

**ENABLING PARTICIPATION  
BY YOUNG PEOPLE**

**METHOD and RESOURCE HANDBOOK**

**FOR YOUTH WORK  
PRACTITIONERS  
IN WALES**

## Handbook Overview

This handbook introduces, explains, or expands on existing knowledge with regard to participation by young people. In seeking to meet the outcomes for young people focussed upon in 'Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes' document which is about to replace the Curriculum Statement for Youth Work in Wales (July 2012) and the National Youth Service Strategy for Wales, it offers ideas and information to work with young people so that they are able to play a full part in decision making about issues which affect their lives.

Good youth work practice expects practitioners to adapt any model or methods to best meet the needs of young people so the ideas and opinions expressed in the handbook are not a prescriptive way of delivering participation but suggested approaches. Its content comes from experienced practitioners in voluntary and maintained youth services and offers a range of examples. However, the context of participation work must be a meaningful partnership between young people and adults which often requires workers to adapt any help they can find to their current situation.

The handbook aims to encourage youth workers to increase the levels of participation by young people in their everyday working practice and to assist staff from other areas which impact on young people's lives to do likewise.

This document is part of a library of Good Practice Methodology Handbooks for Youth Work in Wales. You are encouraged to delve into the other handbooks to find a plethora of practical resources and good practice theory to enhance youth work practice and deliver the best possible outcomes for young people in Wales.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Part of the personal and social development of young people is engaging and encouraging them to have some control over the world in which they live. This is what youth work refers to as participation. It is more than just taking part and includes having a role in decision making at any level which affects them. This can only be realised and achieved by young people themselves but it is supported and encouraged by youth workers and their colleagues who empower and enable young people through their work. Effective empowerment gives young people opportunities to make safe, informed, and responsible decisions on matters that affect them and for young people to contribute more effectively to day-to-day youth work practice and wider issues in society.

This Handbook supports youth work practitioners to develop active participation methods in their work with young people and offers resources which can be adapted to any participation situations in which they find themselves.

Participative work is one of the five pillars which underpin youth work practice in 'Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes', the document which, at the time of writing, July 2012, is about to replace the Curriculum Statement for Youth Work in Wales (see the Youth Work documents handbook which is in preparation). The other 4 pillars are educative, expressive, inclusive and empowering.

This Handbook focuses on making the shift from listening young people to constructing active frameworks where they are full partners in the design, planning and implementation of activities, programmes and policy decisions that impact on them and the wider community. The Youth Service Strategy for Wales (March 2007) states:

***'Participation has always been a key concept for the Youth Service and is one of the central pillars of Youth Work. This approach is supported by the Welsh Assembly Government's commitment to implementing the principles of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in all aspects of its influence and direct work with young people and the 7 Core Aims for children and young people set out in Children and Young People: Rights to Action.'***

## 2. DEFINING PARTICIPATION

There is a wide range of definitions as to what forms participation. This will start with the desire that young people should be able to 'take part' in a variety of activities and services. However, this handbook will focus on those definitions which describe how youth work interprets participation. A broad definition of it comes from the Save the Children<sup>1</sup> 'Re:action Toolkit':

***“People sharing ideas, thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, planning, prioritising and being involved in the decision making process.”***

Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes defines participation as:

***“Encouraging young people to become partners in, and share responsibility for, the opportunities, learning processes and decision-making structures which affect their own and other people's lives and environments.”***

Dr. Roger Hart, who developed a widely used conceptual model for youth participation called the “Ladder of Participation,” (1997)<sup>2</sup> defines participation as a fundamental right of citizenship.

***“Children need to be involved in meaningful projects with adults. It is unrealistic to expect them suddenly to become responsible, participating adult citizens at the age of 16, 18, or 21 without prior exposure to the skills and responsibilities involved”.***

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<sup>1</sup> Save The Children – Reaction Toolkit

<sup>2</sup> Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation 1997

Previous consultation with young people produced a leaflet titled 'Do We Meet Your Standards?'<sup>3</sup> which is set out the Participation Standards for Wales. The Standards defines Participation as:

***Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning, and reviewing any action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice***

This Handbook refers to principles and practices identified within 'Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes', 'The Ladder of Participation' and the 'Participation Standards for Wales'.

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<sup>3</sup> Do We Meet Your Standards – Participation Standards for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government 2007

### 3. PURPOSE OF PARTICIPATION

Youth Projects and Youth Services are increasingly implementing Youth Participation in their everyday work practices as an approach to develop processes such as community involvement and the development, delivery and evaluation of services which affect and impact on young people's lives. Youth Services are also involved in working with their partners from other services to help them design methods through which young people can be encouraged to make comments on, plan, design programmes and evaluate the success of those services.

With participation, Hart says, young people can learn to be responsible citizens.

***To learn these responsibilities, children need to engage in collaborative activities with other persons, including those who are older and more experienced than themselves.***

**Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes** states the purposes for youth work are:

- ⇒ to promote and actively encourage opportunities for all young people in order that they may fulfil their potential as empowered individuals and as members of groups and communities;
- ⇒ to support young people through significant changes in their lives and assist them to understand their rights and responsibilities;
- ⇒ to encourage young people to gain and develop knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values and to make constructive use of their skills, resources and time;
- ⇒ to promote opportunities and access for all young people whatever their race, gender, sexual identity, language, religion, disability, age, background or personal circumstances;
- ⇒ to challenge oppression and inequality.

All of these purposes have direct relevance to participation work.

## **4. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION**

The benefits of participation must impact positively on young people both in that they should get personal benefit from taking part and other young people should be able to share in the outcomes of what they achieve. This form of youth work intervention adds value to the lives of all young people, helping them develop lasting skills and attributes. It has a particularly positive effect on the lives of those who are most vulnerable, disadvantaged or challenged in society as it helps to build confidence, open up new experiences and offer a sense of belonging.

There will also be significant benefits for organisations and services which encourage the participation and for the communities in which the young people live, learn, work and play.

For young people, participation should be educational and enjoyable; fulfilling and fun; create positive opportunities; and encourage the development of skills. It also promotes the self-esteem and confidence of young people.

For communities, youth participation is about adults and young people working together, building community spirit and playing an active role in the development of their communities all of which help to eradicate negative attitudes towards young people.

For society, youth participation can tackle social issues experienced by young people. It combats disadvantage, offers new skills, enhances social cohesion and creates an awareness of democratic processes.

Caerphilly's Children and Young People's Strategy, as designed by a group of young people who had previously experienced limited inclusion in services, outlines the following benefits:

### **What Children and Young People gain from Participation**

- ⇒ A feeling of being listened to, having worth and being value
- ⇒ Respect gained from having a voice and feeling influential
- ⇒ New skills, including personal understanding about how they make a difference
- ⇒ Personal development (confidence/ self-esteem/ aspirations) which also usually results in less bullying
- ⇒ Services which are more responsive to their needs and they enjoy those services more – including schools and colleges
- ⇒ Participation in wider society – everyone gets on better together
- ⇒ Greater knowledge of how to participate in wider society as they grow into adulthood
- ⇒ The ability to practise important life skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, negotiation, listening communication and giving and receiving feedback

## What Organisations gain from Participation

- ⇒ Services that meet the stated needs of children and young people
- ⇒ More responsive and effective services
- ⇒ Appropriate and accessible services with better safeguarding
- ⇒ Active involvement in contributing to the personal, social and political development of children and young people in Wales
- ⇒ Achieving UK and Welsh Government targets and expectations
- ⇒ Better quality decision making through better targeted resources and more cost effective services
- ⇒ Usually less expensive services – children and young people usually make suggestions which are easier to deliver than those designed by adults
- ⇒ Children and young people's behaviour improves and they learn better;

## What the Community gains from Participation

- ⇒ Children and young people develop a sense of citizenship with the necessary skills to exercise their rights
- ⇒ Active involvement of children and young people in their communities
- ⇒ Adults, children and young people develop positive attitudes and better relationships between older and younger community members
- ⇒ An empowering environment that raises aspirations and provides opportunities to work towards achievement
- ⇒ Suggestions about how to deal with problems in communities
- ⇒ Active involvement in solving those problems
- ⇒ Healthier children and young people e.g. from better playground equipment
- ⇒ Less bullying and vandalism, reductions in anti-social behaviour and crime

The following page is an excerpt from Torfaen's Children and Young People Strategy which includes some different ideas and presents the benefits in a different way. This is followed by a group of young people's own vivid design on how they see the benefits. Getting young people to do this as part of any participatory activity often help to reinforce the success of what they have done and what it means to them.

***"I thought participation was about just being there. I know now it's about taking part, getting involved. Having more fun!"  
J Phillips (18)***

## BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION<sup>4</sup>

<b>FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>FOR SERVICES</b>	<b>FOR ORGANISATIONS</b>
<p>Empowering; children and young people can feel more confident to express their views in all aspects of their life.</p> <p>Encouragement; children and young people are able to develop their own thoughts and acquire new skills.</p> <p>Ownership; children and young people develop a sense of ownership in projects targeted toward their needs.</p> <p>Knowledge; enables children and young people to gain a better understanding of the decision making processes within organisations.</p> <p>Respect; Creates a culture in which adults may not agree with children and young people's ideas but nevertheless respect their views and vice versa.</p> <p>Independence; children and young people feel more in control of their own lives and destinies.</p> <p>Problem solving – Children and Young People overcome barriers to achieve a rewarded outcome.</p>	<p>Services become better focused and are delivered to meet identified need.</p> <p>New opportunities are created which can inform service development and assessment.</p> <p>Greater credibility amongst the group of children and young people the service is directed at.</p> <p>Enables services to justify its allocation of resources and helps to prioritise or redirect investments.</p> <p>Services are able to become more proactive and creative in their approach to service design and delivery.</p>	<p>Advocates for the development of effective structures and processes to support children and young people's participation.</p> <p>Provides a motivating force for cultural change within an organisation.</p> <p>Enables an organisation to recruit more appropriately.</p> <p>Provides an opportunity to increase its cost effectiveness.</p> <p>Enables the views of children and young people to be recognised and valued.</p> <p>Enriches accountability and transparency in decision making.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Taken from Torfaen Children and Young People's Participation Strategy

**CONFIDENT  
&  
ABLE**

**NEW  
EXPERIENCES**

**MAKE  
NEW  
FRIENDS**

**LEARN  
NEW  
SKILLS**

**RESPONSIBILITY**

**HAVING A VOICE  
HAVING A CHOICE**

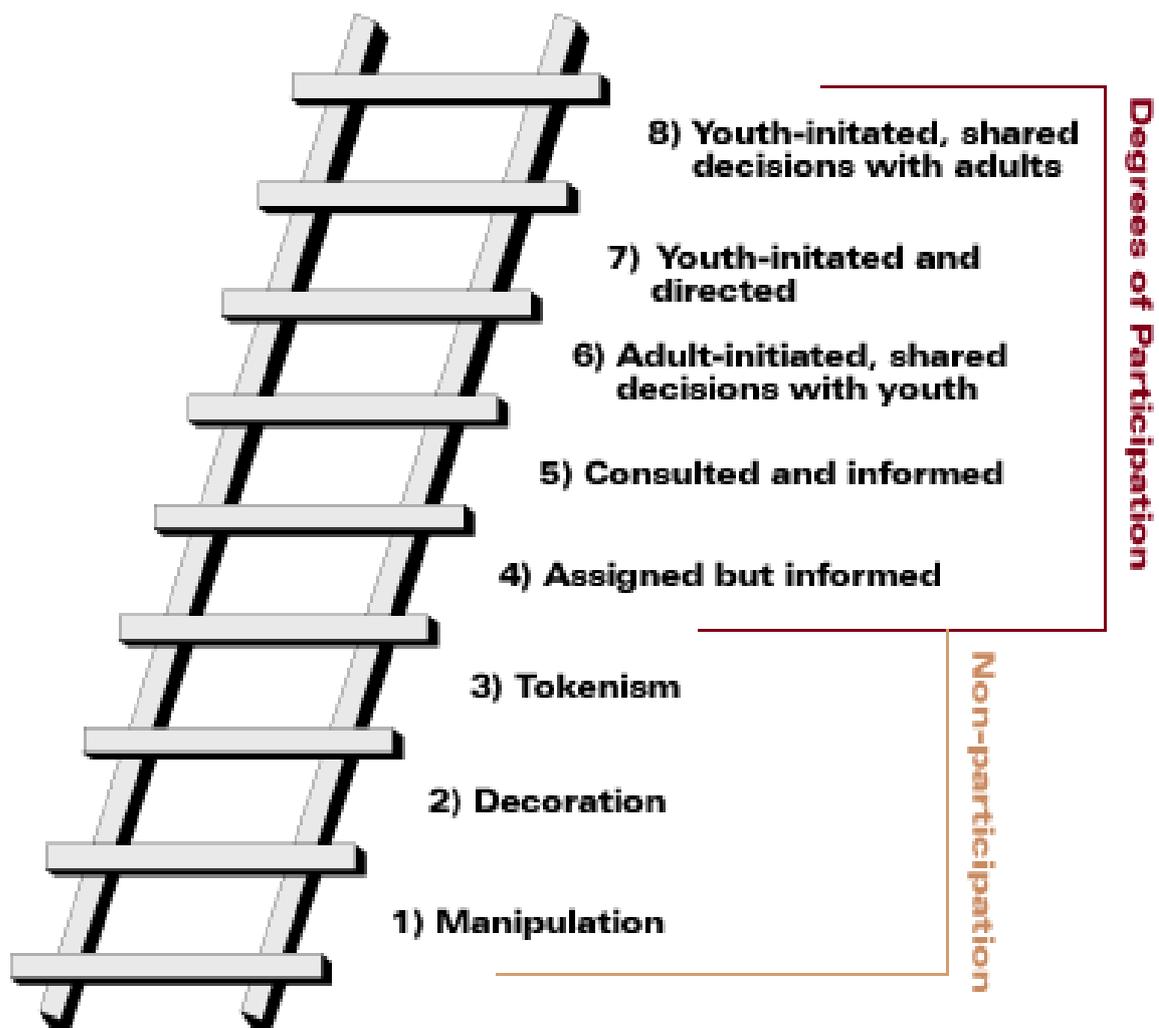
**RESPECT**



## 5. LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

The Ladder of Participation, developed by Roger Hart (1997)<sup>5</sup>, is a model that may be considered in the planning and development of any project where young people take part. The bottom three rungs describe youth involvement that is not true participation whereas the top five rungs describe true participation as defined on pages 5 and 6 of this handbook.

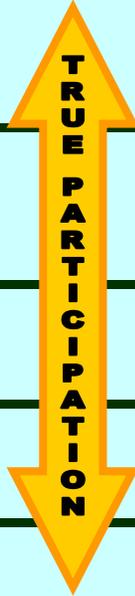
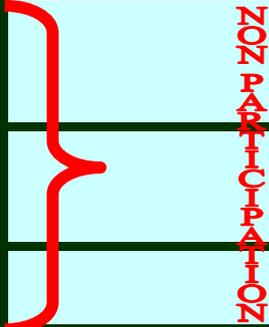
While a group that is at Rung 8 may appear to be working better than one working at Rung 4, this is not necessarily so. Working at a certain rung is a description of where a group is at any one time. If a group starts on a new project or if it takes in new members it may need to go a rung or several rungs down in order to go up again. This will ensure that it fully understands its new task or that it inducts its new members inclusively and successfully. While a group may strive to reach the top rung, the ladder is not a competition and youth workers will serve a group best when they ensure they the whole group has a full understanding of what is going on and all are able to participate, at whatever rung that may be.



<sup>5</sup> Ladder of Participation, Roger Hart (1997)

## PARTICIPATION MATRIX<sup>6</sup>

### DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION

8	YOUTH INITIATED AND SHARED DECISIONS WITH ADULTS		This is when projects or programs are initiated by young people and decision-making is shared between them and adults. These projects <b>empower</b> young people while at the same time <b>enabling</b> them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.
7	YOUTH INITIATED AND DIRECTED		This is when young people initiate and direct a project or program Adults are involved only in a <b>supportive</b> role.
6	ADULT INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH YOUTH		This is when projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision making is shared with the young people.
5	CONSULTED AND INFORMED		This is when young people give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The youth are <b>informed</b> about how their <b>input</b> will be used and how the outcomes of the <b>decisions</b> will be made by adults.
4	ASSIGNED BUT INFORMED		This is where young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being <b>involved</b> .
3	TOKENISM		This is where young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate
2	DECORATION		This is where young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people.
1	MANIPULATION		This is where adults use youth to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by young people.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation 1997

## **6. PARTICIPATION STANDARDS**

### **Extending Entitlement**

Extending Entitlement (2000)<sup>7</sup> and its subsequent Guidelines have confirmed the importance of participation as one of 7 rights of entitlement for young people. The document describes the standard young people should expect:-

- The right to be consulted, to participate in decision making and to be heard on all matters which concern them or have an impact on their lives.

### **National Occupational Standards**

The National Occupational Standards for Youth Work<sup>8</sup> includes standards directly linked to participation:

- 1.2.1 plan, prepare and facilitate group work with young people;
- 1.2.2 work with young people to manage resources for youth work activities
- 1.3.3 enable young people to represent themselves and their peer group;
- 1.4.2 enable young people to access information and to make decisions.

### **The National Standards for Young People's Participation**

The Participation Standards for Wales are a set of 'core principles' for participation activity entitled 'Having a Voice, Having a Choice'. They are quality standards that can provide a means for assessing and measuring participatory practice. They also provide guidance on good practice for children and young people's participation. There are seven Participation Standards which were developed and piloted by young people and endorsed by the Welsh Government's Children and Young People's Cabinet Sub Committee in 2006. Each Local Authority in Wales has developed and adopted a strategy in order to implement these Participation Standards.

The poster style National Standards for Young People's Participation is at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/participationstandards/?lang=en>

The next page explains what is meant by each of the standards. The following page offers a checklist, in table format, for youth workers as to whether they are meeting these standards. The following 7 pages come from the Caerphilly Participation Toolkit and describe each standard in terms of a commitment of principle to young people and the commitment of action required by any staff.

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<sup>7</sup> Extending Entitlement (2000) – Welsh Government

<sup>8</sup> National Occupational Standards for Youth Work – Lifelong Learning UK

## The Seven Standards for Participation by Young People – what we mean by them

	<b>STANDARDS</b>	<b>This means:-</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>INFORMATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information that is easy to understand for everyone</li> <li>• Adults working with you who know what is going on and are up front and clear</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>CHOICE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You choose if you want to get involved or not</li> <li>• You choose to work on things that are important to you</li> <li>• You choose what you do and how you do it</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<b>NO DISCRIMINATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people are all different but you all have the same right to have a say about the things that matter to you</li> <li>• We want everyone to feel welcome and be able to get involved if they want to be</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>RESPECT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone has a chance to have a say, your opinions are important and we will respect them</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We want you to enjoy and benefit from taking part</li> <li>• We know that you have other things to do in your lives as well!</li> <li>• Making sure that participating is a positive not a negative experience</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<b>FEEDBACK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's really important that you know what difference you have made and how your ideas have been used</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	<b>IMPROVE HOW WE WORK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We want to learn and get better at the way we work with you</li> </ul>

## Do We Meet Young People’s Participation Standards when planning activities? A Checklist for successful participation.

	STANDARDS	Do we:-	Yes	No
1	INFORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure everyone has enough information to get properly <b>involved</b>?</li> <li>• Let young people know what difference being <b>involved</b> will make?</li> <li>• <b>Inform</b> young people about who is going to <b>listen</b> and make changes?</li> </ul>		
2	CHOICE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give young people enough <b>information</b> and <b>time</b> to decide if this is something they want to do?</li> </ul>		
3	NO DISCRIMINATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Challenge</b> any discrimination?</li> <li>• Get in touch with children and young people in lots of <b>different</b> situations?</li> <li>• Get young people <b>involved</b> in things they want to do?</li> </ul>		
4	RESPECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Listen</b> to their <b>ideas</b>, <b>views</b> and <b>experiences</b>?</li> <li>• Take them seriously and treat them <b>fairly</b>?</li> <li>• Work with young people to do something about the things they <b>tell</b> us are <b>important</b>?</li> <li>• Work with young people to help <b>change</b> things for the <b>better</b>?</li> </ul>		
5	GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in <b>safe</b>, <b>fun</b>, and <b>enjoyable</b> ways?</li> <li>• Make the most of what young people know?</li> <li>• Do <b>positive</b> things that build their confidence?</li> <li>• Meet in <b>friendly</b> places that are easy for all young people to use?</li> <li>• <b>Value</b> and <b>respect</b> what young people have to offer?</li> <li>• Ensure young people receive something tangible for what they do, including accreditation?</li> </ul>		
6	FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep young people up to date with what is happening?</li> <li>• Give <b>feedback</b> as soon as possible and in ways that are easy to <b>understand</b> for everyone?</li> </ul>		
7	IMPROVE HOW WE WORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask young people what has gone well and what needs to change?</li> <li>• Make sure young people’s <b>views</b> make a <b>difference</b> to the way we plan and take decisions?</li> </ul>		

## Standard 1: It's Your Choice

<b>COMMITMENT (of principle)</b>	<b>Is this true for young people in our organisation?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have for this?</b>	
It is your say – it is up to you if you want to be involved.			
You can drop out if you want to – participation will always be voluntary			
You will be able to choose to work on things that are important to you because <b>you</b> want to, not because we want you to – e.g. school councils.			
<b>COMMITMENT (requiring action)</b>	<b>How will we achieve this?</b>	<b>What evidence will we use to know if we've achieved it?</b>	<b>Who?</b>
As many as possible shall have the choice – not just the same ones every time			
Your choice will not be stopped by lack of transport – if necessary it will be provided.			
Some prefer small groups – how groups work will be your choice			
Successful participation can be formal or informal – both types should be available			
Sometimes young people shall be actively invited to be involved not expected to volunteer			

## Standard 2: No discrimination

<b>COMMITMENT (of principle)</b>	<b>Is this true for young people in our organisation?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have for this?</b>	
We will treat people with respect, how they want to be treated and equally			
Secret ballots and young people only ballots will be used when appropriate			
Respect should be given to people's different views and needs			
<b>COMMITMENT (requiring action)</b>	<b>How will we achieve this?</b>	<b>What evidence will we use to know if we've achieved it?</b>	<b>Who?</b>
Young people in lots of different situations will be contacted so there is fair representation.			
Support will be given – e.g. personal support or childcare – so no-one is stopped from taking part			
All genders, ages, abilities and races should be able to participate			
We will ask you what support you need, offer moral support and challenge behaviour if needed			

### Standard 3: Information

<b>COMMITMENT (of principle)</b>	<b>Is this true for young people in our organisation?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have for this?</b>	
Adults working with you will inform you of your choices and only make promises that can be kept.			
Rules and routines will be made clear e.g. start times, end times, breaks etc.			
You will be given enough time to understand the information that you need.			
<b>COMMITMENT (requiring action)</b>	<b>How will we achieve this?</b>	<b>What evidence will we use to know if we've achieved it?</b>	<b>Who?</b>
You will receive information that is clear and easy to understand			
Adults who are involved will keep you informed about what is happening and how it is being done			
The following methods will be used to inform – leaflets, billboards, posters, websites, emails, texts, phone calls, letters, meetings, minutes of meetings, newsletters, newspapers, assemblies. Young people in a project will advise on which are the most appropriate to use in a given situation			

## Standard 4: Respect

<b>COMMITMENT (of principle)</b>	<b>Is this true for young people in our organisation?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have for this?</b>	
Opinions will be listened to properly and with respect – there is more than one right answer.			
Opinions will be owned by young people so that they can say what action can be taken			
Adults may give information – but young people will be respected for the choice they make			
The way adults speak and act should show respect for young people			
If requests cannot be met, an honest, truthful reason given as to why			
<b>COMMITMENT (requiring action)</b>	<b>How will we achieve this?</b>	<b>What evidence will we use to know if we've achieved it?</b>	<b>Who?</b>
Everyone will have a chance to have a say.			
Young people will be able to lead the agenda on what is important to them			
Trust will be given to young people through sharing responsibility			
Feelings will be considered by giving support to those who need it, especially in a new situation			

## Standard 5: Get something out of it

<b>COMMITMENT (of principle)</b>	<b>Is this true for young people in our organisation?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have for this?</b>	
You will be able to see change and improvements from being involved			
Rewards should be given through discussion with the young people			
<b>COMMITMENT (requiring action)</b>	<b>How will we achieve this?</b>	<b>What evidence will we use to know if we've achieved it?</b>	<b>Who?</b>
You will work in places you like, have fun, do things that you enjoy and build confidence.			
There will be rewards which could include fun, goodies, trips, vouchers, payment, certificates, awards, thank you cards, help with your family etc			
There will be positive outcomes for those taking part and for other young people e.g. changing attitudes, self achievement			
Personal support or help can be offered			

## Standard 6: Feedback

<b>COMMITMENT (of principle)</b>	<b>Is this true for young people in our organisation?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have for this?</b>	
Young people should choose their own method of feedback			
Feedback will be to groups or individuals dependent on who took part			
You will be asked about how you want feedback and how it should go to other young people			
Young people should choose how to share information with others			
Feedback should be given directly to those who took part, they should not have to search for it			
<b>COMMITMENT (requiring action)</b>	<b>How will we achieve this?</b>	<b>What evidence will we use to know if we've achieved it?</b>	<b>Who?</b>
You will be kept up to date with clear, interesting information on the progress of your work			
You will receive feedback which gives you the opportunity to ask questions to give and get more information			
Written feedback can be used as evidence of what has been done and of what you have done			
Written feedback should be in different forms e.g. spidergrams, bullet points, graphs, flow charts, tables, newsletters which should be in different colours so that it is simple and less to read			

## Standard 7: We want to improve

<b>COMMITMENT (of principle)</b>	<b>Is this true for young people in our organisation?</b>	<b>What evidence do we have for this?</b>	
Participants should be treated as equals			
From the start, expectations and boundaries should be made clear			
<b>COMMITMENT (requiring action)</b>	<b>How will we achieve this?</b>	<b>What evidence will we use to know if we've achieved it?</b>	<b>Who?</b>
Participation should be fun, comfortable and have sufficient breaks			
More effort should be made to encourage people to want to take part and maintain contact between sessions e.g. by text, phone calls, letter, email			
Adults should help out and support responsibly			
Some group work should be age specific			
More effort should be made to ensure that participation is peer led			
Try different ways of working with groups e.g. quizzes, ice breakers, supplying food and drink, games			

## 7. DEVELOPING A PARTICIPATION PROJECT

The participation of young people requires a project, organisation, or service to develop and maintain a participation culture and strategy. Each will have different levels of participation as participation often begins as a specific project designed to address particular issues such as consultation on a topic or the formation of a youth committee. This section focuses on planning and delivering a participation project which should be adapted according to the organisation and its policies and practices.

### Planning

There are a number of key steps in planning a participation project in each of which young people should be involved:

- Clarity about the aims and objectives and take into account what resources you have available.
- Clarity about the level of participation (see section on levels of participation) and how decision-making will (or can) be shared with young people.
- Realism about the extent to which change is possible.
- Consideration as to who will be invited to participate by ensuring the group is representative of current and/or potential service users,. includes young people from marginalized groups such as children looked after, black and minority ethnic young people, young people with disabilities.
- Consideration of which methods of participation best suit the aims and objectives, resources and participants. It is preferable to employ a variety of methods and to ask young people what methods should be used.
- Agreeing an ethical statement relating to consent (by young people and/or parents), confidentiality, anonymity and disclosure.
- Development of a contract of participation. Agreeing the rewards for young people who participate, including accreditation.
- Planning which staff will be used as facilitators or supporters and ensuring they have the necessary skills.
- Consideration of the practicalities including the potential obstacles to completing the project?

### Facilitating

It is important that whoever is facilitating a participation project has the necessary skills to engage young people in it and to assist the young people to complete it. For most projects this will be youth workers, trustees or

volunteers. Some may have little or no specific training in involving young people but they will have other skills, knowledge and experience to draw on.

Whoever takes on this role must recognise that their role is to facilitate not to direct in order to bring out young people's own ideas. Any views expressed should be clarified in a non-judgmental way. Facilitators will have an important role in maintaining the focus of the activity and outlining the boundaries. Staff should consider the words they use and avoid the use of jargon. This facilitation role could be taken by:-

A YOUNG PERSON – ideal if the young person has experience of participation work and the necessary skills, confidence and time to fulfil this role.

A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A VOLUNTEER – in which case it is important for the volunteer to be available, to be able to advocate and to “keep track” of the project.

A PARTICIPATION YOUTH WORKER – someone with specific training and skills in children and young people's participation. When using an external participation worker it must be ensured that the organisation's own leaders and staff are “bought in to the project”. Sometimes recruiting an external agency causes the activity to be peripheral to the functioning of the organisation or the local staff feel detached and that it doesn't concern them. It may also prevent local staff and volunteers from developing the project after the external workers are gone and hence the momentum is lost.

## Resourcing

Some Local Authorities have a Participation Officer who will have experience and skills in the participation of young people. These officers may also be aware of funding mechanisms that can be used for the work or have access to the equipment that can be used such as electronic voting systems or activities which add to the participatory experience.

Resources needed are both personal and physical and include

:

- ⇒ **Commitment** from the young people, staff, volunteers and Trustees/Managers of the service and the organisation to make time and funding available for the work
- ⇒ **Commitment** to the project to listen to and respond to the outcomes.
- ⇒ **Support and training** to learn the basics of participation
- ⇒ **Time:**
  - ❖ to plan and prepare
  - ❖ to work directly with the young people formally and informally
  - ❖ to liaise with management
  - ❖ to organise evaluation
- ⇒ **Money** – to reimburse the young people where appropriate, room hire, travel, refreshments etc. and fund appropriate facilities e.g. residential

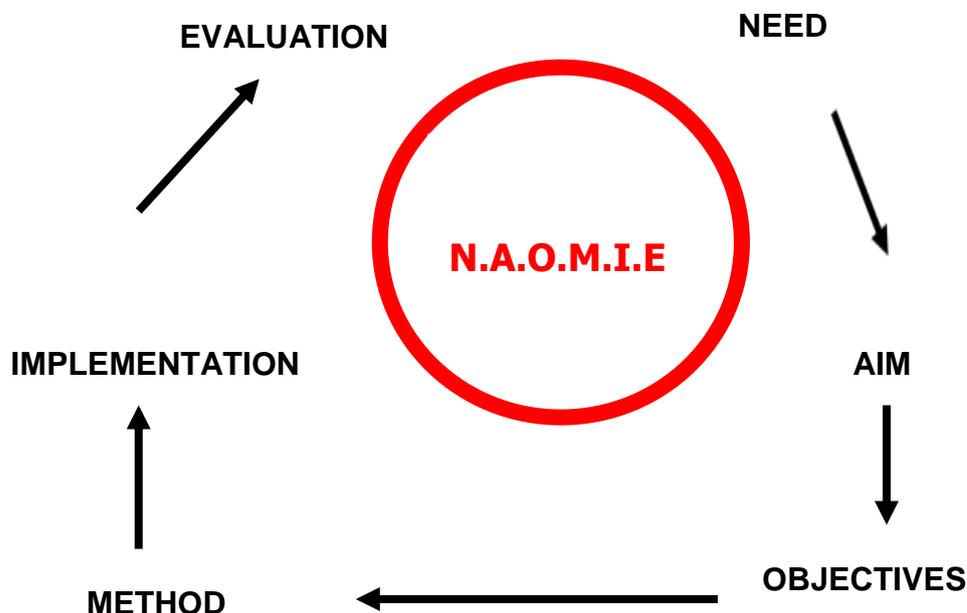
- ⇒ **Timescale** - a clear and realistic timescale must be made available to make it feasible for young people to participate and for them to be given feedback on the outcomes of their involvement
- ⇒ **Commitment to feedback** to the young people involved, ideally by management with the involvement of the facilitator
- ⇒ **Equipment** for learning games, voting technology

## Choosing the appropriate participation method

In planning a participation project it is important to consider which tools or methods to employ to fully engage with young people. These will relate to what will best fit best with the objectives of the project. For example, a group that is formed from representatives of other organisations will require a good number of ice breaking activities so the young people get to know each other. A project to consider the decoration of a youth centre will need some art materials to test out potential designs. A project to look at the development of an area of a town may want to have models of buildings or the materials to make them to put on a street plan.

Other important considerations are whether the method is easily accessible to all potential participants. This will incur time and costs which will need to be considered.

The usual process for any form of group work should be followed such as the NAOMIE loop – needs, aim, objectives, method, implementation and evaluation.



The following page offers 7 stages that projects will need to pass through for effective participation to take place. They contain questions that need to be answered or prepared during the planning phase. This is followed by relating this planning to the process loop.

## 7 stages of effective consultation

Steps	Checklist
<p><b>1. Identify purpose</b></p> <p>Be clear about what why you are consulting</p>	<p>What do you want to get out of the consultation?</p> <p>What impact on decisions will the views you collect have?</p> <p>What are the boundaries – what won't change as a result?</p>
<p><b>2. Establish roles</b></p> <p>Make sure everyone is clear about their role in the decision making process</p>	<p>How much decision making power do the children have? <i>(see the models of participation below to help you decide)</i></p> <p>How does this consultation fit into other stages of the decision making process?</p> <p>What will children get out of it?</p>
<p><b>3. Commitment</b></p> <p>Gain commitment of those involved</p>	<p>Does everyone agree why you are consulting and believe it is important to do so?</p> <p>Have decision makers agreed to consider the views gathered during consultation?</p> <p>Are decision makers willing to make changes based on the outcome of the consultation?</p>
<p><b>4. Involvement</b></p> <p>Decide who to consult</p>	<p>Who will be affected by the service you want to ask about?</p> <p>How will you ensure that the appropriate groups of people get a chance to have a say?</p> <p>How will you make sure that less vocal or articulate individuals can contribute?</p>
<p><b>5. Methodology</b></p> <p>Decide how to consult</p>	<p>How early in the process can children be involved?</p> <p>Are there any existing consultation structures you could use?</p> <p>Could children manage the process themselves or do adults need to be involved?</p> <p>What methods are most appropriate?</p> <p>What child protection and safety issues to be considered?</p>
<p><b>6. Preparation</b></p> <p>Plan the process and decide who will manage it</p>	<p>What timescale do you need to meet?</p> <p>What preparation needs to be done in advance?</p> <p>What skills are needed (e.g. facilitation, data analysis)</p> <p>How will the resources be found - think about financial, material and staff resources needed?</p> <p>What extra support is needed? (e.g. transport, expenses, peer support, supervision, safety)</p>
<p><b>7. Feedback</b></p> <p>Use the findings and feedback the results</p>	<p>Do the interpreted results reflect the views of children?</p> <p>How will the results be fed into the decision making process?</p> <p>How do you plan to feedback the outcome to the children?</p> <p>Would the information gained be useful to anyone else?</p>

## Tools for Planning Participation

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Need</b>	Determine the need for the activity – why are you planning this activity?	Lack of meaningful youth participation within the project.
<b>Aim</b>	The aim is a long term statement of intent. It gives a general direction without time limit and is not usually precise about the outcome e.g. by how much the decision making will be increased. It may be generated by the management of the organisation rather than a young person	To increase levels of young people’s decision making about the day-to-day running of the youth project.
<b>Objectives</b>	Objectives describe the stages that a project needs to go through in order to meet its aim. They will give precise actions that will have to be achieved during the process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and source resources</li> <li>• Consult with other young people on any current issues within the project</li> <li>• Consult with the Management Committee on any current issues within the project</li> <li>• Identify activities that young people in the project wish to undertake</li> </ul>
<b>Method</b>	Decide which methods are to be used in order to achieve the objectives. For example, using a video or demonstration by a worker of the activity, or young people learning by having a go themselves?	Agree an agenda and demonstrate to young people how they can participate in the day-to-day running of the project. Open discussions for getting their views and voices heard.
<b>Implementation</b>	This implementation plan, or how the activity will be delivered, will include resources, (both human and material), timing, bookings that need to be made, e.g. for a room or minibus, advertising the activity, keeping records of the work.	Flipcharts, Mindmaps, colourful pens, games and quizzes, welcoming room, safe place. Funding for bus fares, rewards, resources. Monitor the number of young people participating. Keep records of what is decided.
<b>Evaluation</b>	Make a critical analysis of what has gone well and what could be improved. The participants must be fully involved and particularly comment on whether, for them, the 7 Standards for Participation by Young People have been met	Notes of meetings, Evaluation sheets outlining what was good, what needs to be improved. Inform young people how you are going to feedback the results of any issues, decisions etc, to them.

## 8. ACTIVITIES TO ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE

The following activities can be used to get participation work with young people going and can be adapted to suit the needs of particular groups, for example those with complex communication needs.

### Mind map

Young people explore a topic and record their views and experiences visually. Ideas and thoughts can be represented in various ways, e.g. pictures, text, symbols and photos. This can be done individually or as a group and is a useful way to prompt thoughts and discussion.

Benefits:

- Views can be expressed freely and creatively using images not words.
- A stimulating and accessible way for others to understand the views being expressed.
- Visual prompts are useful for young people when they are asked about their views at a later date.

### Statements

A number of statements are written on cards. Children and young people then vote on whether they agree or disagree with each statement. This exercise can also be used for ranking different issues in order of importance.

Benefits:

- ⇒ A good way to stimulate discussion.
- ⇒ Provides concrete results.
- ⇒ Voting can be done in various ways to make the exercise fun, e.g. a room can be split into an area for each response option with children and young people moving to the area that matches their answer to each statement.

### Pop quiz

A quiz in the style of those used in magazines is devised relating to the consultation topic, i.e. for each question the child or young person is given a scenario and three options A, B or C.

Benefits:

- ⇒ A good way to start discussion as the quiz can be completed in a group or be done individually with children and young people then sharing and discussing their answers.

## **Board game**

A board game is designed to match the chosen topic. Players roll a dice to move along squares and when they land on a particular square a card is taken. Cards contain questions relating to the consultation topic (open-ended, unfinished sentences and agree/disagree statements). Prize for the first past the finish line.

Benefits:

- ⇒ Provides a natural environment for discussion.
- ⇒ Answers to questions on cards are recorded giving concrete data.

## **Making a rap**

Young people produce a simple rap talking about their views, experiences and suggestions. This can be done using prepared sentences to which people add their own word, for example;

**My name is...**

**The best thing about school is...**

**If I was in charge I would...**

Benefits:

- ⇒ Fun way to get children and young people thinking about their thoughts and opinions.
- ⇒ Effective way of recording and communicating a large collection of views.
- ⇒ Can be recorded to give young people a lasting reminder of their work.

## **Using Models**

Where work is being done to plan a room, building or village / town design, this can be helped by using models which are either provided for the young people or made by them. This requires a lot of planning, either in making the model or planning the resources which are needed to make it.

Benefits:

- ⇒ Helps those who learn and like to contribute visually
- ⇒ Gives a very clear description of what the young people decide
- ⇒ Creates better discussion as all can see exactly what each other is proposing

## **9. RECOGNISING AND ACCREDITING PARTICIPATION**

Many ways can be used to reward and accredit work by young people. The following are some of the more appropriate ones for participation work. For more accredited opportunities, please read the Accreditation Handbook.

### **Agored Cymru – Young People’s Participation**

Agored Cymru has been working with the Welsh Assembly Government over the past few years to respond to the accreditation needs of young people around participation and to recommendations from the Estyn report, ‘Having Your Say’.

Units and exemplar assessment materials were developed from Entry 3 level to Level 3, providing flexible opportunities for learners to have their participation work accredited. All of the units have been mapped to the Children and Young People’s Participation Standards for Wales. Young people who get this recognition will be speaking the same participation ‘language’ and allows for better and faster ways of working across sectors for the benefit of the young people they represent.

Agored qualifications consist of units of assessment, each with an assigned level and credit value which allow the learner to achieve at their own pace and build towards full qualifications overtime. There are hundreds of courses available ranging from babysitting to motor mechanics. The criteria of the courses are designed so that the chosen credit can be delivered in the normal youth activity setting. For a full list of qualifications available please go to their website: [www.agoredcymru.org](http://www.agoredcymru.org)

### **Children & Youth University**

The Children’s University in Wales is an exciting and varied holistic approach to education which accredits children and young people aged 5 to 19, for participating in learning activities outside school hours. The Children’s University embraces the principle of learning as a lifelong process.

Working closely with parents, schools and communities, the Children’s University aims to provide a broad framework within which each young person can reach their maximum potential in whatever areas of learning they desire.

Children’s University is the umbrella name for three different phases, namely: Kid’s College (ages 5-8), Children’s University (ages 9-13) and Youth University (ages 14-19).

## **Local Awards**

Many organisations and local authorities have designed their own award to recognise participation by young people. For more information about awards in your local area please contact your Local Authority or County Voluntary Council (CVC).

## **National Awards**

Youth Achievement Awards [www.youthcymru.org.uk](http://www.youthcymru.org.uk)

The Youth Work in Wales Excellence Awards [www.thankssam.org.uk](http://www.thankssam.org.uk)

## **Millennium Volunteers**

Millennium Volunteers is a UK wide initiative designed to promote and recognise volunteering among young people aged 16 – 25 [www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk)

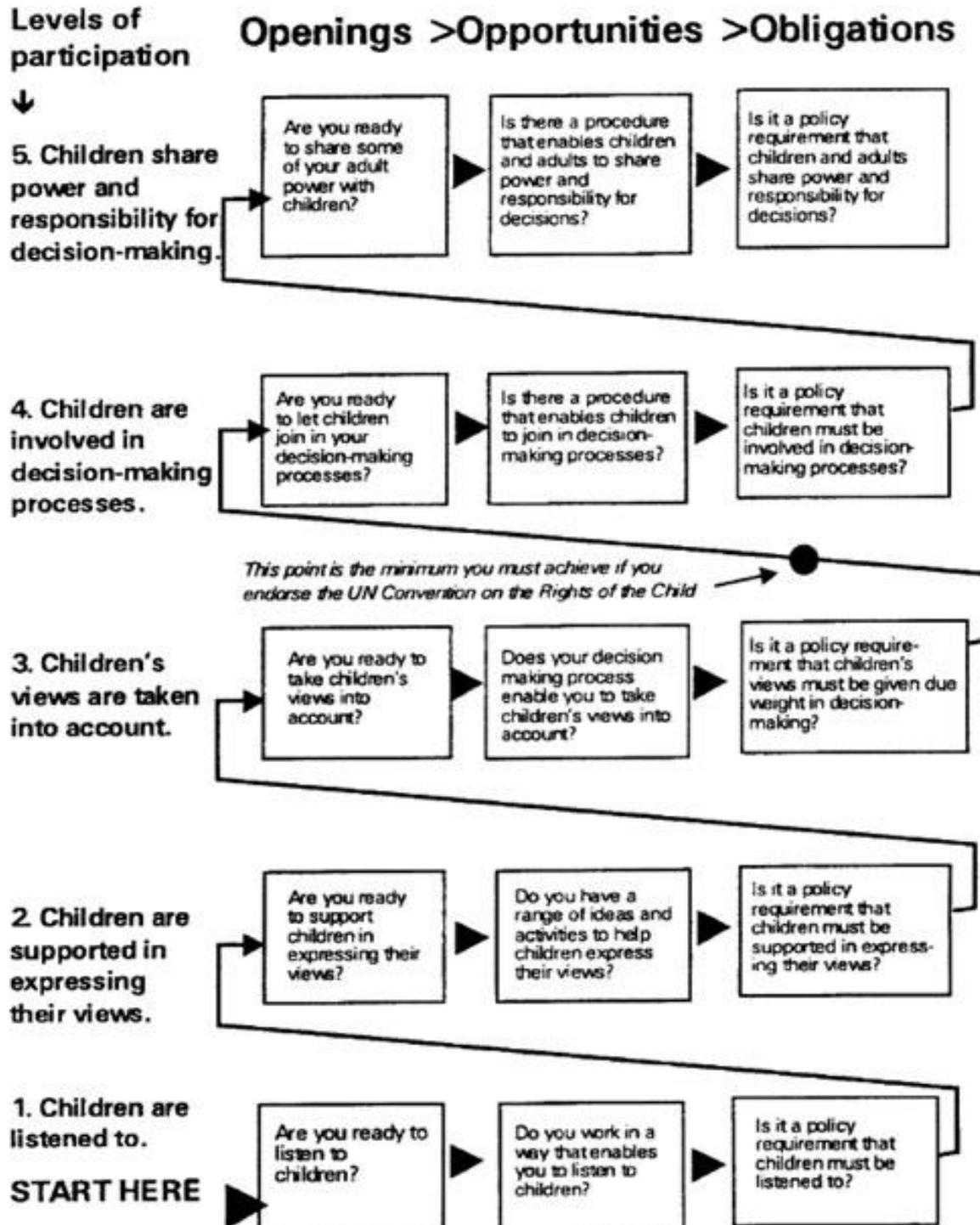
## **Do it yourself**

Have fun designing your own award to recognise participation in a youth setting. Make sure it is of good quality and shows what the young person has contributed and achieved. It could be shown to a prospective employer who may not believe what a young person has been involved in as, sometimes, the participation has been at a higher level than the employer has previously experienced or would consider possible.

These locally designed certificates can be personalised for each young person where members of the group give their views on the contribution made by each member. This increases the learning of each young person of both themselves and their appreciation of others.

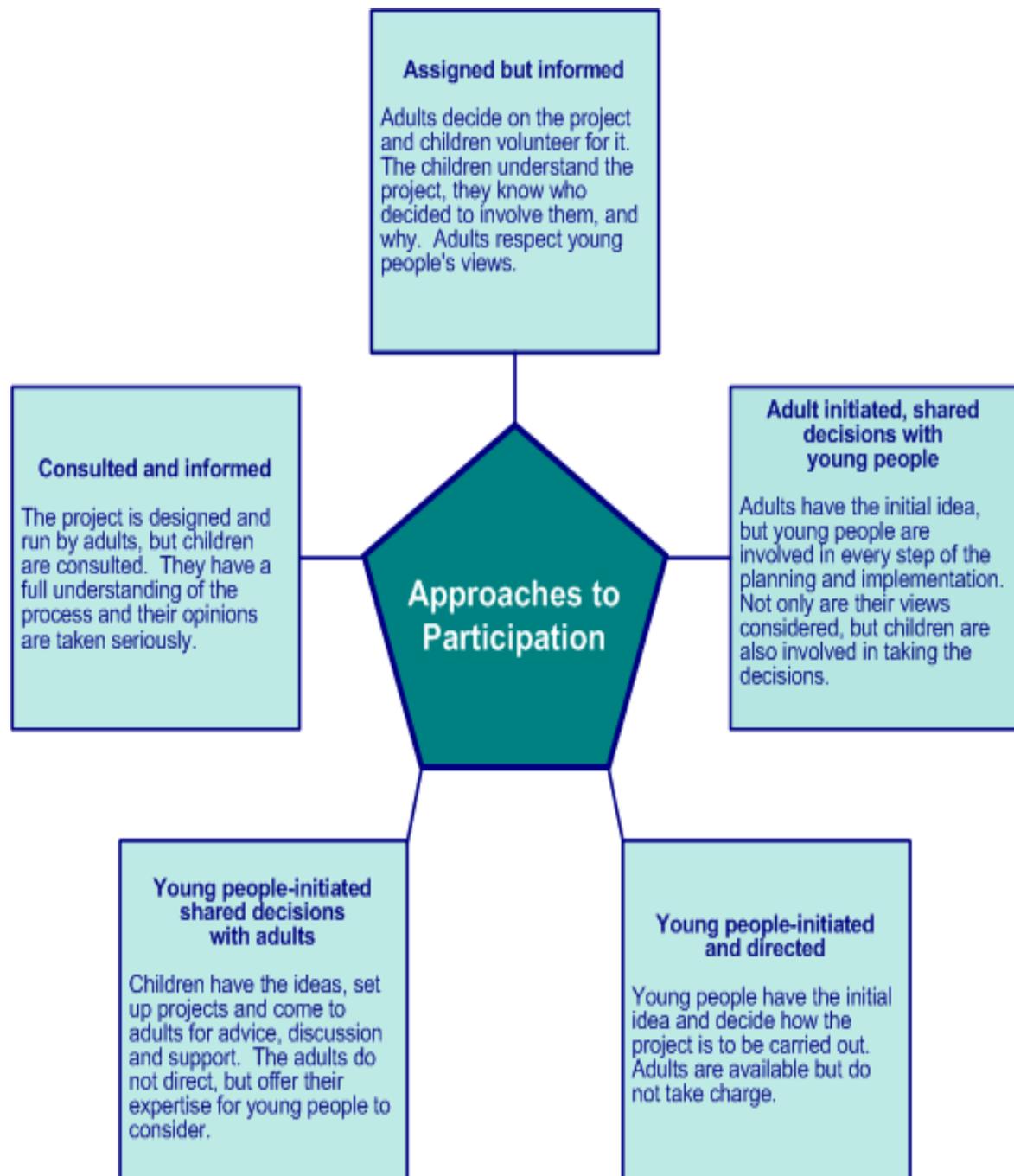
## 10. OTHER MODELS OF PARTICIPATION

Harry Shier, who mainly worked with children in playwork, developed a model of participation<sup>9</sup> which helps organisations assess where they are in attitude and approaches to participation in current work practices. It also provides examples of ways and structures in which to include young people.



<sup>9</sup> Shier, H., 2001, *Pathways to Participation: Openings, Opportunities and Obligations*, Children and Society Volume 15 (2001) pp107-111.

**Phil Treseder's** model<sup>10</sup> is similar to Hart's in that it uses the concepts of child and adult initiated participation. Treseder says that children need to be empowered to be able to participate and that organisations should assist them to do this.



<sup>10</sup> Treseder, P., 1997, *Empowering Children and Young People*, Training Manual, Save the Children Fund, London.

## **11. ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING PARTICIPATION WORK**

In addition to previous information regarding the support that is available through young people's participation officers who are based in each county of Wales there is also a wealth of advice which can be gained from other organisations. They contain examples of good practice which are constantly updated.

### **Children in Wales**

The Children in Wales website:

<http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/areasofwork/participation/index.html>

offers many resources for participation work with children and young people aged 0-25.

### **Participation Workers Network for Wales**

Children in Wales hosts the Participation Workers Network for Wales (PWNW) on behalf of the Children and Young People's Participation Consortium for Wales which is a multi-agency strategic body building capacity for the development of participation. Their website is at:

<http://www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/>

The network is a free service for supporting practitioners and organisations to promote participation through their work with children and young people. It offers a public information area which includes essential information on participation and its development in Wales. It is updated with policy news and updates from strategic bodies in Wales.

The website also has a private members' area which is free to join and holds contact details for all PWNW members. By joining members can share and search for examples of good practice from other members. The Network has recently been redesigned and redeveloped to be easier to search and easier for members to add good practice. There is a database of people involved in the network to enable practitioners to communicate with each other.

The Children and Young People's Participation Consortium for Wales, the Participation Unit and the Welsh Assembly Government's Participation Project are working together to promote the participation of children and young people (0-25) in decision-making in Wales. They also have a set of National Standards for participation which are relevant for all organisations which work with or have an impact on children and young people.

## **Pupil Voice Wales**

Pupil Voice Wales holds a considerable amount of information which considers participation in its widest sense and is not geared purely towards participation by children and young people in a school situation. This information can be found at:

<http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/grown-ups/about-us/what-is-participation/>

The website also gives information on resources, case studies and things to do.

## **Funky Dragon**

Funky Dragon is the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales and can be found on its website:

<http://www.funkydragon.org/>

It is a peer-led organisation and this dictates the work it undertakes. It has produced a guide called "Breathing Fire into Participation" which offers good practice guidelines on supporting groups of children and young people to participate. It runs events and training as well as enabling young people to make contact with and influence the thoughts and actions of people at the highest levels of government including both officers and politicians. Local Youth Councils nominate members to go onto its Grand Council.

## 12. WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

**Welsh Government ‘Children and Young People’s Rights & Entitlements’ Branch** – you can contact the Rights & Entitlements branch on 0845 0103300 (English) or 0845 0104400 (Welsh)

**The Participation Unit** based at Save the Children – 029 2039 6838

*Or through the following web-sites:*

**Children in Wales** <http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/>

**The Participation Workers’ Network for Wales:**

<http://www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/>

**Pupil Voice Wales:** [www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk)

**Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services** [www.cwvys.org.uk](http://www.cwvys.org.uk)

National Standards for Children and Young People’s Participation in Wales

Blast Off Guides - good practice guides to children and young people’s Participation

National Participation Standards Self-assessment tool

Children and Young People’s School Effectiveness leaflet

School Councils Wales Best Practice Guide (autumn 2009)  
School Councils Activity Pack (autumn 2009)

School Councils Wales DVD and Resource Pack

Thomas, N., Phillipson, J., O’Kane, C. and Davies, E., *Children and Decision Making: Toolbox and Training Pack*, International Centre for Childhood Studies, University of Wales, Swansea, United Kingdom.

Kirkbride, L., *I’ll go first, The planning and review Toolkit for use with children with disabilities*, The Children’s Society, United Kingdom.

Children’s Rights Officers and Advocates (CROA) and Department of Health, 2000, *Total Respect ensuring childrens rights and participation in care*, Training manual and Course handbook, London, United Kingdom.

## **RESEARCH:**

York Consulting for the Welsh Assembly Government, Nov. 2008, "*Children and Young People's Participation in Wales*"

Treseder, P. 1997, "*Empowering Children and Young People Training Manual: Promoting Involvement in Decision-making*". Save the Children

## **CONTACTS**

**Youth Forums** – details of the youth forums and their co-ordinators can be found on the relevant Local Authority website

**Children and Young People Co-ordinators** - details can be found on the relevant Local Authority website.

**Funky Dragon** – the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales:  
01792 450000

**Welsh Government 'Children and Young People's Rights & Entitlements' Branch** – you can contact the Rights & Entitlements branch on 0845 0103300 (English) or 0845 0104400 (Welsh)

## **PRACTICE EXAMPLES**

For concrete examples of how pupil participation can lead to more effective schools, see the case studies on the **School Effectiveness Web-site** ([www.sef.wales.org.uk](http://www.sef.wales.org.uk)) and on the Pupil Voice **Wales Web-site** ([www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk](http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk)). The latter also gives useful information about how to maintain and develop pupil participation in your school, and contains downloadable training materials.

**Funky Dragon** (the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales) –  
[www.funkydragon.org](http://www.funkydragon.org)

**Save the Children Wales for the Participation Unit and Consortium** –  
[www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/961.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/961.htm)

**Children in Wales** – [www.childreninwales.org.uk](http://www.childreninwales.org.uk)

**Welsh Government** – including information on 'Respecting Others' (anti-bullying); Healthy Schools; Appetite for Life; 14-19; Extending Entitlement; PSE etc – [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

**Clic** (National Information and Advice Service for young people in Wales 11 to 25) – [www.cliconline.co.uk](http://www.cliconline.co.uk)