monthly). Tel: 020 7278 8222.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.crae.org.uk">www.crae.org.uk</a></p> <p>Also hosts U What? Website, which aims to support the involvement of 12 to 18 year-olds in the development of government policy and laws that affect them, through translating and distributing government documents for young people, and providing guidance on political processes.</p>
<p><b>Citizenship Foundation</b></p> <p>The Citizenship Foundation offers a range of resources for schools and others working with children and young people, as well as school and community based projects, many of which are linked to the National Curriculum</p>	<p><a href="http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk">www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Diana Awards</b></p> <p>The Diana Award recognises young people aged 12-18 who have made a notable contribution to and impact on their schools, community and society.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.diana-award.org.uk">www.diana-award.org.uk</a></p>

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Name of Organisation	Website
<p><b>Groundwork</b></p> <p>Aims to build sustainable communities through partnerships in deprived areas throughout the country. Its youth programme aims to help young people play a full and active part in their communities, and has a focus on participation and empowerment. Specific initiatives include Youth Works and Young Voices (with Save the Children and young people). Tel: 0121 236 8565.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.groundwork.org.uk">www.groundwork.org.uk</a>.</p>
<p><b>Local Government Association</b></p> <p>Co-publisher of Hear by Right. Also organises annual Local Democracy Week in September/October each year. Contact LGA Information Centre on 020 7664 3131.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.lga.gov.uk">www.lga.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>National Children and Young People's Bureau</b></p> <p>Aims to promote the interests and well-being of all children and young people and young people across every aspect of their lives. Promoting participation and young citizenship is a major theme of its work. Young NCB is a free membership network for children and young people and young people involved in NCB projects. Tel: 020 7843 6099.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.ncb.org.uk/">www.ncb.org.uk/</a></p>
<p><b>National Council for Voluntary Youth Services</b></p> <p>The independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England, NCVYS provides support, information and guidance to the voluntary youth sector on the development of quality youth participation practices. Tel: 020 7422 8630.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.ncvys.org.uk">www.ncvys.org.uk</a></p>

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Name of Organisation	Website
<p><b>National Youth Agency</b></p> <p>Works to advance youth work to promote young people's personal and social development and their voice, influence and place in society. Tel: 0116 285 3700.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.nya.org.uk">www.nya.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Participation Works</b></p> <p>Participation Works is a consortium of six leading children and young people's organisations that provides expert advice to anyone wanting to give a voice to children and young people. The Participation Works online gateway for youth participation is a hub for information, resources, news and networking on the involvement of young people in dialogue, decision making and influence across a wide range of settings.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.participationworks.org.uk">www.participationworks.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Save the Children and Young People</b></p> <p>International children and young people's charity with focus on children and young people's rights. Tel: 020 7703 5400.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.scfuk.org.uk">www.scfuk.org.uk</a></p> <p>Website for young people to learn about rights: <a href="http://www.savethechildrenandyoungpeople.org.uk">www.savethechildrenand young people.org.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Schools Councils UK</b></p> <p>Works with pupils, teachers and local authorities to develop and support schools councils in primary, secondary and special schools. Tel: 020 8349 2459.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.schoolcouncils.org">www.schoolcouncils.org</a></p>
<p><b>National Healthy Schools Standard. (2004)</b></p> <p>Promoting Children and young people and Young People's Participation. Copies are available to download from the website.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk">www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk</a></p>

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Name of Organisation	Website
<b>The Children and Young People's Society</b> Works with marginalised children and young people and young people, focusing on tackling the root causes of the problems they face. Tel: 0845 300 1128.	<a href="http://www.childrenandyoungpeoplesociety.org.uk">www.children and young peoplesociety.org.uk</a>
<b>United Kingdom Youth Parliament</b> Aims to provide children and young people and young people of the UK, aged between 11 and 18, with a representative national voice listened to by government, political parties and service providers.	<a href="http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk">www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk</a>

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**APPENDICES**



# Working Together

Listening to the voices of children  
and young people



department for  
**children, schools and families**

# Foreword from Jim Knight, Minister for Schools



The great majority of young people make a positive contribution to their school and community. Improving outcomes for every child means encouraging young people to engage in decision-making and support their local community. We make decisions that impact on children and young people every day. Ensuring their views are heard and valued not only improves services for young people, but also has a positive impact on the school environment and the local community.

As we set out in the Children's Plan, our aim is for all young people to want and be able to participate and take responsible action. Giving children and young people a say in decisions that affect them can improve engagement in learning, help develop a more inclusive school environment and improve behaviour and attendance. Through effective pupil participation, schools give young people the opportunity to develop critical thinking, advocacy and influencing skills, helping every child to fulfil their potential.

This guidance is an updated version of *Working together: giving children and young people a say* (2004) and is intended to promote best practice in pupil participation, reflecting the excellent work already under way in many schools. It reflects comments and suggestions received from a range of stakeholders. I am grateful to all the young people and adults who contributed to drafting the guidance and to all those who sent in comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Knight". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal line underneath the name.

# Introduction

This guidance promotes the participation of children and young people in decision-making in school, local authority and related settings and provides advice on the principles and practice that support such involvement.

## About this guidance

This guidance is issued by the Secretary of State under Section 176 of the Education Act 2002. The Law requires local authorities and schools to have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State (in relation to England) or the National Assembly for Wales (in relation to Wales) about consultation with pupils in connection with the taking of decisions which affect them.

The guidance reinforces the many existing opportunities for skills development and participation, including: personal and social development<sup>1</sup>; Citizenship education<sup>2</sup>; and Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education with particular reference to the Personal Wellbeing programme of study (revised curriculum key stage 3 & 4).



1 Section 78, Education Act 2002.

2 Citizenship: The National Curriculum for England – Key Stages 3-4.

The guidance is also relevant in relation to inspection where the views of pupils play an important part. Section 7 of the Education Act 2005 places a duty on Ofsted to have regard to the views of pupils when conducting a routine inspection of a school. Inspectors are also interested in how a school seeks the views of pupils, as well as what action the school has taken in response to this. Section 2 in Part A of the Self Evaluation Form asks schools to evaluate this and inspectors will consider this alongside discussions which they will have with pupils during the inspection visit. Pupils receive feedback on the outcome of the inspection in a letter from the lead inspector, which summarises the main findings about their school. This provides the opportunity for schools to discuss the findings and to work with pupils to consider how they can contribute to the school's improvement.

The guidance also relates to Section 38 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which places a duty on schools to promote children's wellbeing as well as community cohesion, as part of which they must have regard to their local authority's children's and young people's plan.

At the local authority level, Section 53 of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities to give due consideration to the views of children and young people before determining what (if any) services to provide where these may impact on children and young people.

Each of these requirements and entitlements is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)<sup>3</sup> and the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda and, in particular, two of the five ECM outcomes:

- *enjoying and achieving – getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood*
- *making a positive contribution – being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour.*

While there is now widespread agreement with the principle of participation, there is no single right way of supporting children's and young people's participation in relation to the duties outlined above, and the process of developing effective values and structures to this end is not a straightforward one. But the principles and practices set out in this guidance, identified through consultation as key aspects of involving children and young people, offer a point of reference for local authorities and schools in taking forward this work.

It is important to emphasise that participation is not separate from other initiatives. For example, it is integral to the achievement of the goals of the Government's Children's Plan.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the aims of the curriculum, recently identified by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority as enabling all young people to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens, can only be achieved if children and young people are actively involved in decisions about their lives. Finally, effective participation can both benefit from and provide support to other government programmes, such as SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning). Other relevant initiatives and programmes are mentioned throughout this guidance.

3 Article 12

- states Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child
- for this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

4 DCSF (2007) *Children's Plan: building brighter futures* [www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/)

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The Guidance is in 5 sections:

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## Additional copies

An electronic version of this document is available to download from <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/>.



## What do we mean by children's and young people's participation?

By children's and young people's participation we mean adults working with children and young people to ensure that their views are heard and valued in the taking of decisions which affect them, and that they are supported in making a positive contribution to their school and local community.



This guidance is not aimed at diminishing the ability of decision-makers to apply established policies in cases related to individual children and young people. It is, however, emphasising the importance of and significant benefits which can follow from taking account of children's and young people's views and working with them.

Subject to rules on child protection and safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection, all children and young people should therefore be involved in as wide a range of decision-making processes as possible. To ensure that this involvement is worthwhile, effective and positive for all concerned local authorities and schools must work in *partnership* with children and young people, as one group of stakeholders among many. Only then can participation make a positive difference.

In this respect, local authorities and schools should endeavour to ensure that the children and young people they work with are not simply passive receivers of decisions and services, but contribute to them and, ultimately, help to 'co-produce' them.

This progression is illustrated in the diagram below:

### Levels of participation

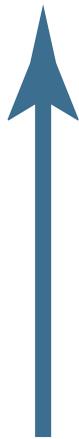
Children share power and responsibility for decision-making

Children are involved in the decision-making process

Children's views are taken into account

Children are supported in expressing their views

Children are listened to



increasing  
empowerment  
and  
responsibility

*Drawing on Shier (2000)<sup>5</sup>*

Participation which is tokenistic or unreflective will lead to cynicism and feelings of powerlessness among children and young people.

### What are the benefits?

Local authorities and schools which have supported effective participation by children and young people have found a range of benefits. These are listed below on the basis of four key categories – children's rights and wellbeing, active citizenship, school improvement and community enhancement. They can be mapped on to the goals of the other initiatives mentioned in the opening section.



5 Shier, H. (2000) Pathways to participation: openings, opportunities and obligations *Children and Society* 14



### **Children's rights and wellbeing**

Children's and young people's participation gives practical expression to children's rights and supports their wellbeing. It does this by:

- sending a powerful message that children and young people of all ages are citizens too
- recognising children and young people as major stakeholders in society with important contributions to make to their community
- enabling children and young people to influence decisions and services which affect them in order to make them more sensitive to their needs
- helping every child to fulfil their potential.

*Recognition for local authorities and schools which place children's rights at the centre of their provision for pupil voice is provided through the Unicef UK Rights Respecting Schools Award. This supports schools in teaching about children's and human rights and modelling rights and respect in all relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers/adults. Schools that have used this approach report improved ethos and improved attitudes and behaviour among pupils, including increased respect and tolerance for others. For more information see <http://rrsa.unicef.org.uk>*

### **Active citizenship**

Children's and young people's participation can encourage and support active citizenship. It achieves this by:

- offering first-hand experience of how decisions are made and how to contribute to them
- providing the opportunity to experience how rights go hand-in-hand with responsibilities
- providing real life opportunities for engaging with the taught Citizenship curriculum

- developing skills of participation and responsible action, including Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS)
- increasing confidence, self-esteem and aspirations.<sup>6</sup>

*At Stoke Damerel Community College, Plymouth, there is a strong sense that citizenship is something you learn in action. Its Citizenship education provision (within and outside the curriculum) provides opportunities for as many pupils as possible to be involved in hands-on community participation projects as well as school decision-making. Perceived impacts include the challenging of negative stereotypes about young people, improved relationships between pupils and teachers and between pupils and improved self-esteem and communication skills among pupils.<sup>7</sup>*

### **School improvement**

Where it is integral to the work of a school, children's and young people's participation can contribute to school improvement in a number of ways, making a positive difference for pupils, teachers and parents. This may be in terms of:

- establishing a more inclusive environment
- improving behaviour, attendance and engagement in learning
- creating a climate of dialogue between teachers and pupils that supports assessment for learning and personalised learning
- enhancing curriculum provision, including, but not restricted to, Citizenship and PSHE education provision
- offering valuable opportunities for teachers to work in more creative and innovative ways with pupils
- facilitating pupils' growth and development outside the formal curriculum
- supporting schools' self-evaluation processes.

*The Four Dwellings High School, Birmingham, has linked pupil participation to school improvement through its Teaching and Learning Discussion Groups. These are made up of twelve volunteers from each year group, and meet twice a term. The twelve pupils are randomly chosen by a teacher taking into account gender, ethnicity and ability, with representation for all the tutor groups. The work of the discussion groups, together with teachers, includes a review of the school's Improvement Plan, focussing on behaviour, feedback and assessment, professional development and extended schools. This has raised the profile and perceived importance of pupil participation in the school, particularly among teachers and governors. As a result, the school reports that pupils take greater responsibility for their learning pupils feel increasingly that they are trusted and valued.<sup>8</sup>*

6 Active Citizenship in Schools (ACiS) is a flexible award system that provides an innovative and exciting approach to school and community-based work. It can help schools address the citizenship curriculum through real-life experiences for young people. Visit [www.continyou.org.uk](http://www.continyou.org.uk)

7 Taken from Davies, L., Williams, C. and Yamashita, H. (2006) *Inspiring Schools: case studies for change – taking up the challenge of pupil participation* [http://cypi.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/files/InspiringSchools\\_3.pdf](http://cypi.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/files/InspiringSchools_3.pdf)

8 *Ibid*



### Community enhancement

Children's and young people's participation can also help to strengthen communities.<sup>9</sup> This may be by:

- providing a means of engaging with socially-excluded groups of children and young people
- improving provision, uptake and cost effectiveness of services targeted at children and young people
- enabling young people to take action on issues in the community which impact on them
- giving children and young people the opportunity to mix with, and learn from and about, those from different backgrounds and generations
- highlighting to children and young people how they can act as positive role models
- encouraging volunteering
- helping young people prepare for the world of work.

*Greig City Academy has established strong provision for pupils' community engagement. This stems from a desire to foster pupils' sense of responsibility towards the community, and to encourage action for community improvement. It is achieved by the embedding of tasks relating to community action within the curriculum, including Citizenship education, but also work-related learning and enterprise challenges and the organisation of productions and events. Perceived impacts include better relationships between the school and its local community and more motivated pupils.<sup>10</sup>*

9 Guidance in relation to Section 38 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, which places a duty on schools to promote community cohesion, is available at: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/communitycohesion/Community\\_Cohesion\\_Guidance](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/communitycohesion/Community_Cohesion_Guidance)

10 *Ibid*

## Principles of children's and young people's participation

Outlined below are some core principles of participation which will help local authorities, schools and children and young people to realise the benefits of participation.

### *There is a clear commitment to children's and young people's participation*

This will include:

- making a public commitment to the principle and practice of children's and young people's participation, particularly on the part of Directors of Children's Services, headteachers and governing bodies, understood by everyone
- working to generate support for children's and young people's participation across all stakeholders
- linking children's and young people's participation to ongoing organisational development and review/quality assurance processes.

### *Children's and young people's participation is supported*

This means:

- respecting and trusting all children and young people
- creating the necessary time and space and resources for participation
- providing training and support for children and young people to ensure that they are able to participate effectively
- providing training for adults so that they can support children's and young people's participation effectively
- sharing information that is timely and relevant, and that is jargon-free and can be understood by children and young people



- managing expectations, i.e. explaining what is 'out-of-bounds', for practical, legal or political reasons
- supplying clear and timely feedback on outcomes to all children and young people, not just those directly involved in a given decision-making process
- celebrating achievements and recognising the learning that children and young people gain through participation.

### ***Children and young people have equality of opportunity to be involved***

This should ensure that:

- no-one is excluded or prevented from participating on grounds of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, culture, language or the area in which they live
- children's and young people's age, maturity and understanding is taken into consideration when deciding how to support their participation
- ways are found to involve those who may appear to lack confidence or motivation
- support is provided to help 'hard-to-reach' groups, e.g. disengaged young people, looked-after children, and those facing the greatest barriers, e.g. some pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- children and young people understand that they share responsibility with others for helping to support and promote effective participation.

### ***Children's and young people's participation is continually reviewed***

It is important to:

- set out a clear rationale and success criteria for children's and young people's participation
- regularly review how well those criteria are being met
- involve children and young people in the evaluation process and review of lessons learned.

### ***Quality standards are met***

Local authorities and schools must:

- abide by agreed quality standards and codes of conduct for working with children and young people
- handle child protection issues in line with established school procedures
- agree rules on confidentiality
- agree rules on data protection in line with the law.

## **Principles into practice**

Effective participation by children and young people will depend very much on the extent to which local authorities and schools meet the kinds of principles outlined in the previous section. These highlight the importance of the ethos of local authorities and schools within which provision for participation operates.

Outlined below are some typical approaches for involving children and young people, which might be used separately or in combination. The list is by no means exhaustive and is followed by a list of sources of further information, including links to further case studies of current practice.

### *Young people councils*

Councils or forums through which young people represent their peers are valuable in providing a formal and visible mechanism for children's and young people's participation and, importantly, one which can be embedded in the decision-making structure of a local authority or school. For these reasons, councils and forums work well as central components of provision for participation, around which other provision can be developed.

Among schools, pupil or school councils are prized as a means of giving pupils a voice, developing their personal and social skills, enhancing the Citizenship curriculum and promoting the development of a school as a community.<sup>11</sup> These councils can take many different forms in terms of their constitution and remit. To be effective, however, a council does need clear links to its school's senior management team and governing body, as well as mechanisms for involving all pupils in its work on an ongoing basis. This could include the use of year group and class councils alongside a whole-school council.<sup>12</sup>

Links between school and local authority-level councils and forums for children and young people will strengthen both by reinforcing pupils' sense of entitlement to having their views heard and encouraging their involvement in decision-making across their school and wider community. There are many other local, regional and national youth fora, including, for example, the UK Youth Parliament ([www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk](http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk))



11 Taylor, M and Johnson, R (2002) *School Councils: their role in citizenship and personal and social education* Slough: NFER.

12 See Whitty, G. and Wisby, E. (2007) *Real Decision Making? School councils in action* <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RR001.pdf>

Regardless of the approach taken to participation, schools have often found it useful to involve partners from other schools and from their local authority, as well as voluntary sector organisations, to help them refine what they do. Most local authorities now have officers responsible for promoting pupil participation.

### ***Pupils as associate governors***

As of September 2003 schools have been able to appoint pupils as 'associate members' allowing them to attend full governing body meetings and become members of governing body committees.<sup>13</sup> Other ways of facilitating links between pupils and school governing bodies include governors meeting with pupils and pupil presentations at, or pupil reports to, governing body meetings.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Planned consultations***

When children and young people raise a particular issue or there is a particular decision to be made, it may be appropriate to use a consultation process. This could involve surveys, discussion groups or interviews.

#### Consultation checklist:

- children and young people are involved in the decision-making process at the earliest possible stage
- the mechanisms used for the consultation are appropriate for the age and understanding of the children and young people involved
- all children and young people affected by the decision to be taken are involved or represented
- any necessary additional support has been provided to enable the participation of all relevant children and young people
- the timing of meeting has been negotiated with the children and young people involved
- the consultation is being held at a location that is convenient for children and young people to travel to and access
- the objectives and protocols of the consultation are clear to the children and young people
- the language used is understood by all
- the children and young people understand the decision-making process – how their feedback will be used to inform the final decision, who else is being consulted and who has the final say
- a system is in place for providing feedback to children and young people on the decision taken and their influence on it.

### ***Working groups***

Issue-specific working groups are a further way of enabling children and young people to contribute to decision-making. These can be valuable in providing the opportunity for self-election. Working groups can also provide opportunities for children and young people to take responsibility for, or

13 See *Statutory Guidance on the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003* on the publications page of [www.governor.net.co.uk](http://www.governor.net.co.uk)

14 See Hallgarten, J., Breslin, T. and Hannam, D. (2004) *I was a Teenage Governor* London: Citizenship Foundation [www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/resource.php?s186](http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/resource.php?s186)

show leadership in relation to a particular issue – for example behaviour, the school environment or community-based activities for young people. Groups might be comprised solely of pupils or pupils and teachers, governors or parents, local authority officers or youth workers.

### **Lesson observation**

Pupils can be involved in observing lessons in order to provide feedback. In some cases this is negotiated between teachers and pupils on an ad hoc basis, in others it is part of departmental or curriculum reviews.

### **Young people as researchers**

Children and young people can act as co-researchers with local authority officers and teachers on agreed issues or they can work as independent researchers – where research is initiated, conducted and reported by pupils.<sup>15</sup>

### **Involvement in appointment processes**

Children and young people value the opportunity to contribute to the appointment process for relevant posts in schools and local authorities. Their participation can take a number of forms as appropriate. These include commenting on the qualities required for the post, helping to write job descriptions and interview questions, through to meeting with candidates and providing feedback to the panel or sitting on the interview panel itself.



### **Working with peers**

Many local authorities and schools facilitate children's and young people's work with peers in their own or other schools and in the wider community, for mutual learning, support and mediation. Peer mentoring can attract different kinds of children and young people to those involved with young people councils, for example. It may include:

15 See Fielding, M. and Bragg, S. (2003) *Students as Researchers: making a difference* Cambridge: Pearson.

- **peer-support** – where older children directly support younger children, whether in groups or on a one-to-one basis, e.g. through help with reading, or by simply listening in order to support pastoral care provided by the school/other agencies.



- **peer-mentoring** – where young people support their peers on a more formal basis. Peer mentors have a clearly defined role and receive training. ‘Buddying’ activities are one example of peer-mentoring.
- **peer-mediation** – when young people are trained to mediate disagreements between peers, such as bullying, fighting and quarrelling. The approach is usually one of group support which enables children and young people to understand the hurt that they have caused so that each person comes away from the mediation with a positive experience and the sense that the outcome is fair to both sides.

### *Use of ICT*

ICT can help local authorities and schools support children’s and young people’s participation by enabling wider and/or more frequent communication, and in an efficient and cost-effective way. Specific uses include e-surveys, e-consultations, votes and discussion boards. As with suggestion boxes, this kind of facility can be particularly helpful where children and young people are nervous about offering their views or wish to do so anonymously.

### *Formal meetings*

Formal meetings with individual pupils may be necessary for a number of reasons, from monitoring progress and planning learning to discussing behavioural issues. Children and young people may also attend multi-agency meetings outside school. Local authorities and schools can structure formal meetings in a way that enhances children’s and young people’s participation.

Children and young people should be as fully informed as possible about the meeting in advance. Information must be accessible to the child or young person. Wherever possible, they should be

involved in decisions about the format of the meeting, such as when and where it will be held and who will attend, as well as discussion about the purpose and desirable outcomes for the meeting.

As part of this process children and young people will need support with their feelings as well as practical preparation. This may entail helping the child or young person to think about the meeting beforehand, what they may find challenging and how they will communicate their views. Access to advocacy services should be provided where necessary. Follow-up support should also be provided to ensure that the child or young person has understood the meeting and that they have any necessary continuing support.

## Useful websites and further reading

To show how different approaches to children's and young people's participation work and the particular strengths they offer, many of the websites listed below provide access to case study examples of current practice. They also offer a range of other resources for local authorities, schools and children and young people to support effective participation.

- **Citizenship foundation** [www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk](http://www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk)  
The Citizenship Foundation offers a range of resources for schools and others working with children and young people, as well as school- and community-based projects, many of which are linked to the National Curriculum.
- **Consulting Pupils** [www.consultingpupils.co.uk](http://www.consultingpupils.co.uk)  
This website provides access to a number of research reports on consulting pupils about teaching and learning.
- **Diana Awards** [www.diana-award.org.uk](http://www.diana-award.org.uk)  
The Diana Award recognises young people aged 12-18 who have made a notable contribution to and impact on their schools, communities and society.
- **Eco-Schools** [www.eco-schools.org.uk](http://www.eco-schools.org.uk)  
Pupil participation is a key part of the Eco-Schools programme. This website provides information on the Eco-Schools awards, which recognise schools' work with pupils in reducing the environmental impact of the whole school.
- **English Secondary Students' Association** [www.studentvoice.co.uk/](http://www.studentvoice.co.uk/)  
ESSA is run by students, for students aged 11-19 years old. It supports young people to have a voice on issues which affect their lives at school or college.
- **Futurelab** [www.futurelab.org.uk](http://www.futurelab.org.uk)  
The Futurelab website contains information on a number of innovative projects in relation to citizenship education and children's and young people's participation, including in relation to teaching and learning.
- **Innovation Unit** <http://www.innovation-unit.co.uk>  
The Innovation Unit website carries useful resources to support schools in developing provision for pupil voice and personalised learning.
- **National Healthy Schools Programme** [www.healthyschools.gov.uk](http://www.healthyschools.gov.uk)  
Provides information on the National Healthy Schools programme and advice on facilitating pupil participation in schools.

- **National mentoring and befriending foundation** [www.mandbf.org.uk](http://www.mandbf.org.uk)  
Provides guidance and support to organisations and practitioners involved in mentoring and befriending.
- **National Youth Agency (NYA)** [www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)  
Many local authorities and schools make use of the NYA's 'Hear by Right' standards for the active participation of children and young people to map and plan how they will facilitate participation and evaluate its impact.



- **Participation Works** [www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)  
Participation Works is a consortium of six leading children and young people's organisations that provides expert advice to anyone wanting to give a voice to children and young people. The Participation Works online gateway for youth participation is a hub for information, resources, news and networking on the involvement of young people in dialogue, decision making and influence across a wide range of settings.
- **Save the Children/Participation for schools** [www.participationforschools.org.uk](http://www.participationforschools.org.uk)  
This website offers guidance and tools to help schools increase pupil's participation. There are also school case studies which, as well as outlining current practice, discuss some of the hurdles in establishing effective provision for participation and how they can be addressed. The Carnegie Young People Initiative's 'Inspiring Schools' series, also found at this website, offers further advice and resources for facilitating participation.
- **School Councils UK (SCUK)** [www.schoolcouncils.org](http://www.schoolcouncils.org)  
Provides resources for teachers and pupils to help them establish a school council and ensure that it operates effectively. The site also provides access to a number of school council case studies.
- **SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)** [www.teachernet.gov.uk/SEAL](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/SEAL)  
Provides information on the Primary and Secondary SEAL programmes and access to relevant resources.

- **UNICEF UK – Rights Respecting Schools** <http://rrsa.unicef.org.uk/>  
A Rights Respecting School teaches children and young people that they have rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. From this starting point they also learn their responsibility to respect others' rights in all relationships in the community.

## Effective participation – a checklist

Addressing the following questions will help to ensure that both the process and outcomes of children's and young people's participation are positive. This list is not exhaustive as there are likely to be other considerations linked to the circumstances of a local authority or school and the children and young people they are working with.

Action	Why?
<b>Identify the benefits you want to achieve</b>	By identifying the benefits that you are primarily interested in achieving through children's and young people's participation you will be able to set clear objectives and success criteria on which to base and evaluate that participation.
<b>Provide a range of opportunities</b>	By offering different kinds of opportunities for participation a local authority or school will help to facilitate and encourage the participation of a wide range of children and young people.
<b>Provide support to develop skills of effective participation</b>	Training for children and young people to enhance their participation skills is crucial. All children and young people should be able to benefit from this training, not just those currently directly involved in offering their views or representing their peers.
<b>Address equal opportunity issues</b>	<p>The children and young people involved in decision-making must be representative – in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, disability, culture, religion, language or the area in which they live.</p> <p>Local authorities and schools should take steps to facilitate and encourage the participation of hard-to-reach groups. They should also consider how to ensure those with special needs are involved on an equal basis. The SEN toolkit (DfES 558/2001) provides detailed advice on this.</p>
<b>Decide who will oversee children's and young people's participation</b>	In some instances it may be appropriate and necessary for an adult alone to be responsible for the process. In other cases adults might work with children and young people, or young people themselves might manage and conduct the process.

Action	Why?
<b>Ensure provision for participation links to the Citizenship curriculum</b>	Provision for participation should be embedded in the work of a school. This includes having clear links between pupils' participation and the school curriculum so that these components become mutually reinforcing.  This is particularly relevant to personalised learning and the need to develop a culture of dialogue between teachers and pupils. <sup>16</sup>
<b>Develop provision that is fun and interesting for children and young people</b>	If children and young people feel they are not being challenged by the process or feel that it is not relevant to them they are likely to lose trust in its importance.
<b>Think about providing rewards to recognise children's and young people's participation</b>	Show children and young people that their input is valued and help them to understand the potential benefits of their participation – for themselves as well as for their peers or wider community. A local authority or school may wish to recognise children's and young people's efforts formally through awards.
<b>Review the impact that children's and young people's participation is having</b>	It is important to monitor the impact that children's and young people's participation is having, in order to assess the benefits and refine practice. Schools may find it useful to work with partners from other schools or their local authority to assist with this.
<b>Provide feedback to children and young people</b>	Providing feedback to children and young people on how their views have been taken into account, and if not, why not, and on what has changed as a result of their efforts, will prevent them from becoming disillusioned where they feel their input is not making a difference. Feedback needs to be presented in an easy-to-understand format.
<b>Share effective practice with other local authorities and schools</b>	There is some excellent work taking place. As well as making use of published case studies, it is useful to visit other schools to share good practice. This will help local authorities, schools and children and young people to continue to enhance their provision for participation. Schools Partnerships may prove helpful here.

16 Hargreaves, D. (2004) *Personalising Learning – 2: student voice and assessment for learning*  
<http://www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk/content/articles/3625/chapt1studentvoice.pdf>

## Acknowledgements

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department for  
**children, schools and families**

# How To

## work successfully with children and young people from different faiths and cultures

The purpose of this guide is to look at how children and young people's different faiths and cultures can impact on participation work. It also provides some practical tips on how to ensure that a diverse range of children and young people are engaged and made to feel safe and comfortable participating within organisations. In addition, the guide looks at general definitions of diversity as well as how to develop meaningful and effective diversity policies and procedures in partnership with children and young people.

### What does faith and culture mean?

There are many definitions of faith but for the purpose of this guide we are describing faith as a system of religious and spiritual beliefs and devotional practices. Culture is a much broader term as it includes the beliefs, values, arts and customs of a society or social group.

It is important to consider faith and culture when developing policies and practices that promote equality and diversity. To enable children and young people from all faiths and cultures, and also those of no faith, to participate fully in activities, organisations should be aware and sensitive to different needs. This might range from offering single-sex environments for certain activities like sports, dance and drama through to being aware of special dietary requirements and religious festivals, dates and worship days.



It is worth noting here that faith and culturally sensitive work with children and young people only represents one aspect of diversity but further discussion of diversity is beyond the scope of this guide.

### Why is it important to take faith and culture into account?

Faith and culture can be very important to children and young people's identity and often helps to influence their sense of belonging to any society. As our society becomes increasingly diverse it is necessary to be aware of and respond to differences in the various faith and cultural communities. This awareness is particularly necessary for the voluntary and community youth sector, which is well placed to engage and support children and young people from minority faith communities or those who may be facing significant life challenges. A lack of such awareness may lead to inadvertent prejudicial attitudes and exclude some children and young people, rather than help to bring down barriers to enable equal access to those children and young people that organisations may wish to work with.

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## What impact does this have on participation workers?

It is important to remember that the identity of children and young people stretches beyond the limits of faith and culture and consists of many other factors. Some of the practical things to reflect on are leisure preferences, musical taste, fashion and inter-generational differences between children and young people and their parents: none of these should be overlooked when working with children and young people. The issues will vary depending on the groups or communities you are working with. It will therefore be necessary to engage with the community to find out what the specific faith and cultural issues are.

Young people's opinions of the proposals for 'places to go and things to do' in the Youth Matters Green Paper highlighted significant issues in the way Muslim young people, for example, perceived mainstream services and activities. These reports highlight the role of the voluntary and community sector in tackling extremism and developing inclusive

ways of working with young people from all faith and cultural backgrounds. It is important for organisations aspiring to be inclusive to consider the whole community, not just those children and young people who are already engaged.

## Equality & Equal Opportunities

### Equality

Equality is the state of being equal – having identical privileges, rights, status and opportunities. It is about being given equal chances and being treated fairly. It is not about treating everyone in the same way, but recognises that people's needs are met in different ways.

Equality focuses on the areas of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or age which are all covered by the law. It is also often used as a revised term for 'equal opportunities'.

### Equal Opportunities

While organisations are not legally required to have an equal opportunities policy, all organisations are required by law to promote: equality of opportunity and good



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relations between persons of different racial groups (Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000); equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons (Disability Discrimination Act 2005); and equality of opportunity between men and women (Equality Act 2006). Equal opportunity policies are mostly driven by anti-discrimination laws rather than the core values and principles of community development and social justice which tend to be the motivation within the voluntary and community sector.

The **Equality Act of 2006** was enacted to establish what is now the **EHRC** (Equality and Human Rights Commission) following a

review of existing equalities and discrimination laws. The Act encourages and supports the development of an inclusive society in which people are able to achieve their full potential and where each individual's human rights are protected against all forms of discrimination. EHRC seeks to be an independent and influential champion to promote and celebrate a diverse Britain. It aims to achieve this by championing equality and human rights for all, working to eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights and to build good relations, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society.

## Major equalities legislation since 1970:

**1970 Equal Pay Act**

**1974 Health and Safety at Work Act**

**1975 Sex Discrimination Act**

**1976 Race Relations Act**

**1978 Employment Protection Act**

**1994 Disability Discrimination Act**

**1997 Protection from Harassment Act**

**1998 Human Rights Act**

**2000 Race Relations (Amendment) Act**

**2003 Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations**

**2003 Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations**

**2005 Disability Discrimination Act (Amendment)**

**2006 Employment Equality (Age) Regulations**

**2006 Equality Act**

## Case Study One

### XLP – Urban Youth Charity

XLP is an urban youth charity founded in 1996. Its aim is to serve urban communities by supporting young people in ethical, spiritual and relational areas so that they can make positive lifestyle choices and are encouraged to fulfil their full potential. XLP is a faith-based organisation and, whilst having a Christian ethos, it is inclusive of all young people and embraces multiculturalism by promoting equality and diversity.

XLP's mission is to:

- Serve the community by meeting the social, educational and behavioural needs of young people
- Educate young people to make wise lifestyle choices
- Empower young people to realise their potential
- Mobilise young people to participate in community transforming projects.

XLP runs formal accreditation courses, which combine studies in theology and youth work with colleges and schools, as well as working with voluntary and community organisations. XLP achieves its aim by organising a wide range of activities in arts and community development such as:

- Music
- Dance
- Drama
- Outreach work
- Recruitment
- Arts showcase events

These activities bring young people from different faiths and cultures together to work in areas of shared interest. The volunteering and placement programmes enable young people to gain work experience and socialise with their peers from diverse backgrounds, increasing their awareness of other cultures and faiths. XLP undertake induction and training in faith and cultural awareness, recognising that young people have complex needs and should not be considered in silos of faiths or cultures but rather in a holistic way.

For more information visit: [www.xlp.org.uk](http://www.xlp.org.uk)

## What does diversity mean?

The term diversity is used to describe and to acknowledge the differences that exist within humanity in terms of the traditional strands of race, gender, disability, religion and sexual orientation. Diversity is used to acknowledge and celebrate those differences in positive ways. However, the concept of diversity is much broader than addressing issues around these traditional strands and, within the context of this guide, the term diversity embraces and celebrates difference in ways that add value to outcomes for children and young people.

## What is good diversity practice?

Work with children and young people should: *'Enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society and to reach their full potential'* *'...treat(s) young people with respect, valuing each individual and their differences, and promoting the acceptance and understanding of others, whilst challenging oppressive behaviour and ideas'*

National Occupational Standards for Youth Work, Statement of Purpose for Youth Work, 2008

## What effect can diversity have on people's lives?

Promoting diversity is about taking proactive steps to promote equality and equal access by making things work for everyone, and not just righting wrongs for groups or communities who are marginalised or suffer historically from discrimination. We are a society that has become increasingly aware of diversity in family life, education, faith, culture and more. All these aspects should be recognised and taken into consideration when developing services and making them accessible to all children and young people. Organisations that value these differences are those that make the effort to provide equal access to all with special attention to those who are most vulnerable to discrimination or lack of access. A good diversity policy and practice can help counteract both direct and indirect acts of discrimination which may exist as a result of ignorance or prejudices.

## Why is it important to develop a diversity policy?

A diversity policy should recognise that there are still sections of society that suffer from disadvantage with a range of negative consequences. Developing diversity policy and practice is about challenging negative personal attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes and enabling changes within organisations so that all children and young people are treated with respect through being sensitive to their faiths or cultural needs.

1. It is good practice in relation to social justice and democracy to support and promote equal opportunities and diversity in employment practices and service delivery.
2. Current legislation and government demands on public sector funders and

partners are leading to greater demand on the voluntary children and young people's sectors to develop policies and demonstrate outcomes in this area. This is particularly relevant in the changing face of commissioning and procurement processes.

## Creating a faith and culturally sensitive organisation

One of the first steps to developing an equality and diversity policy should be consultation with children and young people themselves, community groups and other members of staff. This should cover every area of your organisation's activities from your mission statement to volunteer recruitment policy. Here is an example of a mission statement that encompasses the principles of equality, diversity and the participation of children and young people:

*The organisation values and encourages the participation and contribution of all individuals, regardless of age, class, disability, ethnic background, faith, gender and sexual orientation. The organisation is committed to working with those organisations who work with children and young people who are disadvantaged or discriminated against on the grounds above.*

Adopting a child and young person-centered approach in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child will help to promote an environment where children and young people's opinions are put first. By doing this they will recognise that their voice and views are valued which means, in turn, that they will feel more able to raise any further issues of concern to them. By seeking the views of children and young people when planning and implementing policies and procedures

# How to: faith and culture

you will ensure that children and young people are more likely to feel comfortable.

## Ensuring policies and procedures are living documents

This means policies and procedures should not simply be written by management, approved by the board and not distributed within the organisation. Instead, all levels of the organisation, including children and young people should have an input into developing or reviewing policies so that they take ownership over them and can contribute meaningfully to the review of those policies, ideally once a year.

## Diversity is everyone's business

As with any other policy, for it to work effectively your diversity policy should be made available to all paid staff and volunteers, children and young people, members and users of the organisation, and to parents and carers. The policy should be clearly visible and available for all to see and inspect. An effective policy should also include how staff behave towards each other, including the need to model diversity in action, and the need to challenge, educate and learn. There should also be an expectation of how parents and carers behave when they attend the project.

### Case Study Two

## Faith Drama Productions

Faith Drama Productions is a community based group started in 2005 by young people in the London Borough of Newham in response to knife, gun and gang crime. Its aim is to use drama as an art form to transform young people's lives through inspirational, motivational and educational activities that open up new horizons. To achieve this aim the group undertakes regular outreach work to engage and recruit young people from different cultures and faiths in order to get the multi-faith mix the group's name encapsulates. The majority of the present membership and casting group are from African and African Caribbean Christian and Muslim backgrounds.

The group organises induction and taster acting courses as well as more advanced level classes. It also hosts open days to raise its profile with young people, their parents and carers. While young people can be influenced by negative aspects of youth subculture, it also has positive aspects which can be used to engage young people, especially through their shared interest in fashion, music and dance. The group organises regular talent shows, competitions and networking events to encourage young people to develop healthy relationships with professional artists and help them channel their energy towards positive outcomes. Alongside these arts based activities the group also provides information, advice and guidance for personal and career development in the arts sector.

For more information visit: [www.faithdrama.org.uk](http://www.faithdrama.org.uk)

## A 10–step guide to promoting equality and diversity in your organisation

Creating a plan of action should mean two crucial things: that you have a clear way forward and that you have support within your organisation. It is important to work with others to ensure inclusion and ownership through the development process.

### Step 1: Get other people involved, including children and young people

It will be easier to develop an equality and diversity strategy if you talk through some ideas and plans with colleagues as well as the children and young people you work with. Work with people to develop a shared understanding of equality and diversity and how it could work for you.

### Step 2: Assess achievement so far

Identify what has happened up to this point and celebrate it. You can find this out by doing a short diversity audit (to see how well the make-up of your staff, volunteers and membership reflects the community you serve). You can then build your strategy from a realistic starting point.

### Step 3: Set goals for raising awareness

Depending on what the issues are in your organisation, set some short-term goals for helping people understand that they need to think about regarding diversity. Try a couple of practical activities to stimulate interest. You could have a series of different cultural food days, for example, or get children young people to spend a day in your office, giving feedback on your diversity. Encourage people to think creatively and to want to get involved further.

### Step 4: Identify key people

Decide which people you need to influence to push the agenda forward. It may also be useful to develop a small working group made up of children and young people and your colleagues and partners to help you at this stage. Make sure that you involve at least one or two people from your trustee board at this time. Diversity strategies often fail because they do not involve management and trustees. They require a simultaneous 'top down' and 'bottom up' approach.

### Step 5: Start communication

Begin to share some of the ideas from this resource, signposted websites and other toolkits with your colleagues, children and young people. Diversity needs good communication, so find a way to disseminate ideas, news, training courses and so on. Don't forget to include ways for staff, volunteers, children and young people to give you their ideas.

## Step 6: Set up a meeting/workshop

Bring together your key people, those that you have previously targeted and all other interested colleagues (always keep diversity events open and inclusive – the more people involved, the better) for a meeting to develop a strategy for the organisation. To make it a bit more interesting, you could start it in a training style by doing an awareness-raising activity.

## Step 7: Consult with others

Now is the time to consult more widely on your plans – with staff, volunteers, children and young people, trustees, and any other stakeholders. Consult with your members, if appropriate, to bring them on board with the diversity process too. This will make sure that your plans are realistic and that they meet the needs of as many people as possible.

## Step 8: Initial review

Look back at your short-term goals from Step 3. Did you achieve them? If not, perhaps they need to be re-evaluated. If you have achieved those goals, then it's time to move on to the next stage. How diverse is your management team or trustee board? It will be easier to recruit new members (i.e. children and young people or their organisations) if you can show that you mean what you say – without change at the top, it will be difficult to encourage change in the rest of the organisation.

## Step 9: Train

This is now the time to look at training needs for key people in your organisation and the trustee board. You will then need to look at the rest of the organisation: if you sense that there could be issues with staff and volunteers, you need to train them before you go any further. Training can be done in-house, but it is usually more effective to get an outside trainer.

## Step 10: Review and evaluate

You and your working group should agree targets for the project. You should continue to evaluate how the process is going: Is there enough support? Do you need to adapt your targets? Have real changes taken place in the organisation? Whatever happens, make sure that you celebrate all the positive developments that have taken place – this will encourage you and others.

## Case Study Three

# National Black and New Communities Organisation (NBNCO)

The National Black and New Communities Organisation is based in the Midlands and works from a housing and neighbourhood perspective to engage local people from different faiths and cultural backgrounds. To enable it to achieve its aim of promoting social integration and community cohesion, it has established a network of youth workers and community leaders who meet regularly to discuss topical issues. NBNCO focuses on organising interfaith and cross-cultural events, targeting and attracting participants from both established and new migrant communities. These events usually include workshops, seminars and focus group meetings on different areas of shared interest facilitated by youth workers and leaders from different faith communities. These activities help to raise awareness, understanding, respect and sensitivity for different faiths and cultures and their effect on young people's sense of identity.

## Recruiting Young People

To effectively engage and involve young people from different faith backgrounds a network of youth workers and community leaders has been established to build confidence and trust between members to work together on joint projects. This has made it possible for even the most disaffected young people to have the opportunity to become involved and participate in activities.

In order to build bridges between young people of diverse faiths and cultural backgrounds, NBNCO creates safe spaces for young people, youth workers and community leaders to meet and discuss topical issues such as the growing impact of gang culture and gun and knife crime on young people. Many young people may feel intimidated to participate in cross-cultural events and activities as they are not used to working in this way. NBNCO realises this problem and the youth workers network provides an avenue for dialogue, confidence building and mutual cooperation to overcome this challenge. NBNCO continues to work in a faith and culturally sensitive way to widen participation and endeavours to engage those who would not normally be involved by creating safe spaces where everyone is treated equally. The planning of events takes into consideration appropriate days suitable to people of all faiths, ensuring dietary and gender needs are provided for, and quiet rooms set aside for meditation and prayers.

# How to: faith and culture

## Creating a safe and sensitive environment for children and young people

- Begin by working with the children and young people you work with to agree standards of behaviour. These may include not discriminating on the basis of faith, as well as class, sex etc; not imposing religious views on others; recognising the value and sacredness of all individuals' cultures; and so on. These can then be displayed in your club or meeting place. Do this exercise alongside activities that explore issues around faith and culture.
- Make sure information on different faiths and cultures is freely available. See [www.bbc.co.uk/religion](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion) or [www.multifaithcentre.org](http://www.multifaithcentre.org) or the other references in the Find Out More section on page 11.
- Ensure support and advice is available for young people who experience discrimination or harassment.
- Aim to create an open and unthreatening environment where questions can be asked and issues addressed.
- Provide the option to children and young people to abstain from activities or discussion if they so wish (with an opportunity to explore, if they so wish, why they have chosen to abstain) as some children and young people may feel embarrassed or that they do not have the confidence to speak or explore their faith with others

## Practicalities

- Offer certain activities in a single-sex environment, for example sports, arts, drama and dance.
- Provide a quiet space, which can be used for reflection, prayer and so on.

- Take into account sensitivities to alcohol as well as the law when using venues for residential, social events and other meetings.
- Be aware of special dietary requirements. If in doubt, do not be afraid to ask.
- Be aware of religious and faith days and what these mean, see [www.interfaithcalendar.org](http://www.interfaithcalendar.org). Talk to young people and community groups about planning an interfaith event around these days.
- Be sensitive when planning the time of meetings. For example, it may be helpful to avoid prayer times or evening sessions.
- If using uniforms or costumes, be aware of faith-based dress practices.
- Include diverse images of young people in all publicity materials (observing legal requirements to seek permission first).

## Ideas for activities

- Use or work with children and young people to develop information, games and activities which can be used to eradicate cultural and religious myths, and which reflect the history and culture of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. See [www.interfaith.org.uk](http://www.interfaith.org.uk) for ideas.
- Encourage and support children and young people to develop and lead their own projects. For example, to explore issues of faith and culture from their own point of view, or to respond to their communities' particular needs.
- Through political education and activities, empower children and young people with the skills and tools to be politically active if they wish, and to express appropriate action within the democratic process.
- Work with children, young people and local communities to develop an appropriate curriculum. Aim to build in elements that enable children and young people to explore issues relevant to faith and cultural equality.

## Building links with families and the community

- Build and maintain links with local faith and community organisations; work together to deliver programmes that aim to foster community relations.
- Be aware of issues with language. Although not always necessary, you may need to provide information for parents or carers, as well as children and young people, in a number of languages appropriate to the community you work in.
- Be aware that a whole-family or whole-community approach may be needed. This will build understanding and trust in your organisation, and thus encourage children and young people from certain communities to be involved.
- Involve positive role models from the community in your activities who reflect children and young people's identity.
- Work with community groups, children and young people to build awareness of the issues specific to the communities you want to work with.

## Conclusion

The information and advice given in this guide is designed to be useful for even the smallest organisations that may be just starting to think about faith and culturally sensitive youth work. Such organisations are likely to have very stretched resources, if they have any at all. Much of the information and advice presented here is intended to demonstrate how simple and inexpensive reforms can be. Some small changes may make a big difference to the way you are perceived by children and young people and that in turn may have a significant impact on how they become involved in your work.



## Find Out More

This list of organisations, publications and websites should help you find more detailed information and follow up areas of interest.

**ACAS** has an extensive section on its website on equality and diversity for employers, with downloadable publications and resources, including its *Advisory booklet - Tackling discrimination and promoting equality - good practice guide for employers*. ACAS (2006)  
For more information visit: [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk).  
Phone (helpline): 08457 474747

**Britkid** is a web resource exploring issues of race, racism and life. Visit: [www.britkid.org](http://www.britkid.org)

**Equality and Human Rights Commission:** [www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/Pages/default.aspx)

**Equality Direct:** [www.equalitydirect.org.uk](http://www.equalitydirect.org.uk)  
Phone: 0845 600 3444.

**Equality North East:** [www.equality-ne.co.uk](http://www.equality-ne.co.uk)  
Phone: 0191 495 6262

The **London Voluntary Service Council** has a downloadable model equal opportunities policy and action plan. It is available to download at:

[www.lvsc.org.uk](http://www.lvsc.org.uk) (accessed 3 April 2008)

# How to: faith and culture

Guidance from the **National Council for Voluntary Organisations** on creating an equal opportunities policy is available in their *Creating an Equal Opportunities Policy* resource. Available to download at:

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/askncvo](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/askncvo)  
(accessed 3 April 2008)

**NIACE** (The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) has a resource site as part of the Adult and Community Learning Quality Support Programme (ACLQSP). An equality and diversity self-audit tool is available in the publication *Equality and diversity in adult and community learning: a guide for managers*. LSDA/ NIACE (2002)  
Visit: [www.qualityacl.org.uk](http://www.qualityacl.org.uk)  
(accessed 3 April 2008)

**National Occupational Standards for Youth Work**, February 2008  
[www.lifelonglearninguk.org/documents/whole\\_suite\\_of\\_Professional\\_and\\_National\\_Occupational\\_Standards\\_for\\_Youth\\_Work.pdf](http://www.lifelonglearninguk.org/documents/whole_suite_of_Professional_and_National_Occupational_Standards_for_Youth_Work.pdf)

The **Runnymede Trust's** mandate is to promote a successful multi-ethnic Britain. They do this by acting as a bridge builder between various minority ethnic communities and policy makers. Their website includes community briefings and resources around challenging racist incidents from a youth and faith based perspective. For more information visit:  
[www.runnymedetrust.org/](http://www.runnymedetrust.org/)

**South East Equality:**  
[www.seequality.org.uk](http://www.seequality.org.uk)  
Phone: 01403 738 739

**Participation Works enables organisations to involve children and young people effectively in the development, delivery and evaluation of the services which affect their lives.**

The Participation Works How To guides are a series of booklets that provide practical information, useful tips and case studies of good participation practice. Each one provides an introduction to a different element of participation to help organisations enhance their work with children and young people.

Participation Works is an online Gateway to the world of children and young people's participation. Visit [www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk) to access comprehensive information on policy, practice, training and innovative ideas.

**Participation Works**  
8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE  
[www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)  
Enquiry line: 0845 603 6725

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# How To

## Celebrate children and young people's success

Children, young people and adult workers often work incredibly hard together to make projects and activities happen. However, they don't always take time out to celebrate their achievements, nor do they consider how they might celebrate success from the beginning of a project. This guide will look at what we mean by celebrating success, why it's so important, and how it should be an integral part of all work with children and young people. Through case studies, the guide will also show how organisations with varying resources and capacity make sure they involve children and young people in celebrating their achievements.

### What we mean by celebrating success

**Celebrating** – *mark the occasion or day by ceremony or festival; praise something publicly; showing something good or special has happened.*

**Success** – *the achievement of something that is planned or attempted and turns out well.* (Cambridge Dictionaries Online)

Whether it is in the day-to-day setting of drop-in children and young people's provision, or a specific project planned with children and young people with explicit outcomes built in, there is always an opportunity to acknowledge success. This need not be at the end of a project or piece of work, but can be done at anytime during a project.



It can take place on a one-to-one basis – adult to child or young person – or in a peer support setting with children and young people supporting each other.

It can also take place in a range of settings – on mountainsides and lakes as well as in centres, or in cafes and public places as well as in youth clubs. Even a walk in the country can be managed to make it a celebratory event and a way of acknowledging the success of the children and young people's involvement.

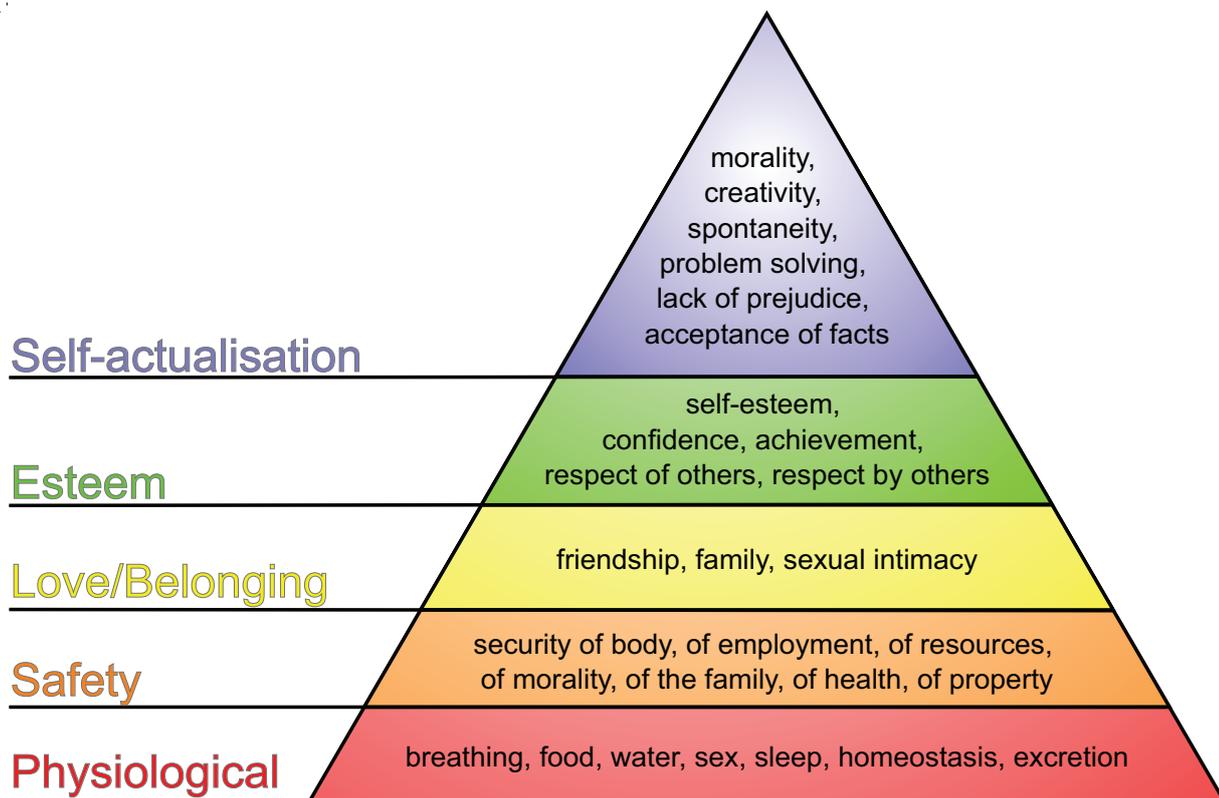
Celebrating success can also provide the opportunity to produce something and to have it valued by others. This can be of central importance for children and young people as they work towards establishing a sound identity.

# How to celebrate success

## Esteem needs

All humans need to be respected, to have self-esteem, to have self-respect and to respect others. By engaging in activities – be it in a profession or a hobby – people can feel involved and accepted, that they have contributed, and have improved self worth. Without these feelings people can suffer from low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem need respect from others, but they must also accept themselves – and this does not come from receiving fame, respect and glory but is internal to each person. Recognising achievement and celebrating success can play a key role in personal development and raising self-esteem.

Abraham Maslow proposed a hierarchy of needs theory that is shown here. It illustrates the important role that self-esteem plays in relation to the development of children and young people. Celebrating their achievements can go a long way towards raising self-esteem. This can help them to feel valued and confident, particularly when the levels of physiological, safety, love/belonging have also been addressed.



Maslow, A (1954) *Motivation and Personality*

# How to celebrate success

## Why celebrating is important – identifying learning, having fun, evaluation

Celebrating demonstrates a commitment from organisations to a participatory style of working and an expectation that organisational learning will be a priority. Through celebrating, lessons can be learned and practice developed.

Opportunities for further training can also be identified, and organisations can undertake to respond to these identified ongoing needs.

Successful celebratory or closing activities encourage children and young people to celebrate their achievements. They can also generate feedback, which can inform the planning process for future programmes and provide insight and ideas from them. It is important to make the evaluation process meaningful, and above all to have some fun as well.

Below are some ideas to get you started:

- You might choose to hold a big celebratory event at the end of the year or the end of a particular project. Or you might feel that a small event held more regularly provides a better opportunity to celebrate.
- Gestures such as thank you letters and certificates also go a long way towards making children and young people feel that they and their contributions are highly valued.
- Press releases to local radio, television and newspapers keep your organisation in the public eye. They also highlight to a wider audience the successes of children and young people and ensure that they are recognised as part of the community.
- Asking children and young people what they want is also essential if the organisation is to avoid tokenism.

## What not to do

Avoid tokenism at all costs. Children and young people need to have control over their opinions and expressed views. Very often they are engaged with projects and organisations that are controlled by adults who also make the key decisions. But children and young people need to be consulted and informed. They will probably choose to participate at different levels - some preferring a lesser degree and others wanting a higher level of involvement. A wide range of opportunities to participate needs to be available, informed by the varied needs, interests and abilities of the children and young people.

Tokenistic and decorative modes of participation do little to enhance children and young people's well-being and skills; bring their opinions to bear on decision making; or re-draw systems and structures of decision-making. Indeed they can have negative consequences with children and young people deterred from further involvement.

## Celebrating on a budget – it doesn't have to cost a fortune

A celebration activity can take place on a very small scale and still be very effective in terms of the impact it will have on the individual or group. For example, a word of congratulation can have more impact on the individual than the same individual being part of a large, more formal celebration team.

Cost has no link to impact in terms of value for money. The smallest, or even no budget, should not be a barrier to celebrating. It is possible to arrange events in-house with children and young people thoroughly engaged as participation partners in the planning and delivery of the celebration.

# How to celebrate success

## Case Study One

## Oxfordshire Children's Fund

# Celebrating at the centre of all work

The Community Chest funds play and leisure activities for five to 13-year-olds living in Oxfordshire. Community Chest ensures the right to play for children who don't have the money in their family to pay for activity costs or equipment.

The Community Chest has funds of £50,000 per year and is run by panels of children aged between five and 13. They are fully trained to run their own fortnightly meetings, assess applications and decide on who to award the money to. Each panel exists for six months and has between eight and 12 members.

Acknowledging the commitment and success of the panels is key to the whole project. A 'Thank You' and internal accreditation package runs throughout the panel members' tenure to ensure they are thanked and rewarded for their hard work and commitment. Comments from award winners are collected and given back to the panel meetings so they hear first hand what a difference their decision makes. This helps to create a sense of the validity of their work.

*'Our meetings help people and if you can make someone feel happy it helps you feel happy too'.*

On completing the training, panel members receive a goody bag with a branded T-shirt, pen and gym kit ruck sack.

The highlight of the Thank You package is a special trip chosen through consensus by each group. A theme park is a common choice and the day is purely about feeling treated and having a lot of fun. The trip takes place a few weeks before the end of a group's six-month tenure and often helps to strengthen the spirit of the group.

There is also a formal 'Thank You' tea party for each panel and their invited family and teachers. At the party the panel members' achievements are recognised with a certificate; a mini Community Chest voucher for £25 for them to spend on a play or leisure activity; and a surprise 'Thank You's' booklet which records their achievement in words and photos.



# How to celebrate success



10-year-old Kier was a member of a panel. He said:

*'When I got graduated I found it happy and a good experience'.*

Panel member Zak's mum said:

*'Zak really liked the tea party, he's been saying to people "me and Mum are going out to tea". I had to go to my boss's boss to get let off early, so that really made it for him. He was over the moon. It gives him a sense of responsibility and having a sense of responsibility and of being important is good for him. It's not something he gets to do so it is extra good for him'.*

Children and young people also designed a Thank You policy – called the Thank-You Plan – that serves as an overall policy for Oxfordshire Children's Fund Participation Projects.

# How to celebrate success

## 'Hidden' outcomes for children and young people in celebrating an event

Celebrating offers many opportunities for children and young people to build their confidence, improve their self-esteem, and develop new skills including:

- Event planning
- Speaking in public
- Negotiating
- Project management
- Managing a budget
- Listening and communicating
- Team work
- Being part of a community with collective identity.

### 10-step guide to putting on a celebratory event

Here are some ideas to help you get started with your planning

1. Start planning well in advance of the celebration.
2. Make the planning group small and focussed.
3. Let all possible participants know about it well in advance and ensure that all information goes out to everyone who needs it. Do so with plenty of time for them to respond and prepare themselves. Also make sure that there is a reply slip for them to book places, and to give you information about any dietary and access needs.
4. Check with the children and young people what would be a good time to hold the event. Sometimes an evening or weekend event will be the best way to accommodate everybody.
5. Check the accessibility of any venue you might use – both site accessibility and getting there. Choose a central location to minimise travel expenses, and a venue that will accommodate all your needs with plenty of room for your planned activities. Ask the venue to present everything in writing so all costs are detailed and make sure a full contract is issued.
6. Make sure any keynote speakers or main guests are invited and booked very early in the process.
7. Plan a varied and interactive programme so you are not expecting people to sit and listen for too long.
8. Be sure everybody knows what their role is on the day and that they have time to rehearse using microphones and other equipment.
9. Check out all the equipment you will need is in good working order and plan for a backup.
10. Have a plan B – as part of your risk assessment process – in case things don't turn out as you expect (e.g. a main guest who can't come at the last minute).

**In the end have a dynamic, engaging and fun-filled time!**

## Case Study Two

## Worth Unlimited/ St Basils

# A celebration helps to build young people's aspirations

Worth Unlimited and St Basils celebrated young people's participation in a life skills programme by holding a graduation ceremony. It took place at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham. Young people who had completed their life skills programmes wore a cloak and gown and were awarded their certificates by the Mayor. Young people were involved in running the ceremony and also performed a play. The play focussed on what it was like to be a young person without a home to live in.

For some of the young people involved, the experience was such a positive one that they are now thinking they would like to take part in a 'real' graduation ceremony and aspire to go to university.

Worth Unlimited is a Christian Youthwork agency offering personal support and experiential learning opportunities. Visit [www.worthunlimited.org.uk](http://www.worthunlimited.org.uk) for more information. St Basils works with young people to prevent youth homelessness by providing accommodation and support services. Find out more at [www.stbasils.org.uk](http://www.stbasils.org.uk)

## What can celebrating success be useful for?

### Funders

If the event or celebration is for a project that has received funding you will find that funders always appreciate seeing their name in lights. In most cases they will insist that they are showcased in some shape or form. Remember too that funders will also expect to see their logo on any promotional materials and it is always a good idea to thank them publicly for their support at any events they sponsor.

You might want to seek other funding or sponsorship for the celebration if you have not already received funding. Smaller frontline organisations can ask bodies like the Lions Club or your local Chamber of Commerce. Local businesses are often keen to promote children and young people's activities that have a positive spin to them.

A celebration of success is also a way to attract future funding to a project or organisation. By inviting funders to celebratory events you provide a direct link to the children and young people who have been engaged in the project. It is a great opportunity to showcase what they have done and influence potential funders directly.

### The organisation – internally and externally to learn/promote

By measuring impact against curriculum or personal development, a picture can be built of the success or otherwise of the work that is taking place over a given length of time. It is a vital way of improving performance and productivity. There may be a range of factors that mean that a particular piece of work – or element of it – is not going well. It might be that targets are not achieved or progress made. But, by using this process, success can be measured to aid the learning of an

# How to celebrate success

organisation and the children and young people it works with.

Lessons can be learned, programmes can be redesigned, and decisions made about what celebration could take place and the audience it should reach.

It might even be possible to share the practice, or generate income from the work that has taken place.

## Children and young people – to step back and celebrate their achievements

Although children and young people will have been a part of the planning and delivery of both the project and the celebration, very often the end still comes as a bit of a surprise. When they are totally immersed in a project's delivery, the journey that has taken place for individuals and organisations can get lost.

Celebrating re-engages everybody with an overview of what has been achieved. And planning the celebration can bring out a whole new set of skills development. This can often lead to a more complete evaluation of the work that has taken place. In addition, ways of celebrating that journey that can be taken into future projects.

## The individual participation worker – to gauge progress

It's not always easy to see the impact of the work or the development of the children and young people involved in a project from the inside. Funders increasingly look for workers to make some assessment of the individual progress that has been made by each participant.

John Huskins' *Quality Work with Young People* is an example of the stages of personal development which you might find useful to assess individuals' progress. It identifies seven steps in personal development:

### Stage 1

Initial contact. Young person is testing the workers out (what have these adults to offer me? can they be trusted?).

### Stage 2

Familiarisation (getting to know each other, further testing out, the workers 'selling' what youth participation has to offer).

### Stage 3

Socialisation (informal group contact or activity). Youth participation workers encourage greater commitment to and involvement in programme.

### Stage 4

Involvement in activities, seeing it through to completion. Workers encourage progression to stage 5.

### Stage 5

Young people begin to take part in planning and organising activity themselves.

### Stage 6

Young people run activities themselves with support from workers.

### Stage 7

Leadership or peer education level – young people take responsibility for others as well as themselves.

Huskins, J (1996) *Quality Work With Young People*

## For gathering evidence – for writing impact and annual reports

Whatever the level of celebration – from a one-to-one catch up through to a full-blown celebration event – evidence accrues that can be given to funders or written into impact reports and organisational annual reports.

In the case of one-to-one catch up, it is appropriate to use the seven steps guide outlined here. Measuring baseline positions on the guide from one to seven at the beginning of relationships with children and young people, and measuring again at a

## Case Study Three

## The RSPB Phoenix Forum

# A residential helps the group celebrate their good work

The RSPB Phoenix Forum is a body of 10 democratically elected members from the teenage membership of the RSPB who meet four times a year at different RSPB nature reserves across Britain to advise RSPB staff on the style and pace of the teenage membership package. Each meeting has a full agenda, decided upon by the Forum and the meetings are chaired and minuted by the teenagers themselves.

Any teenage member of the RSPB can stand for the Forum by writing a manifesto of approximately 100 words, describing what they could bring to the Forum. These manifestos are then published in the teenage membership magazine, *Wingbeat*, and our members are asked to vote for the ones that they like the sound of the best.

The Forum chooses or writes most of the content of *Wingbeat* and become our primary ambassadors in all sorts of ad hoc external opportunities. In 2002, for example, two Forum members were invited to attend the Earth Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa to represent UK Youth. They rubbed shoulders with world leaders and challenged them on issues such as climate change long before it became fashionable.

Closer to home, the Forum chooses the location and content for the annual RSPB Phoenix Conference, which in recent years has involved practical conservation work, wildlife watching, and political lobbying at Westminster.

The RSPB firmly believes that giving teenagers an input to their own membership package is very important. Many parents have contacted us to say that their children had developed confidence and self-belief as a result of being part of the Forum. Some great friendships have been formed and are still strong today, long after the teenagers have left the Forum.

"The RSPB Phoenix Forum is a lot of fun, and looks good on members' CVs. But we have other more tangible reward mechanisms. Every year, we run a residential weekend for the Forum, usually based in a Youth Hostel. This comprises a short meeting, and then visits to local nature reserves or other attractions of the members' choosing. We even went bowling one weekend when the weather was too rough to be outside. As members retire from the Forum, they get a certificate, signed by our Chief Executive, in recognition of their service. As RSPB Volunteers, the teenagers also get a volunteer card, entitling them to discounts off RSPB goods, and those who serve for five years or more are eligible for long-service awards, such as an exclusive swift lapel badge."

You can find more details at [www.rspb.org.uk/phoenix](http://www.rspb.org.uk/phoenix)

# How to celebrate success

given specific time in the future can gauge progress. It will give you a true indication of the impact of the work or specific project you are engaged with, as well as the personal development of the children and young people involved.

An annual report has to have some particular information included, usually of a financial nature plus an overview of the organisation and its work. In addition, it is an opportunity to showcase projects and achievements; to give a public endorsement to individuals and groups; and publicly celebrate their success.

## Potential for research

Within the voluntary and community youth sector there are practitioners who have honed their participatory skills and have set up ways that participants can feel rewarded and engage in the process of celebration. Alongside the children and young people you work with, you could do some research into what these organisations have done to get some more ideas to work with. Some of them are listed on page 11.

### Case Study Four

### Young Devon

## Celebrating and making plans over dinner

Young Devon is a charity that supports young people in Devon. Its vision is 'changing the odds in favour of young people'. The organisation is piloting a nationally accredited scheme – Participation In Action (PIA) – that invests in young people, giving them the skills and qualifications to be professionals in their own right. One of the voluntary groups being supported by the pilot scheme is called ALLSORTS where around 12 young people volunteer every week.

ALLSORTS has been involved in a great deal of positive participation work including:

- Taking part in interviews for the head of Devon's Children's Trust, Education Welfare Officers, school nurses, and the senior matron at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital
- Giving advice on improving young people services

Recently they have been working with the Red Cross to develop HIV/AIDS awareness. As part of this a local service supporting people living with HIV/AIDS delivered a course to the group.

The young people felt they had learnt so much they wanted to educate other young people and share their new knowledge with them. As a group they decided they wanted to do a performance using drama as the tool to educate other young people. The performance was a real success and about 30 young people from around Devon turned up to see it.

The young people were so proud of their achievement and the success of their work that they decided to celebrate what they had done. It was also a good way of helping to keep the group engaged in their work. Along with the workers, the group sat down and decided to go for a meal to celebrate. They also saw it as a chance to discuss their success – not just the performance, but also all their brilliant work along the way.

This was a really great way to celebrate as it gave them the opportunity to evaluate their success as a group. The group have now decided to keep up their hard work and continue on their positive participation journey.

More information about Young Devon can be found at [www.dya.org.uk](http://www.dya.org.uk)

# How to celebrate success

## Find Out More

This list of organisations and websites will help you to find more detailed information and follow up areas of interest:

### [www.byc.org.uk](http://www.byc.org.uk)

British Youth Council is led by young people for young people and runs training workshops, creates volunteering opportunities and builds inspiring campaigns which give everyone aged 26 and under a chance to make a positive contribution to society both in the UK and other countries.

### [www.youthactionnetwork.org.uk](http://www.youthactionnetwork.org.uk)

The Makin' it Real Awards were set up in 2006 to reward and recognise groups of young volunteers and the workers who support them for making a positive difference to their local community. Each year, first, second and third place prizes are awarded to groups of young people and to workers in celebration of the amazing things that can be achieved through Youth Action.

### [www.clubsforyoungpeople.org.uk](http://www.clubsforyoungpeople.org.uk)

If children and young people have done something they are proud of, however big or small, there is space to share their achievements in the *done somethin'?* memoirs.

### [www.ukyouth.org](http://www.ukyouth.org)

The Youth Challenges and the Youth Achievement Awards offer an activity-based approach to peer education. The Awards are designed to help develop more effective participative practice by encouraging children and young people to progressively take more responsibility in selecting, planning and leading activities that are based on their interests.

### [www.sja.org.uk/sja/](http://www.sja.org.uk/sja/)

St John Ambulance recognises children and young people for acting safely, promptly and effectively in a real emergency and for putting good first aid into practice. Young First Aider of the Year Awards are presented at special ceremonies at St John's Gate in London.

### [www.princestrust.org.uk](http://www.princestrust.org.uk)

The Celebrate Success Awards ensure every person who has changed their life for the better or helped change someone's life around with The Prince's Trust has their efforts recognised. Since they began almost 2,500 people have been nominated: young people, volunteers, xl club advisers, team leaders, partner organisations and staff.

### [www.theaward.org](http://www.theaward.org)

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award provides an enjoyable, challenging and rewarding programme of personal development.

### [www.fairbridge.org.uk](http://www.fairbridge.org.uk)

Recently young people from Fairbridge have been able to see their own films on a silver IMAX screen and meet the likes of HRH Princess Alexandra, Kevin Spacey and Secretary of State for Children and Families, Ed Balls.

Kevin Spacey said, *'It was a fantastic and eye-opening evening. It's clear that Fairbridge plants those first seeds a young person needs to find their own self-esteem and the confidence to do great things'.*

Fairbridge supports young people who are not in education, employment or training – giving them the motivation, confidence and skills they need to change their lives.

## Case Study Five

## NCVYS Young Partners Award

### Awarding success

The Young Partners Award (YPA) is a celebration of children and young people's involvement in decision-making within voluntary and community youth organisations and projects. It provides an opportunity for such organisations and projects to demonstrate what they have achieved, share ideas and inspire other organisations.

The Young Partners Award is unique because young people are in control. Using their own experiences, young people:

- Developed the criteria for the Award
- Are responsible for shortlisting the nominations
- Visit the shortlisted organisations
- Make the final decision on who the winners are
- Plan the award ceremony ensuring that everyone has a good time!

Here's what a young person has to say about being involved with the Young Partners Award:

'Being part of the planning group was great and the people I was working with really helped to make the mood more enjoyable. I like travelling to different places so going to visit projects and finding out more about what they do and seeing how they work with other children and young people was really exciting. Helping them celebrate their work at the awards ceremony was brilliant and everyone enjoyed themselves. I can't wait to do it all again' Linda Epstein, YPA planning group member

Find out more about the awards at [www.ncvys.org.uk](http://www.ncvys.org.uk)

**Participation Works enables organisations to involve children and young people effectively in the development, delivery and evaluation of the services which affect their lives.**

The Participation Works How To guides are a series of booklets that provide practical information, useful tips and case studies of good participation practice. Each one provides an introduction to a different element of participation to help organisations enhance their work with children and young people.

Participation Works is an online Gateway to the world of children and young people's participation. Visit [www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk) to access comprehensive information on policy, practice, training and innovative ideas.

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### Participation Works

8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE

[www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)

Enquiry line: 0845 603 6725

# How To

## Involve children and young people with communication impairments in decision-making

*“Listen to me, no-one else, listen to me, it’s my life, listen to me!”*

All children and young people can and do communicate. And those children and young people with communication impairments are as able as anyone else to be involved in decision-making. As participation and communication are basic human rights, we must support them to participate in and influence decisions and issues that affect their lives. This How To guide provides information and ideas about how – with the right attitudes and the right approach – you can enable children and young people with communication impairments to do this.

### What do we mean by communication impairments?

Over one million children and young people have communication impairments in the United Kingdom. Communication impairments can take a variety of forms. For example, children and young people may need support with: clarity of speech, **expressive language** and getting their message across; **receptive language** and understanding what is being communicated to them; and **social use of language** which could include difficulty understanding the rules of conversation or interaction. They may also use speech and language, but in a more simplified or less clear way than expected.

*“I may not have speech, but I have a voice. I can give my opinions, I can even argue”*



While some children and young people may have physical or learning difficulties, hearing or visual impairments, or be on the autistic spectrum, others may have communication needs in the absence of any other impairment. These children and young people are sometimes referred to as having a “hidden disability” as their impairments are not always easy to see. Around six per cent of the population have this “primary” communication need.

Speech is not the only way we communicate; we also communicate using body language, gestures, behaviour and facial expressions. Many children and young people will also use other methods to support their communication such as augmentative and alternative communication, communication aids, Makaton or sign language. These can be formal communication systems or some children and young people use systems that are unique to them. They are all of equal value. It is important for adults to adapt their own verbal language for children and young people with communication needs and to be receptive to simplified language or unclear speech as well as alternative and augmentative means of communication.

This guide does not give in-depth information on the full range of communication impairments but rather gives a practical approach for how to overcome the barriers these children and young people face so they can fully participate in decisions and issues that affect them. More information on specific communication impairments can be found in the Find Out More section on page 10.

## Key Policy and Legislation

### United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC contains 54 articles detailing children and young people's rights with Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC enshrining the right of all children and young people to express their views and for these to be taken into account in decisions that affect them. In addition, it gives children and young people the right to request and receive information in a format of the child or young person's choice. Further to this, Article 23 focuses specifically on disabled children and young people, recognizing their right to dignity, independence and active participation within their community.

### Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) provides protection for disabled children, young people and adults in a number of areas, including access to services covering those in the statutory, independent and voluntary sectors. It requires service providers not to treat a disabled person less favorably for a reason related to their impairment than they would treat a non-disabled person. It also requires service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' for a disabled person to make the service more accessible.

### Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a new positive duty on public authorities to promote disability equality. The Disability Equality Duty requires public authorities, including local authorities, mainstream and special schools, to develop a Disability Equality Scheme. One of the key elements of this is the requirement to involve disabled people in the development of the Disability Equality Scheme and its action plan.

### Barriers to participation

*"Don't judge a book by its cover – we can all make choices"*

Participation has never been so high on the agenda. Yet children and young people with communication impairments are still much less likely to be involved in decision-making processes than those without them. It's time this changed!

So what are some of barriers children and young people with communication impairments experience?

*The assumption that speech is the only or best way to communicate.* All methods of communication are equally valuable. We need to ask not **if** children and young people can communicate, but **how** they do.

*The assumption that a child or young person who has some verbal language has age appropriate communication.* Many children and young people with communication needs become very adept at disguising the true nature of their understanding or levels of expressive language.

*Staff may not understand communication impairments or feel they have the right skills.* Staff need training to develop their skills and knowledge and to develop their confidence.

*Communication impairments may not always immediately be 'visible'.* This could mean people do not realise a child or young person needs support with their communication. This is why it's so important to find out what support children and young people require as far in advance as possible, to spend time getting to know them and to learn how they communicate.

*Children and young people not having access to their communication system.* For example, if a child or young person uses a communication book or aid, this should be kept with them at all times, not just in certain settings or at certain times.

*Not allowing enough time.* Many children and young people need additional time to process the language they hear and to formulate their responses. Given time and

# How to: communication impairments

support they can make the contributions of which they are capable.

*Expecting children and young people to 'fit in' to adult models of participation.* For participation to be meaningful it needs to be an on-going child-centred process that is flexible and adapted to the child or young person and the ways they communicate. For example, this should include a range of approaches – such as observing their body language, recognising the range of ways they communicate – to build up a holistic picture over a period of time.

*Low expectations.* All children and young people can and do communicate. It's up to us as adults to make the effort to understand, to be open to their communication attempts and adapt to the way children and young people communicate.

*Inaccessible activities.* Activities need to be adapted to the child or young person. Otherwise they may be excluded and not given the opportunity to have their views heard. Providing a range of activities for children and young people to express their views benefits all children and young people and can make things more fun and meaningful for everyone.

*Lack of previous involvement in decision-making.* If children and young people have not been involved in or have been excluded from decision-making processes before, they may not have the confidence to express their views, think their views are not valued, or feel they need to give adults the "right" answers. It's important that we support children and young people to develop their confidence and practise their skills. This includes showing them we value their views and involvement and that any attempt at communicating is welcomed. Having the opportunity to participate in decisions about their every day lives can also give them the confidence to participate in larger decisions.

## Making participation a reality

*"You can find out what's best for us by involving us"*

*"If you don't listen to what we want – how can you give us what we want"*

### Creating the right culture in your organisation

Creating an inclusive culture is the key to enabling children and young people with communication impairments to participate effectively in decision-making. This requires a commitment at all levels and an understanding that it is everyone's responsibility.

Creating an inclusive environment where all children and young people can participate is an on-going process and needs to be based upon the social model of disability. Here the focus is on identifying the barriers that prevent children and young people participating and finding solutions, rather than expecting them to adapt or 'fit in'. The focus is on the child or young person's strengths. An inclusive, accessible and communication-friendly environment benefits everyone – not just children and young people with communication impairments – and is good practice for everyone.

Some of the key things your organisation should consider are:

- Does your organisation have a participation policy that is inclusive of children and young people with communication impairments?
- Are all your organisation's policies inclusive and accessible for children and young people with communication impairments? They should recognise:
  - All children and young people can and do communicate.
  - Staff need to be skilled in recognising the level and means of children and young people's communication to support participation effectively.

# How to: communication impairments

- The views of all children and young people, including those who do not use speech, are equally valued whatever their method of communication.
- The rights of children and young people with communication impairments to participate.
- Have you contacted other organisations, particularly those led by disabled people, to support you in the process of becoming inclusive?
- **Does your organisation:**
  - Display positive images of disabled children and young people with communication impairments?
  - Show its commitment to the social model of disability?
  - Proactively identify barriers and seek solutions to the involvement of children and young people?
- Positively promote disability equality?
- Provide disability equality training for all staff?
- Allow the time required?
- Provide communication skills training for staff to enable them to effectively communicate with ALL children and young people?
- Involve ALL children and young people in all issues as a matter of course?
- Have a charter of shared values developed in partnership with ALL children and young people?
- Regularly review (or develop new) policies with children and young people with communication impairments?

## Case Study One Bridges, Bolton

### Getting involved in funding bids

The opportunity to apply for Youth Opportunity Funding (YOF) is a relatively straightforward matter for groups of young people who are able to articulate their priorities and argue their case. For children and young people communicating without words, it is essential to be more creative in establishing what is important to them and for what they would like to apply for funding.

At a residential short break care house in Bolton, team members had experienced lots of very positive responses from the young visitors when they were able to go into the garden. Team members struggled however to keep the experience of being outside stimulating and interesting as their visitors were physically unable to take part in traditional games and play activities. They decided to try and find out more about what would interest the young people when spending time outside. They took the young people to a local garden centre to give them the opportunity to see, smell and touch different plants, garden ornaments and furniture. They took the young people to a butterfly farm and on a nature trail and watched their reactions to smaller insects and birds. They were able to identify plants and feeders that would attract different birds and insects. Research with families and schools identified a range of equipment that would be more meaningful to the visitors.

The YOF application was submitted as a before and after garden plan with photographs of the young people's reactions to the different opportunities offered. The application was successful and a wonderful sensory garden and play equipment was funded.

Bridges provides short break care for disabled children and young people in Bolton. It comprises Bolton Shared Care (a family based short break care scheme, providing short break foster care, sitting and befriending), two residential short break care houses and a family support team. Between us, we support around 250 children and young people with a whole range of skills and interests.

# How to: communication impairments

## Creating accessible information

*“My voice is my power”*

*“Frustrating when you don’t tell us stuff”*

Information is central to enabling children and young people to make informed choices and decisions. One of the main barriers to participation for children and young people with communication impairments is the lack of accessible information. This could be information about specific issues or how you advertise your organisation to make sure all children and young people know about it and can get involved in the first place.

To be inclusive of children and young people with communication impairments, information needs to be available in a variety of accessible formats; visual or multi-sensory information is often easiest. Other examples include, easy read versions, photographs, pictures or audio. The children and young people also need the opportunity to respond in as many different ways as possible; through creative opportunities such as art or drama, experientially, verbally or through their chosen means of communication.

It’s not just the format you need to think about. Children and young people with communication impairments may also need adults to use simplified language or vocabulary. They may need additional time or support to absorb and understand information and to develop their messages, responses or opinions so they can contribute meaningfully and equally.

Remember, it’s a child or young person’s right to have accessible information and a range of accessible ways to contribute.

When developing information think about the following things:

- What is the information for? To advertise your service? About a specific issue? Having clear aims about the type of information will make it easier to develop and easier to understand.

- Who is the information for? Is it for a specific child or young person? Or do you want to make it as generically accessible as possible?
- Is the information you provide in a range of accessible formats, such as easy read versions? Creating accessible information doesn’t need to be expensive or difficult. For example, using photographs, shorter sentences or pictures can all easily make something more accessible.
- Find out about the specific communication requirements of the children and young people you are working with so information can be provided appropriately.
- How and where is information located? Is it in places children and young people with communication impairments can access it?
- Is there support available for children and young people to access the information?
- Involve children and young people in the development of information – they’re the experts.
- Give children and young people information in advance e.g. before a meeting or activity so they have enough time to absorb it and decide what they want to say about it.
- Regularly review information with children and young people.
- Feedback on children and young people’s involvement should always be provided in the child or young person’s preferred way.

*“Tell us what’s changed”*

- Ask children and young people how they would like information to be provided.
- Providing information in a variety of formats benefits all children and young people and it can be fun developing it!

## Case Study Two Bridges, Bolton

### Every picture tells a story

Photographs have long been used as a way of keeping a photographic record of activities, likes and dislikes and as a way of prompting discussions. At Bridges we were introduced, as part of a "Photo Voice" project, to the concept of the children and young people having their own cameras to take photographs of what captured their interest. The results for young people communicating without words were particularly enlightening.

We had always known from Gary's reactions that he enjoyed bowling, certain cafes and soft-play areas. After giving him a camera at these places he produced a series of interesting images of different colours and lights from different angles and distances. It became clear that the activity itself was perhaps of secondary interest with lighting and colour his main focus. We began to consider the lighting as a factor when planning activities and had another insight into interpreting Gary's behaviour and responses, both positive and negative, in different situations.

Emma was not interested in manipulating the camera herself but her carers took photographs immediately after she had been examining an item; looking through or focusing on something from as near to her perspective as possible. If she had been dangling upside down from a swing, spinning around, or peering closely at a leaf, they repeated the action and photographed what they saw. They produced a series of photographs that illustrated the way Emma liked to see the interplay of natural light through objects and the range of textures she enjoyed. What we had previously seen as aimless wandering we now saw as much more focused and purposeful as there was no doubt Emma was captivated by certain effects and textures.

## Safeguarding

### *Participation... "It's our right"*

### *"Don't judge a book by its cover – we can all make choices"*

Safeguarding is central to all decision-making activities and it is vital that safeguarding policies and procedures are inclusive of children and young people with communication impairments. It's about making sure children and young people's rights are respected and ensuring participation becomes a reality. Further information on safeguarding can be found in the How To Safeguard Children and Young People guide but when supporting children and young people with communication impairments you may also need to consider the following:

- How is information provided to support children and young people to make

informed choices about whether they want to be involved, to what level and to enable them to give their consent? Is this accessible for everyone?

- What different methods are in place to ensure children and young people know how to make complaints or raise concerns? Are they accessible for children and young people with communication impairments?
- Do staff have a clear understanding of how individual children and young people communicate and how to support them effectively?
- Have children and young people with communication impairments been involved in developing policies and procedures?
- Children and young people are the experts in their own lives and their dignity should be respected. Are children and young people with communication impairments involved in telling adults how they want to be supported and choosing the people that support them?

## Case Study Three 1 Voice

### Everybody can make a difference

1 Voice is a national support network for children and young people who use communication aids and their families. Underpinning all their work is the belief that everybody has something to say and can make a difference.

Key to the success of 1 Voice is the involvement of role models. These are older young people or adults who work alongside and support children and young people at 1 Voice events such as weekend training and activity sessions. All of them use communication aids and some have been members of 1 Voice for years. Others are keen to share experience and expertise developed elsewhere. In addition to leading sessions on issues such as living independently, they inspire and motivate children and young people and can help families have higher expectations of their own family members.

Recently young people involved in 1 Voice wrote and produced a music DVD called Listen to Me. The song and video told viewers about themselves and gave top tips on how to talk with young people who use communication aids. The DVD has been really successful and has been distributed all over the world. The young people involved have received a Diana Award for their work to raise awareness of disability.

Being recognised formally for taking part is really motivating for any children and young people. 1 Voice also feels that children and young people's participation needs to be acknowledged in other ways too – so they always make sure that they keep in contact, send thank you letters and cards, and ensure as many people hear about their work as possible.

In a group where many different forms of communication aid are being used it is not always possible to provide all participants with individually tailored update letters or information. This does not need to be a barrier to getting things done. At 1 Voice they are open with people about what they are doing, why they are doing it and enlist the help of the young people's care workers and supporters. They keep all their communications jargon free, in young people's language and in big plain font. This makes sure everyone is kept in touch, has every opportunity to get involved and can have their say.

## Getting to know children and young people

*"If you give us respect – we'll give you respect"*

*"Help us make decisions by giving us your time – enough time"*

*"Show us you want to listen"*

Developing effective relationships with children and young people with communication impairments is key to effective participation. This is not only so you can spend time getting to know them, their levels of understanding and the way they communicate in different contexts but more importantly, so they can get to know and trust you.

*"Trust us – we need to trust you"*

We often ask children and young people for a lot of information about their lives but rarely give the same back. Something simple

# How to: communication impairments

like developing a photographic pen picture of yourself, which tells them a bit about you can be a great way of supporting them to get to know you.

It is also important to be aware of the balance of power that exists between adults and children and young people and how this might impact on their involvement in meaningful decision-making. The process should be child-centred, with the child or young person in control of the process, including who supports them and how they are supported. It is also vital that they are shown their views and their involvement is valued.

## *“Don’t guess what we want”*

In addition to finding out about the different ways they communicate, you should find out how they want to be involved and how **they** want **you** to support them. This could include talking to other people in their lives (with their permission). Be careful not to substitute the views of the young person with those of people that know them.

## Top tips for making it happen

- Give children and young people with communication impairments enough **time**.
- Communication is a two-way process – how you communicate with the child or young person and how they communicate with you. Learn from each other
- Know the child or young person well and know their levels of understanding so that you can present information in an accessible way.
- Know how they communicate so that you can provide a range of opportunities for their contributions that include their chosen method.
- Make sure you give the child or young person the opportunity to endorse that you have interpreted their views correctly.
- Provide and use a range of approaches, activities and methods to gain and record children and young people’s views – this is better for everyone.
- Build on your strengths and the many communication skills you already have.
- If at first you don’t understand what a child is communicating, keep trying and keep asking. Don’t pretend you’ve understood or finish their sentences for them.
- Repeat things back to the child to clarify if you’ve understood what they meant. You could ask them to show you or take you to what they mean or use things like pictures to facilitate understanding.
- Don’t make assumptions about a child or young person’s ‘ability’ to communicate – it’s not **if** but **how**.
- Use a variety of methods to support communication, such as photos, objects or pictures. Make sure you have recorded how a child or young person communicates and keep adding to this over time. Make sure all staff know about it.
- A can-do attitude is your most important tool.
- Avoid using jargon, figures of speech, abstract terms or sentences that are too long.
- Always focus on what the child **can** do.

## Practical ideas for involving children and young people with communication impairments

*“Empower us”*

*“Gives us new skills”*

**Communication passports.** Some children and young people use communication passports that are written in the first person and belong to the child and their family. They are unique to each individual child and contain key information that anyone who meets the child needs to know. It could include information about how they express their likes or dislikes; say yes or no; how they like you to communicate with them. They often include three columns headed ‘when I do...’, ‘people think I mean...’ ‘you should do...’. More information on communication passports can be found in the Find Out More section on page 11.

**Photographs.** Photographs are an excellent way of supporting communication and can be used in a variety of ways. For example, children and young people can take photographs of things that they like or dislike, what’s important to them, or of things they would like to change. Photographs can be taken of children and young people (with consent, of course) to record their time and the things they enjoy. They can also be used to make information more accessible and the environment more communication friendly. You could develop an information sheet about your organisation with pictures of the staff, places or activities so that children and young people know what to expect when they come. Photographs can also be used to support children and young people to make choices. You could develop a choice book containing photos of the different activities or choices on offer, so that children and young people can look through and show

you what they want or ask them to point to what they like or dislike.

**Pictures and symbols.** Pictures and symbols can both be used to make written information accessible and to support language. For example, pictures of different facial expressions can be used to support children and young people to say what they like or don’t like in pictorial questionnaires.

**Use a variety of approaches.** There is no one set way children and young people communicate or one set approach. Using a variety of methods including observation will make children and young people’s participation more meaningful.

**Creative methods.** Creative methods such as art, drawing or drama can be great ways of supporting children and young people to express their views and are adaptable and accessible. More information on using creative methods can be found in the How To Use Creative Methods for Participation guide.

**Talking mats.** Talking mats are an interactive resource that use three sets of pictures: Topics – to show the topic being explored; Options – to show the different options or choices; and Visual Scales – to show how they feel about each choice using pictures of different emotions. Children and young people are supported to indicate how they feel about each option or choice one at a time. There is more information in the Find Out More section on page 10.

**Video or audio.** Video cameras or Dictaphones can be used by children and young people to express their views by recording their views and listening or viewing information.

**Mosaic approach.** This is a child-centred and adaptable approach that was initially developed to gain the views of young children. The first stage collects and records information through observations, photographs or videos, mapping and role-play. Following this, all the information is collated and reflected upon. There is more information in the Find Out More section on page 11.

## Find Out More

This list of organisations and publications should help you to find more detailed information and follow up areas of interest.

### Organisations and websites

The **ACE Centre** provides support and advice on children and young people with complex physical and communication impairments. Further information and resources are available from:

[www.ace-centre.org.uk](http://www.ace-centre.org.uk)

**Afasic** seeks to raise awareness and create better services and provision for children and young people with speech and language impairments. Further information and resources are available from:

[www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk)

**BT Betterworld** provides resources to support communication skills in all children and young people. Website:

[www.btbetterworld.com](http://www.btbetterworld.com)

**The Communication Trust** aims to raise awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication across the children and young people's workforce. Further information and resources are available from

[www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)

The **Disability Toolkit** is a website established by the Children's Society to support professionals to involve disabled children and young people in participation and decision-making. The website has a database of resources and practice examples. For more information visit:

[www.disabilitytoolkit.org.uk](http://www.disabilitytoolkit.org.uk)

**I CAN** works to promote the development of speech, language and communication skills in all children and young people with a special focus on those who find this hard. Further information and resources are available from [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

**Making Ourselves Heard** is a project led by the Council for Disabled Children. It promotes the active participation of disabled children and young people in all decisions and issues that affect them. For further information visit: [www.ncb.org.uk/cdc\\_moh](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc_moh)

**Talking Mats** is a low-tech communication framework involving sets of symbols. It is designed to help people with communication difficulties to think about issues discussed with them, and provide them with a way to effectively express their opinions. Website: [www.talkingmats.com](http://www.talkingmats.com)

**Talking Point** provides information and resources about communication for professionals and parents, plus links to other information and websites. Website: [www.talkingpoint.org.uk](http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk)

**1 Voice** is a support network for families involved with communication aids and welcomes children and young people, professionals, families and anyone interested in alternative or augmentative communication (AAC). Further information is available from: [www.1voice.info](http://www.1voice.info)

# How to: communication impairments

## Publications

Clark, A and Moss, P (2001)

### ***Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach.***

National Children's Bureau in association with JRF.

The Mosaic approach is a multi-method one in which children's own photographs, tours and maps can be combined with talking and observing to gain deeper understanding of children's perspectives on the places in their early childhood.

Morris, J (2002)

### ***A Lot to Say.***

Scope.  
A guide for social workers, personal advisors and others working with disabled children and young people with communication impairments. Available to download from [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

Watson, D and others (2007)

### ***I Want To Choose Too.***

University of Bristol  
A resource aimed at teachers and others who support primary age children with little or no speech in decision-making, containing a range of practical, easy to use resources and ideas. Available to download at: [www.bristol.ac.uk/norahfry/download/iwanttochoose2007.pdf](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/norahfry/download/iwanttochoose2007.pdf) (accessed 18 March 2008) or contact Debby Watson on 0117 3310988,

## Resources

### **I'll Go First**

The Children's Society (2006)

A CD ROM on using computer technology to enable disabled children and young people to make their views known in a fun and creative way. Contains new story boards and the option for disabled children and young people to record their views online. Available from [www.childrensociety.org.uk](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk)

### **Listen Up**

Mencap (2004)

A toolkit of multi-media resources to help children and young people with a learning disability complain about the services they use. Available from Mencap [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

### **My Life, My Decisions, My Choice**

The Children's Society (2007)

Disabled young people have assisted The Children's Society in developing a set of resources to aid and facilitate decision-making. The resources are aimed at both disabled young people and the professionals that work with them. Download all the resources at: [sites.childrensociety.org.uk/disabilitytoolkit/about/resources.aspx](http://sites.childrensociety.org.uk/disabilitytoolkit/about/resources.aspx) (accessed 18 March 2008)

### **Personal Communication Passports**

CALL Centre (2003)

A resource outlining the key principles of making and using communication passports as a way of documenting and presenting information about disabled children and young people who cannot easily speak for themselves. Available from

[www.callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk/](http://www.callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk/) (accessed 18 March 2008) where the resources can be explored online before purchasing. Tel: 0131 651 6236. A website to specifically address questions about planning, creating and using passports can be accessed at

[www.personalpassports.org.uk](http://www.personalpassports.org.uk) or [www.communicationpassports.org.uk](http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk)

### **Top Tips For Participation: what disabled young people want**

Council for Disabled Children and Participation Works (2008)

A poster, highlighting in disabled young people's own words, their top tips for participation. Available from: [www.ncb.org.uk/cdc\\_moh](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc_moh)

# How to: communication impairments



**Participation Works enables organisations to involve children and young people effectively in the development, delivery and evaluation of the services which affect their lives.**

The Participation Works How To guides are a series of booklets that provide practical information, useful tips and case studies of good participation practice. Each one provides an introduction to a different element of participation to help organisations enhance their work with children and young people.

Participation Works is an online Gateway to the world of children and young people's participation. Visit [www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk) to access comprehensive information on policy, practice, training and innovative ideas.

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Case Studies:

1 Voice support network

Bridges short break care, Bolton

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## Participation Works

8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE

[www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)

Enquiry line: 0845 603 6725

# How To

## Use Creative Methods for Participation

This How To guide aims to provide some ideas and information for organisations working with children and young people to help them get started using creative methods.

Creative participation methods offer a unique way to develop fun and inclusive engagement with children and young people and support their involvement in decision-making. Using creative methods can enable children and young people to share, explore and develop their ideas and to express them in memorable ways. It is **not** about using creative arts therapies. It is about activities and approaches that can be used in a variety of settings to enable children and young people to participate

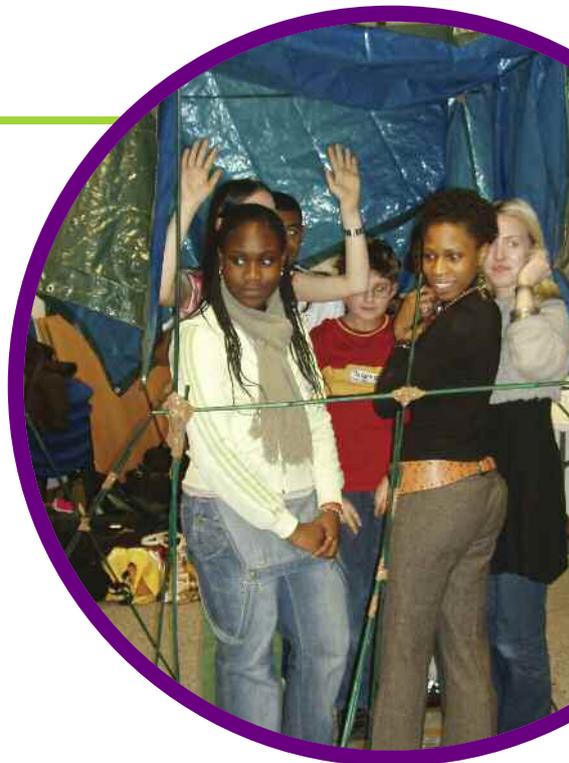
### Creative methods

Many organisations working with children and young people use creative methods; it might be projects, workshops or sessions that use video, drama, dance, music, arts and crafts, photography and so on. Your organisation may use these methods already to help children and young people participate in decision-making. Creative methods are popular because they are:

**Fun** – choose the right activity with a group of children and young people and they will be keen to get involved. Fun and enjoyment sparks enthusiasm and energy – a powerful mix.

**Inclusive** – everyone can take part because it does not have to rely on those who are confident speakers or readers. Creative methods often focus on the visual or experiential so there is less reliance on verbal skills.

**Engaging for all ages and abilities** – children and young people of all ages and abilities can get involved in creative



activities. They might need some adapting and some might be more appropriate than others but there is plenty of scope for something for everyone.

Creative activities are a familiar and enjoyable part of many organisations' work with children and young people so it can be an easy step to use creative methods to develop creative participation work with children and young people too.

### What creative participation can do

**Find out different kinds of information.** It can express not just the 'what' but also the thoughts and feelings children and young people have about a subject. For example songs, poems and raps, or drawings and paintings can express feelings and emotions that are hard to talk about.

**Help plan and evaluate services.** Many consultations and evaluations use creative ways to gather and analyse information about services and use the findings from this to plan better services for children and young people. Children and young people receiving a service are the best people to help decide if it is useful and how it could be better.

# How to use creative arts

## **Explore difficult or sensitive issues.**

Creative methods can help discussion by 'distancing' an issue so that discussion is not about personal experience. Developing a drama about bullying or making posters about racism or sexism can provide a safe space for children and young people to put forward their ideas and experiences, explore how issues like peer pressure affect behaviour and say how they think these issues should be dealt with.

**Include a range of views.** Children and young people will have different experiences and views about issues. Creative methods can allow the expression, exploration and presentation of differing views even within the same creative space. For example, children and young people of all ages and abilities can contribute to a photographic collage or a community map.

**Challenge stereotypes about children and young people.** It is not uncommon for young people to be portrayed in the media and within local communities in negative ways. Creative methods can help children and young people to challenge stereotypes among themselves and encourage more understanding of diversity and difference.

**Engage the hard to reach.** Creative activities have proved to be a successful way to engage children and young people who are not part of or have rejected mainstream services. For example, youth offending teams, pupil referral units and secure children's homes have found that creative activities can inspire and interest young people, get them involved and often help them re-engage with learning, education and their community.

**Present information and views in different ways.** The creative work produced by children and young people can often be a refreshing change from a written report and be much more memorable too. It can reach out to and be understood by many more people – old and young, professional, family and community.

**Provide opportunities for social and emotional development.** Creative activities also offer unique opportunities for

children and young people to learn about communication and getting on with others as well as provide different ways to express feelings and emotions. Children and young people often experience pleasure, delight and satisfaction whilst engaging in creative activity and such positive experiences can only enhance well-being.

## How children and young people can benefit from creative participation

**By learning new skills.** Creative activities provide opportunities for the development of new skills.

**By expressing themselves.** It helps to give children and young people the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings. This is a crucial part of participation work as often children and young people do not believe their views are important, will be understood or acted upon.

**By learning how to communicate and negotiate.** Involvement in creative activities often includes communicating and sometimes practising how to deal with situations. For example, a drama about personal relationships might explore how to deal with peer pressure.

**By increasing their confidence and self-esteem.** Children and young people learn that their views and opinions are important, worthy of respect and that it is possible for them to put their views forward, be listened to and have those views acted upon.

**By acquiring a sense of achievement.** Many children and young people are proud of their creative achievements and so are their parents and carers. Working towards goals provides opportunities for children and young people to gain recognition for their work and can contribute to learning profiles, CV's and future employment prospects.

# How to use creative arts

**By being included and involved.** Much creative work takes place in groups and requires groups to work together, this can be a great opportunity to learn how to get on with others and helps to build relationships and create feelings of belonging.

## How organisations can benefit from creative participation

**By learning** what children and young people's views are on a range of issues including the children's services they use.

**By keeping** children and young people's views at the heart of the service.

**By demonstrating** in a practical way how the organisation is putting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice.

**By showing** how children and young people in the organisation are achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes especially the 'enjoying and achieving' and 'making a positive contribution' outcomes.

**By collecting** evidence about children and young people's views and their participation that can inform evaluation, monitoring and inspection requirements.

## Steps to get started

Below are some actions that you can take to help you prepare for and get started using creative arts to enhance your participation work.

### Step 1. Review the creative artwork and participation work already done within your organisation.

- Is there any scope for bringing this work together more?
- Could you use creative methods to help evaluate the work of the organisation or to put forward children and young people's views on issues important to them?
- If the organisation is new to creative methods then start with something small scale, have a look at the Find Out More section on page 11 and 12 to get some ideas and talk to people in other organisations who have experience of working in this way.

### Step 2. Get the people you need on board.

- Talk to managers, staff and volunteers to gain their support and then talk to the children and young people about what they might like to do in terms of participation and choice of creative activity.
- Think about doing 'taster' type activities to help give everyone an idea of what it is like. It can be hard to say 'I'd like to

make a video about...' if you have never even taken a photograph. Sometimes children and young people say they cannot do something or 'I'm not any good at...' but often they have never had a chance to try it and may need encouragement to have a go.

- Check out local sources of help such as youth arts workers or children and young people's arts agencies and involve them early.
- Think about who the work is going to influence and where and how it will be presented.

### Step 3. Start planning the activity or taster sessions.

- Get children and young people involved in the planning if possible.
- Be clear what the children and young people are going to focus on and why and what the outcomes of their work will be. Make sure the children and young people are clear about this too.
- Be practical. Creative activities need the right resources available plus space and time – do not underestimate this, it

usually takes longer than expected.

- Give some thought to how you could record progress – maybe a graffiti wall, take photographs and build in some time to review and evaluate with the group at the end. Be clear with the children and young people about how this will be used.
- Always consider health and safety – most activities can be done safely with planning and careful management.

## **Step 4. Review the activity with the children and young people.**

- What was good about it?
- What would they do differently next time?
- Did they agree on any important messages?
- Who are the messages for?
- How can they can make sure they are heard?
- What happens next?

## **Step 5. Consider how to build on the work**

- Is there a way this can be shared with others, with the children and young people's permission and involvement?
- If the children and young people thought it was successful, would they like to do more and what would they like to focus on?
- Find out about local arts projects through your local arts development officer. Sometimes by working together you can access funding to do more ambitious work.
- Encourage the children and young people to get involved in the future planning. Successful creative partnerships ensure that children and young people have ownership of the project: if it is theirs from the beginning they will learn to take responsibility, build skills, negotiate and work together to achieve their objective.

## The experience is as important as what is created

What happens during a creative activity is just as important as what is produced. For example, a group who work together on developing a drama or a series of songs might spend a lot of time discussing and agreeing the plot or the lyrics. This development of ideas, negotiation and sharing of views can be a powerful experience for those involved. Case Study Two (see page 8) describes how music is being used by young people to describe their feelings and views often in difficult circumstances.

The final product might not demonstrate all that children and young people have given

and gained and/or the children and young people's production skills may be developing. This can lead to disappointment that somehow the final product is not as good as they thought it would be. Children and young people should be supported so that they do not feel let down and can see that they are developing ideas as well as creative skills. Reflection on experiences, successes, disappointments and learning is important. Case Study One (see page 6) describes an activity where reflection about the final product and how to improve it is a key part of the activity. Groups need to review their progress as they go along so that there is constant feedback about achievement and development. This also ensures children and young people can reflect on what they have learnt and produced, and consider how to refine it next time.

## Examples of creative participation

Below are some examples of how creative arts have been used to involve children and young people. They also show how participation has been able to effect change in areas of their lives they feel are important and how it has increased other people's awareness of certain aspects of their lives.

### **Presenting young people's experiences**

A group of young fathers made a CD about their experiences of being a dad. They wrote the lyrics, sang, played the instruments, did the mixing and sound production, and designed the CD cover.

### **Contributing to training professionals**

Young people created, performed and filmed a drama about running away and leaving home. They were all young care leavers or had run away from home in the past. They made the video to show other young people that running away can bring even more problems than the ones they thought they were leaving behind. Once made they thought it could also explain to social workers and foster carers how young people feel and what happens when young people are on the streets alone. It is now a training resource.

### **Presenting positive images of children and young people**

A group of looked after young people worked with an arts agency to organise and manage a conference for adults. They worked with graphic artists, designers and event managers deciding the management of the day. Adult delegates commented on their high level of professionalism and care.

### **Exploring sensitive issues**

Young people in an inner city area made a video about their experiences of being victims of crimes perpetrated by other young people and their concerns about their safety, especially on the streets. They also tackled the lack of serious concern about this by adults and professionals such as teachers, police and local services.

### **Including children and young people in consultations and developments about their community**

Children and young people worked with architects and planners to influence the design of a new housing development.

### **Keeping track of progress**

Young carers kept scrapbooks or journals about a carers support group they are part of. They could record whatever they wished in any way they liked and it could be private or shared. The poems, descriptions, cartoons, doodles and mementos helped them to review what they had enjoyed or found difficult and what had supported them.

### **Challenging other young people's views**

A series of posters and postcards about homophobia were designed by gay and lesbian young people and distributed to youth clubs to promote discussion and raise awareness.

### **Providing information about a children or young people's service**

Secondary school students who are part of a primary to secondary school transition project designed a leaflet and made a video about the project for primary school children and their parents and invited them to get involved in the project.

## Providing information for young people

Young people researched sexual health services in their area and talked to other young people to find out the kind of information young people want to know. They designed a young people's sexual health booklet and website and made sure it was distributed in places young people will see it.

## Case Study One

### The Big Idea:

#### Involving children and young people in the built environment

The Big Idea project worked with young people to help them develop skills to be involved in making decisions about the built environment they live, work and play in. A toolkit has been produced from the experiences of young people and workers involved in three pilot projects. It is a practical guide to support workers aiming to involve young people in other built environment projects.

A 'Design Challenge' activity involved the young people in designing and building a temporary shelter using plastic sheeting, bamboo canes, string and parcel tape. Each group was asked to ensure that their shelter:

- Allowed all the group to sit under it – at the same time!
- Was waterproof – and they had to test it to prove this with a bucket of water...
- Used only the materials provided.
- Was freestanding – no help from walls, doors or nearby furniture.

Young people found the activity fun and engaging. The group had to discuss, negotiate and agree how to build their shelter so they learnt how to work together and come to decisions as a group.

Once the shelters were complete and the groups had compared their finished products, they talked about how they could have improved on their shelter design. They also talked through their experience of working together as a team and how they had participated in making the decisions need to build their shelter.

The activity requires minimal resources but maximum participation and is often used as a warm up activity for new projects/groups or to support team building with young people getting to know each other.

Find out more about The Big Idea and similar activities at [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

# How to use creative arts

## Professional artists

The quality of children and young people's creative work and the experience of creating it can be enhanced and extended by working with professional artists.

Professional artists can offer access to a wider range of arts and media and provide learning and mentoring for children and young people to develop skills and produce high quality artwork. Local arts agencies may be able to provide access to professional studios and equipment and the support to use them. Children and young people benefit from this by extending the range of their experience, and by increased opportunities to develop skills and produce a high quality arts product. For some children and young people developing a network of positive role models will be a great gain.

## Working with artists and creative arts organisations

Artists and creative arts organisations bring invaluable expertise and skill about the arts. Workers involved with the children and young people bring essential knowledge and skills about working with young people – this is why co-facilitated projects often work well. As with any project it is the planning and preparation that help to make it successful. Artists need to understand why the creative participation project is being undertaken and what it is aiming to do, including how it might be intended to effect change or influence decision-making.

### Here are some top tips drawn from successful creative arts partnership projects:

- 1.** Find artists who are trained and experienced in working with children and young people as well as skilled in their art form. They should always have a Criminal Records Bureau check completed and be aware of your policies and procedures such as child protection.
- 2.** Consider and agree how workers from the organisation will work with the artists. Working together as co-facilitators is a common practical approach but make sure you are clear about who is responsible for what – such as managing children's behaviour, getting to and from venues, permissions to attend, numbers of children attending, who is responsible if children do not turn up etc.
- 3.** Be clear about the aims of the work and provide the artists with as much information as possible about the project including how the final work will be used e.g. presented to local councillors or to be used at a conference. Always provide a clear brief about what the artist or arts agency is expected to do.
- 4.** Be clear with the children and young people about what the project will involve and their roles and responsibilities within it. Encourage and support them to be involved in planning.
- 5.** Make sure the space and time available are appropriate and the right equipment is to hand. Arts projects can be very engaging and children and young people can feel frustrated if they do not have enough time to complete them.
- 6.** Think about evaluation at the beginning. How will the organisation, the children and young people know if this project has been successful and made a difference? Artists will need to consider how to evaluate the quality of the art work and arts practice.

Look at *Providing the Best* in the Find Out More section on page 10 for more information.

## Case Study Two

### Reaching the Parts: Mobile digital music project

Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership has been running a mobile digital music production project for young people at risk for the past six years. They provide high-end DJ-ing and studio quality Apple Macs and software with a tutor experienced in working with the most vulnerable young people. Settings have included Young Offenders Institutions, fields, youth clubs, pupil referral units, village halls and children's homes. Young people have consistently rated the project highly because it meets them where they are, and they are instantly able to make the kind of music they are into, from two-step garage to grime!

This project has enabled young people to have their say on a variety of issues. In Huntercombe Young Offenders Institute young men were able to surprise their workers with expressions of their feelings. The music young people have made has informed Children's Services through films and performances. Making music has also been used as part of a creative package in consultation exercises where young people have been enabled to make decisions about services they access and projects they wish to participate in.

Find out more about Reaching the Parts at: [www.oyap.org.uk](http://www.oyap.org.uk)

## Safety and ethics

Creative activities provide opportunities for feelings and experiences to be shared and explored and can provide a safe environment for this to happen. For example, sensitive issues can be distanced by creating a story that explores what might happen in an imaginary situation rather than the real situation of someone in the group. If personal experiences are shared then boundaries must be set about how that information is used within and outside of the group. Care must always be taken to make sure that safe boundaries exist. Artists and children and young people's workers need to make sure children and young people do not feel exposed and that views and opinions can be challenged and explored as ideas and behaviour without becoming personal. It is not always possible to assess how a creative activity may spark a memory of a difficult experience for a child or young person, but there should always be an adult who can talk with the child or young person and find them more support if needed.

## Permissions to use artworks

It is important to discuss and agree with the children and young people involved how any art works created will be used. Some art works have a specific purpose. For example, Case Study Three on page 9 describes groups from two regions in England coming together to give their views on a government green paper. From the outset they knew that their work would be made anonymous and shared in a final report and had given their permission for this to happen.

Other art works are made by children and young people for themselves. Care must be taken with sensitive work that describes, for example, a child's feelings or a young person's experience. They may not wish others to see it. If it could be useful to share with a wider audience the children and young people who created it must give permission.

Using photographic or video work of children and young people needs careful

consideration (see the How To Safeguard Children and Young People guide at [www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)) and permission should always be obtained for use in any reports, websites or documents. In the case of children and young people under 16, this should be from the parent or guardian – and of course the child or young person too.

Gaining permission to use artworks is important for children and young people's developing understanding of participation. Their views and work will be presented to other people and may influence decisions. They should be given feedback about how their work and views have been received and what has changed as a result.

## Funding the work

Creative participation work does not have to be expensive and can often be done within existing budgets. However, it is possible to access funding, particularly funding for the development of art-based work, which can also support participation work. Local creative arts agencies may be able to act as partners to put together funding bids so it is worth considering working with them as it may enable more ambitious projects to be undertaken. They may also be aware of potential sources of funding for arts projects.

### Case Study Three

## Myrtle Theatre Company: Care Matters drama workshop

On behalf of the Healthy Care Programme the Myrtle Theatre Company consulted with looked after children and young people from two government regions – the South West and the East Midlands – about the Government Green Paper for looked after children: Care Matters.

The children and young people, aged 8 to 19, took part in day-long drama based workshops which were divided into two groups: for 8 to 11s and 12 to 19s. The children and young people were accompanied by workers and carers whom they knew. A specially written play introduced the themes of the Green Paper and interactive drama based activities continued throughout the day. The activities enabled the groups to put forward their views and thoughts – they could do this physically by acting them out as well as describing them. This then became the final act of the earlier play.

The result was a report collating the opinions and comments of the 38 children and young people who took part. The report was sent to the two Government Offices Regions to inform their regional response and looked after children's regional strategy. It was also sent as part of the Healthy Care Programme's response to the consultation on the Care Matters proposals. A children and young people's version of this report was also prepared and shared with the children and young people who took part. Some of the comments from the consultation reports were included in the Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper and demonstrated how children and young people's views were heard, listened to and will be acted upon.

Find out more about Myrtle at: [www.myrtletheatrecompany.co.uk](http://www.myrtletheatrecompany.co.uk)

Find out more about the Healthy Care Programme at: [www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare](http://www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare)

## Find Out More

This list of publications and websites should help you to find more detailed information and follow up areas of interest.

### Useful resources

#### **Are you listening! A toolkit for evaluating Children's Fund Services with children and young people.**

Cambridgeshire Children's Fund and Save the Children (2005). Tried and tested activities, many with a creative focus and descriptions of how they were used. Available to download from:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/social/children/fund/>

(accessed 9 October 2007)

#### **Building creative partnerships a handbook for schools - Could your school be even more creative?**

Creative Partnerships (2007). Although written for schools, it can help any organisation that is seeking to develop creative partnerships. Available to download from:

<http://www.creative-partnerships.com/handbook>

(accessed 9 October 2007)

#### **ENYAN Creative Youth Consultation & Participation Toolkit.**

ENYAN (2007). This guide forms part of ENYAN's current campaign to raise awareness of the arts as a tool for effective youth consultation and includes 12 case studies. Available from: [enyand2@artsworld.org.uk](mailto:enyand2@artsworld.org.uk).

#### **The Evaluator's Cookbook: Participatory Evaluation Exercises.**

National Evaluation of the Children's Fund (2005). Many of the activities in this collection are arts and craft based and require only minimal resources and equipment. Available to download from: <http://www.ne-cf.org/news.asp?section=000100040004&monthInView=2006/5/1&id=1074>

(accessed 9 October 2007)

#### **Keeping Arts Safe: Protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in arts activities.**

Arts Council, England and NSPCC (2005). Available to download from:

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/keepingsafepdf\\_phpS4UNyh.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/keepingsafepdf_phpS4UNyh.pdf) (accessed 9 October 2007)

**Listen Up!** Mencap (2003). A toolkit of multimedia resources to help children and young people 5 to 19 years with a learning disability complain about the services they use.

Available to download from:

[http://www.mencap.org.uk/html/listen\\_up/listen\\_up.asp](http://www.mencap.org.uk/html/listen_up/listen_up.asp)

(accessed 9 October 2007)

#### **Participation: Spice it up! Practical tools for engaging children and young people in planning and consultations.**

Save the Children and Dynamix (2003). Participation activities with a creative twist but you do not need to be a professional artist to use them. Available from [www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)

#### **Positive pointers for artists. Using the arts to engage young people at risk.**

Arts Council England (2006). A useful reference for artists and arts organisations working with young people at risk. Available to download from:

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/information/positivepointers\\_phpYUOyvtv.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/information/positivepointers_phpYUOyvtv.pdf)

(accessed 9 October 2007)

**Providing the Best.** Arts Council England (2006). Guidance for artists and arts organisations on assessing the quality of activities provided for children and young people.

Available to download from:

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/providingthebestpdf\\_phpJq0DJ9.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/publications/providingthebestpdf_phpJq0DJ9.pdf)

(accessed 9 October 2007)

#### **Youth Arts in Practice – A guide to evaluation.**

YALP, NIACE and The National Youth Agency (2006). Includes case studies of youth arts projects involving young people in their evaluation. Available from: The Young Adults Learning Partnership. Tel: 0116 2047071.

# How to use creative arts

## Useful websites

[www.accessart.org.uk](http://www.accessart.org.uk)

Free downloadable art resources and workshops to use with children and young people on a range of subjects.

[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Information about the Arts Council including its strategy for children and young people, regional support, downloadable publications, funding sources, regional arts action plans and links to local community arts projects.

[www.artsline.org.uk](http://www.artsline.org.uk)

Disability access information service to the arts, leisure and entertainment.

[www.artspider.org.uk](http://www.artspider.org.uk)

A website for learning disability arts.

[www.bbc.co.uk/blast](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blast)

BBC Blast inspires 13 to 19s to get involved in creative activities. Ideas, tips, newsletters, message boards and opportunities to showcase creative work online.

[www.e-mailout.org](http://www.e-mailout.org)

An online source of information about participatory and community arts plus a magazine.

[www.enyan.co.uk](http://www.enyan.co.uk)

English National Youth Arts Network. A membership organisation which aims to raise the profile and support for youth arts in England.

[www.11million.org.uk](http://www.11million.org.uk)

Website for the Children's Commissioner for England with information about campaigns, issues and ideas for participation work.

[www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare](http://www.ncb.org.uk/healthycare)

Website for the Healthy Care Programme includes a section of case studies of creative activities involving looked after children and young people.

[www.show.me.uk](http://www.show.me.uk)

A museums and galleries guide for children and young people with information about what is on where, virtual guides and lots of fun games and activities to do online and an interactive area for children to show their art work.



# How to use creative arts

**Participation Works enables organisations to involve children and young people effectively in the development, delivery and evaluation of the services which affect their lives.**

The Participation Works How To guides are a series of booklets that provide practical information, useful tips and case studies of good participation practice. Each one provides an introduction to a different element of participation to help organisations enhance their work with children and young people.

Participation Works is an online Gateway to the world of children and young people's participation. Visit [www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk) to access comprehensive information on policy, practice, training and innovative ideas.

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Myrtle Theatre Company, Bristol  
Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership

Images kindly provided by Myrtle Theatre Company and National Children's Bureau

## Participation Works

8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE

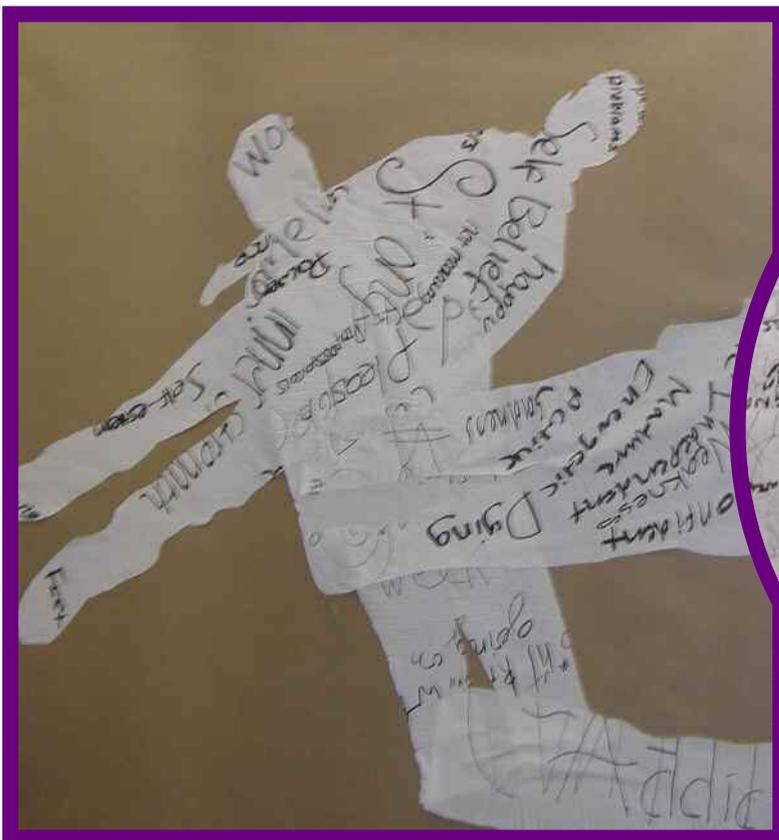
[www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)

Enquiry line: 0845 603 6725

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# Listening as a way of life



## Listening to babies

*Diane Rich*

Babies by their very nature demand constant attention. This starts even before they are born. Mothers develop a bond with their baby over their nine-month period together and this

is where communication begins. Medical staff monitor the growth of babies and listen to them in the womb. Babies' actions are felt by their mothers and sometimes can be seen

by those around when they stretch, turn or kick. Affectionate comments such as, 'Baby's going to be a footballer!' 'I think baby's dancing in there!' show that their early actions are being observed and thought about.

Listening to children is an integral part of understanding what they are feeling and what it is they need from their early years experience. 'Listening' in this document is defined as:

- An active process of receiving, interpreting and responding to communication. It includes all the senses and emotions and is not limited to the spoken word.
- A necessary stage in ensuring the participation of all children.
- An ongoing part of tuning in to all children as individuals in their everyday lives.
- Sometimes part of a specific consultation about a particular entitlement, choice, event or opportunity.

Understanding listening in this way is key to providing an environment in which all children feel confident, safe and powerful, ensuring they have the time and space to express themselves in whatever form suits them.

Of course, children are usually very interested in babies and listen to them well, but this leaflet refers to listeners as adults.

Adults' responses to children vary enormously. Many respond instinctively towards babies, engage in quality interactions with them and have respect for babies, believing that babies have a right to be listened to. But others do not.

### The importance of listening to babies

#### Who counts as a baby?

The Department for Education and Skills publication *Birth to Three Matters: A framework to support children in their earliest years* identifies four broad areas of development for children from birth

to three years old. In the framework, the terms children, young children, babies and young babies are used.

- 'Children' refers to those from 24 to 36 months.
- 'Young children' refers to those from 18 to 24 months.
- 'Babies' refers to those from eight until 18 months.
- 'Young babies' refers to those from birth to eight months.

Although the principles for listening to babies may be relevant to all adult – child relations, this leaflet focuses on young babies and babies as defined by the DfES, namely those from birth to 18 months. Both of these age groups are referred to as babies throughout the leaflet.

### What is listening?

Effective listening to babies entails respect and a belief that they are worth listening to. Listening is a two-way process which is not limited to the spoken word. It involves babies being active through sounds, movements and actions of many different kinds. Adults need to have the skills to interpret these. In daily encounters, they will make decisions informed by their observations and interactions with babies. They will decide, moment-by-moment, how best to provide for the babies they care for, sometimes getting involved but at other times leaving babies content in their own explorations.

### Why is it important to listen to babies?

Listening to babies helps to ensure that:

- they are valued and feel valued
- they are responded to caringly and attentively
- their physical, emotional and

cognitive needs are met

- their interests and experiences are developed in appropriate ways.

Listening acknowledges babies' right to be heard from pre-birth and throughout their lives. It builds up positive enriching relationships between adults and babies (Gillespie Edwards 2002). It helps adults understand a baby's priorities, interests, concerns and rights. Adults are better able to provide for babies when they listen to them. Through listening a deepened understanding of each individual baby is developed.

Babies who are not listened to are likely to grow up with low self-esteem, while those who are listened to have a sense of well-being and are likely to be less anxious. Roberts (2002) reports that babies feel valued when their actions are responded to calmly. She writes:

*Sharing children's distress with them in a calm way without fuss or panic is one of the most effective things that 'important people' can do to help children grow up feeling good about themselves and other people.* (Roberts 2002, p.42)

Bruce (2004) refers to the stress that not listening to babies can cause them. This can lead to later anxiety and aggressive behaviour, as they grow older. Listening to babies is important because it has an impact on self-image and behaviour in later life.

Listening is not only restricted to adults: babies and children are listeners too. Babies interact with others all the time. They can hear before they are born and become familiar with key voices and sounds that will surround them once they have entered the world. Babies naturally prefer the sound of human voices to other sounds and they respond

to these familiar voices. Babies are already expert communicators and they learn even more about listening from the listeners who are all around them. They also learn early on that listening is important and is part of the social world. Being listened to plays a key role in developing as a skilful communicator. Much is written about the importance of early interaction, which includes being listened to, and its impact on developing communication, language and literacy (Rich 2002). Makin and Whitehead (2004) recognise this too and also acknowledge that babies are ready to learn. They say that:

#### *Babies*

- *understand the people who look after them every day*
- *think about what is going on around them*
- *enjoy new things and new experiences*

*... babies are born already prepared to find other people interesting and worth communicating with from the start.*

*(Makin and Whitehead 2004, p.16)*

*Birth to three matters* states that, 'Babies and young children are social beings, they are competent learners from birth' (DfES 2002). Babies learn by being listened to because listening adults respond to babies' interests and are then better able to meet their needs.

### How to listen

#### How can listening to babies be achieved?

Most adults enjoy listening to babies. They love the reactions from babies when they engage with them. A baby's smile is a great sense of real pleasure to many parents. A gurgle, a laugh, a baby sound, hand wave or a kick might

be celebrated. Such actions from babies are communications that can demand attention of some sort.

Adults are listening to babies all the time and especially when they are cuddling their babies, feeding them, changing their nappies or bathing them (see 'Lara's story'). Adults even listen to them when they are asleep.

There may be complaints from babies when an attentive adult leaves the room, or a cuddle ends. Roberts (2002) states that adults should show sympathetic acceptance of babies' grievances. Calm feedback shows babies that they have been listened to but at the same time acknowledges that it is

not always possible to alter a course of action. For example Katie's mum calmly acknowledges her daughter's protests, but she does not change what she is doing (see 'Katie's story').

Although Katie's mum did not stop dressing Katie, despite her protests, she recognised that Katie does not like the intrusion of being dressed and that her tights are rough. In future she will be able to choose different clothes for Katie. She has listened to her baby. Being listened to is much better than being ignored.

Listening to babies can be achieved when adults think of babies as capable communicators and when they recognise and tune-in to the many

different ways babies do this. Generally it is parents who tune in to their babies and consequently listen to them well. If babies spend time with other carers the knowledge parents have needs to be respected, valued and shared. Listening to babies involves listening to parents too, and finding out from them about daily events in the home worlds of babies, including what they like, dislike, their preferred food and sleep patterns, what they can do and what currently interests them. Developing relationships with parents is important. Gillespie Edwards (2002) confirms that:

*There is immense potential in the parent-staff relationship to support the child, by offering opportunities*

## Case studies

### Lara's story

Babies enjoy close attention from adults at nappy changing or other times, as this example shows:

Tina picks up seven-month-old Lara and says, 'Let's check your bottom!' They go together to get a tissue and a nappy and she carries her on her hip from the mat area into the bathroom area, and then lays her on the mat. Tina undoes Lara's clothes and says, 'That looks a lot better, doesn't it?'

and then, 'Hiya, hiya', looking at her face to face. Lara kicks and Tina says, 'Those legs!', as she fixes the nappy. Then she says, 'There we go. Are you pulling my jumper?' Tina smiles closely at her in between fixing the poppers on her babygrow and Lara, seeming to enjoy the attention pulls at Tina's clothes and kicks her legs.

(Case study taken from Everyday Stories, NCB)

### Katie's story

Katie's mum calmly acknowledges her daughter's grievances:

Katie, three months old, lies on the mat as her mother kneels over her getting her dressed. She talks to Katie in a high, excited voice as she dresses her.

'Who's a clever girl? Who's a clever girl? You are. You're a clever girl, aren't you and I'm taking my clever girl to the shops. I am!' Her mum rubs Katie's tummy and Katie laughs.)  
'You ARE a clever girl. Mummy's clever girl, Katie. And we're

getting ready, aren't we? Yes we are... yes we are. Let's put your little toes in here, come on, ready for the shops... That's a good girl! (Katie squirms and tries to wriggle free.) 'Oooh, you don't like these tights, do you?' (Katie starts to cry.) 'Oooh, Katie, I know you don't like this, but soon we'll be at the shops. Nasty tights. We'll have to get you some comfy soft ones at the shops, won't we? Come on now... nearly ready for the shops. The shops...the shops. We're going to the shops. Yes we are...'

(Katie and her mum)

*for continuity, complementarity [SIC], mutual respect and deepened understanding of the child as an individual, as part of a family with a particular cultural background and as an active learner with strong interests of his own. When such a partnership is achieved it leads to confidence all round: confident staff, confident parents and confident children. (Gillespie Edwards 2002, p.3)*

Listening happens best when adults have good relationships with babies and when these adults respect each other's ways and communicate together about the babies they care for.

### How do babies communicate their needs?

Although babies cannot talk, they have no problems communicating and have little difficulty in letting those around them know what they want, how they feel or what interests them, without words. They are very skilled at it. Crying is commonly thought of as one of the key ways babies communicate. They cry for different reasons. Sometimes, as Winnicott (1964) suggests, it is simply to exercise their lungs; at other times it may be to signal hunger, pain or even the memory or fear of pain. Sometimes babies might cry if they are sad. Crying might occur simply because it is enjoyable to make sounds and be in control. Exploring the world and wanting

to be in control is natural for babies, especially as they grow older. This can lead to frustrated crying when the physical restrictions of simply being a baby limits what they can do and what they can get hold of, or when things they don't want are in their way. Leach (1997) records that some babies might be over-stimulated by too many toys or people around them so they cry to register feelings, such as rage or frustration.

Adults who are tuned in to babies can identify their different cries and will respond appropriately. Taking action is not always possible, but responding to babies, understanding and paying attention is important. Sometimes just acknowledging that they feel sad or frustrated is all that can be done.

## Case studies

### Lara and Mary's story

Calmly supporting babies while giving them time and space to express how they feel is important.

Lara, seven months old, topples onto her face with a big bump. Lara then cries very loudly and seems very shocked by her fall onto her face. Mary is very sympathetic and says, 'Oh dear', and says to her, 'It's not that bad, it's not that bad', but then goes on to say, 'It's

very sad, isn't it?', as she holds her gently, and then decides to wait while Lara carries on screaming. Mary also remarks, 'It frightened you, didn't it, Lara?' She responds to the insistence and passion of Lara's screams. She rocks her and holds her and comforts her.

(Case study taken from Everyday Stories, NCB)

### Samson's story

Adults try to tune in to what will stimulate, interest and engage babies.

Samson, seven months, drops a spoon into a tin and listens to the noise that it makes as it drops down. Then Samson picks the spoon up and mouths it again and Sonia sorts through the basket and draws his attention to some of the other items. Samson frowns at the new things he is offered and carries on examining the spoon and tin very carefully.

Sonia seems to notice that he has spent quite a long time playing with the tin and spoon and she comes alongside his play by clapping a wooden spatula on the side of the tin in time to the tape and the music that she has put on. Samson listens attentively and then reaches for the wooden spatula. He tries this on the tin...

(Case study taken from Everyday Stories, NCB)

Responding to babies calmly and acknowledging how babies feel is very important if babies are to grow up feeling good about themselves. Listening adults will acknowledge babies' feelings, interests and what they are asking for. Listening adults will give babies space and time to express how they feel (see 'Lara and Mary's story').

Babies give messages about how they feel not just through crying, but also through all of the sounds and actions they make. Makin and Whitehead (2004) report that they might wave their arms, or kick or make sounds of pleasure. They squeal, gurgle, sigh, blow bubbles, hiccup, giggle and babble. They move their bodies in different ways too. They kick their legs, wave their arms, stiffen their bodies, arch their backs, stretch and clench their fingers. Observations of non-verbal language allow adults to see babies communicate through their many actions. Babies learn about more conventional communication through watching. They are great watchers and can watch those near to them and fix eye contact. Through watching they can mimic the speech of those interacting

with them by opening their own mouths and by getting excited (Trevvarthen 1993). Babies move their gaze away when they are bored. In these many varied ways they communicate and get reactions from listeners. They entice adults into a two-way communication.

### What adults do when they listen to babies?

Observation is an important starting point for listening to babies and this can happen all the time, especially during the daily routines such as feeding, nappy changing, bathing and getting ready for sleep times. Babies communicate how they feel, and what they want, to adults who 'tune in' with all their senses. They recognise all of their baby's actions and interpret these in order to respond in the best possible way. Listening adults follow what babies seem to be looking at and talk around this (Bruce 2004). They provide things for babies that are good to feel, to hold and touch, to taste, to look at and listen to. They try to see the world from the baby's perspective and tune in to the things that will stimulate,

interest and engage them. Often these can be very simple things, as Sonia, a keyworker in a day nursery, shows when she tries to do exactly this for seven-month-old Samson (see 'Samson's story').

Listening adults interpret the sounds and actions of babies. In a day-care setting a practitioner may know that a specific cry or action from one baby is a sign of hunger, or tiredness or needing a nappy change, while a similar cry or action from another baby may mean something different. Strangers in a baby's home can be amazed when a parent reacts to a baby's squeal by simply saying, 'He wants to sit up now!'. The adults have tuned-in to their children and recognise that they are worth listening to and that they have a right to be heard.

Adults often ask babies what they want and respond to their answers. Fifteen-month-old Verity is able to make decisions about where she goes and what she does within her day nursery. She is supported by staff in a day nursery who tune in to where she wants to be (see 'Verity's story').

## Case study

### Verity's story

Being given choices is a significant part of being listened to.

Verity is sucking a plastic toy and as she does so, she moves to the corner of the room where there are large, soft play shapes covered in coloured plastic.

Jackie notices and moves to the centre of the room where there is a large, soft cylinder supported on two blocks that the children can ride on. She smacks the sides of the cylinder with her hands and calls to Verity, 'Are you going to play on this? Come on then.'

Verity comes across and with some help, climbs up tentatively. She sits straddled on the cylinder but looks slightly ill at ease and Jackie says, 'Don't you like it, Verity?' Verity shakes her head very slightly. She slides off.

Verity looks on as the games on the cylinder are repeated with Jake. Then Jackie says, 'Do you want to do it, Verity?', but Verity does not move and Jackie comments, 'She knows what she doesn't want to do, doesn't she!'

(Case study taken from Everyday Stories, NCB)

Many adults talk to babies as if they understand what they are saying. The earlier episode with Katie and her mum is a good example of this. Adults seem to naturally respond to the fact that babies cannot understand words. It is common to see people who communicate with babies by pulling faces, making exaggerated sounds, repeating words and using a higher-pitched voice than usual. This helps to hold a baby's attention and gets messages across to babies. Listening adults will engage with babies as they:

- direct their talk to them
- give babies choices
- take turns in making sounds and actions with babies
- respond to what babies show interest in
- calmly and caringly acknowledge babies' emotions
- sing a variety of songs to them ranging from traditional lullabies from many cultures to pop-songs from the charts
- tell them stories
- sing nursery rhymes and get babies involved in action songs
- give commentaries on everyday actions
- model how to be a listener and how

- to be a communicator
- share toys and picture books with them
- laugh with their babies.

## Challenges and possibilities

### Challenges

Being in busy home environments may mean that babies do not get to be heard by adults and those around them. Listening to babies and doing all of the activities in the list in the preceding section requires time, patience and commitment. It means that daily routines cannot be rushed, although this is of course not always possible in day-to-day lives. In homes where there is a lot of background noise from the TV, radio, or computer games, babies' sounds and actions are sometimes not acknowledged.

Deaf or blind babies communicate their feelings, interests, likes and dislikes in the same ways as all other babies, using all the senses they have (see 'James' story'). They can mimic adults and respond to them. When listening adults tune in to babies with all their senses they will hear what is being said and

respond to their babies in the best way for each unique baby.

Parents of deaf babies often use more direct face to face communication with babies, with expression as well as touch or gestures. They encourage others to do the same especially when different adults care for their child.

When different adults care for babies, for example, family members, child-minders, nursery staff, and parents living in separate homes, there will be challenges in maintaining relationships, which keep every 'listening adult' informed about individual babies. Regular time spent sharing information about babies is important in helping listeners tune in to them most effectively. Documentation of observations is particularly useful to ensure continuity of care for the baby. Diary sheets and profile books are good examples of how this can be achieved.

Having time to focus on babies is a challenge for all busy parents and practitioners but it is important to provide children with their rights from the earliest age.

## Case study

### James' story

Mum stays close to James when she gives him a new soft toy to explore, She reassures him that she is there by staying close and talking to him.

Four-month-old James, blind from birth, holds his mum's hair as she talks with him. 'Ouch, that's my hair James. That's mummy's hair. It's long hair for James to pull! She calmly says, 'Gently, James, do be gentle! He squeals as he pulls her close and puts her hair in his mouth. He kicks his legs fast. Mum's face is very close to his own, and he nuzzles it with his cheeks. He smiles as he touches her face and makes gleeful sounds as he carries on kicking his legs

vigorously. 'That's right, It's mummy. It's mummy come to play with you James! She keeps her face very close to James as she puts a soft toy gently onto his face and then into his hand. 'Does that feel nice James? Mummy likes it. Does James like it?' He releases her hair and stops kicking as he lifts the toy to his mouth and nose. He rubs it on his face. He feels it on his cheek and breathes in the smell. He explores it with his fingers. Mum stays very close. 'Mummy thought you'd like that teddy James.'

(James and his mum)

## Possibilities

When adults respect babies and believe that they are worth listening to, listening becomes possible. Focusing on the needs of the baby is a starting point for building a good relationship. Where this does not exist, support can come from baby massage classes or seeking help and support from other family members or early years workers. Parenting classes that are often held at local children's centres will support parents through listening to others and sharing experiences.

It is not just relationships with babies that are important; good communicative relationships between all those who look after babies have to be maintained and developed so that information can be shared on a daily basis. The more that adults commit to this, the greater potential there will be for all babies to be listened to. Starting at the very earliest years will mean that a generation will grow up with listening as the norm, which will inevitably have a positive impact on society as a whole.

## More information on listening to babies

Clark, A and Moss, P (2001) *Listening to Young Children – The Mosaic approach*. National Children's Bureau  
Outlines a new framework for listening to young children's perspectives on their daily lives – the Mosaic approach.

Goldschmied, E, and Jackson, S (1994) *People Under Three: Young children in day care*. Routledge  
A practical book focusing on the under-threes, their emotional well-being and cognitive development.

Gillespie Edwards, A (2002) *Relationships and Learning: Caring for children from birth to three*. National Children's Bureau  
Drawing on the detailed observation of 15 children in day-care settings, from their arrival and separation from parents in the morning to their departure and reunion with parents in the evening, the author highlights the importance of one-to-one relationships with young children for fostering their self-esteem, well-being and their ability to learn.

DfES and Sure Start Unit (2002) *Birth to Three Matters: A framework for supporting children in their earliest years*. DfES  
The framework offers guidance for practitioners and other professionals involved in the delivery and planning of services to children aged between birth and three. Website: [www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/birthtothreematters/](http://www.surestart.gov.uk/ensuringquality/birthtothreematters/)

Kirby, P, Lanyon, C, Cronin, K, and Sinclair, R (2003) *Building a Culture of Participation*. DfES  
Provides an overview of the range of participation activity currently being undertaken at local, regional and national levels.

Miller, J (1997) *Never Too Young: How young children can take responsibility and make decisions*. National Early Years Network/Save the Children  
Shows how children under the age of eight can participate, make decisions and take responsibility for their actions.

## References

Bruce, T (2001) *Learning Through Play: Babies, toddlers and the foundation years*. Hodder and Stoughton

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Leach, P (1997) *Your Baby and Child – New Version for a New Generation*. Penguin

Makin, L and Whitehead, M (2004) *How to Develop Children's Early Literacy*. Paul Chapman

Peers Early Education Partnership (2000) *Learning Together* (a series of folders, song tapes and videos). PEEP

Rich, D (2002) *More Than Words: Children developing communication, language and literacy*. The British Association for Early Childhood Education

Roberts, R (2002) *Self Esteem and Early Learning*. Paul Chapman

Sure Start (2003) *Birth to Three Matters: A framework to support children in their earliest years*. DfES

Lancaster, Y P and Broadbent, V (2003) *Listening to Young Children*. Open University Press

The Early Childhood Forum (2003) *Quality in Diversity in Early Learning: A framework for early childhood practitioners*. National Children's Bureau

Trevarthen, C (1993) *Playing into Reality: Conversations with the infant communicator*. Winnicott Studies, Spring, 7

Winnicott, D W (1964) *Home is Where We Start From*. Penguin

## Useful websites

### [www.earlychildhood.org.uk](http://www.earlychildhood.org.uk)

earlychildhood.org.uk is a website from the Early Childhood Unit (ECU) at the National Children's Bureau in England. This site contains capsules of information on specific topics within early years care and education including work on consulting young children.

### [www.ncb.org.uk/features/eds/](http://www.ncb.org.uk/features/eds/)

This site hosts research funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust and conducted by the Early Childhood Unit in 1996-97. The detailed observations of 15 different children, in 15 nurseries for a full day, provides excellent support material for those working with under-threes in day-care settings.

## Listening as a way of life

This leaflet is one of five leaflets from the Sure Start funded project 'Listening as a way of life'. The series provides a guide to finding more information to help practitioners design creative and individual ways of listening to children and to each other.

Others in the series include:

- Why and how we listen to young children
- Are equalities an issue? Finding out what young children think
- Listening to disabled children
- Supporting parents and carers to listen – a guide for practitioners

## Acknowledgements

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### [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

The Talk to your Baby initiative (part of the National Literacy Trust website) aims to encourage parents and carers to talk more to babies and young children.

### [www.deafnessatbirth.org.uk](http://www.deafnessatbirth.org.uk)

This resource provides information and news about the work funded by the UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to develop services for disabled children under three and their families.

### [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

RNIB believes that children with sight problems should enjoy the same rights, freedoms, responsibilities and quality of life as those who are fully sighted. It aims to support, inform, enhance, expand and complement the statutory and other provision that exists.

### [www.article12.com](http://www.article12.com)

A12 is a children's rights based organisation run by under 18-year-olds, for under 18s in England. It aims to get young people's views and opinions across to everyone and to be taken seriously at all times.

## DfES Guidance

Lancaster, Y P and Broadbent, V (2003) in *Listening to Young Children*. Open University Press

A five-part resource from Coram Family, London. The pack is aimed at practitioners and parents in a range of settings and is designed to enable them to offer young children opportunities to express their views of experiences and events in their daily lives.

*Listening to Young Children: A training framework* (Lancaster and others 2004) is closely linked to this resource and is included in the DfES Sure Start Guidance.

### [www.coram.org.uk](http://www.coram.org.uk)

Coram Family is a children's charity that aims to develop and promote best practice in the care of vulnerable children and their families.

### [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

NCB promotes the interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. NCB advocates the participation of children and young people in all matters affecting them. NCB challenges disadvantage in childhood.

### [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

Contact a Family brings together families who have a disabled child. It has information on rare and unusual conditions, and the groups associated with them. It runs a national helpline for parents.

## NCB Library and Information Service

If you would like more detailed information or further references in this subject area, contact NCB's Library and Information Service.

The library is open to visitors by appointment, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm. NCB members can visit free of charge. The rate for non-members is £10 per day.

Enquiry line: +44 (0)20 7843 6008

E-mail: [library@ncb.org.uk](mailto:library@ncb.org.uk)

Written enquiries: Library & Information Service, NCB, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE.



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National Children's Bureau  
8 Wakley Street  
London  
EC1V 7QE  
tel: + 44 (0)20 7843 6000  
fax: + 44 (0)20 7278 9512

Membership and general enquiries: 020 7843 6080  
Conferences and Training: 020 7843 6041  
Young NCB: 020 7843 6099  
Book sales: 020 7843 6029  
Library and Information Service: 020 7843 6008  
Visit our website at: [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)  
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# Listening as a way of life



## Listening to young disabled children

Mary Dickins

### Why do we listen to children?

We listen to children because it acknowledges their right to be listened to and for their views and experiences to be taken seriously about matters which affect them.

We listen to children because:

- of the difference listening can make to our understandings of children's priorities, interests and concerns
- of the difference it can make to how children feel about themselves

- listening is a vital part of establishing respectful relationships with the children we work with.

### Who benefits from listening?

Listening is important for the children who are being listened to, but also for the adults who are listening, whether at home or in an early years setting, at school, at a local authority level or in national government.

### Why listen to disabled children?

The reasons for listening to young disabled children are the same as the reasons for listening to all children. Listening acknowledges their right to be listened to and for their views and experiences to be taken seriously; it can make difference to our

Listening to children is an integral part of understanding what they are feeling and what it is they need from their early years experience. 'Listening' in this document is defined as:

- An active process of receiving, interpreting and responding to communication. It includes all the senses and emotions and is not limited to the spoken word.
- A necessary stage in ensuring the participation of all children.
- An ongoing part of tuning in to all children as individuals in their everyday lives.
- Sometimes part of a specific consultation about a particular entitlement, choice, event or opportunity.

Understanding listening in this way is key to providing an environment in which all children feel confident, safe and powerful, ensuring they have the time and space to express themselves in whatever form suits them.

understanding of children's priorities, interests and concerns; it can make a difference to how children feel about themselves; and it is vital to establishing respectful relationships with the children we work with.

Although we often take it for granted, making effective choices and being able to engage in and contribute to sensible decision-making processes demand specific skills and reasoning, and these processes require facilitation and support. Such opportunities and experiences are crucial for all children but there are issues for disabled children that make listening particularly important.

For example disabled children:

- are subject to a much higher degree of adult intervention and their scope for making day-to-day choices and decisions is often severely limited
- have many things done to, and for, them and they are significantly more vulnerable to abuse than non-disabled children (NSPCC 2003)
- are more likely to be subject to a number of medical interventions and treatments
- are more likely to be subject to various kinds of assessment procedures and less likely to be involved in the process
- are more likely to be excluded from consultation processes because these are often based on written and spoken language
- are supported by parents, and staff who are more likely to see their roles as advocates rather than listeners
- are more likely than other children to have contact with multiple carers who lack the skills to

understand the child's communication system.

Historically acquired attitudes and prejudice among individuals and institutions such as the 'medical model' of disability (see below) have encouraged us to be prescriptive in our attitudes towards disabled people and to limit opportunities for preferences and opinions to be expressed and acted upon.

It is important to remember that disabled children from black and minority ethnic groups face additional cultural and linguistic barriers (Chamba and others 1999).

One final reason to include disabled children is that doing so will improve practice with all children. 'For many young children speech and language are not the best routes of communication, especially about wishes and feelings. Creating listening environments that are inclusive will benefit all children!' (Marchant and Jones 2003)

Throughout history society has sought to explain disability to itself. The following two models illustrate our current thinking.

### The medical model of disability

This is the view that because disability is caused by 'impairment(s)' professionals must cure or alleviate it in order to be seen as successful. It is a medical 'problem' which we must 'treat'. The impairment thus becomes the primary focus of attention. In this model the child is seen as faulty. However, in effective listening, it is important that the child is seen as the expert on his or her life.

### The social model of disability

The social model of disability *demands* that we listen to disabled children and adults and take their views on board. This is the view that dis(ability) is socially constructed. It is the social and physical barriers that society creates that are seen as the disabling factors and not the individual's impairment(s). This model enables us to accept and value difference.

Viewed from the perspective of the social model 'many of the problems faced by disabled adults and children are not caused by their conditions or impairments, but by societal values, service structures, or adult behaviour' (Marchant and Jones 1999).

Although, in recent years, considerable attention has been directed at seeking the views of children generally, younger disabled children in particular have remained a neglected group. For these children the fundamental human right (the right to be consulted) has often been ignored, particularly where there are high support needs and/or communication difficulties (Ward 1997). An example of this is an assessment form completed by a social worker, which said: 'He has no speech and therefore his view is unavailable' (NSPCC/Triangle 2001).

Under recent disability discrimination legislation (the DDA 1995 and SENDA 2001) all early years providers have a duty not to discriminate against disabled pupils in education and social care or other services made within their provision. And in particular, 'not to treat disabled children "less favourably" for a reason related to their disability'. Failure to

include disabled children in consultations and planning along with their peers might well fall into this category as case law is gradually established.

## How can we listen to disabled children?

Communication difficulties are most often cited as the reason why disabled children, especially younger ones, are not consulted. Adults often fear that they require specific expertise to listen to disabled children. But if we explore this assumption in more detail it becomes obvious that spoken language is only one of a range of methods that we employ in order to communicate our thoughts, feelings, information and ideas. Body language, humming, laughing, kissing, hugging, blinking and crying are just some of the ways in which we naturally express ourselves.

So although some new resources and skills may be needed, attitudes and approaches are very important.

Listening to disabled children can be loosely divided into three categories:

- focused listening to individual children – perhaps as part of a specific consultation or assessment procedure
- inclusive strategies that include the 'voice' of the disabled child as a fully fledged and participating member of a group
- everyday listening and consultation as a vital element of good early years practice.

Listening to young disabled children effectively, particularly if their needs are complex, may sometimes involve learning new communication

techniques, but more often than not it is a question of acknowledging and 'fine tuning' the skills that effective practitioners already use everyday, including *sensitivity, creativity and intuition*. (See later section 'Ethical issues in consulting young disabled children')

### Listening to individual children

It is very important to collect as much information as you can from parents, professionals and other carers about how the individual child already communicates. Other children, siblings and friends may also have important knowledge and observations to contribute. Observation of the individual child and how they interact and communicate is an essential part of this process.

Observing children is as important as listening to what they say – much of what young children say would not make sense without observation. Children communicate, for example, through their behaviour, art, gestures and sounds and also by their inaction, what they choose not to do or say.

It is important, where possible, to establish the child's means of communicating 'yes' and 'no' and to incorporate where possible a range of familiar objects of reference (toys, photographs, etc.). Where it is not possible to establish a reliable yes and no it might be helpful to think in terms of distress or happiness, consent or refusal. Interpretation requires careful and sensitive assessment. Smiling, for example, does not automatically mean yes.

The Communication guide (on page 4) is an example of a child-centred approach to communicating.

Listening to individual children also involves becoming a more effective listener. The following guidelines for effective listening were developed as part of the Save the Children CHOOSE project which used equality training and awareness raising in order to develop 'whole setting' inclusive approaches and strategies for consulting disabled children and their non-disabled peers in two London nurseries. (Taken from *Starting with Choice*, p.13.)

- Show interest in everything the child has to say, using your judgement later on to draw out the information you actually need for future planning.
- Give children time and try not to interrupt or finish sentences.
- Don't attempt to fill every silence.
- When the child has finished talking, sum up what he has said and reflect it back to him, for example, 'It sounds like you felt very angry when Tommy took your ball away'.
- Don't feel that you have to have an answer or a solution for everything.
- Acknowledge the feelings that are being expressed and give them validity.
- Avoid closed questions that leave you open to a yes/no answer (e.g. 'Are there things you like at nursery?'); use open-ended questions instead (e.g. 'Tell me some of the things you like about nursery?').
- Make eye contact and get down to the child's level (some autistic children find eye contact very difficult).
- Remember that 'why?' questions can sound like an accusation.
- Talk respectfully to children; they know when they are being patronised.
- Be honest if you don't know something.
- If you make a mistake, apologise.



## Communication guide

When I do this	People think I mean	You should do
Smile	I am saying 'yes' I am happy I like what I am doing	Give me time to smile and act according to my answer of 'yes'
Lift up my left hand and bang the tray (I am just learning to do this)	I am trying to say 'no'	Ask me the question again and act according to my answer of 'no'
Close my eyes and moan	I am uncomfortable I am sad I am bored I don't like what I am doing	1. Ask me if I am uncomfortable, if I smile, move my position, for example, if I am in my wheelchair – take me out and let me stretch out on a mat. If I'm on the mat, sit me back into my chair See my practical support plans to help you do this properly 2. If I don't smile, just talk to me and see if you can cheer me up 3. If I don't smile, see if I would like to do something else, offer me a choice
Keep letting my head fall forwards	I am tired	Let me rest, stretched out on the mat, or on my side lying board
Stick my tongue out	I am thirsty	Give me a little warm drink of water from my special mug. See my practical support plans to help you do this properly
Cry but there are no tears	I am cross	Check to see if I need anything, change my activity or include me in an activity Move me from sitting next to someone who may upsetting me
Screw up my hands	I feel very unsafe	Give me more support and help
Screw my nose up and twist my head	I have got a tummy ache	Help me change my position Give me sips of warm water to drink

When collecting information about how an individual child communicates, keep an open mind and remember that all children use a combination of communication methods.

### Communication techniques

There are a number of communication techniques and methods and a list of these can be found in *Two-way street* (a handbook and video available from [www.triangle-services.co.uk](http://www.triangle-services.co.uk)) and there are two Department of Health resource

lists for those working to involve disabled children. These are:

- Advice and information for practitioners, parents and carers about communicating effectively with disabled children.
- Resources for practitioners to use in communicating with and involving disabled children.

(Each list gives details of a range of resources with an annotated summary and colour images. These are available from [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk))

### Inclusive strategies for listening to children in groups

An effective practitioner may consult children every day about their choices, likes, and dislikes without giving it much thought. Consultation does not have to be a formal process. A typical circle time, for example, will usually involve information sharing and listening skills. Consultation in groups can be an extremely useful way of involving children in planning outings, buying equipment and contributing to child-led

activities and learning. It is vital that disabled children are not excluded from these processes. The CHOOSE project found that even young children with complex and multiple difficulties can participate effectively so long as practitioners establish the right way of listening for the individual child.

The case study 'Outdoor choice at Anansi' demonstrates how an inventive

and committed staff team can devise ways of involving all children in their planning. Some of the disabled children involved demonstrated their preferences by smiling, blinking or even sneezing.

### Everyday listening and consultation

Once established, listening and consultation become part of the

everyday fabric of good practice. Consultation for all young children needs to be carefully planned and supported and no child should take part in a consultation if they really do not want to do so. The best participatory methods are those that are enjoyable, creative, and flexible and open to negotiation with the individual child or group of children. Remember that the more opportunity children

## Case Studies

### All join in

*All Join In* is a unique video, made with a diverse group of three to seven year olds, about playing and getting on together. The video has been heavily influenced by young children – disabled and non-disabled – from start to finish. The children who appear in the video were involved in planning, filming and editing; this includes children communicating through sign, gesture, communication books and other visual resources.

Children are encouraged to wonder about other children and about differences in a positive way. Different communication methods and strategies are introduced, including sign language around feelings and getting

along, and skills for observing and understanding each other's feelings. The video is almost adult free, interactive, lively and fun. (NSPCC/Triangle 2004)

*Two-Way Street* is another video made with disabled children and young people, aiming to improve practice in communicating with children and young people who have communication impairments. Children in the video communicate through behaviour, sign, symbols, body language, eye pointing, facial expression, gesture, play, use of art, objects of reference, speech, vocalisation and physical movement. (Marchant and Gordon 2001)

### Outdoor choice at Anansi

Staff at Anansi Nursery received basic training in communication skills and inclusive strategies as part of the Save the Children CHOOSE project. They worked over a period of time with the children to identify their preferred outdoor play activities, plan the physical layout of the outdoor provision and provide the very best outdoor environment for all the children.

The consultation involved several techniques, such as offering different practical and natural resources (bamboo, gravel, long grass, a mini-beast area) to find out which the children enjoyed most, and asking them to point to areas on a map of the garden to see which they liked best.

Anansi has two gardens; one in front and one at the back. The children were invited to say which garden they preferred and offered very clear views, both positive and negative. One child said, 'I like the pre-school garden better because there are no boys'. Another said 'We must not shout because it hurts the old people's ears' (in a building next door). One child repeatedly signed 'tree' in Makaton and located the flash card with a picture of the tree, indicating her desire to be taken to the back garden. Staff helped her to climb the tree, where she stayed for half an hour.

(Case study taken from *Starting with Choice*, p.5)

have to influence and control the agenda, the better the outcome is likely to be. When we plan to consult children it is crucial that we consider how we will process and use the information they give us.

If the children's views, suggestions, likes and dislikes, etc., have been established and recorded the children then need to know that these have been taken seriously. One way to do this is to present their views respectfully in ways that are accessible to them – for example, using their own words, signs, symbols and art. Feedback on how their views have influenced decisions and whether their ideas and suggestions have been taken up, and why, is a crucial part of the process.

## Ethical issues in consulting young disabled children

*The biggest ethical challenge for researchers working with children is the disparities in power and status between adults and children.*  
(Morrow and Richards 1996, p.98)

For disabled children there are additional power issues as they face the double challenge of being young and disabled.

Listening to, and consulting, young disabled children, especially where children are communicating without speech, may involve a high level of interpretation on behalf of the listener. This raises ethical issues which need to be taken into account as part of the process of listening and consultation. Such issues include the following:

### Conflicting agendas

As adults we may be inclined to 'hear' what we want to hear. It is important

to allow for the emergence of differences of perspective and opinion, to be honest about them and willing to negotiate. Children may also have conflicting agendas; for example, where choices are indicated in a group consultation it may well be impossible for everyone to get their own way. When this happens it is important to explain, as far as possible, the reasons why a particular choice has been made.

### Informed consent

It is important to make every effort to ensure that the individual child is aware of what they are being asked to do, the purpose, and that they have the right to say no to anything. All young children need careful guidance to enable them to express their views; find out what the children need to know in order to make an informed decision and provide the relevant information. Also ensure that parents are kept informed and have an opportunity to contribute information about how the individual child communicates. Consent should be ongoing and it is important that we are aware of and respond to any body language or gesture that may indicate that a child does not want to continue or hasn't finished and has more to say.

### Young disabled children can!

One of the findings of the CHOOSE project was that young children, even those with complex and multiple disabilities, *can* participate effectively and have a right to do so. The 'Ask Us' project (led by the Children's Society) and 'Two-Way Street' (led by Triangle and NSPCC) both found that disabled children and young people had strong views about the society they live in, how they are treated, the services they receive, their education, health and

leisure. Moreover, they found that disabled children wanted to be respected and to have a say in things that affect them.

Early years services and settings can do much to help children in the process of developing decision-making skills and forming a positive sense of identity. Taking disabled children and their views seriously and listening to what they have to communicate is an empowering process that can help to ensure their sense of belonging and membership of a group as well as enabling them to achieve their full potential as individuals.

## Specific information on listening to disabled children

Clark, A and Moss, P (2001) *Listening to Young Children – The Mosaic approach*. National Children's Bureau  
Outlines a new framework for listening to young children's perspectives on their daily lives called the Mosaic approach.

Dickins, M, Emerson, S and Gordon-Smith, P (2003) *Starting with Choice: Inclusive strategies for consulting young children*. Save the Children  
Provides early years workers with clear, practical guidance on consulting young children, and a range of techniques that help young children to express their views.

Kirby, P, Lanyon, C, Cronin, K, and Sinclair, R (2003) *Building a Culture of Participation*. DfES  
Provides an overview of the range of participation activity currently being undertaken at local, regional and national levels.

Lindon, J (1998) *Equal Opportunities in Practice*. Hodder & Stoughton  
Looks at the principles and practice of equal opportunities; good practice in working with boys and girls; diversity in

ethnic group and cultural tradition; world religions; good practice with disabled children; key issues in good practice.

Miller, J (1997) *Never too Young: How young children can take responsibility and make decisions*. National Early Years Network/Save the Children  
Shows how children under the age of eight can participate, make decisions and take responsibility for their actions.

Marchant, R and Gordon, R (2001) *Two-Way Street: Communicating with disabled children*. NSPCC  
A practice guide for involving disabled children in assessment, planning and review processes. Written with help from disabled young people, it is full of practical ideas for making initial contact with children, working directly, observing children respectfully and representing children's views.

Sure Start, DfES and NCB (2003) *Early years and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995: What service providers need to know*

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Chamba, R and others (1999) *On the Edge: Minority ethnic families caring for a severely disabled child*. Policy Press

Dickins, M, Emerson, S and Gordon-Smith, P (2003) *Starting with Choice: Inclusive strategies for consulting young children*. Save the Children

Marchant, R. and Jones, M. (2003) *Getting it Right: Involving disabled children and young people in assessment, planning and review processes*. Triangle, Brighton

Marchant, R and Cross, M (2002) *How it Is: An image vocabulary for children about feelings, rights and safety, personal care and sexuality*. NSPCC and Triangle

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NSPCC/Triangle (2004) *All Join In*.

Ward, L (1997) *Seen and Heard: Involving disabled children and young people in research and development projects*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation

## Useful websites

### [www.earlychildhood.org.uk](http://www.earlychildhood.org.uk)

earlychildhood.org.uk is a website from the Early Childhood Unit (ECU) at the National Children's Bureau in England. This site contains capsules of information on specific topics within early years care and education including work on consulting young children.

### [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

Contact a Family brings together families who have a disabled child. It has information on rare and unusual conditions, and the groups associated with them. It runs national helpline for parents.

### [www.deafnessatbirth.org.uk](http://www.deafnessatbirth.org.uk)

This resource provides information and news about the work funded by the UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to develop services for disabled children under three and their families.

### [www.article12.com](http://www.article12.com)

A12 is a children's rights based organisation run by under-18-year-olds, for under-18's in England. It aims to get young people's views and opinions across to everyone and to be taken seriously at all times.

### [www.coram.org.uk](http://www.coram.org.uk)

Coram Family is a children's charity that aims to develop and promote best practice in the care of vulnerable children and their families.

### [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

NCB promotes the interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. NCB advocates the participation of children and young people in all matters affecting them. NCB challenges disadvantage in childhood.

### [www.ncb.org.uk/cdc](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc)

The website for the Council for Disabled Children.

### [www.ncb.org.uk/aba](http://www.ncb.org.uk/aba)

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) is a group of over 40 organisations working to progress and promote a society in which children and young people feel safe and protected to develop, grow, learn and play in a secure environment.

### [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

I CAN is the charity that helps children with speech and language difficulties across the UK. The charity works to create a society where their special needs are recognised, understood and met, so that they have the same opportunities in life as other children.

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Cover photo: [www.johnbirdsall.co.uk](http://www.johnbirdsall.co.uk)

## Listening as a way of life

This leaflet is one of five leaflets from the Sure Start funded project 'Listening as a way of life'. The series provides a guide to finding more information to help practitioners design creative and individual ways of listening to children and to each other.

Others in the series include:

- Why and how we listen to young children
- Listening to babies
- Are equalities an issue? Finding out what young children think
- Supporting parents and carers to listen – a guide for practitioners
- Listening to young children's views on food

For copies contact Patricia Thomas on 0207 843 6064 or email [pthomas@ncb.org.uk](mailto:pthomas@ncb.org.uk)

## DfES Guidance

Lancaster, Y P and Broadbent, V (2003) in *Listening to Young Children*. Open University Press

A five-part resource from Coram Family, London. The pack is aimed at practitioners and parents in a range of settings and is designed to enable them to offer young children opportunities to express their views of experiences and events in their daily lives.

*Listening to Young Children: A training framework* (Lancaster and others 2004) is closely linked to this resource and is included in the DfES Sure Start Guidance.

## NCB Library and Information Service

If you would like more detailed information or further references in this subject area, contact NCB's Library and Information Service.

The library is open to visitors by appointment, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm. NCB members can visit free of charge. The rate for non-members is £10 per day.

Enquiry line: +44 (0)20 7843 6008  
E-mail: [library@ncb.org.uk](mailto:library@ncb.org.uk)  
Written enquiries: Library & Information Service, NCB, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE.



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National Children's Bureau  
8 Wakley Street  
London  
EC1V 7QE  
tel: + 44 (0)20 7843 6000  
fax: + 44 (0)20 7278 9512

Membership and general enquiries: 020 7843 6080  
Conferences and Training: 020 7843 6041  
Young NCB: 020 7843 6099  
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# Listening as a way of life



## Why and how we listen to young children

*Alison Clark*

### Why do we listen to children?

We listen to children because:

- it acknowledges their right to be listened to and for their views and experiences to be taken seriously about matters that affect them
- of the difference listening can make to our understanding of children's priorities, interests and concerns
- of the difference it can make to our understanding of how children feel about themselves
- listening is a vital part of establishing respectful relationships with the children we work with and is central to the learning process.

### Who benefits from listening?

Listening is important for the children who are being listened to but also for the adults who are listening, whether at home or outside the home, in an early years setting, a school, at a local authority level or in national government.

### Benefits to young children

#### *Everyday experiences can change*

If young children's views and experiences are taken seriously then adults may decide to make changes to children's daily routines. This may include, for example, enabling children to help themselves to water through the day, or may result in changes to other routines, such as children gaining open access to the outdoors.

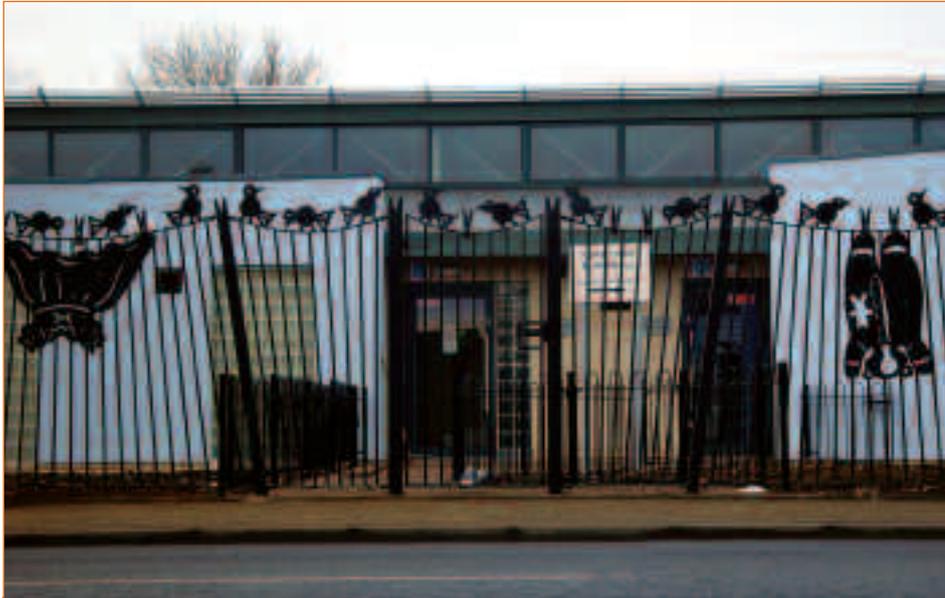
#### *Raising self-esteem*

If young children feel their views are respected and valued by adults then

Listening to children is an integral part of understanding what they are feeling and what it is they need from their early years experience. 'Listening' in this document is defined as:

- An active process of receiving, interpreting and responding to communication. It includes all the senses and emotions and is not limited to the spoken word.
- A necessary stage in ensuring the participation of all children.
- An ongoing part of tuning in to all children as individuals in their everyday lives.
- Sometimes part of a specific consultation about a particular entitlement, choice, event or opportunity.

Understanding listening in this way is key to providing an environment in which all children feel confident, safe and powerful, ensuring they have the time and space to express themselves in whatever form suits them.



Listening to children's and adults' experiences - a washing line fence featuring memorable clothes resulting from a community arts project at Sure Start Blakenall. Acknowledgement: Karl Lewis, Bostin Arts

This impact of listening has been recorded by practitioners who were involved in the Effective Early Learning (EEL) programme: 'One of the most rewarding aspects of our involvement with the EEL project has been the children's responses to the interview schedules. Their views on the way the school is run, the teachers' jobs and the parents' involvement have been expressed very naturally and with great insight. They also come up with some surprises and made us think!' (School Enquiry and Research Newsletter (2000) quoted in Dupree, Bertram and Pascal 2001, p.19)

this can have a positive effect on their self-confidence. This can be of particular benefit to those children who find it hardest to communicate their perspectives or who have had limited experience of adults who listen to them.

#### *Developing skills and understandings*

Young children may also gain new skills as their confidence builds. These can include social skills, such as being able to talk to children who they have only just met, and to adults. Listening activities may offer children the opportunity to gain additional practical skills, for example, how to operate a camera. Listening to young children can create the time and space in which they can reflect on their early years experience and in so doing, help them

to process and understand what is happening. 'It's not so much a matter of eliciting children's preformed ideas and opinions, it's much more a question of enabling them to explore the ways in which they perceive the world and communicate their ideas in a way that is meaningful to them!' (Tolfree and Woodhead 1999, p.2)

#### **Benefits to practitioners and parents**

##### *Challenges assumptions*

Listening to young children can challenge assumptions and raise expectations. Seeing and hearing children express their interests and priorities can provide unexpected insights into their capabilities. Practitioners and parents may see children in a new light.

#### *Reciprocal process*

Working in a more democratic way with young children can relieve practitioners and parents from the burden of needing to know all the answers. Listening to young children may reveal different possibilities for engaging children and new interests to explore together.

#### *Child protection*

There is the possibility that listening to young children may lead to some children sharing serious concerns. This is more likely to be the case if listening is embedded in everyday practice and if listening to children is not limited to adult-led agendas. Such circumstances may be rare but reflect the responsibilities that come from taking children seriously.

## Case study

### Benefits of listening to children

Cathy was a shy child who had taken a long time to settle in the nursery. Her keyworker commented on how Cathy's confidence had grown during the period she was involved in the listening project. She had taken great pleasure in taking her own photographs and

making her maps. These she was happy to show with great pride to her parents and keyworker.

(Case study from Clark and Moss 2001)

## Case study

### Children's day

Wistanstow Under Fives meets in a village hall with mock Tudor beams. This is a shared community space, used by a variety of groups during the week. Despite the restrictions of the space the emphasis is on listening to, and acting upon, the children's wishes, opinions and interests.

One example arose over a child's enquiry about Children's Day.

The play leader had been talking about Mother's Day with a group of children when one child remarked: 'We have Mother's Day and Father's Day so why don't we have Children's Day?'

The play leader explained she didn't know why in this country we don't so she asked the children if they would like to have a Children's Day and if so what they would

like to do? They were keen to have such a day and came up with the idea of painting the hall pink!

Initially this might have seemed like an impossible suggestion for this shared space. But the playgroup took the children's idea seriously, worked with it and came up with an imaginative solution. On Children's Day there was a party where the children could make special glasses and choose the colour of the lenses, so they could make the hall pink...or whatever colour they liked.

This case study illustrates an early years setting where listening to and involving young children is embedded in practice (see Miller 1997). The practitioners have found creative ways to place young children and their ideas 'centre stage' – despite the restrictions of the premises.

(Case study from Clark, McQuail and Moss 2003)

## Benefits to early years provision

### *Opportunity to reflect on practice*

The sharing of children's perspectives can provide the chance for early years practitioners to reconsider the relationships they have established with young children as well as to rethink routines and activities. This process of reflection can be 'contagious' in a multi-agency environment, with changes to one service's practice leading to changes in neighbouring services.

### *Opportunity to reflect on the environment*

Young children can make insightful comments about their indoor and outdoor spaces. This information can be used to inform changes to existing provision or to contribute to new designs and buildings.

## How can we listen?

How we listen to young children will depend on why we are listening. We may be wanting to:

- tune in to children as part of their everyday lives
- listen as part of a specific consultation about a particular entitlement, choice, event or opportunity
- find out about their thoughts and feelings.

## Foundations for listening

Whatever methods we use to help us to listen, there are certain principles which provide the foundations for listening. Being a skilful listener is not easy. It requires practitioners to show respect, honesty and patience, be sensitive to timing, be imaginative and work collaboratively.

## *Respect*

Effective listening requires respect for whoever we are listening to. We need to believe that children of all ages, backgrounds and abilities are important and unique and worth listening to. This is connected to our view of children: do we see the child we are working with as a strong child, a skilful communicator, a competent learner and a healthy child? This includes babies, and children who may be seen as having communication or other difficulties.

## *Openness and collaboration*

Listening requires us to be sensitive to a variety of ways of expressing feelings. Children are individuals, with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and they may use a variety of ways to communicate their perspectives which require us to be open, receptive and willing to learn. Similarly we need to

respond to the preferred ways which children choose to communicate their views and experiences. This is particularly important with disabled children.

One way to achieve this may be to work closely with parents or other adults who know the children well. Listening can be a collaborative activity.

### *Honesty*

Honesty is required to make listening effective. We need to be clear about why we are listening. If we are listening to children's views and experiences about a particular issue, we need to explain this carefully to children in ways appropriate to their levels of understanding.

We need to be honest about how far we may be able to act upon children's views and to explain how other people's views may need to be taken into account. We need to be honest in feeding back the outcome of a consultation so children can see how their views have been taken seriously and where and why it hasn't been possible to act on their suggestions.

### *Patience and timing*

Effective listening takes time. Patience is essential when working with very young children, especially if they have communication difficulties.

Listening requires us to be sensitive to timing. The best times for listening will vary according to individual children's emotions, feelings and routines. How we ourselves are feeling will also effect how well we are able to listen.

Children's timing may be different from our own. Children may choose to express their feelings and wishes at the very moment we are least prepared.

### *Imagination*

We must use all our senses, not just our hearing. This includes using our eyes, sense of touch, and smell, in order to listen to how children are communicating to us. We need imagination in order to design ways of listening which are enjoyable and varied and which take into account children's different strengths and abilities. Imagination may often be required in order to act upon young children's ideas and expressed interests.

### *Ways of listening*

We can use a range of ways of listening to young children, a selection of which are listed below. Different tools have strengths and limitations. More than one approach can be used at the same time. Choosing which to use will depend on our skills, those of the children we work with and their ages, and the time, space and resources available. Several tools use the arts, whether visual arts or performing arts, as a means of listening.

Observation is an important starting point for listening to young children. This builds on a strong tradition within early years practice of using observation as a tool for understanding young children's abilities, needs and interests (for example, Paley 1981 and 1997).

Interviews are among the most popular method for gathering the views of older children and adults. This formal talking needs to be adapted to be appropriate for young children. Group interviews can be used, following a similar approach to 'circle time' (Miller 1997). Interviews can be conducted 'on the move' (for example, Clark and Moss 2001). Child-to-child interviews offer a different approach where older children can act as consultants to younger children (for example, see Johnson and others 1998).

Children can respond to formal and informal opportunities for talking (Cousins 1999).

Still and moving film can open up new ways of young children communicating their perspectives. Projects have used single use cameras, 'polaroids', digital still cameras and video cameras with children aged three years and above (Clark and Moss 2001; Lancaster and Broadbent 2003). This builds on innovative work with older children, where photography has proved to be a valuable medium for children to communicate their perspectives about their schools and neighbourhoods (for example, Smith and Barker 1999; Morrow 2001). Walker (1993) has described this as the 'silent voice of the camera'. Listening to children takes place through the process of the children choosing and taking the images, as well as in discussing the final product.

Performing arts and play can provide a natural way for young children to communicate with adults. Role play activities can include the use of toys and puppets as 'intermediaries' in consultations. The Daycare Trust (1998), for example, used a teddy bear as a starting point for young children talking about their nurseries.

Visual arts provide a variety of different 'languages' for young children to communicate their perspectives. This links to Malaguzzi's idea of the 'hundred languages of children' (Edwards, Gandini and Foreman 1998). Visual tools for listening can include painting and drawing (Lancaster 2003; Coates 2003) and model making and map making (Hart 1997; Clark and Moss 2001). Listening to children while they are in the process of making is often as important as talking about the final product (Coates 2003). Children can demonstrate their interests and priorities

## Case study

# Listening to children and parents

Sure Start Blakenall in Walsall, working with Walsall Community Arts team, commissioned an artist from Bostin Arts to listen to the views and experiences of young children, parents and older members of the community and to use these ideas as a basis for planned artworks within the proposed new Sure Start building.

### Phase one: Talking and making

The artist ran arts activities in different locations across the area. The aim was to find out from local residents of all ages what it was like to grow up in this part of Walsall. This work included visits to centres with pre-school groups and also interviewing adults and young children in the street. Arts activities included making a height chart with children from a local playgroup, including pictures of things they liked to do. Other sessions involved taking photographs of the children and making mobiles of favourite things. (Note: It is always important to seek the permission of the child's parent/carer as some families may not want their children to be photographed.)

These arts activities were the basis for talking and listening. The young children's and adults' views and experiences were collected in scrapbooks.

### Phase two: Listening turned into design

The artist used the comments and ideas from the scrapbooks to identify key themes. These formed the basis for discussion with the architect and the building steering group. Examples of design features incorporated into the final building include a glass wall containing hand and foot prints of babies, older children and adults, and fencing made into a washing line design incorporating cutouts of memorable clothes. This Sure Start programme has demonstrated an imaginative approach to listening to and involving young children. The organisation has taken seriously the need to consult young children and has chosen to use the expertise of a community arts team to help to do so.

(Case study from Clark, McQuail and Moss (2003))

through the visual arts. This may include children with linguistic communication difficulties or other disabilities who might find a formal interview difficult. Artists and community arts teams may be a useful resource for practitioners to call on for consultations, in addition to practitioners' everyday work on listening.

## Possibilities and challenges

What possibilities are there for listening to young children and what are the challenges?

### Possibilities

There are many possibilities for including young children's views and experiences. Here are some suggestions, but there will be others according to the context you are working in.

- Times of transition – Listening in imaginative ways can support children as they adjust to change. This might be a whole class event such as starting in a new class or moving classrooms, or on a personal level helping children talk about a new sibling.
- Assessment – Children can play an active role in recording their progress and identifying what they have enjoyed or found difficult. Involving children in this way can also open up further channels of communication with parents.
- Internal audits – Listening to young children could add to annual reviews and help to identify activities, places and people of importance from the children's perspective.
- Parent's centre – Listening to young children can be the focus of work

with parents/family members and carers and their children, looking at different ways children, from birth, listen and communicate.

- Outdoor environment – Listening to how young children use existing outdoor provision can be an important starting point for planning change.
- Indoor provision – Listening can reveal concerns about how children can or cannot access resources and equipment.

### Challenges

Listening to young children places a great responsibility on each of the adults involved and requires skill, understanding, time and space.

- Taking children seriously – Children need to know that their views and

experiences are valued and not ridiculed or ignored. This involves demonstrating that we take them seriously. When it is not possible to act upon their ideas then we need to explain this to children.

- Responding to what children say – Listening to young children's views and not responding could have a negative impact: 'Asking children what they think, but taking it no further will send a message that there is little real interest in their view' (Mooney and Blackburn 2002).

- Time to listen – Listening to young children cannot be a rushed activity. The younger the child the less possible and desirable it is to rely on direct questions. Time to listen shouldn't be seen as another bolt-on activity but as an integral part of every day.

- Respecting privacy – Adults cannot demand or require that children provide them with an opportunity to listen to them. Adults should respect children's privacy and silence as well as their expressed opinions. There is the risk that the

drive to listen to and consult children becomes another invasion of their time, thoughts and spaces rather than an empowering process. There will always be the need for discussion and negotiation with children about what material is private knowledge and what can be shared and with whom.

## Case study

### The Tree of Feelings

To explore the role emotion plays in painting or art-making, we painted a 'tree of feelings', a branch potted in sand and water. A tree of feelings represents a bounded space that allows children to keep on adding or taking away photos, drawings, pictures and messages about how they are currently feeling.

We talked about colour with the children: 'What colours do you like or dislike? What is your favourite colour? Why do you like or dislike these colours?'

Jack said his favourite colours were: 'Gold and black because I like Sonic and Brother Shadow ... He turns bad ... Black and red ... bad. Gold because I love money.'

Jacob said: 'Gold because it shines. Red for Liverpool football.'

Rachel said: 'Pink because I have a pink dress ... Barbie wears pink.'

Johnny said: 'Silver because it shines.'

Helen said: 'Pink, it's in my bedroom in my new house ... I love my house.'

They then chose the colours they liked or disliked, that made them happy or sad and began painting the tree with these. Spontaneously some children began choosing colours that reflected their interpretations of how they felt about parts of the tree. For instance some children

coloured what they saw as peaceful branches with a particular colour, whilst scary parts were painted with another colour. The collaboration reflected the different interpretations of the children.

After this we asked children to think about the kinds of feelings they experience. Those who wanted to shared some of their emotional experiences with the group. They then drew their own pictures to represent some of the feelings they had discussed. They then hung them on the 'tree of feelings'. We then talked to the children about their pictures to find out why they felt a particular way. Sad faces were about: 'Someone hitting you', 'Shoving ... pushing', 'When my mum is cross I cry', 'When I leave Gramps'. Happy faces were about: 'Snowflakes falling on my happy head', 'I like growing beans', 'Walking in an airport', and 'Cuddling'. The children also drew faces that showed they were feeling hungry, cross and sick. Children have spontaneously continued to use the tree to register their feelings.

(Case study from 'Exploring Feelings' by Lancaster and Broadbent (2003) in *Listening to Young Children*. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Open University Press.)

## Specific information on listening

Clark, A and Moss, P (2001) *Listening to Young Children – The Mosaic approach*. National Children's Bureau

Outlines a new framework for listening to young children's perspectives on their daily lives called the Mosaic approach

Clark, A, McQuail, S and Moss, P (2003) *Exploring the Field of Listening to and Involving Young Children*. Research Report 445. DfES

This research study was commissioned by the Sure Start Unit of the DfES. The aim was to carry out a state of the art review into listening to and consulting with young children under five years old.

Cousins, J (1999) *Listening to Children Aged Four: Time is as long as it takes*. National Early Years Network

Describes what the author heard when listening to, recording and observing 130 children aged four in a variety of early years settings, and their teachers. The author also discusses techniques of observation. Case studies and quotations from the children illuminate the text.

Miller, J (1997) *Never too Young: How young children can take responsibility and make decisions*. National Early Years Network/Save the Children

Shows how children under the age of eight can participate, make decisions and take responsibility for their actions.

Marchant, R and Gordon, R (2001) *Two-Way Street: Communicating with disabled children*. NSPCC

A practice guide for involving disabled children in assessment, planning and review processes. Written with help from disabled young people, it is full of practical ideas for making initial contact with children, working directly with them, observing children respectfully and representing children's views.

Kirby, P, Lanyon, C, Cronin, K, and Sinclair, R (2003) *Building a Culture of Participation*. National Children's Bureau

Provides an overview of the range of participation activity currently being undertaken at local, regional and national levels.

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Mooney, A and Blackburn, T (2002) *Children's Views on Childcare Quality*. Institute of Education, for DfES

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## Useful websites

### [www.earlychildhood.org.uk](http://www.earlychildhood.org.uk)

earlychildhood.org.uk is a website from the Early Childhood Unit (ECU) at the National Children's Bureau in England. This site contains capsules of information on specific topics within early years care and education including work on consulting young children.

### Listening as a way of life

This leaflet is one of five leaflets from the Sure Start funded project 'Listening as a way of life'. The series provides a guide to finding more information to help practitioners design creative and individual ways of listening to children and to each other.

Others in the series include:

- Listening to babies
- Listening to young disabled children
- Supporting parents and carers to listen – a guide for practitioners
- Are equalities an issue? Finding out what young children think
- Listening to young children's views on food

For copies contact Patricia Thomas on 0207 843 6064 or email [pthomas@ncb.org.uk](mailto:pthomas@ncb.org.uk)

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Author: Alison Clark  
 Critical Reader: Penny Lancaster  
 Series Editor: Ann-Marie McAuliffe  
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### [www.article12.com](http://www.article12.com)

A12 is a children's rights based organisation run by under 18-year-olds, for under 18s in England. It aims to get young people's views and opinions across to everyone and to be taken seriously at all times.

### [www.coram.org.uk](http://www.coram.org.uk)

Coram Family is a leading children's charity that aims to develop and promote best practice in the care of vulnerable children and their families.

### DfES Guidance

Lancaster, Y P and Broadbent, V (2003) in *Listening to Young Children*. Open University Press

A five-part resource from Coram Family, London. The pack is aimed at practitioners and parents in a range of settings and is designed to enable them to offer young children opportunities to express their views of experiences and events in their daily lives.

*Listening to Young Children: A training framework* (Lancaster and others 2004) is closely linked to this resource and is included in the DfES Sure Start Guidance.

### [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

NCB promotes the interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. NCB advocates the participation of children and young people in all matters affecting them. NCB challenges disadvantage in childhood.

### NCB Library and Information Service

If you would like more detailed information or further references in this subject area, contact NCB's Library and Information Service.

The library is open to visitors by appointment, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm. NCB members can visit free of charge. The rate for non-members is £10 per day.

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 E-mail: [library@ncb.org.uk](mailto:library@ncb.org.uk)  
 Written enquiries: Library & Information Service, NCB, 8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE.



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National Children's Bureau  
 8 Wakley Street  
 London  
 EC1V 7QE  
 tel: + 44 (0)20 7843 6000  
 fax: + 44 (0)20 7278 9512

Membership and general enquiries: 020 7843 6080  
 Conferences and Training: 020 7843 6041  
 Young NCB: 020 7843 6099  
 Book sales: 020 7843 6029  
 Library and Information Service: 020 7843 6008  
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**SureStart**

The Learning and Skills Council  
Guide to Engaging with Young People

*Putting Learners in the Driving Seat*



Nicole Atwood, Carol Jackson  
and Ryan Martin



Learning+Skills Council

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17–23 Albion Street, Leicester LE1 6GD.  
Tel: 0116 285 3700. Fax: 0116 285 3777.  
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## FOREWORD

Many of you will know that, as Chair of the Young People's Learning Committee (YPLC), I am personally committed to ensuring that young people's views are properly represented in the development of our policies, programmes and activities.

About a year ago I asked one of the Committee's members, Alex Williams, Director of Community Affairs at Manchester City Football Club, to help me in this task. Alex established a working group to find out about the extent of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC's) work in consulting with young people and to see what more, if anything, we could do.

Alex's group has concluded through its research, that there is much good work already being done at local level to take the views of young people – this is clear from the case studies featured in this guidance. We have also done some work at national level; I was particularly pleased to ensure that the views and opinions of young people were included in the YPLC's advice to the Council on the 14 to 19 Green Paper. The working group did conclude, however, that there were not yet satisfactory arrangements in place for utilising all the information gathered from across the organisation so that it could genuinely inform national policy making. The Young People's Learning Committee intends to introduce some practical measures to bridge that gap. These are set out later in this guidance document.

All local offices are strongly encouraged to find ways of involving young people in our work and decision taking and more

importantly to tell us about it. Consultation with young people can be done in a myriad of ways and does not have to be undertaken directly by local LSCs and need not be expensive. It may be that you draw on the good work done by providers or it might be work done in partnership with providers and/or other organisations. It is not necessary for consultation to be duplicated but we do need to ensure that we access the views of young people so we can learn from them. Our providers and partners have a valuable role to play in helping us do that so we can say with confidence that learners are at the heart of our strategy.

In re-affirming this commitment to consultation with young people, Alex's group has also developed, working with The National Youth Agency and the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, a practical guide that is intended to assist you in effectively engaging with young people. Please continue to promote young people's involvement in the life of the LSC and support us in making their views and opinions matter. I hope that you will find the guide of use; Alex and I commend it to you.



**Chris Banks,**  
Chair YPLC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Banks'.



**Alex Williams,**  
Member YPLC

---

## POLICY INTO ACTION: SOME PRACTICAL STEPS

In supporting the policy of engaging young people in the decision-making process the Young People's Learning Committee (YPLC) has endorsed the actions set out below as a way of putting policy into practice. The YPLC will:

- ask each local LSC, on a termly basis, to provide it with information on what consultations it has planned and for the outcomes of any consultation that has taken place;
  - post on the intranet the summary reports of local consultations that are reported to the YPLC, to allow information sharing and promote best practice between local LSCs;
  - review and update its guidance on engaging with young people on a regular basis to ensure that the methods of consultation and the case studies are current;
  - ask local LSCs to include young learners as partners within the strategic planning process and provide details of consultation arrangements within their plans;
- share with local LSCs, plans for and outcomes from, any national consultations with young people that it undertakes;
  - report on how the outcomes of national and local consultations have been taken account of in its recommendations and decision making; and
  - meet on a regular basis with those particular national organisations who have a role in representing the interests of young people.

These represent some low cost, practical actions that we can put in place quickly to ensure that the views of young people at local level can be considered at national level to inform policy development.

This work will be carried out on our behalf through the Young People's Division at the national office in Coventry.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is committed to listening to the voice of the learner in shaping its policies. This document provides information and advice about good practice in consulting young people. This summary gives the key issues and processes to consider when planning and conducting a consultation.

- Consider which groups of learners you wish to consult. These might include learners with difficulties and disabilities; black and ethnic minority groups; and other hard to reach groups. Young people who are disengaged from learning, or who don't generally take part in consultations may be difficult to reach: try using creative approaches to engage them.
- There are a wide range of issues to get young people's views on – the quality of teaching and learning; curriculum; staffing; facilities; access; transport; support; advice and guidance.
- A number of methods can be used to consult young people – events, meetings or advisory groups; formal structures, such as committees; focus groups; satisfaction surveys; community based research; local youth councils and forums; parallel structures; and ICT. Consider which method is most appropriate to the local context and the young people you are consulting. There may be resource implications.
- If young people are taking part in meetings, it is important to ensure that they are well briefed beforehand.
- Consider some of the issues that may arise when planning and organising a consultation – ensuring that the location and environment of a consultation is appropriate; recruiting a representative group of young people; keeping learners involved in a consultation process; and securing adequate resources.
- Consider ways of making the consultation relevant and interesting to young people. This will involve creating the right environment and communicating with young people in a way that is direct and straightforward. Good, open communication and the careful management of expectations are vital.
- Following a consultation, it is important to report on the actions taken and any other plans that have been made to listen to learners. Feedback can be through local newsletters, websites and text messaging. It might be worth developing a communication plan.
- It is important that young people's involvement and contribution to any consultation process is recorded and recognised. This might involve financial reward, such as a CD voucher, or accreditation through curriculum framework and assessment schemes.
- If engagement and consultation with young people is going to be long term and effective rather than through one-off initiatives, the principles and structures should be embedded into day-to-day practice.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Learning and Skills Council is committed to listening to the voice of the learner in shaping its policies, and the programmes and projects it supports. The LSC believes that it can only secure the best standards of learning and skills if providers and partners take account of the needs, aspirations and circumstances of young people and put their interests first. It is a priority for the LSC to engage young people in a continuing dialogue and ask for their views about the nature and quality of provision. It is also important that young people are informed about ways in which the feedback they have given makes a difference to the service they receive. The LSC, therefore, strongly encourages the establishment of arrangements to ensure the active and effective engagement of young people in influencing policy and provision.



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## CHAPTER 1: WHY THIS GUIDANCE?

Public policy currently puts learners in the driving seat in relation to the provision of learning. This means it is imperative to consult with learners about the nature and quality of provision based on their experience as users of the services we provide.

In his first remit letter to the LSC dated November 2000, the former secretary of state David Blunkett stated that in its partnership working the LSC needed to:

*'... develop its mechanisms for taking account of the views of learners and potential learners.'* (Paragraph 11)

*'... ensure that the range of opportunities for young people reflects feedback from the young people themselves.'* (Paragraph 14)



In section 2.12 of the LSC's *Prospectus* (1999), there is a strong emphasis on flexible provision to meet individual and local needs:

*'More of the right kind of learning will be available, in ways that meet the needs of local people, on their own terms and in settings with which they are comfortable.'*

The purpose of this guidance is to provide information and advice about good practice in consulting with young people aged 14 to 19, the engaged and hard-to-reach groups. It is divided into sections that outline the key issues that the LSC and its partners might consider when consulting and listening to young people. Case studies and sample activities highlight and illustrate how the principles of effective consultation can be transferred into good practice, with clear benefits for policy makers, practitioners and young people alike.

## CHAPTER 2: WHY SHOULD YOU CONSULT?

### PRINCIPLES

There are **four principal reasons** for involving young people in discussions and decisions concerning the provision of learning and skills and their transitions, for example, from learning to employment:

- Educational – it provides developmental opportunities for the young people concerned.
- Civic – it promotes active citizenship among young people and has the potential to reduce apathy and improve social capital.

BENEFITS TO PROVIDERS	BENEFITS TO LEARNERS
Better understanding of learners and learning	The opportunity to influence and reap the reward of the outcomes
Improved participation, retention, achievement and quality	Improved motivation and achievement of learning goals
Priorities developed according to needs	Acquiring and developing transferable skills with other learners
Good practice and provision reinforced	Feeling recognised and valued for making a difference

- Business – it is good sense to take an increasingly customer focused approach to services.
- Political – it is current policy to modernise and improve structures by making them more democratic and responsive.

### BENEFITS

Consulting young people makes for a 'win-win' situation. Providers of education stand to benefit from consulting young people, as do the young people themselves. In addition, employers and wider society can derive benefits from consulting young people: it can enable employers to gain a better understanding of the education, training and employment needs of their potential workforce; within society young people will have had the opportunity to develop the skills to enable them to play a more active role in their local communities.

In a recent national survey, one local Learning and Skills Council outlined the main benefit of consulting young people:

*'The major benefit to young people is the conclusions they draw about their ability to have greater impact and to change the world around them.'*

Another highlighted the central importance of learner consultation:

*'You can't deliver what the learners need or want unless you are in constant dialogue with them about the services.'*

A college respondent to the survey also shared this view:

*'Finding out what our learners need is a central part of college development. It enables the college to fulfil its mission, which is to put learners first.'*

Young people that have been involved in consultations have also commented on the benefits to both themselves and providers:

*'It helps the people asking the questions to understand us better and to hear what we want or need.'*



*'I had a lot of fun at the same time.'*

*'The people were interested in what we had to say and it was good to be listened to.'*

*'We were able to voice our opinions in a safe environment.'*

*'We want to be heard not just to make a difference but to have a voice and to be taken seriously so that we can make our own choices and decisions.'*

*'I learned something new because I felt OK about asking the questions I wanted answered.'*

*'We enjoyed the process of working through issues alongside other young people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures.'*



*'It was fantastic that our views were being heard.'*

*'It was good to meet new people and find out what they thought about things.'*

*'It will only work if once they have heard our views some things are done about it.'*

## CHAPTER 3: WHO SHOULD YOU CONSULT?

Methods used to engage and consult young people should be flexibly applied according to variations in age, ability and attitude. For example, a group of 14-year-olds with limited attention span and fresh from a school with no tradition of learner consultation, is unlikely to respond well to adult-led meetings and formal consultative arrangements. However, they are more likely to take up the opportunity to express their views through a chat-room, a web-based notice board or text messaging. By contrast, a group of more mature students, familiar with the workings of a learning provider and accustomed to being asked their views, may be more likely to participate in meetings and contribute to surveys and other conventional opinion research activities.

It is important not to make assumptions about the willingness of learners to take part in processes by virtue of their age and ability alone. At various points in the maturation process some factors have a disproportionately strong influence. For example, young people who are still in the process of forging their own identities are acutely susceptible to peer pressure. They may be reluctant to draw attention to themselves by appearing 'different' through, for example, getting engaged in the policy-making procedures of a college.

Young people have a valuable, practical contribution to make to the work of the governing bodies of colleges and are entitled to be represented on them. Their presence is also important politically and some providers might wish to review their constitutions to consider whether there might be ways of strengthening such arrangements.

Formal structures include those where professional staff have greater control, such as academic boards, and those where learners exert greater influence, such as student unions. Formal structures are not enough to secure active involvement. Informal ways of consulting with learners might be explored, such as use of the intranet, small group discussions, special events and debates on particular issues. A balance of formal and informal approaches could be tried.

Providers should find ways of involving as many learners as possible in decision making. Existing arrangements might be reviewed to ensure that they adequately attend to matters of diversity, equality and inclusiveness. In particular, it is important to consider the specific needs and circumstances of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities when arranging a consultation, as this group of learners are often hard to reach and may require additional support.



Accessible media, such as e-mail and websites can be a good means of engaging them. Large print should be used for those who have a visual impairment. Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities will need longer run in times for getting involved in events because of existing pressures in balancing their courses and their lives. It is important to take account of any specific additional needs they may have when being asked to participate. 'Valuing People: a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st century' a model for including people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities may prove useful and can be downloaded from the Department of Health website [www.doh.gov.uk](http://www.doh.gov.uk)



Where young people take their place on formal structures, it is important to check that the ratio of representatives to those being represented is fitting for the size of the organisation and the remit of the representative structure.

It is also worth checking that a broad cross-section of young people are involved in the formal processes of decision-making and in any specific consultation. In doing so, questions that could be considered include:

- How representative are the young people involved in the consultation process?

- Are there equal opportunities for all learners?
- If learners do take part in consultations through committees and working-parties are they there in reasonable numbers; or is their presence only a token? It is good practice to ensure that at least two learners take part in any meeting, so they are not isolated and can give each other mutual support and encouragement.
- What incentives can you offer young people?

It is important to be clear about who should be consulted. Among existing learners there may be particular groups whose views are particularly relevant. For example:

- learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities;
- black and minority ethnic groups;
- those who are vocationally undecided;
- care-leavers;
- offenders; and
- refugees and asylum-seekers.

An important strategy for widening participation is to try to consult with young people not currently engaged in learning provision and programmes. Creative approaches, rather than tried and tested methods may be needed to engage those young people who do not normally take part in consultations. Allies may need to be found to help in the process, such as the Connexions Service, the local authority youth service, and those voluntary and community organisations that tend to be in closer contact with these young people. It is worth considering young people themselves as peer consultants, who would go out into the community to find out the hopes, fears, expectations and worries of hard to reach groups of young people. Young people can be effective intermediaries and can get a better response than adults.

---

## CHAPTER 4: WHAT SHOULD YOU CONSULT ABOUT?

There are several issues concerning the everyday running of a learning provider or service that young people might be encouraged to discuss and express their views on. These include:

- quality of teaching and learning;
- curriculum;
- staffing;
- facilities;
- access;
- transport;
- support, such as childcare provision and finance;
- information, advice and guidance;
- specific policies, programmes or projects; and
- aspirations with regard to work, further and higher education.

Some providers may already have arrangements in place for this to happen on a regular basis. Others may not. It is important to ensure that within a local area a consistent approach is taken to this, otherwise learners could be randomly disadvantaged by choosing

to take up a programme or course at a provider where there is little opportunity to have a say.

In addition there may be specific policies or initiatives being introduced nationally and locally on which the views of young people would be welcomed; for example, the expansion of education maintenance allowances or the incorporation of key skills in vocational training programmes. More locally, there may be a pilot scheme introduced to provide free transport for learners from low-income families to make it easier to access facilities; or to make a particular learning site more safe and secure.

Whether the issues stem from the normal running of provision or derive from a particular initiative, it makes good sense to canvas the views of those who are directly affected. When consulting some groups of young people, particularly those who are hard to reach, it is important to listen carefully to their views and opinions and if necessary to interpret their responses.

## CHAPTER 5: HOW SHOULD YOU CONSULT YOUNG PEOPLE?

Having decided and identified which groups of young people to consult, and what to consult them about, it is important to think carefully about how to plan and conduct the consultation. It may be the case that no single method will be sufficient and that different approaches could be tried.

It is important to consider how much control and power to give to the young people throughout the process, and to be honest with them about any set parameters. This might well depend on the purpose of the activity. It could also depend on whether there are 'rules of engagement' which constrain the terms of the consultation or whether the consultation is completely open, starting with a blank sheet of paper, so to speak. The former would not require as great a transfer of control as the latter.

The Northern Ireland Youth Forum has identified a model for participation, comprising a continuum that locates power with adults at one end and with the young people at the other.

- **Led:** the adults have complete authority.
- **Tokenism:** adults set the agenda and take the decisions, but may consult one or two young people.
- **Consultation:** adults decide what they want to ask, and how much control they want to give the young people. They are still seen as the leaders.
- **Representation:** a number of young people express the views of their peers. It is important to consider which issues are not on the agenda, and how effective this approach is in practice.
- **Participation:** joint decision making, where all parties have some control. All responsibilities are shared.
- **Self-managing:** young people have effective control over the decision making.

It is important to consider where along this continuum to locate the voice of young people for the purpose of the particular event or activity in mind.

A MODEL FOR PARTICIPATION					
Led	Tokenism	Consultation	Representation	Participation	Self-managing
Power of the adults			Power of the young people		

## REVIEWING PRACTICE

Before embarking on any consultation strategy, it is worth reviewing what is already in place, to identify the existing arrangements, formal and informal, set up to find out what young people think about provision; and to involve them in discussions and decisions. Rather than make any assumptions about the things that young people may or may not want to be consulted about, it is better to ask them.

In setting up the review, it is worth asking the following questions:

- What has been done so far?
- How will learners be engaged in the process?
- Will the review be comprehensive and impartial?
- How will judgments be made about what works and what does not?

When considering the existing structures and procedures it is important to ask:

- Are learners represented on the important policy-making groups and committees, such as the governing body of the provider or advisory groups?
- Is there a students' charter? And if so, what difference does it make to how students feel about the provider and their place in it? How is the charter reviewed and how are the views of particular groups represented?



There are a number of **successful methods** that can be used to directly engage young people:

- Arrange **events, meetings or advisory groups** to find out what young people think about particular issues. An example might be how key skills are best taught and learned ... and make clear how you will use the findings.
- Ensure learners are properly represented on **formal structures, such as committees** ... and make sure meetings are conducted in ways that help them contribute to them.
- Set up **focus groups** to sound out reactions to ideas ... and make sure they are skilfully managed.
- Conduct **satisfaction surveys** of learner opinion using questionnaires, intranet polls, face-to-face interviews or discussions ... and try to ensure a good response rate.
- Carry out **community-based research** ... and find ways of using young people as peer researchers.
- Establish **forums/local youth councils** ... and ensure that they are run by young people for young people. If such bodies already exist, it may be appropriate to make links with them. Organisations such as the local authority youth service, or local voluntary networks may be able to provide you with contact information.
- Set up **parallel structures** to run alongside established decision-making structures to provide advice or to act as a sounding board ... and indicate how you intend to take account of their advice.
- Use **ICT** as an alternative to written and spoken word, because it can be a successful way of engaging young people, through websites, online surveys, discussion groups, e-mail questionnaires, text messaging and video production ... and make sure that the young people have input into the look, style and content of the material.

However, it is important to remember:

- there is no right or wrong method for conducting a consultation. It is important to consider the local context, the issue being considered and which method is most appropriate;
- when you have decided which consultation method to use, promotion and publicity are key aspects in ensuring the effectiveness of the consultation;
- there may be resource implications in ensuring that the consultation works. Recognise that some methods may require more resources than others; and
- it may be particularly useful to make use of existing structures, such as the role of local strategic partnerships.

If young people take part in meetings it is important to make sure that they are well briefed beforehand about important matters that will be coming up. It will not be productive if they come to a meeting poorly prepared and informed. Somebody should be given responsibility for the briefing. Good preparation is necessary if active involvement is to work. This includes training young people in the skills needed for some of the tasks that might be involved, such as appointing staff. Young people cannot be expected to make a valuable contribution to a selection process, without having in advance, sight of the key information.

## FORUMS

The purpose of local forums is to share experience, information and ideas, gain confidence from doing so, and perhaps campaign on a wider front to ensure the best service possible is provided. Local offices may need to consider the resource implications of setting up forums, eg travel expenses and attendance allowances.

Local networks are essential to find out what is going on, to give and receive support, to organise, plan and campaign, to be effective. It is important to build on the work done within individual schools, colleges and training agencies; and local LSC area wide forums are one way to do this.

## EMERGING ISSUES

The application of the methods identified earlier in this report could result in a set of emerging issues that might usefully be addressed in any attempt to involve learners in decision making.

- **Location:** in order to create the right atmosphere, it is important to ensure that the location and environment are appropriate to the local context and to the young people involved in the consultation.
- **Recruitment:** while it is important to recruit young people who have genuine interest and enthusiasm in getting involved, the canvassing of views should be on-going to ensure those consulted are fully representative.
- **Representation:** it is important to achieve a balanced and appropriate ratio of representation, one learner cannot 'represent' 10,000 others. The ratio should be appropriate for the representative structure being used.
- **Equality and diversity:** it is important to be inclusive and ensure equality of opportunity and diverse representation, including gender, ethnicity and disability.
- **Retention:** difficulties in keeping learners involved are often caused by external pressures, such as lack of time or support, or moving on to different levels and stages of education.
- **Recognition:** it is important that young people receive proper recognition for the contribution that they make.

- **Flexibility:** consultation should take account of and accommodate young people's preferred life styles, which may be very different to those who are undertaking the consultation. For example, meetings scheduled to take place first thing in the morning may not be a good idea.
- **Communication:** formal procedures and the use of technical language and jargon need to be avoided.
- **Feedback:** if young people's engagement in a consultation process is to be sustained, feedback needs to be well planned, timely and comprehensive.
- **Tokenism:** young people want to be treated as partners in the process and not patronised. Recognise any constraints that you might be working under, and let the young people know.
- **Training and support:** this needs to be provided if young people are to gain the most from their experience.
- **Attitudes:** throughout the organisation attitudes may need to change to recognise and value young people's contribution.
- **Resources:** adequate funding must be allocated to any consultation process/model adopted.
- **Time:** all those involved must be aware of the time it takes to establish such procedures effectively. This cannot be overstated.
- **Change:** local offices and providers may need to be willing to introduce changes to their policies and practices based on the feedback from the consultations they conduct.

**Cross-organisational issues** are likely to prove a particular challenge. As local LSCs do not directly deliver learning to young people, consultation of learners is more commonly undertaken by providers. Of the issues highlighted above, recruitment, communication and recognition are more likely to be tackled through effective planning, briefing of providers, and the timely

provision of clear and concise information. It will be important for local LSCs to ensure that providers share a clear understanding of the purpose, benefits and challenges associated with consulting young people, and have a key role to play in creating local structures for consulting young people about their learning.

Another challenge facing providers, local LSCs and others is **finding the resources** – in particular the **time** – to enable the voice of the learner to be heard and responded to. It is difficult sometimes to enable staff to recognise the value of this policy and invest time and effort in it. Another challenge is finding learners who are prepared to invest their time and commitment in the process, especially when some of them are only with a provider or on a programme for a year or less, or study on a part-time basis. Moreover, young people have many other demands on their time, not least the requirement to study and, in many cases, part-time paid employment. Those undertaking consultation should not necessarily expect young people to get involved only in their own time. It is worth exploring the possibility of negotiating for time off from their timetabled classes to take part.

In a previous study, providers pointed out the importance of explaining to learners why things do not always work out in the ways they want and expect them to, and that other competing views and priorities also have to be considered in discussions and decisions. If learners do not 'get a result' they can easily be disappointed and become disillusioned with the process. However, it is important that those undertaking consultation do not agree to do something if they are not able to do it. Young people understand that power may not be shared equally, but believe that respect should be. Therefore, **good, open communication and the careful management of expectations are vital.**

## COORDINATE TO AVOID CONSULTATION OVERLOAD

Quite properly, all providers of services, or those with responsibilities to young people, are being encouraged to consult with them to make sure that what is provided meets their needs, hopes and expectations. The danger is that young people will get consultation fatigue. Investigate existing consultation projects with local partners to identify other local efforts to consult with users of public services. This coordination will help to ensure that learners do not feel bombarded by consultations.

It is also vital to make sure that consultation is timed to ensure that the feedback that emerges can genuinely influence policy or practice. People become highly sceptical when they find that decisions have already been made and the consultation is merely a cosmetic activity that allows the organisation to demonstrate that it has 'consulted'. If people feel they are simply being asked to rubber-stamp a 'fait accompli', they will be reluctant to take part. So it is important to get the consultation in early if the young people are to believe there is any value in getting involved.

## MAKE IT RELEVANT

If young people are to contribute effectively they will want the consultation process to be of interest to them. They prefer sessions to be kept fairly short – not longer than a couple of hours – and a range of different techniques to be used, including working in small groups and in pairs. Icebreaker sessions are a useful way of creating a relaxed environment and enabling young people to feel at ease with each other and with the facilitators. It

is also good practice to invite young people to be involved in planning the consultation process; and to comment on how it worked in practice. This helps to improve future consultations.



Appendix 1 provides an example of a programme for a consultation event organised by a local LSC to find out what young people think about their experience of learning in the post-16 sector. Also included is a set of questions designed to stimulate thinking and discussion, some examples of icebreakers that could be used at the start of the session and some questions designed to get feedback from the young people about the process itself.

When facilitating consultation events it is important to define any phrases or initiatives that young people may not be familiar with, such as 'apprenticeships', 'work-based learning' and qualifications and levels such as 'NVQ' and 'level 2'. It is also important to explain the role and function of organisations such as the local Learning and Skills Council. If a consultation method is chosen that is not face to face, such as a postal survey, text messaging or a web-based questionnaire, it would be useful to provide an introduction that explains these issues.

## CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

The location of any consultation event and the atmosphere that is created are crucial if young people are to feel relaxed and able to express their views openly.

Limited funds may be a constraint, but if affordable it is worthwhile considering venues which are 'young-people friendly', such as leisure centres, youth clubs and football grounds. Think about providing lunch at a suitable venue that is likely to appeal to lots of young people, and will provide a welcome break from the usual type of venue used for consultation. The young people that were consulted about the production of this guidance said emphatically that they do not like meeting in offices with 'suits'.

When planning the event it is important to consider the factors that enable young people to feel comfortable, such as the provision of refreshments that will appeal to them; giving time in the programme for them to get to know each other; keeping the sessions interesting and short.



*Putting Learners in the Driving Seat*

## FIND THE RIGHT LANGUAGE

It may sound obvious but in consulting young people it is important to avoid using jargon on the one hand and being patronising on the other. Young people want adults to be straightforward and direct in what you have to say. And whether the communication is written or spoken, finding the right tone of voice is important in convincing young people that their views are genuinely valued.

Local Learning and Skills Councils might consider providing suitable versions of their key policy documents, such as strategic plans, in clear and jargon-free language so that young people can more easily get to grips with them and influence discussions and decisions about them. They might also wish to consider providing documents in different languages and formats.

## CHAPTER 6: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WITH THE FINDINGS?

It is important to report on the actions taken and other plans made to listen to learners. Annual reports and strategic/development plans could be used to explain.

The trouble with clichés is that they are based on fact: actions do speak louder than words. When decisions have to be taken following consultation, learners should be told about them. Feedback should be fair and fast, short and simple. Depending upon the type of consultation method used and the number of young people involved, the feedback may need to be given to individual young people, or to the overall group.

It is good practice to ask young people how they would like to receive feedback. If feedback is given too long after the



consultation people will have forgotten about it or may have lost interest. And if it is no more than rhetoric, learners will become disenchanted and sceptical. Feedback can be communicated at an appropriate time through a range of sources, including local newsletters, websites, text messaging, meetings and through student representatives.

Investing time in developing a **communication plan** is an effective way of deciding how and when to convey the key messages and outcomes of any consultation. It enables responsibility to be allocated for specific tasks and helps to ensure that feedback is comprehensive and well planned.

Any communication plan should comprise the following elements:

- **Audience:** who are you trying to reach?
- **Message:** what are the important things you want to say?
- **Method:** what is the most effective way to get your message across?
- **Timing:** when is it most likely to have the greatest impact?
- **People:** who is to be responsible for implementing this plan?

## CHAPTER 7: HOW MIGHT YOU RECOGNISE AND REWARD THOSE WHO TAKE PART?



It is important that young people's involvement and contribution in any consultation process is recorded and recognised, so that they can demonstrate to others what they have achieved and contributed to the learning community.

The least that can be done is to pay travel expenses for the young people who come to meetings and take part in events on behalf of their peers. Ways might be found of enabling those young people with limited funds, or those who do not have bank accounts, to have access to some of these events. They cannot always pay for their own travel expenses up front and then be reimbursed, so payment of expenses in arrears may be a strong disincentive. Local LSCs, with their partners, may consider developing a simple, auditable system for advance payment of expenses, or a cash float. Attendance allowances might also be paid because that gives an important signal that the young people concerned are valued for their

contribution. Staff get paid for attending; why should not learners who are also giving up their time for the greater good?

For some, financial reward may be less important than other forms of recognition. For example, some of the skills used in expressing the voice of young people correspond closely to key skills: communication, working with others, problem solving.

Young people develop important interpersonal, communication and influencing skills through their active involvement. These might be recorded in Progress Files and learners can be given the option of having this learning accredited. For example, there are curriculum framework and assessment schemes such as *Getting Involved and Influential* (GI2) being developed by the NIACE/NYA Young Adult Learners Partnership, or other programmes accredited by local Open College Networks. It is good practice to issue young people with a certificate to recognise the contribution that they make to a process, specifying what they were consulted about and the skills they used.

Young people were consulted about the publication of this Guidance. Each young person was given a £20 Virgin Megastore voucher and a certificate in recognition of their contribution. In November 2001, the London Central Learning and Skills Council consulted a group of young people about various aspects of their education and training. All of the young people were issued with a certificate confirming their attendance and thanking them for their valuable contribution.

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## CHAPTER 8: HOW DO YOU MAKE ENGAGEMENT SUSTAINABLE?

Consultation is just one part of engagement. If engagement through consultation with young people is going to be long term and effective rather than one-off initiatives, the principles and structures should be embedded into day-to-day practice. In order to achieve sustainable engagement it is important to establish structures that are simple and functional.

Effective consultation takes time, effort and skill. If it is done in haste by staff who have neither the time, commitment nor skills it will be a waste and the whole process will become devalued. Some staff are better at this than others. They may believe in it more and have good communication skills. They may be on the right wavelength for attentive listening. If staff do not have the skills to effectively listen to young people and value their opinions, then it may be worthwhile investing in training programmes so they can develop them. It is also important to ensure that the commitment and resources are available to implement any changes to be made as a result of consultation.

There are further practical steps that can be taken to ensure that young people are genuinely and properly consulted about their learning.

- Use annual reports and development plans to report on progress in consulting with learners. Evidence culled from consultations with learners could contribute to the annual self-assessment report made by providers.
- Find the most effective and efficient approaches to consultation. In doing so, the local LSC and providers are encouraged to collaborate with each other and with other agencies seeking to engage with young people in discussion and decisions on service plans and programmes.
- One option for local Learning and Skills Councils (with local partners) is to facilitate partnership-wide residential training programmes, that bring staff and young people together to explore relevant skills, structures and evidence-based practice – what works and what does not work.
- An innovation fund could be established to support and encourage young people to take part in projects intended to improve their citizenship and influencing skills. A young people's forum might decide on the criteria for allocating the money and those projects to which it should be awarded. In some cases, if action is only linked to short term funding it may be more appropriate to consider alternatives.

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## APPENDIX 1: RESOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

You may find the following publications useful:

### PUBLICATIONS

- Advisory Centre for Education (1995), *Research into Student Participation in Decision Making*.
- Baker, J. (1996) *The Fourth Partner: Participant or consumer?* Leicester: Youth Work Press, London: DFEE.
- Bentley, T. and Oakley, K. et al. (1999) *The Real Deal*. London: Demos et al.
- British Youth Council (1999) Various copies of *Youth Agenda*. London: BYC.
- Chambers, R. (1997) *Whose Reality Counts? Intermediate Technology Publications*.
- Cohen, J. and Emanuel, J. (1998) *Positive Participation: Consulting and involving young people in health-related work: a planning and resource pack*. London: HEA.
- Connexions Service (2001) *The Active Involvement of Young People in the Connexions Service: Managers' guide and practitioners guide*. DfES Publications.
- Connexions Service (2002) *Good Practice Guide on Involving Young People in the Governance of Connexions as Decision Makers*. DfES Publications.
- Combe, V. (2002) *Up for It: Getting young people involved in local Government*. Leicester: National Youth Agency.
- CYPU (2001) *Learning to Listen: Core principles for the involvement of children and young people*. Crown.



- Dungey, J. (1999) *Spotlight on Best Value*. Community Consultation. LGIU.
- DfEE/York Consulting (2000) *Consultative Forums: Good practice for learning*. Work Press.
- DfEE/Department of Psychology, Queens University Belfast (2000) *A Review of Approaches to Involving Young People in a Public Service*. DfEE.
- Department of Health (2000/01) *Quality Protects Research Briefings*. A series of research briefings to help front line managers and practitioners to base their work with children and families in need on reliable evidence.
- Frost, R. (ed) (2000) *Voices Unheard: Young people at the beginning of the 21st century*. Leicester: Youth Work Press: Carnegie YPI.
- Hart, R. (1992) *Child's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship*. London: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

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Johnson, V. et al. *Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process.*

Kitchin, H. (ed) (2000) *Taking Part: Promoting children and young people's participation for safer communities.* London: LGIU.

NCVY (1999) *NCVYS Position Paper and Youth Participation Strategy.* London: NCVYS.

National Union of Students (2001) *General Principles of Consultation.*

National Youth Agency/Local Government Association (2001) *Hear by Right.*

Oldfield, C. (Spring 2000) 'Mapping Youth Consultation'. In *Youth Action*, no. 69, pp.14–15.

Save the Children (1997) *Empowering Children and Young People Training Manual.* London: Save the Children.

Taylor, M. (1999) *Preparing for the Future: Involving users in the running of voluntary organisations.* London: ACENVO.

Treseder, P. (1996) *Empowering Children and Young People: Promoting involvement in decision making.* London: SCF and Children's Rights Office.

Willow, C. (1997) *Hear! Hear! Promoting Children's and Young People's Democratic Participation in Local Government.* London: Local Government Information Unit and Children's Rights Office.



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## ORGANISATIONS

These organisations are experienced in consulting with young people. They may be able to provide further information and resources:

### **British Youth Council**

2 Plough Yard  
Shoreditch High Street  
London EC2A 3LP  
Tel: 020 7422 8640  
E-mail: [mail@byc.org.uk](mailto:mail@byc.org.uk)  
Website: [www.byc.org.uk](http://www.byc.org.uk)

### **The NIACE/NYA Young Adult Learners Partnership**

21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester LE1 7GE  
Tel: 0116 204 4200  
E-mail: [Nicola@niace.org.uk](mailto:Nicola@niace.org.uk)  
Website: [www.niace.org.uk/research/YALP/](http://www.niace.org.uk/research/YALP/)

### **The National Youth Agency**

17–23 Albion Street  
Leicester LE1 6GD  
Tel: 0116 285 3700  
E-mail: [info@nya.org.uk](mailto:info@nya.org.uk)  
Website: [www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

### **NIACE**

21 De Montfort Street  
Leicester LE1 7GE  
Tel: 0116 204 4200  
Website: [www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

### **National Union of Students**

Nelson Mandela House  
461 Holloway Road  
London N7 6LJ  
Tel: 020 7272 8900  
Website: [www.nus.org.uk](http://www.nus.org.uk)

### **School Councils UK**

Lawford House  
5 Albert Place  
Finchley  
London N3 1QB  
Tel: 020 8349 2459  
Website: [www.schoolcouncils.org.uk](http://www.schoolcouncils.org.uk)

### **Carnegie Young People's Initiative**

Elizabeth House  
39 York Road  
London SE1 7NQ  
Tel: 020 7401 5460  
Website: [www.carnegie-youth.org.uk](http://www.carnegie-youth.org.uk)

### **Save the Children**

17 Grove Lane  
London SE5 8RD  
Tel: 020 7703 5400  
Fax: 020 7703 2278  
Website: [www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)



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**The Children's Society**

Edward Rudolf House  
Margery Street  
London WC1X 0JL  
Tel: 020 7841 4400  
Website: [www.the-childrens-society.org.uk](http://www.the-childrens-society.org.uk)

**National Children's Bureau**

8 Wakley Street  
London EC1V 7QE  
Tel: 020 7843 6000  
Fax: 020 7278 9512  
Website: [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)

**UK Youth Parliament**

Suite 3, Bennetts Business Centre  
Pontesbury  
Shropshire SY5 0RT  
Tel: 01743 792335  
Fax: 01743 790652  
Website: [www.ukyouthparliament.com](http://www.ukyouthparliament.com)

**Connexions Service National Unit**

Department for Education and Skills  
Moorfoot  
Sheffield S1 4PQ  
Tel: 0114 259 1104  
Website: [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)



## APPENDIX 2: CONSULTING YOUNG PEOPLE – CHECKLIST

TASK	COMPLETE	TASK	COMPLETE
Decide which groups of young people you wish to consult: – all learners – engaged or hard to reach groups – specific groups – specific age groups		Consider whether it is appropriate to involve local partners: – Connexions – youth service – voluntary organisations – training providers – colleges	
Decide and be clear about the issues you wish to consult on: – quality of teaching and learning – curriculum – staffing – facilities – access – support – advice and guidance – specific policies		Think about the timing of the consultation process and whether it can be combined with any others.	
Decide who will conduct the consultation, and if any staff training is needed.		If you are holding a consultation event, think about how you will create a relaxed and comfortable environment: – venue – programme – activities – refreshments/lunch	
Think about how much power and control you want to give to young people through the consultation process.		Consider the language you use: check any papers to avoid jargon and be sure to define any unfamiliar concepts.	
Decide which consultation method(s) are most appropriate to use: – events – committees – focus groups – surveys – peer research – youth forums/ councils /MYPs (youth parliament) – ICT		Decide how you will recognise and reward those who take part in the consultation: – accredited schemes – vouchers – certificates	
Consider any challenges and issues that might be encountered and how they could be overcome.		Decide how to feed back the findings of the consultation and any subsequent actions that will be taken.	
Ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the consultation process.		Think about how the consultation can be sustained as part of an ongoing strategy.	

## APPENDIX 3: FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is a national organisation responsible for planning and funding all post-16 education and training (except universities) for people over 16. The LSC has 47 local offices throughout England.

An important part of the LSC's work is to ensure that schools, colleges and training providers listen to what their students have to say about their learning; what they want; whether it is good and how it can be improved.

This information is to tell **YOU** how **YOU** can comment on **YOUR** learning:

### Why are you being asked for your views?

In order to provide an effective service for you, it is crucial that teachers, trainers and tutors consult with you and get feedback when planning and shaping learning provision. It is also important that you get feedback on exactly what will change and how, based on any comments that you make.

**THIS IS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE YOUR SAY.**

But don't just take our word for it. See what other young people have to say ...

*'I had a lot of fun at the same time.'*

*'The people were interested in what we had to say and it was good to be listened to.'*

*'It helps the people asking the questions to understand us better and to hear what we want or need.'*

*'We were able to voice our opinions in a safe environment.'*

*'We want to be heard not just to make a difference but to have a voice and to be taken seriously so that we can make our own choices and decisions.'*

*'It was good to meet new people and find out what they thought about things.'*

*'It was fantastic that our views were being heard.'*



*'I learned something new because I felt OK about asking the questions I wanted answered.'*

*'We enjoyed the process of working through issues alongside other young people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures.'*

*'It will only work if once they have heard our views some things are done about it.'*

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**So how might this help you?**

- You can have your say and get your voice heard.
- You can meet others of the same age and talk about your experiences.
- You can find out what it is like to be involved; you might want to do more or encourage others to get involved.
- You can influence changes that might take place on your programme and improvements in facilities.
- You can develop influencing skills that will help you now and in the future.

**What to do next?**

If you are interested in getting involved in local consultations then talk to your teacher, tutor, trainer, youth worker or personal adviser about how you can get involved.

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## APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE PROGRAMME AND CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

### Programme

1.00pm	Arrival and lunch
1.30pm	General introduction to the project, what will happen today and who everybody is Icebreakers Think about your current learning What is good about it? What is not so good about it? How could it be improved?
1.45pm	Introduction/background to the LSC and the project
1.55pm	Groups of young people to address the consultations questions
2.30pm	Comfort break
2.40pm	Groups to continue working through questions
3.10pm	Feedback
3.25pm	Final comments, questions and what will happen next

### These are the questions that you will be asked to think about

#### About your experience

- 1 Why have you chosen the course/programme that you are doing?
- 2 What do you think you will gain and how will you benefit from learning?
- 3 What kind of learning do you want to be involved in from age 19 and throughout your life?

#### About the LSC and learning for young people in general

- 4 How can we help young people to achieve their best in education/learning at age 16?
- 5 What actions should we take to help young people continue to achieve in learning up to age 19?
- 6 What kinds of things would encourage more young people to take up apprenticeships and work-based training?

#### About consultation with young people

- 7 How should colleges, schools and training providers involve young people in making decisions about the services they provide?
- 8 If the local LSC wanted to set up a forum for young people to discuss learning issues, then how should we go about setting this up? What would attract young people to serve on such a forum? How should young people be chosen? How should we ensure that the group reflects the diversity of young people in the community?

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## APPENDIX 5: EXAMPLES OF ICEBREAKER EXERCISES

### 1 NAME AND ADJECTIVE

This game helps participants learn names quickly by association. Gather the group into a circle facing inwards, then tell them that each person will introduce themselves by using their first name preceded by an adjective that starts with the same letter, for instance Jumping Julie or Howling Hanif.

Nominate one person to start off. This person steps into the circle, says their name and steps back. Going clockwise, the next person steps forward, says their name and also the previous name before stepping back. The following person steps forward, says their name and the previous two names, and so on until everyone has stepped into the circle, given their name and all the previous names. This will get harder as the game goes on.

The game can be adapted so that names are accompanied by parts of the body, for example, Michelle Muscle, Anne Artery or Harry Hand.

### 2 SHARKS

Gather the group into a circle facing inwards. Hand a sheet of newspaper to each person and tell the group to follow your movements carefully so as not to get lost, then rip your sheet of

paper into two, stand on one half, violently screw up the other half and throw it into the middle of the circle.

You now have a lagoon of shark infested water and everybody is living on their own little island. This is an ordered society and everybody must live in alphabetical order, so tell the group where A starts and ask them to rearrange themselves by moving from island to island without falling into the shark infested waters.

The group must devise an effective way of finding out each other's names and moving to their places.

### 3 GUESS WHO?

Prepare a sheet of five to ten questions and hand out a copy to each member of the group. The questions should include things like, 'what was the first CD you ever bought?' or 'what was the most embarrassing moment in your life?' Individuals have ten minutes to fill in the sheet and should not show it to anyone else. All the sheets are collected by the worker then read out at random and the rest of the group has to guess whose sheet it is by the answers given.

A word of warning. Young people are sometimes a little too honest and it may be worth looking through the sheets first in case any of the stories are too embarrassing to be read out.

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## APPENDIX 6: THANK YOU LETTER

This needs to be sent to participants as quickly as possible after the consultation

Dear

Thank you for taking part in this consultation exercise. Your views will be fed back to the Learning and Skills Council by the end of April, and they will then be used by the Department for Education and Skills to change and hopefully improve the learning that is available for young people between the ages of 14 to 19.

- Do you have any comments that you would like to make about the way we consulted you?
- Do you think that the information we provided you with and the questions we asked were clear enough and easy to understand?
- What else do you think we could have done in order to help you to get your views across?
- Would you like to make any other comments?

Once again, thank you for taking part. Please find enclosed with this letter a copy of the notes from the consultation and a music voucher in recognition of your contribution.

Please return any comments in the pre-paid envelope provided.

Yours sincerely



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## APPENDIX 7: PRACTICAL TIPS AND ACTIVITIES

When conducting consultations with groups of young people it is important to allow them to express themselves freely in ways that they are most comfortable. Bearing this in mind, you should avoid being too prescriptive. It is important that you are clear from the beginning what you are consulting them about. Here are some ideas and suggestions that might help:

### BE CREATIVE

The use of different **coloured paper and pens** is often effective. Write questions, keywords or statements on flipchart paper and allow the young people to freely discuss or write their comments, concerns or questions. Ink colour could symbolise different comments, for example, questions could be in green, positive comments in blue and negative comments in red.

Some young people may prefer to express their views more dramatically. **Role-play** can be an effective way of allowing them to speak freely and openly. For example, if you are consulting young people about the desired skills and qualities of a tutor or a personal adviser, you could ask one group to devise a role-play dramatising a really good tutor/PA, and the other group to dramatisise a really bad PA/tutor. This will allow them and you to identify the essential skills and qualities that matter to young people.

Devising and performing **songs, raps or poetry** may appeal to many young people as interesting and fun ways of expressing their views.

The use of **ICT**, through web pages and **video cameras** can also be effective. Part of a consultation event could involve one group of young people interviewing and video recording the views of other young people. The whole group could then be involved in discussing the interviews and editing the tape to ensure that the key messages are conveyed.

**Web pages** can be a successful way of recording feedback from young people. This flexible format allows for cartoons and digital photos to enhance interesting fonts, etc. There is also scope for inserting sound and video files. Young people are generally very enthusiastic about this medium, they are happy to write up their own materials and have a finished product that looks exciting.

### TIPS FOR HOLDING A RESIDENTIAL EVENT

#### 1 Administrative arrangements

- It is important to arrange parental permission for the young people to participate so that you can act 'in loco parentis'. Ensure that you have emergency contact telephone numbers and medical details. Local authority procedures may vary, it is important to check requirements and other procedures, such as health and safety and child protection.
- Ensure that you notify the youth participation workers and young people that a proper health and safety risk assessment has been carried out.

- Ensure that the accommodation booking and any venue arrangements are confirmed in writing.
- Ensure information about young people's individual needs, such as access and dietary requirements, are received well in advance of the event.
- For a residential event, youth participation workers should be given two months' notice, and young people one months'. For any other consultation event, youth participation workers need one months' notice, and young people two weeks'.
- Ensure that information (including non-negotiable ground rules and guidelines) is sent out at least one week before the event. Ask the young people how and where they want the information to be sent. It is also helpful to send a copy to the relevant adults, such as parents/carers, youth workers, or personal advisers. Any instructions or directions should be clear and easy to follow.

## 2 Planning

- Allow sufficient time to thoroughly plan and prepare for an event, allow three to six months for a large-scale event. It may be helpful to use a timeline for this to indicate what action needs to be taken and by when. This might provide opportunities for young people to run some of the sessions. It may also allow harder to reach young people to be involved.
- Undertake a risk assessment for the event and the different types of activities.
- Consider establishing any non-negotiable ground rules and advise the young people of them before the event.
- Build in contingency plans regarding the venue, transport, late arrivals or early departures. Where possible provide transport to the venue, or at the least build transport costs into the budget.

- The event might need to be held at a weekend to fit in with young people's study or part-time employment, which often takes place during evenings.
- For optimum group dynamics the number recommended is from 15 to 20 with a maximum of 30 young people. It is also important to consider staff ratios.

## 3 Venue

- Young people need to be accommodated in a good hotel, or good hostel-type facilities. Ensure that the hotel or hostel is able to provide the appropriate facilities and is happy and willing to accommodate groups of young people.
- The accommodation manager needs to be briefed to serve food young people like. This means more than just burgers and might include pasta, pizza and chips. Drinks at breaks could include cola, water and orange juice, in addition to tea and coffee.
- Ask the hotel to block videos and external phone calls and confirm in writing for rooms allocated.
- An out-of-town hotel not only gives better value accommodation but also gives fewer options for late night revelry. It is impracticable to forbid young people to leave the hotel.
- Some young people prefer to share rooms, particularly young women. It is good to offer young people the choice.
- The working rooms in the hotel should be as informal as possible. This includes the set up of round tables and background music chosen by the young people. A formal layout can work as long as the environment feels comfortable and relaxed. Stick flipcharts on walls (with the hotel's consent).

#### 4 Programme

- It is important to discuss ground rules at the beginning of an event and to be clear about what can be negotiated by the young people. Discuss likely outcomes of not following the ground rules.
- Ensure that icebreakers are included in the programme if the young people do not know each other.
- On the first evening it is a good idea to arrange evening entertainment for the young people together as a way of getting to know each other. This could be ten-pin bowling or another activity that could be arranged by the young people themselves. Book a coach if the venue is far away. Remember that some of the young participants may have had long journeys.
- Provide resources that can enhance young people's creative ideas, eg publisher/music packages on laptops and coloured paper.
- The most serious, concentrated work is best done early on Saturday afternoon. The Sunday morning needs more active, participative sessions. All the sessions should be creative, dynamic and fun.
- The session after lunch on Sunday is useful as a concluding focus for the weekend. Local officials may be invited to attend to hear the young people's views on the agreed topics. It is usually preferable to avoid adults hanging around during the earlier sessions without a role.
- Collect evaluation sheets to gauge young people's views on the event or undertake a verbal evaluation/feedback session. Ensure sufficient time is built into the programme for this.



## APPENDIX 8: CONSULTATION EVENT CHECKLIST

	Involve young people? Y/N	Informal suggestions schemes	Canvas opinion surveys	Consultation focus groups	Consultation creative approaches	Consultation use of new technology – website, mobile phone	Membership of decision making bodies
<b>Planning and organising</b> Identification of needs of local young people Investigation of current provision Definition of critical success factors for the service Development of strategy, activities, objectives, plans Development of organisation Definition of quality dimensions and standards Design of specific involvement activity Staff recruitment							
<b>Delivering and doing</b> Facilitation of access and outreach work Information services Advisory/guidance services Tutoring services Mentoring							
<b>Checking</b> Gathering information on performance and impact Measuring achievement against objectives Staff appraisal							
<b>Reviewing and learning</b> Evaluation of performance and outcomes Accounting to various stakeholders Identification of learning points							

## APPENDIX 9: CASE STUDIES

The following case studies are intended to highlight examples of existing good practice in consulting young people.

### CASE STUDY 1

Berkshire LSC contracted a research consultant to undertake a postal survey of trainees on the WBL (Work Based Learning) programmes. The survey targeted trainees currently in training and leavers during the operational year, both those who had achieved their qualifications and those who were non-completing leavers. The fieldwork was undertaken in March 2002.

#### The aims of the research were to:

- measure and evaluate levels of satisfaction with the WBLFYP programme overall, and with specific aspects of it;
- explore trainees' views on quality related issues such as key skills; and
- enable analysis of factors which promote retention and completion.

#### Key findings

- 1 The average satisfaction score was 8.2 (out of 10).
- 2 50 per cent of the trainees ranked their job or work placement as most important to their overall level of satisfaction. Dissatisfaction with the job or work placement was one of the most cited reasons for non-completion rather than training related (54 per cent versus 36 per cent).

- 3 There was a clear relationship between overall satisfaction levels and trainees' reported levels of support from their employers. Where employers were less supportive, trainees were less satisfied with one-to-one tutor time and materials provided.
- 4 Trainees' views at the start of the programme (awareness of programme requirements and confidence that they will successfully complete) were a significant factor in overall levels of satisfaction. Early leavers were more likely to have joined WBL from employment than from education, had lower awareness and confidence levels than completers, and 25 per cent of non-completers were reactive/resistant learners.
- 5 Attitudes to learning and learner motivation influenced levels of satisfaction and were also a factor in non-completion. Enthusiastic learners were significantly more satisfied.
- 6 Only 44 per cent of trainees remained with the same employer once training was completed. 83 per cent were very likely to continue in learning after completing the WBL.
- 7 Non-completers were less satisfied than trainees as a whole on all the measures (listed at 1 above). Those who went to an external training centre rather than learning at the place of work were less likely to leave early.

#### Actions arising from the research

- 1 The results are being presented to all Work Based Learning Providers with full copies of the report. Discussions are taking place about whether to repeat the research.

- 2 Further analysis is being undertaken to identify the characteristics of trainees most at risk of not completing their qualification. This will be used to profile individual provider's early-leavers statistics against both a sector norm and the Berkshire LSC norm.
- 3 Work with the Berkshire Training Provider Network (BTPN) is taking place to trial a system of analysing learner's motivation, awareness and confidence on entry and on an on-going basis, to see if it can act as an 'early warning system' and reduce non-completion levels. This might also test whether those entering from employment are more at risk of not completing
- 4 It is hoped to develop a system that aggregates the data from provider satisfaction surveys to get a Berkshire LSC result on an ongoing basis

**Contact details**

Sue Beasley,  
Berkshire LSC, Pacific House,  
Imperial Way, Reading,  
Berkshire RG2 0TF.  
Tel: 0845 019 4147



Photo: Picture House Centre for Photography Ltd

## CASE STUDY 2

The local Learning and Skills Council and the Connexions Service in Cornwall share targets relating to young people's engagement in learning. The two organisations linked with representatives of providers, for example, 6th forms, FE colleges, work based learning (WBL) providers, employers and the voluntary sector to establish innovative ways of encouraging young people aged 16 to 19 to stay in learning or of re-engaging those who have dropped out.

A review of the literature (both national and local) regarding participation and withdrawal from learning post-16 was carried out and provided some clear reasons why young people choose not to engage in learning and why they might drop out. The review informed the development of some possible 'interventions', the aim being to maximise the number of young people retained in learning. The validity and usefulness of these interventions needed to be tested with the client group. Thus, primary research was carried out with young people to determine:

- whether the 'interventions' suggested might impact on engagement and retention in learning;
- the extent to which these 'interventions' need to be modified to encourage engagement and retention; and
- which other (new) elements need to be considered to influence engagement and retention.

Over 150 young people were invited to take part and only four refused. This excellent response rate demonstrated young people's willingness to express their views and influence their futures.

A group of 18 young people who were disengaged from learning were identified. Consultations were carried out with them at their

homes and each interview lasted for over an hour. This enabled the researcher to gather substantive qualitative information. Albeit small, the sample ensured that there was an adequate balance of age groups, gender, rural/urban residence and employed/unemployed.

The findings from the consultations resulted in ten recommendations and shaped the direction of a pilot project currently being set up in Plymouth. The pilot has brought together six secondary schools, two FE colleges, private training providers and the Plymouth Learning Partnership, with the aim of retaining young people in learning. The pilot is focusing on transition management, that is, the successful progression from compulsory to post compulsory education, which young people identified as being key to engagement and retention. Activities are planned to commence in September/October 2002, they include staff development activities to review and develop practice in relation to engagement and retention issues, and further work with young people.

The pilot will be run over a period of three years and is being pump-primed with funding from the Learning and Skills Council Devon and Cornwall. The evaluation for the pilot will consider not only the intended improved engagement and retention rates but also the perceptions of young people themselves.

### Contact details

Marina Auburn,  
Devon and Cornwall LSC,  
Foliot House,  
Budshead Road, Crownhill,  
Plymouth PL6 5XR.  
Tel: 0845 019 4155.

Richard Hartley,  
Connexions Cornwall and Devon,  
Carnon Building,  
Wilson Way Pool,  
Cornwall TR15 3RS.  
Tel: 01209 313753.

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## CASE STUDY 3

### Engaging Young People in Connexions – DfES

Connexions, as the gateway and guidance service for 13 to 19-year-olds, has engaged young people in its development from the outset. For example:

- In late 1999 there was national consultation of a total of 600 young people aged between 12 and 22 in small groups all over England.
- During 2000 the Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) consulted around 60 young people on the quality standards for the Connexions Service.
- Around 50 young people from black and minority ethnic groups have been consulted on the quality standards.
- During spring 2000 The National Youth Agency ran events for DfEE staff on how to involve young people in the process of developing Connexions Service policy.
- During autumn 2000 the Connexions Service National Unit sponsored 4 training events for over 200 staff from Connexions partnerships on how to involve young people in the Connexions Service.
- In January 2001, the British Youth Council was commissioned to collect young people's opinions on the business plans drafted by the first round of Connexions Partnerships. Of the 13 plans, four were rejected on the basis that the partnerships

did not truly involve young people in the design and delivery of the service.

The CSNU actively used the feedback from young people to change policy in key areas such as the personal qualities of personal advisers, the range of support services which young people needed to access, choice of personal advisers and the importance of continuing to build in the views of young people as Connexions continues.

In the Cornwall and Devon Pilot young people were involved in discussions in the Plymouth and Torbay local management committee/partnership meetings about the local pilot projects, and future planning to ensure that the Connexions Service met local needs. Young people have been involved in shaping the role of personal advisers and in the process of selecting them. A youth pocket handbook *Sorted*, which covers youth issues has been designed with the help of young people.

#### Contact details

Connexions Service National Unit,  
Department for Education and Skills,  
Moorfoot,  
Sheffield S1 4PQ.  
Tel: 0870 000 2288.

## CASE STUDY 4

Essex LSC undertook a local telephone survey of 1,400 16 to 18-year-olds in their area in the winter/spring of 2001–02. This was undertaken in parallel with the Post-16 Learning Survey, a survey of 2,800 Essex residents aged 16 and over, and both surveys explored the learning behaviour and patterns of the two cohorts. The issues covered in the 16 to 18 Learning Survey were current and past learning behaviour and achievement, preferred types of provision and mode of delivery, learning plans, barriers to learning, incentives to learning, information advice and guidance, influences upon learning decisions, and a whole range of other issues.

The next stage is to take the results from the survey and identify headline figures/key issues that can be explored further. It is anticipated that detailed learner/potential learner feedback work will heavily involve local partners, particularly local learning partnerships.

### Challenges and difficulties

The challenges and difficulties of this work include obtaining reliable and robust data and translating the results of research into action. Some of the implications of the findings are within their control, but not all, and long-term strategies are required to reverse negative attitudes towards learning.

Surveys should only be one tool in a set of tools employed in trying to capture the voice of the learner and potential learner. Each of the different methods has advantages and disadvantages.

### Impact of the work

In the short-term the results of the survey has helped the local LSC to re-examine its marketing strategy and that of their partners.

They are currently producing area profiles by pulling together the results of this survey, other surveys and the findings from their analysis of various data sets. It is hoped that this will help local providers to shape their recruitment and marketing strategies and influence their planned provision.

### Contact details

Chris Hatten,  
Essex LSC,  
Redwing House, Hedgerows Business Park,  
Colchester Road,  
Chelmsford CM2 5PB.  
Tel: 01245 550089/87.



## CASE STUDY 5

### Background

In 1995 Slough Borough Council commissioned Freeform Arts Trust to undertake research with 16 to 25-year-olds to support a bid for an SRB grant. Coordinated by the Nai Roshni Partnership, Slough instigated some of the projects that came from the Freeform research, one of which is its flagship – a centre for young people run by young people. Slough Young People's Centre and its participants undertook further research into youth forums and councils, and were integral in its activation.

A full-time research worker was recruited to identify the priority issues – transport, housing, drugs, sexual health and parenting, safety, leisure and arts facilities, as well as support for financial and career choices. Young adults were asked to design programmes of activity that they felt would engage their peers in communicating with others, including agencies, partnerships and employers.

The Youth Forum Project has since developed two programmes of activity for 16-year-olds.

### Used Youth Focus Programme (16 to 25)

This consists of single-issue focus groups targeting young adults in hostels, supported and emergency accommodation identified by consultation throughout the year. Representatives working in the field are invited to participate in the focus groups to answer questions and help inform attendees of the realities, practicalities, possibilities and priorities in Slough.

Following the Drugs and Young People focus group, the Used Youth set up a working group consisting of five young adults and DAT

(Drug Action Team) partners to advise, consult, design and deliver services as well as information about services.

### See What I'm Sayin'

This was the idea of a youth forum participant who felt that the method of expression could reinforce the message, and engage young people who have difficulty communicating and participating. It is a flexible programme of activity designed to target disadvantaged or disaffected young adults aged 16 to 25. It uses art, photography, graffiti, music, lyrics, creative writing and physical expression to explore feelings, thoughts, wants and needs. It perpetuates the peer-centred ethos of the Youth Forum Project encouraging young adults previously involved to facilitate sessions. It is free to all participants, and resources and expenses are negotiated with facilitators.

### Outcomes

- Development of communication and social skills.
- Assisting young people to identify needs and express thoughts.
- Building and increasing confidence.
- Development of presentation and negotiation skills.
- Helps return young adults into formal, regular activity.

All of the Forum project's initiatives owe some success of engaging young people to the supportive environment of a well resourced centre run by young people themselves. It is also this peer centred approach that the Youth Forum Project perpetuates.

### Contact details

Emma Sommerwill, c/o Slough Young People's Centre,  
323 High Street,  
Slough SL1 1BL.  
Tel: 01753 536349.

## CASE STUDY 6

The West of England LSC, along with its partners, the Bristol Local Education Authority, local schools, colleges and Connexions, is currently preparing a response to a recent local area inspection of 16 to 19 education and training provision within Bristol. The document will focus on plans to improve local provision and it was, therefore, considered important to understand the views of young people in relation to the choices available to them after Year 11. Since changes implemented as a result of the Area Plan are likely to take effect within the next year or two, it would appear that pupils currently in year 10 (ie aged 15) are the ones most likely to benefit.

Consequently, Mindset Research were commissioned to conduct a programme of qualitative research designed to provide a comprehensive picture of the views and expectations of this group of pupils, thereby ensuring that there is a match between what is proposed and what pupils feel they need. The programme also included inputs from Connexions advisers and careers coordinators (within schools). Research was conducted throughout May and early June 2002.

### Research objectives

The programme of research addressed the following questions in relation to Year 10 pupils:

- What do they want to do after year 11 and why?
- What do they expect to be able to do after year 11 and why? (Are there any major differences between young people's wants and expectations?)
- What are the key influences on this decision making?
- What are their opinions of the various educational and training

- providers available to them and why?
- If they are staying on in education and training, how important is 'ease of travel' to their choice of provider? How would they plan to travel to the provider of their choice?
- How satisfied are they with the information, advice and guidance they have received on post-16 choices?
- If they are planning to leave education and training, what if anything, would encourage them to stay?

Additionally, the views were sought of Connexions advisers and careers coordinators, with the objective of understanding their perceptions of the above through their contact with pupils and with their responsibility for post-16 planning, support, information and advice.

The programme of research was qualitative in nature and consisted of:

- nine representational focus groups of eight to ten Year 10 pupils in schools in Bristol;
- one focus group with Connexions advisers (mix of careers and intensive advisers); and
- one focus group and one in-depth interview with careers coordinators.

The research raised many issues. However, there was agreement regarding the three issues that should be treated as priority:

- 1 The post-16 planning process must begin at an earlier date – some careers teaching can be delivered at a very early stage but structured programmes should begin no later than Year 8.
- 2 Students and possibly parents are currently confused by the range of post-16 options on offer. This is compounded by the lack of an integrated overview of options and routes.

- 
- 3 Post-16 options must be presented and discussed in a way that engages pupils. Students often admitted that they are unlikely to be proactive in seeking out information for themselves so everything possible must be done to encourage them to make use of the resources available to them.

**Contact details**

Tony Muir,  
West of England LSC,  
St Lawrence House,  
29–31 Broad Street,  
Bristol BS99 7HR.  
Tel: 0845 019 4168



## CASE STUDY 7

The Central London Connexions Partnership has a Youth Involvement Group (YIG) comprising youth service managers across the seven boroughs of the Partnership (Camden, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Southwark, Wandsworth and Westminster). In summer 2001 they commissioned a researcher to find out what young people wanted the Connexions Service to deliver. This survey included:

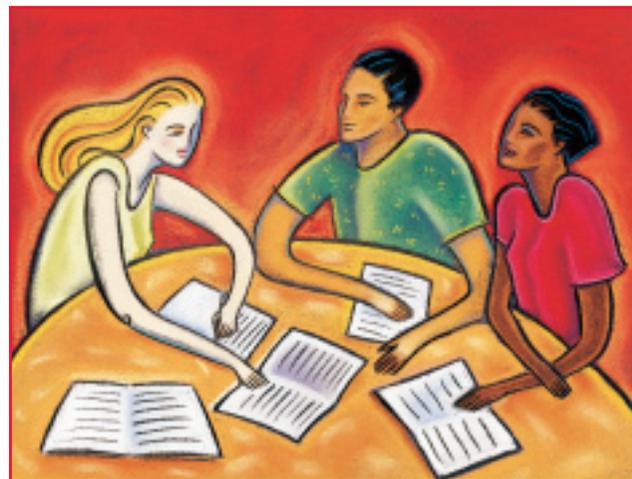
- Questionnaires to young people via youth groups and organisations – quantitative research.
- Questionnaires and focus groups – qualitative research by **peer researchers**.
- A video to promote the views of the young people.

The quantitative research focused on the personal adviser role, asking:

- What type of advice and support do young people want from a personal adviser?
- What skills and qualities should personal advisers have?
- How and where would young people want to access them?

Eight peer researchers were recruited. They were all aged 16 to 18, and they represented young people from different ethnic backgrounds. They received a day's training on communication skills, body language, interview and facilitation skills, and the use of video cameras. Other peer researchers from east London that had been involved in similar work advised and supported the group.

Seven focus groups were held with a range of young people in well-known settings in each of the boroughs. The average



attendance at each was 12, and the peer researchers conducted the one-to-one interviews and facilitated the group. The youth coordinator and researcher provided support.

A 15-minute video, featuring the views of young people was produced and featured at a Connexions conference in December 2001. A companion report, *Successful Young People, Successful Communities*, provided further detail.

The benefits for the young people included improved confidence, and skills in interviewing, listening, facilitating, video making. They also learned to be more diplomatic and non-judgmental, and came to a better understanding of Connexions and the youth service.

The Connexions Service was able to raise its profile; find out **directly what young people want and expect** from it; and how the service could be developed and improved.

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### What were the factors that made for success?

- A flexible approach.
- The commitment of the peer researchers.
- Interviews and focus groups facilitated by young people.
- The experience of the video/research company.
- The training for the peer researchers.
- The youth coordinator was a young person.

### Outcomes

One of the most positive outcomes from this process was that young people were involved in the selection panel to appoint a range of staff, including the Partnership's chief executive. In some cases the young people chaired the panel. The peer researchers are also to be involved in drafting a youth charter.

### Contact details

Hayley Ramsay Jones,  
Connexions,  
3rd Floor, 125–135 Freston Road,  
London W10 6TH.  
Tel: 0207 598 4913  
Or: 07967 347830.



# Top Tips for PARTICIPATION

## what disabled young people want

### Respect us

"Trust us – we need to trust you"  
"If you give us respect – we'll give you respect"

### Involve us from the start

"You can find out what's best for us by involving us"  
"Don't guess what we want"

### Listen to us

"If you don't listen to what we want – how can you give us what we want?"  
"Listen to me, no one else, listen to me. It's my body, listen to me, it's my life, listen to me"

### Be open and honest with us

"Frustrating when you don't tell us stuff"  
"We all make mistakes"  
"We ask you questions to help us understand our world and grow as people"

### Prove you're listening to us

"My voice is my power"  
"Tell us what's changed"  
"Show us you want to listen"

### Make sure we get something out of it

"Participation is a great way to help us learn how to make decisions and understand the choices we may face in the future"  
"Gives us new skills"  
"Empower us"

### Give us time

"I know what I want to say – give me time"  
"Give me time to get my message ready"  
"Help us make decisions by giving us your time – enough time"

### Support us to make our own decisions

"I want more choice"  
"If you listen to us you can help us get a positive outcome"



making  
ourselves  
HEARD

Council for Disabled Children, NCB  
8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE

tel 020 7843 6006

fax 020 7843 6313

email [vwright@ncb.org.uk](mailto:vwright@ncb.org.uk)

[www.ncb.org.uk/cdc](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc)

Charity registration no. 258825

**P/W** Participation Works

Produced in partnership  
with young people from  
Generate UK and 1Voice

# Involving children and young people – where to find out more

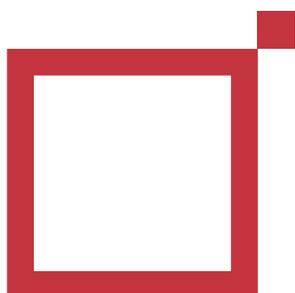
This listing accompanies the DfES/NYA briefing paper on *Involving Children and Young People – an introduction*. It is intended to help those with a responsibility for promoting children and young people’s involvement, whether at policy development and strategic level or at delivery level, to identify the resources that can best help them do so.

Wherever possible, website links have been included. The listing is organised under the following headings:

- Top ten useful resources
- Definitions and models of participation
- The policy context
- Organisations promoting children and young people’s rights and participation
- Resources: Identifying appropriate approaches
  - Consulting children and young people
  - Practice initiatives
  - Using websites and ICT
  - Large-scale events
  - Advisory groups, parallel structures and committees
  - Safe and sound involvement

## Top ten useful resources

It can be baffling just thinking about where to start! These top ten resources include a general introduction to children and young people’s participation as well as some practical resources to get going and some specialised resources to help respond to those most often excluded.



## Introduction to the field

**Cutler, D. and Taylor, A.** (2004), *Expanding and sustaining involvement – a snapshot of participative infrastructure for young people living in England*. Carnegie Young People Initiative. Examines participation infrastructure – ie. systems and procedures, structures and resources – in the voluntary and statutory sectors in England. Eight key aspects were identified: policy, budgets, champions, structures, specialist staff, training, guidance and monitoring.  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploads/Expandingandsustaining.pdf](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploads/Expandingandsustaining.pdf)

**Willow, C.** (2002), *Participation in Practice: children and young people as partners in change*. The Children's Society, £11.95. Tel: 020 7841 4415. [www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)  
Book includes detailed examination of the policy context for consultation and participation with children and young people. Using a rights focus, it explores four interdependent themes: the case for involving children and young people in decision-making; why children and young people are excluded; how adults can respect children and young people; and acting on children and young people's ideas and views. Six case studies reflect the different models and approaches used by The Children's Society, including a school inclusion project, advocacy in the child protection system, using festivals to consult young carers, Ask Us project with young disabled people, listening to very young children; and setting up a children and young people's bureau.

## Skills and toolkits

**Kirby, P. et al.** (2003), *Building a Culture of Participation*. DfES. Free. Tel: 0845 602 2260. E-mail: [dfes@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfes@prolog.uk.com). Published in two parts. [www.dfes.gov.uk/listeningtolearn/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/listeningtolearn/)  
Available from Prolog as DfES/0826/2003 for handbook, DfES/0827/2003 for research report. Study, carried out by NCB (National Children's Bureau) and the PK Research Consultancy, examines participatory practice with children and young people through case studies of 29 organisations. It concludes that meaningful participation is about developing positive relationships with children and young people, in which they are listened to and heard as part of everyday practice. Handbook, designed for management and staff at different levels within an organisation, aims to stimulate thinking, offer ideas about how to actively involve children and young people in decision-making, and to encourage organisations to explore how they can develop a more participatory culture.  
Contact: [rsinclair@ncb.org.uk](mailto:rsinclair@ncb.org.uk) or [kirby@pkrc.co.uk](mailto:kirby@pkrc.co.uk)



**Shepherd, C. and Treseder, P. (2002), *Participation – spice it up! Save the Children*, £18.95.**

Available from Plymbridge Distributors on 01752 202301. E-mail: [orders@plymbridge.com](mailto:orders@plymbridge.com)

Produced by Dynamix, a Swansea-based cooperative using participative methods with children and young people, this manual provides practical tools for engaging children and young people in planning and consultations. It is based on activities used with children and young people from 18 months to 25 in a range of settings, including play leader training, whole school policy making and consultations, exploring issues such as bullying, behaviour and discipline and tackling problems of young people who feel excluded.

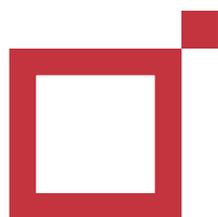
**Treseder, P. (1997), *Empowering Children and Young People*. Save the Children, £15.** Available from Plymbridge Distributors as above.

Manual, full of checklists and exercises, aimed at professionals promoting children and young people's empowerment in a range of sectors. Section 1 focuses on helping professionals to increase their understanding of issues relating to empowering young people in their work, while section 2 focus on training young people to be active in decision-making by building their confidence and skills. The final part looks at long-term strategies for making empowerment work.

## Inclusion

**Ask Us (2001 and 2003).** The Children's Society, £5.50. Tel: 020 7841 4415. Outline of project available at [www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/741.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/741.asp)

CD-Rom resulting from a multi-media consultation through which over 200 disabled children and young people aged 4 to 24 from across England addressed issues such as access to leisure, participation and social exclusion, communication and services. Particularly aimed at those responsible for implementing the Quality Protects initiative, but relevant to decision-makers in all sectors. Ask Us2! CD Rom looks at the rights of young disabled people to inclusive services.



**Miller, J.** (1996), *Never too Young: how young children can take responsibility and make decisions*, Save the Children/National Early Years Network, £10. Available from Plymbridge Distributors on 01752 202301.

Practical resource showing how children under 8 can participate, make decisions and take responsibility for their actions. It provides early years workers with information about why participation works, and includes a range of tried and tested techniques for involving children in decisions that affect them.

**Ward, L.** (1997), *Seen and Heard: involving disabled children and young people in research and development projects*. YPS, York, £6.50. Available on 01904 431213. Report covering background issues, the context, the law, practicalities of involving children, ethical issues, and equal opportunity issues. There is a section on children with sensory, profound or multiple impairments, and a four page checklist for action summarising key issues.

## Standards

*Keeping it Safe: a young person-centred approach to safety and child protection, standards and guidelines* (2002). National Council for Voluntary Youth Services, £30. Tel: 020 7422 8630.

Comprehensive pack covering child protection, safe recruitment and selection, managing staff and providing safe activities – including risk assessment, insurance, transport and safe internet access. It has a range of practical material, including code of conduct and sample consent and incident forms.

**Wade, H. and Badham, B.** (2003), *Hear by Right: standards for the active involvement of children and young people*, The National Youth Agency/Local Government Association. Available on 0116 285 3709.

*Hear by Right* offers tried and tested standards for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sector to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people. The standards cover seven areas: shared values, strategy, structure, systems, staff and elected members and trustees, skills and knowledge, and style of leadership, forming a model of how to achieve change in an organisation.

# Definitions and models of participation

It is important to be clear about terms being used. Participation is not simply about being listened to or being consulted – it is also about influencing decision-making and change. Some key terms are defined below:

- Participation: ‘The process of sharing decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives.’ Cited in Willow, C (2002), *Participation in Practice*, p.2 (see above).
- Involvement: ‘the overall term for children and young people being included in the decision-making process, at any level.’ Treseder, P. (1997), *Empowering children and young people*, p.4.
- Consultation: ‘a process which requires the commitment to take on board young people’s views and present detailed information back to them. Consultation can be an ongoing process.’ Treseder, as above.

Discussion of children and young people’s participation commonly draws on the ‘ladder of participation’. This model was devised by Hart, following Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation, and has eight stages representing increasing levels of participation. These are:

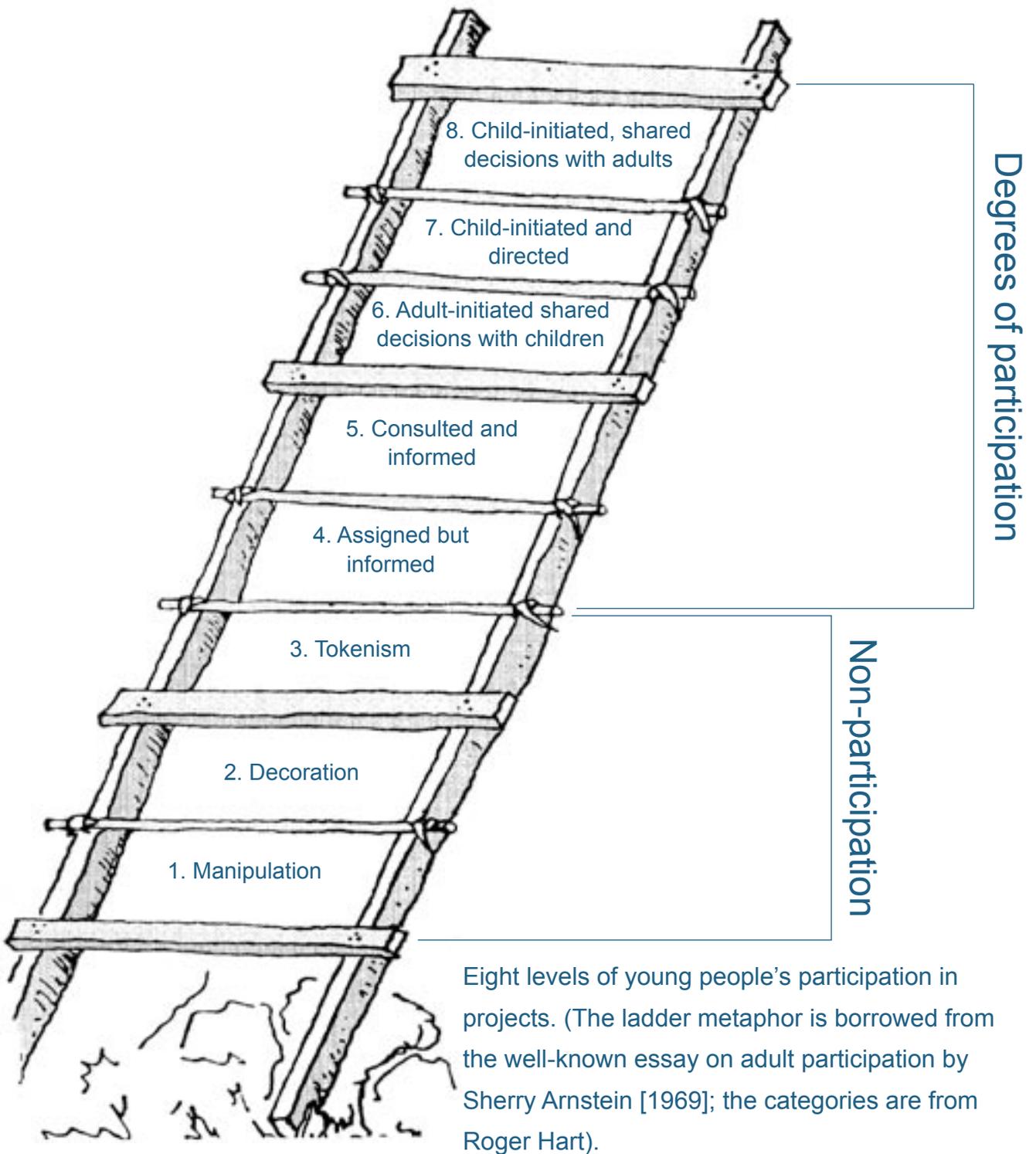
1. manipulation
2. decoration;
3. tokenism;
4. assigned but informed;
5. consulted and informed;
6. adult-initiated, shared decisions with children;
7. child-initiated and directed; and
8. child-initiated, shared decisions with adults.

Cited in Willow, C (2002), *Participation in Practice*, pp.48–50.

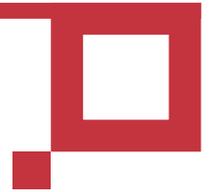
While the first three stages are to be avoided, as they constitute the ‘rungs of non-participation’, the ladder highlights that participation can take various forms and different degrees depending on a range of factors. It offers both a gauge to the nature of involvement and a guide to how its quality might be improved. A version of the ladder of participation is available at [www.developingcitizenship.org.uk/pdfs/Participation.pdf](http://www.developingcitizenship.org.uk/pdfs/Participation.pdf)



# The ladder of participation



# The policy context



## General

Public policy increasingly includes requirements that service users, including children and young people, should be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of services. This section sets out some of the key policy frameworks.

**The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, formally ratified by the UK Government in 1991, provides children and young people under 18 with a comprehensive set of rights. In particular, Article 12 of the Convention states that ‘States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.’

Other key Articles relating to children and young people’s participation include:

- Article 13, which states that ‘the child shall have the right to freedom of expression’;
- Article 23, which covers disabled children’s right to a ‘full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community’.

A child-friendly summary of the Convention has been published by Unicef as *What Rights?* available at [www.therightssite.org.uk/html/rights\\_war.htm](http://www.therightssite.org.uk/html/rights_war.htm)

Governments which have signed up to the UNCRC (all except two countries) must report on progress to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The UK’s report was examined in 2002. [www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/downloads/cr-2nd-uk-periodic-report.doc](http://www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/downloads/cr-2nd-uk-periodic-report.doc). A summary of the Committee’s *Concluding Observations* is available from [www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk) or [www.crae.org.uk](http://www.crae.org.uk)

The UNCRC is now increasingly cited in proceedings concerning children and young people. Professionals are using it to promote children and young people’s participation in decision-making. Over 400 statutory and voluntary bodies have formally adopted it, and some local authorities have used the UNCRC as the planning framework for all their children’s services.

Resources on UNCRC: Unicef has produced a set of four Children's Rights Comics focusing on different aspects of UNCRC. They are available on 020 7405 5592 or on its website at [www.therightssite.org.uk](http://www.therightssite.org.uk)

Article 12 has produced *A Right To Know*, a toolkit for teachers and youth workers to introduce children's rights and the UNCRC to young people aged 11 to 18 years old. Available price £30 from 0870 606 3377.

**The Human Rights Act 1998** came into force across the UK in October 2000. It grants all UK citizens, including children and young people, all the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights. While there is no specific focus on children and young people, the European Convention has been used to bring about changes in UK law and policy, for instance relating to corporal punishment in schools and access to social services files. For more information see Drew, S. (2000), *Children and the Human Rights Act*, Save the Children, £10, which outlines the use of the act in the advocacy of children's rights.

***Every Child Matters***, The Government's Green Paper, (September 2003), sets out significant changes in structures and services for children and young people. It affirms that services 'should involve children and families in putting together the picture of their needs and in designing the services to meet those needs.' (p72, 5.16). *Every Child Matters: Next Steps* (March 2004) sets out the Government's vision for transforming children's services, including more opportunities for children and young people to get involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of policies and services. This includes establishing Children's Trusts, which bring together a range of local services for children and young people. More information on how pathfinders were set up is at: [www.dfes.gov.uk/childrenstrusts](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/childrenstrusts)

This follows the appointment of a Minister for Children, Young People and Families (June 2003) and the creation of the Children, Young People and Families directorate in the DfES (December 2003). The 'Change for Children' programme aims to transform children's services through building local partnerships, and helping every child to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being.

**The Children Bill** (March 2004) sets out key legislative requirements towards implementing this new vision for joined up planning and services for children and young people. It also outlines the

post and powers of the new England Commissioner for Children.

[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200304/ldbills/035/2004035.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200304/ldbills/035/2004035.htm)

***Learning to Listen***, published by the Children and Young People's Unit, 2001, sets out the core principles and values underpinning children and young people's participation in the planning, delivery and evaluation of government policies and services. These principles are intended to give all government departments a solid framework on which to base their plans to increase the involvement of children and young people in policy and service design and delivery. Website: [www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/downloads/LearningtoListen2-older.pdf](http://www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/downloads/LearningtoListen2-older.pdf)

Ten government departments have produced Learning to Listen action plans on the involvement of children and young people in the policy development and delivery of their departments. These can be accessed from [www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/publications.cfm](http://www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/publications.cfm).

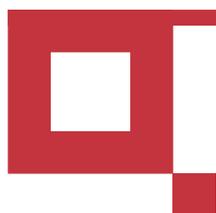
DfES commissioned The National Children's Bureau to produce *Building a Culture of Participation*, research published in November 2003 on the key practices and benefits of participatory organisations. This is available from [www.dfes.gov.uk/listeningtolearn/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/listeningtolearn/).

The DfES is taking forward work with the voluntary sector to develop a participation training programme for professionals working with children and young people and children and young people themselves. The DfES is also developing a Participation Practice Centre which will support those involving children and young people in decision making - by means of a database of good practice, networks and core standards.

Children and young people's active involvement is a key feature of the Children's Fund, which supports multi-agency preventive work with disadvantaged children aged 5 to 13 in each local authority. [www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/childrensfund/index.cfm](http://www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/childrensfund/index.cfm)

## Local democracy and neighbourhood renewal

- The Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to develop a community strategy to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of local areas, and to consult local people in doing so. [www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000022.htm](http://www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000022.htm)



- Involving local people in the regeneration of their own neighbourhoods lies at the heart of the government's neighbourhood renewal strategy. The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) (part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) is responsible for progress on neighbourhood renewal across government. [www.neighbourhood.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk).
- Guidance on community cohesion issued by the Local Government Association and other bodies stresses the need for children and young people to be 'centrally involved' in helping build and sustain strong local cohesive communities, and to be involved in public services at both strategic and delivery levels. [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/cc\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/cc_guidance.pdf)

## Health

- The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (Children's NSF) is intended to ensure that services are designed around the needs of children and young people. The framework is being developed incrementally, following consultation with a range of stakeholders including children and young people. Key areas for development include the introduction of Children's Champions, and a focus on Children's Choice – giving children, young people and families a real say in service delivery.
- Strengthening Accountability sets out guidance for NHS staff responsible for developing patient and public involvement in the planning and delivery of health services, under Section 11 of the Health and Social Care Act. [www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/07/42/92/04074292.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/07/42/92/04074292.pdf)
- New arrangements for service user involvement have been developed, including a Patient Advisory and Liaison Service and a Patients Forum in every trust. Each Patients Forum will be required to develop strategies to include young people.  
[www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/ChildrenServices/ChildrenServicesInformation/fs/en](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/ChildrenServices/ChildrenServicesInformation/fs/en)

## Education

### Sure Start

The Sure Start Unit has produced guidance for listening to younger children. Coram Family was commissioned to build on and disseminate a training package, *Listening to Young Children: A Participatory Approach*, available at: [www.coram.org.uk/listening](http://www.coram.org.uk/listening). This was complemented by the National Children Bureau leaflet *Listening as a way of Life*, which was commissioned to raise awareness on listening to babies and young children and is available at:

## Schools

*Working Together: Giving children and young people a say* guidance was published in April 2004. It amends section 176 of the Education Act 2002, and provides a basis for schools to decide how best to involve pupils in all aspects of the life of the school, including examples of good practice for them to use and adapt. It is available at [www.dfes.gov.uk/participationguidance](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/participationguidance), or from DfES publications 0845 602 2260 quoting reference 0134/2004.

Pupils may be appointed as associate members of school governing bodies (Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 348 School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003, para 11 and Schedule 6). However, associate members under 18 at the date of appointment may not vote. (Statutory Instrument 2003, No. 1377. The School Governance [Procedures] [England] Regulations 2003: Reg. 22).

Ofsted must also now ensure that inspections take account of pupils' views (Framework 2003 – Inspecting Schools (2003). Ofsted, p.1), available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/docs/3266.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/docs/3266.pdf). Student participation is also promoted under the Healthy School initiative: 'A Healthy School will consult with and actively involve pupils in the planning, implementation and evaluation of initiatives.' [www.healthy-schools.co.uk/pages/hps\\_young.html](http://www.healthy-schools.co.uk/pages/hps_young.html)

## Connexions

The involvement of young people in shaping the service is a key principle underlying the Connexions strategy, and is included in the inspection framework. Success indicators include assessing 'how actively the partnership involves young people at every stage of its operation'. Ofsted (2002), *Connexions Partnerships: a framework for inspection*, p.5. Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/docs/2309.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/docs/2309.pdf). Young people are also involved in inspection visits. See page 23 for Connexions Guidance, all available at: [www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships)

## Youth Service

One of the four elements defining good youth work is its success in enabling 'the voice of young people to be heard, including helping them to influence decision making at various levels.'

*Transforming Youth Work* (2001), DfES, p.4).

Website: [www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/youthservice.pdf](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/youthservice.pdf)

# Organisations promoting children and young people's rights and participation

## Article 12

Organisation run by and for children and young people under 18, campaigning on children's rights. Tel: 020 7278 8222. [www.article12.com](http://www.article12.com).

## British Youth Council

Independent charity and coalition of 150 organisations, run for and by young people, in order to represent their views to Government, the media and others. It organises and facilitates consultations with young people, supports local youth councils, and runs a participation training programme for young people and practitioners. Tel: 020 7422 8640. [www.byc.org.uk](http://www.byc.org.uk).

## Carnegie Young People Initiative

Promotes the involvement of young people aged 10 to 25 in public decision making. Its 'Taking the Initiative' series of reports maps activity to promote young people's involvement in public decision making in the fields of national and local government, education and health in the UK and Ireland, and overseas. Reports available on [www.carnegie-youth.org.uk/html/publications-test.htm](http://www.carnegie-youth.org.uk/html/publications-test.htm). Tel: 020 7401 5460.

## Children's Rights Alliance for England

An alliance of over 180 organisations committed to children's human rights through the fullest implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Publications available online include State of Children's Rights in England (2002), Children's Rights Bulletin (monthly). Tel: 020 7278 8222. [www.crights.org.uk/](http://www.crights.org.uk/). Also hosts U What? website, which aims to support the involvement of 12 to 18 year-olds in the development of Government policy and laws that affect them, through translating and distributing Government documents for young people, and providing guidance on political processes. [www.crights.org.uk/uwhat](http://www.crights.org.uk/uwhat). The Alliance has created a consortium to design and deliver training for professional and policy makers on the rights of children and young people under the UNCRC.



## Department for Education and Skills

The Participation Team in the Children, Young People and Families Directorate is responsible for supporting cross-government work on children and young people up to 19, and promoting active dialogue and partnership with children and young people. Tel: 020 7273 4906. The International Team is responsible for coordinating the UK's implementation of the UNCRC. Tel: 020 7925 7503. E-mail: [Neil.remsbery@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Neil.remsbery@dfes.gsi.gov.uk)

## 4Children (formerly Kids Clubs Network)

National organisation for out of school childcare, offering advice and support to out of school clubs, parents, children, childcare providers, government, local authorities, employers and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships. Tel: 020 7512 2112.

Website: [www.4children.org.uk](http://www.4children.org.uk)

## Groundwork

Aims to build sustainable communities through partnerships in deprived areas throughout the country. Its youth programme aims to help young people play a full and active part in their communities, and has a focus on participation and empowerment. Specific initiatives include Youth Works and Young Voices (with Save the Children). Tel: 0121 236 8565. [www.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.groundwork.org.uk).

## Local Government Association

Co-publisher of *Hear by Right*. Also organises annual Local Democracy Week in September/October each year. Contact LGA Information Centre on 020 7664 3131. [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk).

## National Children's Bureau

Aims to promote the interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives. Promoting participation and young citizenship is a major theme of its work. Young NCB is a free membership network for children and young people involved in NCB projects. Tel: 020 7843 6099. [www.ncb.org.uk/](http://www.ncb.org.uk/)

## National Council for Voluntary Youth Services

The independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England, NCVYS provides support, information and guidance to the voluntary youth sector on the development of quality youth participation practices. Tel: 020 7422 8630. [www.ncvys.org.uk/](http://www.ncvys.org.uk/)

## The National Youth Agency

Works to advance youth work to promote young people's personal and social development and their voice, influence and place in society. Tel: 0116 285 3700. [www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk) and [www.youthinformation.com](http://www.youthinformation.com)

## Save the Children

International children's charity with focus on children's rights. Tel: 020 7703 5400. [www.scfuk.org.uk](http://www.scfuk.org.uk). Website for young people to learn about rights: [www.scfuk.org.uk/rightonline/index.html](http://www.scfuk.org.uk/rightonline/index.html)

## Schools Councils UK

Works with pupils, teachers and local authorities to develop and support schools councils in primary, secondary and special schools. Tel: 020 8349 2459. [www.schoolcouncils.org/](http://www.schoolcouncils.org/).

## The Children's Society

Works with marginalised children and young people, focusing on tackling the root causes of the problems they face. Tel: 0845 300 1128. [www.the-childrens-society.org.uk](http://www.the-childrens-society.org.uk).

## United Kingdom Youth Parliament

Aims to provide children and young people of the UK, aged between 11 and 18, with a representative national voice listened to by Government, political parties and service providers. Contact Kate Parish, tel. 01252 844241. [www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk](http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk).

# Resources

## Identifying appropriate approaches

A simple overview of various approaches and their relative strengths and weakness is given in the companion briefing, *Involving Children and Young People – an introduction* (2003), DfES/NYA.

**Cohen, J. and Emanuel, J.** (1998), *Positive participation involving young people in health-related work: a planning and training resource*. Health Education Authority (now Health

Development Agency). Tel: 020 222 5300. Available at [www.had-online.org.uk/documents/positive\\_participation.pdf](http://www.had-online.org.uk/documents/positive_participation.pdf).

Practical guide covering getting started, key practice issues, and strengths and weakness of different methods. It also outlines different activities which can be used for planning, learning and training purposes.

**Combe, V.** (2002). *Up for it: Getting young people involved in local government*.

The National Youth Agency, £12.95.

Report of research project focusing on young people aged 10 to 25, which aims to provide local authorities with a practical understanding of the different stages in running successful youth involvement programmes. These stages are creating the right environment, planning your environment, doing and follow-up. The report identifies challenges and possible solutions for each stage. Summary available on [www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/government/632.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/government/632.asp).

**Craig, G.** (2000). *What works in community development with young people*. Barnardo's,

£10.00. Considers different forms of community development involving children and young

people, provides advice about how research and evaluation should be conducted and draws

conclusions about what helps and what hinders community development. Summary available at

[www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/researchpublications/documents/wwcomdev.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/researchpublications/documents/wwcomdev.pdf)

Full report available from Barnardo's on 020 8550 8822,

e-mail: [dorothy.howes@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:dorothy.howes@barnardos.org.uk).

### **IDeA Knowledge**

Includes best practice toolkits on range of topics including education.

[www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk](http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk).

**Neary, S.** (2001), *Making it real: young people in democratic structures*. Local Government

Information Unit, £5.00. Available from Central Books on 020 8986 5488.

Guide intended to improve adults' understanding of what they can do to engage and involve

young people. It helps adults think through the implications of trying to set up initiatives which

involve them in working together with young people, highlighting the importance of preparatory

work to enable young people to participate confidently in forums and meetings.

**Mumby, C.** (2001), *Building User Involvement: a step by step guide to involving users in youth*

*information, advice, counselling and support services*. Youth Access, £12.00. Tel: 020 8772 9900. Offers detailed guidance, including examination of the uses of different approaches and their advantages and disadvantages. Approaches considered include questionnaires, computers, interviews, focus groups, peer research, participatory evaluation and committees and planning groups. Also identifies constraints and difficulties, formal structures underpinning involvement, and provides case studies of examples of involvement.

*Participation works! 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st century* (2000). New Economics Foundation, £12.00. Tel: 020 7377 5696. Word version available at [www.neweconomics.org/uploadstore/pubs/doc\\_1910200062310\\_PWA4.doc](http://www.neweconomics.org/uploadstore/pubs/doc_1910200062310_PWA4.doc)  
Handbook on techniques for community participation. Each entry contains a definition and description, details of resources needed, and a case study. Techniques covered include citizens' juries, future search, guided visualisation, participatory appraisal, forum theatre and planning for real. It also gives advice on how to choose the most appropriate technique.

**Partnerships Online:** [www.partnerships.org.uk](http://www.partnerships.org.uk)

Range of information on partnership and participation (but with no specific focus on young people), including A-Z of effective participation at [www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/AZpartic.html](http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/AZpartic.html).

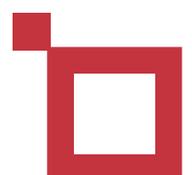
**Renewal.net:** Online guide to what works in neighbourhood renewal. Documents on the site include how to guides, case studies and project summaries and much more.

Website: [www.renewal.net](http://www.renewal.net)

## Consulting children and young people

**Fajerman, L.** (2001) *Children are service users too: a guide for consulting children and young people*. Save the Children publications, £3.95. Available from Plymbridge Distributors on 01752 202 301 or e-mail [orders@plymbridge.com](mailto:orders@plymbridge.com).

Practical guide for organisations seeking to draw up a strategy for consulting children and young people. It includes checklists to help guide those who are less familiar with consulting children and young people through the process, and provides a set of activities differentiated by age, for use with children from two upwards.



**Fajerman, L., Jarrett, M., and Sutton, F. (2000),** *Children as Partners in Planning: A training resource to support consultation with children.* Save the Children, £15. Plymbridge Distributors as above.

Intended for all childcare workers and professionals associated with Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships who are working to fulfill DfES guidance on consulting children on local childcare plans. It includes an explanation of what consulting children involves, three training programmes with photocopiable resources and handouts; case studies, and activities to use with children.

**Madden, S. (2001),** *Re:action consultation toolkit: a practical toolkit for consulting with children and young people on policy issues.* Save the Children Scotland Programme, £20.00. Tel: 0131 527 8200.

Produced as part of the Scottish Executive's Action Programme for Youth, this practical guide is organised in ten main sections. They cover why consult, the principles of participation, ways of including people, planning and preparing for a consultation, the main approaches and methods of consulting, techniques and tools, methods of recording, transferring ideas and information, and suggestions for good practice.

**Marchant, G. R. (2001),** *Two-Way Street: training video and handbook about communicating with disabled children and young people.* NSPCC, training pack £55.00, handbook only £9.50. Tel: 0116 234 7223. JRF summary available at [www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/741.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/741.asp).

Pack developed in consultation with disabled children and young people and designed to improve professional practice in communicating and consulting.

**Miller, J. (1996),** *Never too Young: how young children can take responsibility and make decisions.* See top ten.

**Morris, J. (2002),** *A Lot to Say*, Scope, free. Tel: 0207 619 7341; email: [information@scope.org.uk](mailto:information@scope.org.uk).

Guide for practitioners, including personal advisers, who are responsible for assessing the needs and seeking the views of young people who have communication impairments.

**Morris, J. (1998),** *Don't Leave us Out: involving disabled children and young people with*

*communication impairments*. YPS for JRF, £6.50. Tel: 01904 431213.

Report on research with young disabled people, which covers the practicalities such as gaining consent, planning visits, using facilitators, and being with the young people.

**Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation:** national charity specialising in community participation, training and development, particularly through the 'Planning for Real' processes of community consultation. [www.nifonline.org.uk](http://www.nifonline.org.uk).

**Rural Media Company:** independent production house specialising in rural issues, young people and those who are marginalised or isolated, committed to close working partnerships with local community groups. Tel: 01432 344039.

E-mail: [contact@ruralmedia.co.uk](mailto:contact@ruralmedia.co.uk). [www.ruralmedia.co.uk](http://www.ruralmedia.co.uk).

**Shepherd, C. and Treseder, P. (2002),** *Participation – spice it up!* See top ten.

**Treseder, P. (1997),** *Empowering children and young people*. See top ten.

**Viewpoint Interactive:** interactive computer-based package for consulting children and young people, which aims to provide them with an environment for consultation that they find interesting and easy to use. Can be used with young children and young people with limited basic skills. Contact John Dotchin on 01422 825 862. E-mail: [services@vptorg.co.uk](mailto:services@vptorg.co.uk). [www.viewpoint-organisation.co.uk](http://www.viewpoint-organisation.co.uk).

**Youth on Youth video company:** develops professionally supported video projects, including training, giving young people a chance to present their views to decision-makers. Tel 020 7254 1668. [www.youthonyouth.org](http://www.youthonyouth.org)

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## Practice initiatives: peer research, inspection, review and evaluation

*Ask Us!* (2001 and 2003). The Children's Society. See top ten.

**Browning, S. (2003).** *Engaging Young People in Evaluation and Consultation*. New

Opportunities Fund. Tel: 0845 0000121. Summary and full report available at [www.nof.org.uk/default.aspx?tc=345&tct=1&fc=&fct=30](http://www.nof.org.uk/default.aspx?tc=345&tct=1&fc=&fct=30)

Review of issues and best practice in engaging young people in evaluation.

**Campbell, R. and Berry, H. (2001), *Action research toolkit*.** Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership, £15.00. Tel: 0131 255 7388.

Toolkit produced to help workers and organisations using action research – a developmental process with workers and young people jointly contributing to resolving issues and concerns. It outlines basic principles of action research, with good practice tips and practical tools to support exploratory work with young people.

**Children's Rights Officers and Advocates and the Department of Health (2000). *Total Respect Training Pack* (2001).** Tel: 020 8748 7413. More information from [www.croa.org.uk/totalrespect.htm](http://www.croa.org.uk/totalrespect.htm)

Training pack promoting the participation of looked after children and young people.

**Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2001). *Listening To Young Children – The Mosaic approach*.** National Children's Bureau, £11.95.

Looks at how young children's views and experiences can become the focus for reviewing services. The Mosaic approach is a multi-method approach in which children's own photographs, tours and maps can be joined to talking and observing to gain a deeper understanding of children's perspectives on their early childhood settings. Available from NCB on 020 7843 6029.

**France, A. (2000), *Youth researching youth: The Triumph and Success peer research project*.** The National Youth Agency, £12.95.

Evaluation of two-year peer research project in which eight young people aged between 15 and 21 undertook research on youth transitions in Sheffield. Summary available at [www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/d30.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/d30.asp)

**Hartley-Brewer, E., (2002), *Stepping forward: working together through peer support*.** National Children's Bureau, £8.50. Tel: 020 7843 6000.

Book defines the scope of peer support and explains different approaches, from peer mentoring and peer research, to peer counselling and peer education.

**Lightfoot, J. and Sloper, P.** (2002). *Having a say in health: guidelines for involving young patients in health services development*. Available at: [www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/havsayhe.pdf](http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/havsayhe.pdf)

**Lifestories ...** (2002) Wolverhampton Health Care Trust. Tel: 01902 445 330.

Report on using lifestories as a technique for enabling socially excluded young people (aged 16+) to influence service delivery, based on the experience of a Wolverhampton Health Action Zone project. Report identifies different stages of the process and assesses the positive aspects and difficulties.

**Marchant, R. and Jones, M.** (2003). *'Getting it Right' – involving disabled children in assessment, planning and review processes*. Triangle Services Ltd, £7.00. Tel: 01273 413 141. [www.triangle-services.co.uk](http://www.triangle-services.co.uk)

**Murray, L.** (2003). *Undercover in Sheffield: a young people's sexual health service evaluation scheme – phase 1 report*. Centre for HIV and Sexual Health. Video and report – limited numbers of copies available from [liz.murray@chiv.nhs.uk](mailto:liz.murray@chiv.nhs.uk)

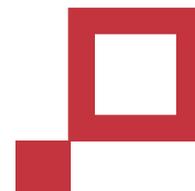
Report on Sheffield project which used 'mystery shopping' approach to involve young people in evaluating clinic-based and outreach sexual health services. It covers the recruitment and training of young people, rewarding young people and the evaluation findings, and the stages and processes of setting up the project.

*Voices and choices: young people participating in inspections* (2002). Barnardo's, £5.00.

Evaluates impact of involving care experienced young people (aged 18 to 25) in inspecting local authority children's services. Summary available on

[www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/researchpublications/documents/](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/researchpublications/documents/)

VOICES.PDF. Full report available from 01268 520224.



**Ward, L.** (1997), *Seen and Heard: involving disabled children and young people in research and development projects*. See top ten.

**Worrall, S. and Treseder, P.** (2000), *Young People as Researchers: a learning resource pack*. Save the Children. £9.95.

Pack provides materials for workers training young people in participatory research. It includes list of

identified competencies, together with exercises and background information focusing on research issues, research methods, analysis and report writing, and learner needs, support and evaluation.

*Young People's Charter of Participation* (2001). The Children's Society. £3.50.

Developed by young people and workers from the Rotherham Participation Project, this is a hands-on tool setting out principles, standards and action plans to promote the systematic participation of children and young people.

## Using websites and ICT

**Howland, L.** (2002), *Logged Off: how ICT can connect young people and politics*. Demos, £6.

Argues that use of ICT has an important role in promoting young people's involvement in democratic processes, but only if young people are offered real power over decisions which affect them. Summary at [www.demos.co.uk/uploadstore/docs/LGOF\\_es.pdf](http://www.demos.co.uk/uploadstore/docs/LGOF_es.pdf)

**Hansard Society:** has established online E-Democracy Coordinators Training Course, which aims to give participants the skills to facilitate discussions so that people can hear all sides of political issues, express their points of view and respond to others, and know that they are being listened to by decision-makers and that their opinions will be taken into account.

[www.hansard-society.org.uk/etraining.htm](http://www.hansard-society.org.uk/etraining.htm).

**Harding, M.** (2001). *Internet resource pack*, UK Youth. Tel: 020 7242 4045.

Practical guidance for involving young people in internet use and design.

### Examples of websites:

**younggov.ukonline.gov.uk:** UK Online's section for children and young people aged 11 to 18, offering information and a chance to have their say.

**www.youthconsultation.co.uk:** Peterborough Youth Consultation Project.

**www.spired.com:** Youth participation and information site for children and young people living in Oxfordshire, which aims to consult them about local issues.

**www.saysomething.org.uk:** Website for children and young people in East Riding, offering them a chance to have their say on issues affecting their lives. Includes instant polls, online surveys and discussion groups, with possible prizes as incentives.

**www.youngtransnet.org.uk:** Website set up by National Children’s Bureau to give children and young people a say on transport issues. Provides tools for conducting and analysing school travel surveys.

**www.takingitglobal.org:** Website encourages children and young people to believe in themselves and their ability to make a difference in the world.

## Large scale-events

**Equal partners: organising “for youth by youth” events** (2002). United Nations, £13.50. Tel: 0870 600 5522.

Guide to help adults assist young people in developing and running youth-focused events, which includes advice on where to find young people, how to involve them effectively in organising events, and how to keep them motivated.

**Participation in Practice** (see top ten) includes a chapter on organising a young carers’ festival.

**Young Persons Citizens’ Jury** (2003). Leicestershire Rural Partnership. Tel: 0116 265 7020 or download on [www.oakleaves.org.uk/text/ypcj%20final%20full%20report2%20web%20version.doc](http://www.oakleaves.org.uk/text/ypcj%20final%20full%20report2%20web%20version.doc).

Report of citizens’ jury on rural services, which took place in 2002, involving 14 young people aged 14 to 18 as jurors. Appendices to the report (pp. 58–65) cover the jury process, timetable, and an information sheet setting out the role of jurors, organisers, observers, witnesses and facilitator.

## Advisory groups, networks, parallel structures and committee membership

### NCVO information sheets

**Underage:** the legal position of young people on boards. Gives information on the legal position of young people under 18 on boards in specific types of organisations.

[www.askncvo.org.uk/Asp/search/docViewer.aspx?searchText=underage&search=1&siteID=2&siteID=15&documentID=789](http://www.askncvo.org.uk/Asp/search/docViewer.aspx?searchText=underage&search=1&siteID=2&siteID=15&documentID=789).

**Supporting young adult board members**

Advice to boards of management on how they can recruit and keep board members aged 18 to

25. [www.askncvo.org.uk/Asp/Search/docViewer.aspx?siteID=2&SID=15&documentID=788&catID=11](http://www.askncvo.org.uk/Asp/Search/docViewer.aspx?siteID=2&SID=15&documentID=788&catID=11)

**Akpeki, T.** (2001). *Guide to board development: involving young people*. National Council for Voluntary Organisations, £7.50. Tel: 01536 399016

Offers practical advice for voluntary organisations on involving young people in decision-making within an organisation.

*Ambitious ... Realities* (2002), The Children's Society.

Account of the process through which The Children's Society changed its structures to involve children and young people in its planning and decision-making processes.

**Michel, E. and Hart, D.** (2002), *Involving young people in the recruitment of staff, volunteers and mentors*. National Children's Bureau, £12.50.

Training pack includes information to help organisations develop policy, procedures and structures, and training materials for a two-day accredited course to give young people the skills to participate effectively.

**Office of Children's Rights Commissioner for London**, *Advisory Board Handbook*. Available from CRAE on 020 7278 8222.

Booklet sets out reasons for setting up children and young people's advisory boards, how to go about setting them up and working with advisory boards. Includes poster developed by advisory board members for children and young people thinking about joining such boards.

### **Involving young people in Connexions**

Range of publications giving guidance on involving young people in the design, delivery and development of Connexions are available on its website. These include:

[For partnerships and senior managers:](#)

*Measuring the Impact of the Active Involvement of Young People in Connexions*.

[www.connexions.gov.uk/publications](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications)

Promotes *Hear by Right: standards for the active involvement of children and young people* as a key mapping and planning tool for effective strategic development; available from:

[sales@nya.org.uk](mailto:sales@nya.org.uk)



*The Active Involvement of Young People in the Connexions Service: a guide for managers.*

[www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/1651\\_Managers\\_guide\\_SLATS.pdf](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/1651_Managers_guide_SLATS.pdf)

*Aide-memoire on Developing a Strategy for the Active Involvement of Young People in*

*Connexions.* [www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/iypaidememoire%20.doc](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/iypaidememoire%20.doc)

*Connexions Youth Charter: Guidance for Connexions Partnerships.* [www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/Youth\\_Charter2.pdf](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/Youth_Charter2.pdf)

[publications/uploads/cp/Youth\\_Charter2.pdf](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/Youth_Charter2.pdf)

*Guidance on involving young people in the governance of Connexions as decision-makers.*

[www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/CNX\\_Good\\_Practice.pdf](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/CNX_Good_Practice.pdf)

*Involving Hard to Reach Young People in the Connexions Service: guidance for practitioners*

*and Connexions Partnerships.* [www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships/publications/connexpubs/](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships/publications/connexpubs/index.cfm?Fuseaction=DocumentDetails&DocumentID=279)

[index.cfm?Fuseaction=DocumentDetails&DocumentID=279](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships/publications/connexpubs/index.cfm?Fuseaction=DocumentDetails&DocumentID=279)

[For practitioners and young people:](#)

*The Active Involvement of Young People in the Connexions Service: a guide for practitioners*

*and young people.* [www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/1651\\_Practitionersguide.pdf](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/1651_Practitionersguide.pdf).

*Connexions Youth Charter: guidance for practitioners and young people.*

[www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/Youth\\_Charter1.pdf](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/Youth_Charter1.pdf).

## Safe and sound involvement

The Children's Legal Centre offers a free and confidential legal advice and information service covering all aspects of law and policy affecting children and young people. The service is open to children, young people and anyone with concerns about them. Advice line is open Monday to Friday 10:00-12:30 and 14:00-16:30. Tel: 01206 873820; e-mail: [clc@essex.ac.uk](mailto:clc@essex.ac.uk). [www2.essex.ac.uk/clc/](http://www2.essex.ac.uk/clc/).

### General safety issues

A range of publications on educational visits can be accessed at

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/healthandsafety/visits](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/healthandsafety/visits).

Sample forms are also available on the DfES Standards Site at

[www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport/howdo/safekeeping/safe\\_forms/forms23\\_33pdfs/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/studysupport/howdo/safekeeping/safe_forms/forms23_33pdfs/)

#N400080. Although related specifically to study support, they can be adapted for other purposes, and include risk assessment, checklists, evaluation and parental consent forms for off-site visits, and model health and safety policy. Sample forms are also available in Keeping Safe (see top ten).

*What To Do If You're Worried A Child is Being Abused* – government departments have come together to issue a single set of guidance for all those whose work brings them into contact with children, plus a summary providing easily accessible, step-by-step action points. Accompanying training resource is planned. Contact Department of Health Public Enquiries line on 020 7210 4850 or download from [www.doh.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren/index.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren/index.htm).

*Keeping it Safe* (see top ten) includes detailed information on child protection policies and procedures.

### **Internet safety**

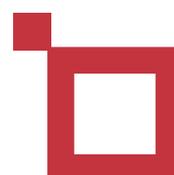
International charity Childnet has produced a range of resources to promote children's safe use of the internet. They include Kidsmart practical internet safety advice website for schools, Chatdancer website for young people, and a range of resource materials. [www.childnet-int.org/safety/index.html](http://www.childnet-int.org/safety/index.html)

National Grid for Learning includes website providing practical information and advice for schools on how to use the technologies safely. [safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools](http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools). Specific initiatives include Internet Proficiency Scheme for Key Stage 2 pupils. Site also provides examples of good practice, including internet use policy and image consent forms. [safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools/index.php3?S=5](http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk/schools/index.php3?S=5)

### **Rewards**

*Encouraging and Recognising Young People's Active Involvement in Connexions* (2002).  
Connexions Service National Unit.

Guide intended to encourage Connexions Partnerships to develop an incentive and rewards policy. Includes checklist on key elements of a policy, different kinds of incentives and rewards, and information on the legal and tax implications.



[www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/Encouraging%20and%20Recognising%20Young%20People's%20Active%20Involvement%20in%20Connexions.doc](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/publications/uploads/cp/Encouraging%20and%20Recognising%20Young%20People's%20Active%20Involvement%20in%20Connexions.doc)

## Accreditation

Network for Accrediting Young People's Achievement (2003), *National Framework of Awards in Non-Formal Educational Settings*. The NYA, single copies free, on 0116 285 3709. Gives an overview of the different forms of accreditation for young people's informal learning, including participation activity.

Youth Achievement Awards for young people aged 14 to 20 plus. Contact UK Youth on 020 7242 7774. [www.ukyouth.org/what\\_we\\_do/programmes\\_services/qualifications.htm](http://www.ukyouth.org/what_we_do/programmes_services/qualifications.htm)

Millennium Volunteers: can be used to recognise young people's involvement in the design and delivery of Connexions or other participation initiatives. MV offers recognition for young people following 100 and 200 hours' involvement. For information on local MV projects or developing links into MV contact 0800 085 1624.

[mvonline.gov.uk](http://mvonline.gov.uk).

Open College Network. Tel: 01332 591071. [www.nocn.org.uk](http://www.nocn.org.uk)

Offers a wide range of accreditation, including accreditation for activities such as peer research.

The National Youth Agency,  
17–23 Albion Street, Leicester LE1 6GD.  
Tel: 0116 285 3700. Fax: 0116 285 3777.  
E-mail: [nya@nya.org.uk](mailto:nya@nya.org.uk)  
Website: [www.nya.org.uk](http://www.nya.org.uk)

This guidance has been produced by The National Youth Agency  
for the Department for Education and Skills

This guidance is available from: [www.dfes.gov.uk/listeningtolearn](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/listeningtolearn)

August 2003  
(Revised June 2004)



This booklet and DVD package has been created by members of the Participation Workers Network for England (PWNE) as an introduction to ‘participation work’.

**It is aimed at all those who wish to improve the way they involve children & young people - not just ‘Participation Workers’.**

It draws on the ideas and experiences of children & young people and adult participation workers from all over England.

“**they help you get respect**”

- describes **what** participation work involves.
- explains **why** it is so valuable to children & young people.
- gives **key tips** for effective practice.
- provides details of the **PWNE** - set up to help all adult workers get the support they need.

On the DVD children and young people answer the following questions:

- **What makes a good Participation Worker?**
- **Why involve us?**
- **Why is it important to listen to the views of Children and Young People?**
- **What do you like about having a say in the group you're involved in?**
- **How we can make a difference?**

# What is Participation Work?

“Participation Workers help you put your voice across”

Participation Work is all about helping children & young people to be more **influential** and to have more say over matters that affect them.

**Effective participation means that their voices lead to change.**

There are a lot of different names used to describe participation, but the main thing is that practice is underpinned by a strong commitment to a **child’s right to be heard.**

Members of the PWNE find the following definitions useful:

#### **Participation**

the process of involving children and young people in decision making at increasing levels of control and autonomy.

#### **Empowerment**

the outcome of this participation process in terms of children and young people’s increased power and influence.

#### **Involvement**

the overall term for children and young people being included in the decision making process at any level.

#### **Consultation**

a process which requires the commitment to take on board young people’s views and present detailed information back to them. (Treseder, 1997, Empowering Children and Young People: Involvement in Decision Making)

**It’s not your job title that’s important - its how effective you are at helping children and young people make things happen!**

# Why is Participation Work important?

**“if you listen to people,  
you know what they want”**

Children & young people have strong opinions, clear views and lots of skills. But, they may struggle to make their voices heard, and adults and organisations need to improve the ways that they listen.

**It is a basic human right to be heard**

For further information go to [www.crae.org.uk](http://www.crae.org.uk)

**Benefits to children & young people**

e.g. learning new skills, building self-confidence, feeling more valued and influential

**Benefits to the wider community**

e.g. more respect for children and young people, better community relations, more trust between generations.

**Benefits to services**

e.g. more effective services for children and young people, helping organisations to be innovative, inclusive and responsive.

More and more organisations that have an impact on children & young people's lives are trying to involve them in decision making.

Participation Workers help this to happen by bridging the gap between children & young people, and decision makers. Without them, the voices of many children and young people would go unheard.

**Effective participation produces all sorts of positive outcomes, and benefits children and young people, services and the wider community.**

# What does participation involve?

**“without one, where would you get..?”**

Helping children & young people to have a voice can be challenging and demanding – and hugely rewarding.

There are certain skills, values and personal qualities that are very important. Participation Workers can work on a variety of activities, in extremely different settings, and with a huge range of children & young people.

## **In the DVD, children and young people describe 'What Makes a Good Participation Worker?'**

**“Creative and inspirational”**

**“open to all opinions”**

**“friendly and care about what they're talking about”**

**“dead good personality”**

**“patient”**

**“sense of humour”**

**“can take criticism”**

**“follows things through as promised”**

**“understands young people”**

**“willing to listen and learn”**

## Members of the PWNE have drawn up these lists to help those interested in Participation Work.

### Skills

- Group facilitation
- Able to adapt learning styles and communication methods to suit different children and young people
- Negotiation skills
- Problem solving
- Knowledgeable about children and young people's rights
- Networking skills
- Research and analysis
- Knowledgeable about decision-making processes and structures
- Recognises and understands how power is used

Being an effective Participation Worker requires hard work and commitment. You have to be open to new ideas and always willing to improve your skills. But, the results are worth it!

### Essential Qualities:

- Commitment to children's rights
- Thinking strategically
- Building respect and credibility with colleagues
- Positive and enthusiastic
- Patient and resilient
- Realistic
- Assertive

### Tasks

- Lots of travelling!
- Attending meetings
- Preparing and delivering training
- Supporting young people to be involved in projects
- Planning and delivering activities with young people and adults
- Project development & planning
- Administration & monitoring
- Recruitment and staff management
- Reading, research & networking
- Report writing
- Accommodating national standards, insurance, and health and safety issues
- Working evenings and weekends, as well as office hours

# Who does participation work?

**“you’ve got to be creative & inspirational”**

Participation Work attracts adults who wish to see children & young people’s views given more weight in society.

Members of the PWNE come from a wide range of professions, sectors and settings. **Not all are designated ‘Participation Workers’.**

The skills necessary to be an effective Participation Worker are now required across the workforce.

**The PWNE welcomes this growth in practice, and can support new members with advice and guidance, and local contacts.**



## **Members of the PWNE include:**

Youth Development Workers  
Child & Family Support Officers  
Communities Managers  
Youth Project Leaders

Social Workers  
Children’s Rights Managers  
Architects  
Landscape Designers

“they give you loads of information”

“they help us to get things done”

“they help you get respect”

“they help young people work with organisations”

“they lead you through”

PWNE members work in all sorts of different **roles**, on **projects** with **diverse groups** of children & young people

Cambridge City Council’s **Participation Manager** makes sure that council services effectively involve children and young people.

**Colchester Mind’s Young People’s Board** advises it’s Child & Adolescent Advocacy Service, ‘The Junction’ and other projects working with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

**City Equals** is a forum of young disabled people who advocate as a group on issues that are relevant to them and other young people who may have physical and/or learning disabilities.

The **PALS officer** at Bristol Royal Hospital for Children makes sure families and patients are able to influence service change and development.

More examples can be found by becoming a member of the PWNE and looking it’s database. (see back of pack)



Housing Officers  
PALS officers  
Civil Servants  
Teenage Pregnancy Workers

**... and the list is growing!**



## Join the Participation Workers Network for England

The Participation Workers Network for England exists to provide opportunities for adults for whom participation is part of their daily work, to network, share new ideas and learn more about participation practice.

### The network offers the following:

- regular e-mail updates.
- opportunities to share achievements and frustrations via the website and at events.
- information and contacts from emerging regional networks that are supported by the PWNE.
- a chance to take part in dialogue with Government Departments and the Children's Commissioner.
- opportunities to attend regional and national networking events.

Through the PWNE you can access more information and resources about how to actually carry out Participation Work.

To join the the PWNE go to [www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/cypi/participation\\_workers](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/cypi/participation_workers)

Or call/email Abi Carter on 0845 456 1697 or [abi@carnegie-youth.org.uk](mailto:abi@carnegie-youth.org.uk)

The PWNE is run by the Carnegie Young People Initiative (CYPI) – part of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. CYPI works to increase the influence that children and young people have over decision making that affects them and supports practitioners and organisations to improve their practice in this area.

[www.carnegie-youth.org.uk](http://www.carnegie-youth.org.uk)

department for  
**education and skills**  
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

Carnegie **YPI**  
young people initiative



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