

HSCP VOICE OF THE CHILD PARTICIPATION TOOLKIT

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<https://herefordshiresafeguardingboards.org.uk/herefordshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/professionals/voice-of-the-child-participation-toolkit/>



The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) is a statutory body established under the new arrangements of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 so that all agencies work together to safeguard children. The HSCP is led by three Safeguarding Partners: Herefordshire Council, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group and West Mercia Police.



All quotations (unless referenced) are the anonymous contributions of the young people of Herefordshire. Though we don't know their names, their voice matters and we thank them.



LOOK OUT FOR THEIR WORDS AT THE
BOTTOM OF EACH PAGE

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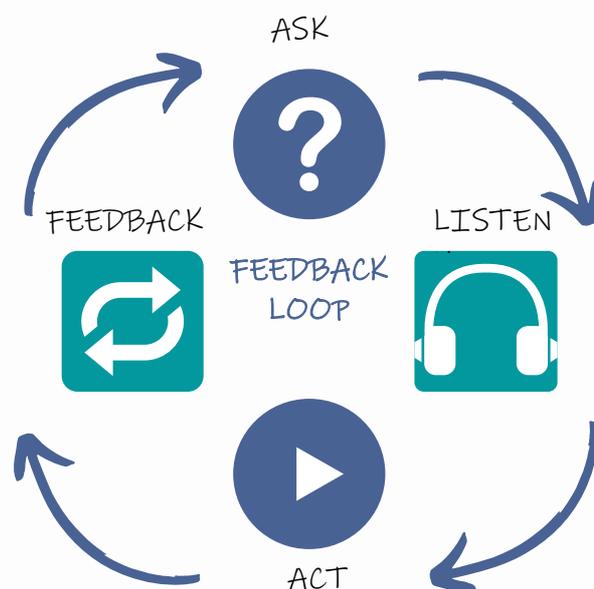
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HSCP VOICE OF THE CHILD PARTICIPATION TOOLKIT INTRODUCTION

The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Voice of the Child Participation Toolkit is a set of guidance and tools to improve participation and engagement with children and young people at all levels. The aim is to ensure that participation is meaningful and informs the work of safeguarding partners.

In October 2021, the HSCP and [No Wrong Door](#) began consulting with young people...



300 young people took part in an online survey.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

9 schools and youth groups engaged in a takeover challenge to offer ideas on safeguarding.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Mapping exercises of current practice were established.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

Youth scrutiny groups explored outcomes and key messages, feeding back to 70 professionals at a safeguarding partnership summit and 15 strategic leads on behalf of the county's young people.

Each part of the consultancy process has fed into the creation of the HSCP Voice of the Child Participation Toolkit.

It combines examples of existing good practice and newly generated material that can be easily accessed when needed.

Whether at a strategic or practitioner level, this Toolkit aims to give tips and practical suggestions that put young people, their views and their ideas at the heart of the safeguarding partnership.



1. ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND TIPS FOR PRACTITIONERS

1.1 WHY IT MATTERS AND KEY MESSAGES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

The participation of young people, in any context, matters so much that it is written into the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#):

"Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously"

Article 12: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC – Child friendly version)

Young people responding to the 2021/22 HSCP children and young people survey certainly agreed. They said...

'Really listen to what they have to say because even though they're young, they still should have a say with things'

'Allow more work/ activities/opportunities to express opinions, beliefs and interests because otherwise students will be disengaged and this often leads to a decline in mental health and therefore that creates a bad relationship with the young person'

'Keep listening. Even if you don't like what we're saying, just keep listening'

Arguably, when the decisions being made directly affect a child's life, such as with safeguarding, it matters even more. However, the process of engaging with young people in a meaningful and inclusive way is not always easy – especially when some young people are already distrustful or disillusioned with the process.

'It just feels like tokenism...'

...is a phrase that many young people respond with when faced with the suggestion of a survey, for example. It makes absolute sense; if something is not worthwhile, why would any of us want to do it?

For participation to work, initial engagement needs to include the **purpose and managing expectations**. Young people need to know what they are being asked to contribute to and how their responses will be used, without over-promising. Once this is clear, and you have 'buy in,' the results are incredibly rewarding.

'Never group people or assume anything about them, always ask'



1.2 GETTING THE TONE RIGHT

Any form of participation, and engagement in it, relies on communication skills: dialogue, language and tone. Getting it right has the power to capture attention, garner trust and empower young people. It offers the opportunity to show care and apportion worth. Where the tone, dialogue and language are misjudged, however, there is the potential to very quickly alienate a young person.

Some of the views shared in the HSCP children and young people survey emphasised this:

'Your facial expressions and body language when you're listening makes a MASSIVE difference on how supported someone feels!'

'Though we can feel listened to and safe, we don't always feel cared for'

Leicester City and Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership put it really well in the short video *WAS NOT HEARD*.

The film on the left was conceived by five groups of young people. A script was then developed from their ideas and written by a young person. This was then made into a film with the support of Leicester City Participation Service and Badshoes Film and performed by young actors. It was funded by NHS England and LLRSC. Fuller interviews are also available on their YouTube channel.

PARTICIPATION GOLD



[WAS NOT HEARD](#)

tone and dialogue

It doesn't take a lot to get it right! Imagine the difference that Response B would make, as compared to Response A.

A young person has been struggling with their mental health for some time. They sort of know the reason for it, but hasn't told anyone, and doesn't know how to control the feelings they're having. They pluck up the courage to ring a local agency helpline. After trying to explain this to the person on the end of the line, they get this response...

RESPONSE A

"Right (SIGH) Have you got a referral? No? Well you need a referral from your GP. Well there's a lot of young people like you at the moment, so we've got a waiting list. It's about 7 months. Try your GP and then get back to us. OK? Thanks."

RESPONSE B

"Sorry to hear you're feeling like that. I have to ask; do you feel like you're in any immediate danger of hurting yourself or someone else? No, great. Have you got a referral from your GP at all? No, don't worry. A referral's a really good starting point as we've got a waiting list of about 7 months at the moment and your GP can help get you onto that if they think it's the right thing for you. I know it's a long time, but there's lots of other support out there in the meantime too. If you go on our website there are links for helpful resources and if you need to talk to anyone at any time there are also links to the Samaritans and Child-Line. OK? You've done the right thing calling. Give your GP a bell and we'll get the ball rolling. Take care"

It may seem extreme, but the first example comes directly from a young person's experience. The second response says pretty much the same thing as the first, but a more considered tone and dialogue means that the young person *feels* different having finished the phone call. The organisation has also identified signposting resources that can help. They *feel* supported, valued and cared for. They also *feel* like there was a point to ringing. The video to the right sums up some top tips from young people.

PARTICIPATION GOLD

What Do We Need was created by a group of young people at NWD following focus groups on the topic of use of 'tone'?



[WHAT DO WE NEED?](#)

'Listen to them, and respect them, and help them using the ways they feel comfortable'



1.3 CHOOSING THE RIGHT ACTIVITY: TOOLS FOR DIRECT WORK

As with any form of engagement with young people, participation is far easier if there are trusting and honest relationships, which help put people at ease and support contributions. Sometimes we don't have much time to build these relationships.

There are many tried and tested techniques that help the discussion get off to a good start, and having an arsenal of these to hand is always useful – especially as young people are clear that one size does not fit all:

'Understand that every young person is different and have been through different experiences with life that will need different approaches to help support them'

'You should not press people, give them time to express how they feel in their own way because for some people it is harder than others'

Particularly useful links to explore ideas are:

[Social Worker Toolbox](#)

This link has 40+ examples of visual tools taken from Barnados 'Say it your own way' booklet. The [Social Worker Toolbox](#) also has resources on all aspects of talking to young people and though the resources are specific to social work assessment, they are useful for other professionals too.

For a really accessible resource, with lots of original ideas as well as some of the old favourites, the [Children and Young People's Health Service Norfolk and Waveney](#) website is fantastic. It's particularly useful to engage younger children.

[Just One Norfolk](#)

With so many options to choose from, the general rules are simple:

- **OWN YOU!** Young people will respond far better in a one-to-one scenario if they know you are genuine and you are comfortable with the task.
- **SHOW INTEREST AND EMPATHY.** Have a genuine interest in them, their life, their views and their struggles. Ask open questions that enable this.
- **USE VISUALS.** Visuals are excellent prompts (and means the awkward silences are avoided!) and make discussion more entertaining.

SEE SOME EXAMPLES ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE

'Make sure you know that we are all different and have different needs'



EXAMPLES IN MORE DEPTH



FROM RESOURCE WEBSITE KIDDIEMATTERS.COM

EMOJIS

An initial question of ‘which emoji are you at the moment and why?’ can prompt a whole discussion very easily. If a young person is particularly unwilling to contribute their own views, why not pair the emoji with images of another young person/celebrity and ask which emoji the young person thinks that person is and why. It can then lead to further discussions about what might be needed to change the emotion.

GAMES

Games always go down well with young people (age appropriate). This Snakes and Ladder game asks them to focus on things that make life easier for them and things that make it harder – of course the focus could be changed to fit any participation question.

22: Can you fill in the Snakes and Ladders board?

38	37	36	35	34	33	32
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
23	22	21	20	19	18	17
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
7	5	4	3	2	1	Start

Write things that make life harder along the SNAKES. Write things that help you out along the LADDERS.

FROM 'SAY IT YOUR OWN WAY' BARNARDOS

Would you rather be an eagle or a lion?	Would you rather live at the beach or in the mountains?
Would you rather have a pet giraffe or a pet panda bear?	Would you rather be a pro sports player or a professional chef?
Would you rather be able to fly or read minds?	Would you rather shovel snow for an hour or rake leaves for an hour?
Would you rather swim with dolphins or dance with tame bears?	Would you rather have lived in the 1880s or the 1980s?
Would you rather go fishing or go hiking?	Would you rather learn to water ski or snow ski?
Would you rather kiss a frog or hug a porcupine?	Would you rather drive a race car or record an album?

FROM PARENTING WEBSITE IMOM.COM

What would you do on your "perfect" day?	What's the biggest thing adults don't understand about teens?
If you could know one thing about the future, what would it be?	If you could meet one person from history who would it be?
Why do you think so many young people want plastic surgery?	What would you really like to do, but don't, because you're concerned about others' opinions?
What would your dream house be like?	What do you want to have accomplished in ten years?

CONVERSATION STARTERS

With older young people conversation starters (daft or serious) can put them at ease and bring a little light-heartedness to the conversation. Showing you respect their responses will bode well for later more potentially difficult discussions.

Ask them a wide variety of questions that allow them to explain and explore their ideas to the fullest extent before they lose their ideas altogether



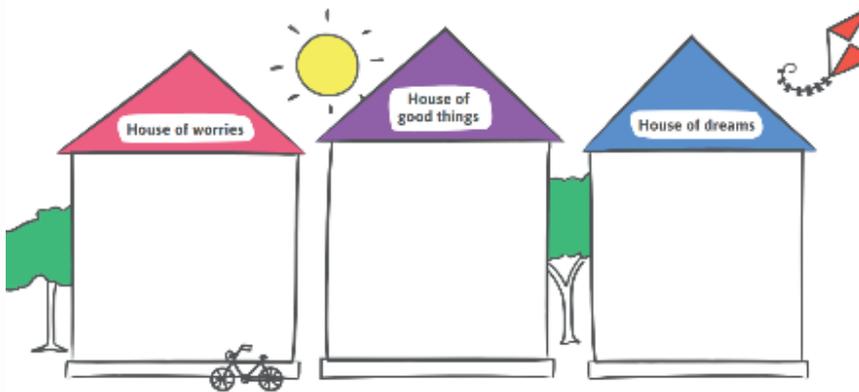
SIGNS OF SAFETY



The Signs of Safety approach is 'a relationship-grounded, safety-organised approach to child protection practice'. Herefordshire Council's Children and Families Directorate has adopted Signs of Safety as its overarching practice model for working with children and young people in Herefordshire.

There are plenty of well-researched and designed resources for direct work in Signs of Safety, including My Three Houses, The Fairy or Wizard, and Words and Pictures.

Example of Sign of Safety tools



1.4 ENCOURAGING POSITIVE GROUP WORK

Group work can help young people share with others who have had similar experiences, and help them to appreciate the views of others, among many other benefits. There are plenty of group 'ice-breaker' activities to get people talking and feeling at ease.

[North Yorkshire Youth](#) is a great website with clear instructions on activities and how they might fit certain groups/time-scales.

[NYY Ice-breakers and games](#)

If you already have confident young people that you've worked with before, why not ask them to decide on what activity they do and lead any ice-break activities?

'Make them feel comfortable in the environment that they are in'

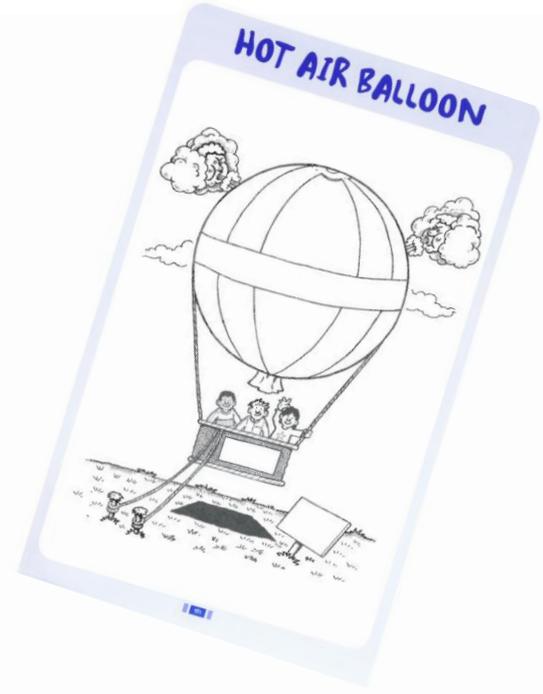
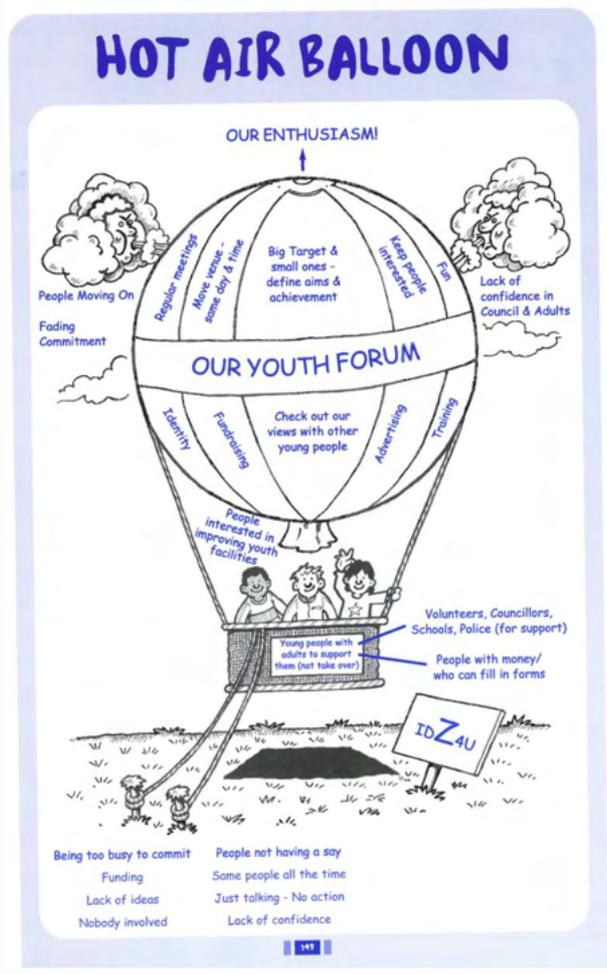


Setting the tone with group work can also ease the participative process for both participants and facilitators alike. Having a 'Group Agreement' such as the one to the right (created by [Young Minds Youth Panel](#)) can give direction and expectations whilst also allowing the participants to have an element of ownership over the process if the agreement is created together. This moves the activity to come away from being something done 'to' young people into something done 'with' them.

There are similar tools that can stimulate discussion as a group. Templates for these are easy to adapt. The Hot Air Balloon example (featured in [Participation: Spice it up! Shepherd, Carol 2002](#)) is one that is commonly used.

Group Agreement created by YoungMinds Youth Panel

- Keep what we discuss confidential
- Listen to all sides, and be open minded
- It's okay if you don't understand something
- Voice your opinion – it's okay to disagree
- Look after yourself, and take time out if you need it
- Be friendly, nice, and kind
- Don't talk over each other
- Treat others with respect



This example focuses on what makes a good youth forum: What do you want the group to be? What lifts you up as a group? What pulls you down? What supports you? The same remit could be used for a range of topics: Our town, our family, our school...

'I see a counsellor, and my time could be improved loads if we played games or did activities together'



1.5 ENSURING INCLUSIVITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Inclusivity and accessibility is always key to participation. Children and young people of different abilities or with different backgrounds will communicate and react differently. Full representation can inform the development of service provision far better than the views of a small number. This was identified as being a top priority amongst young people surveyed:

'We'd like to be listened to and taken seriously irrelevant of ethnicity, gender identity, ability, disadvantage and other barriers'

These are ideas on how your preparation could help, whether approaching a wide-ranging group or special interest groups:

-  Identify the barriers to participation for any young person – for example, is it money/access/fear of prejudice/age?
-  Accommodate different literacy levels and work in the language of participants – how you phrase questions is particularly important.
-  Ensure all the information is accessible to everyone – if this is online, think about access/lack of it to the internet, but also capability for screen reader functions, larger fonts, or how it displays on a phone screen.
-  Ask venues about their accessibility so you can choose appropriate venues.
-  Provide practical resources like transport, crèche facilities, translation, signing.
-  Approach excluded children and young people directly and through their communities.
-  Involve excluded children and young people in contacting others, in person or through the design of information and strategies for making contact.
-  Use a variety of methods of consultation.
-  Ensure group ground rules cover equality of opportunity issues and that these are implemented.
-  Develop facilitating skills to enable those who are less confident and marginalised to participate fully in group.
-  Meet regularly to build skills and confidence of consulted children and young people

ADAPTED FROM 'BREATHING FIRE INTO PARTICIPATION' – Aspinwall and Larkins and Welsh Assembly Government (2002)



'Try and see things from their point of view, take into account that they experience, deal and cope with things in different ways than you can expect'



1.6 ESTABLISHING AND MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic brought many challenges for young people, especially in terms of safeguarding, but one of the needs it really exposed was young people’s desire for certainty (in the face of a lack of it).

It’s human nature to want to know what’s happening, when and why. Not knowing can lead to anxiety, paranoia and avoidance. The same is absolutely true when it comes to participation or any interaction with young people. The boundaries and the expectations need to be really clear, to offer that certainty.

A USEFUL ANALOGY...



If a person burst into the room now and said the following ‘Right, we want you to go to Manchester tomorrow, or possibly Liverpool. OK? Off you go!’ it would be perfectly reasonable if you were to panic and have more questions than answers. Which am I going to? What route will I take? How long will it take? What will I do when I get there? Why am I going? What am I getting out of it? What will happen afterwards? It’s hardly surprising, therefore, that a young person disengages if they’re simply told ‘We’re going to do a participation activity. Let’s go!’

PARTICIPATION GOLD

The Welsh Government and ‘Young Wales’ devised National Participation Standards. They work on the basis of what young people will get, and what practitioners will give; essentially a contract. The overview of the standards is below and a link to the full page is to the right.

PARTICIPATION STANDARDS POSTER

I: Example of how to explain assessment

Hello, my name is _____

I have come to see you because you are important and sometimes we need to check that you are happy and safe where you are living/at home with your family.

It is my job to make sure that you are safe and happy.



To do this we will talk to each other and I will listen carefully to what you want to say and what you would like to do.

Then together we will try to decide what would help you be happy and safe.

We can draw pictures, chat or play games.

I will write down what you think so I can remember. This will help me to decide how to help.

If you or anyone else is being hurt then I will have to help make you safe.

This page is another example of a resource on the Social Workers Toolkit link available in section 1.3. It outlines clear expectations They have three differentiated versions of it in order to cater for different age groups.

Information

Choice

Working better for you

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S NATIONAL PARTICIPATION STANDARDS

No discrimination

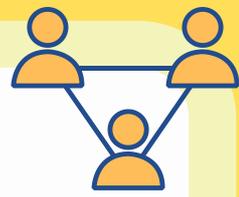
Feedback

You get something out of it

Respect

Remember, when setting out expectations or possible outcomes, it is really important to explain what you do, what type of service you are offering, what you will do with them and what they can expect as an outcome. Clarity is key, as the example on the right shows.

Don't lie to young people. Don't say you can do something if you can't. Just be honest



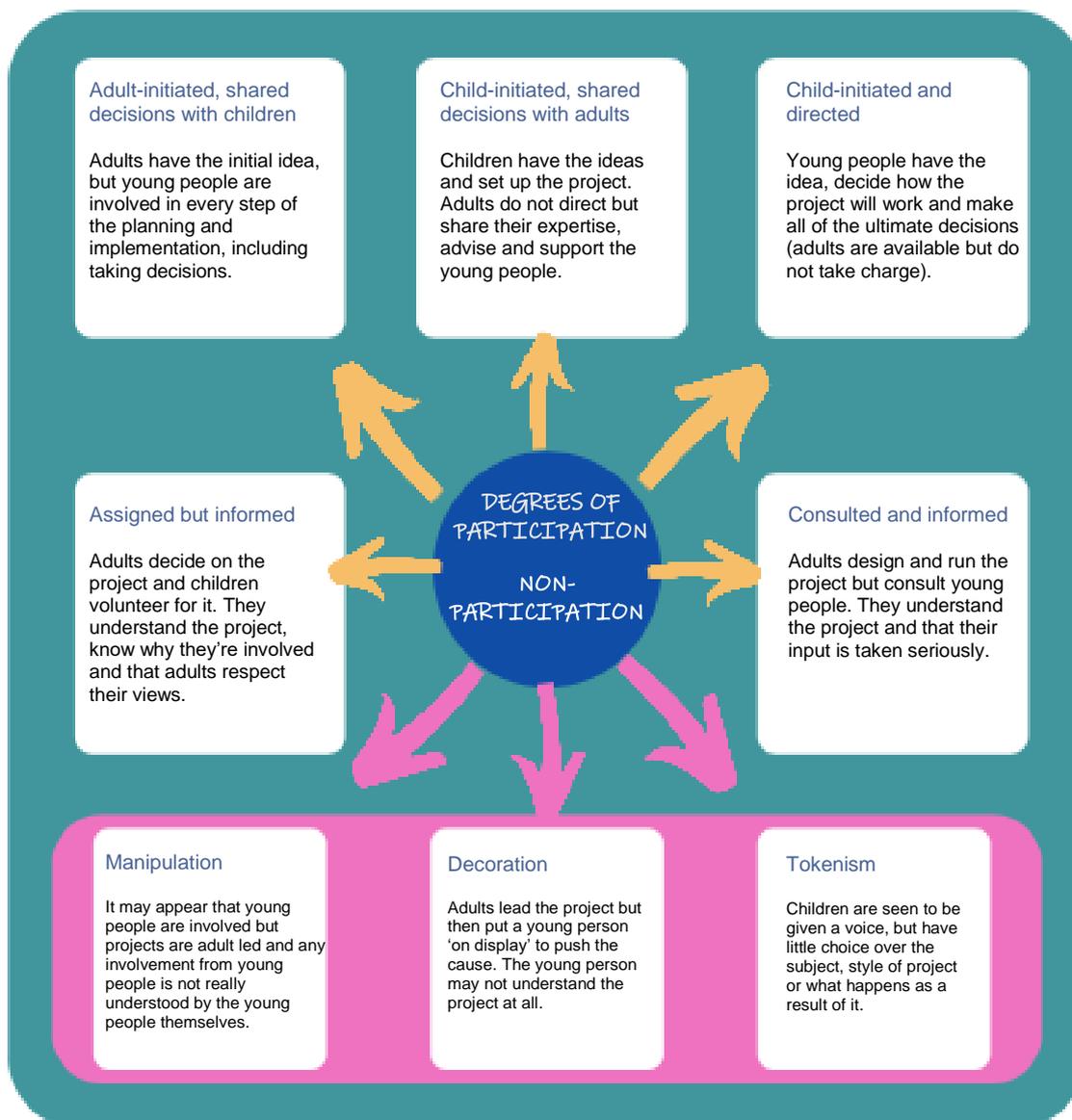
2. MANAGEMENT APPROACHES TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION

2.1 WHY IT MATTERS AND KEY MESSAGES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

It goes without saying that management support is crucial in order to create a culture of true participation. One sole practitioner being an expert in participation may be fantastic for a particular group of young people, and certainly make the practitioner popular, but it can seem futile if that good practice is not supported, disseminated or celebrated.

It is incumbent upon managers (with support from the executive above) to understand where their practitioners are in terms of participation, why this might be, where you might want them to get to, and how to foster a really child-centred approach.

This means recognising the barriers to participation as well as the existing successes.



Where would you place your department's current level of participation? (May vary from one area to another)

Why is it at that level?

Where would you like it to be?

Adapted from Roger Hart's *Ladder of Participation* and Phil Treseder – *Empowering Children and Young People* (1997)

'Being able to get support for problems and questions really help'





2.2 WORKING WITH THE CHALLENGES TO PARTICIPATION

For any practice to progress, you must first understand why it may not have done up to this point. It is rare that any professional would under-value the impact participation can have, but it may be overwhelming for a variety of reasons. Below are some potential challenges, as outlined by practitioners themselves.

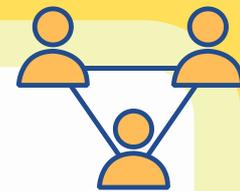


Managers may have to consider extra elements, such as staff capacity, ease of analysis, credibility for funders and validity with stakeholders.

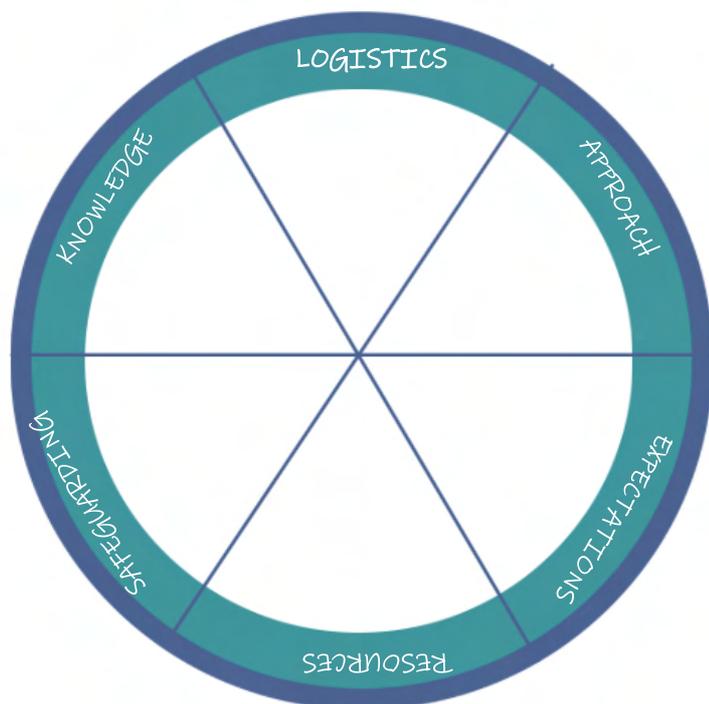
Often, the elephant in the room will be 'time'. If professionals are over-burdened and 'fire-fighting', taking the time to listen to the views of children and young people and then acting on it, may be daunting. However, when participation is supported, prioritised, done in a meaningful way, and generates focused outcomes, it can result in 'less fires' to put out longer-term.

These are all very understandable concerns, so the role of a manager is to myth-bust and support in a variety of ways.

'It often feels like adults have much more important things to be doing than listening to kids'



TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE



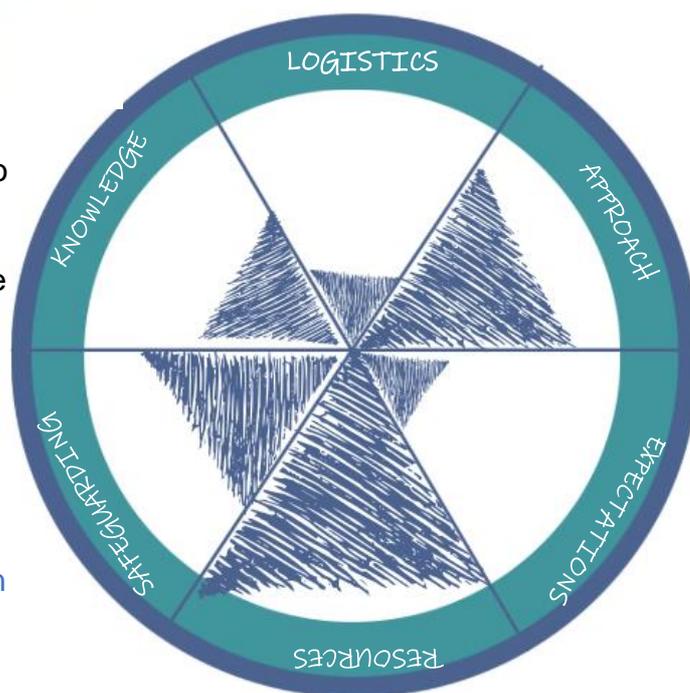
As well as being an excellent tool for engaging young people one-to-one on any topic, a coaching wheel is also incredibly effective in staff development when looking at barriers/challenges.

The premise is simple: outline six potential challenges around the edge of the wheel (in this case those identified by practitioners in terms of participation).

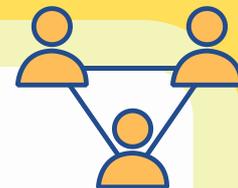
Individuals then shade the areas in response to a question posed. It is always better to emphasise positives so the question, in this case, would be 'How confident are you in these areas of participation?'

This then has multiple uses:

- Can be shared to prompt discussion.
- Can aid practitioners with own self-evaluation.
- Can aid managers to see patterns within a team (and therefore inform future training).
- Can give focus to the support given.
- Can allow for positive praise/sharing of differing strengths.
- Can enable evaluation at the end of a session (would they be able to add further shading to some areas now?)
- Can inform routes forward from a managerial and strategic level.



'Many of the professionals can't do anything about my views because they are restricted, even if they do care'



2.3 VOICE OF THE CHILD CHECKLIST

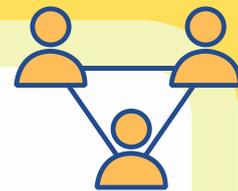
Using a checklist can help in planning but also give confidence in approaching participation.



MOVING
FORWARD

PLANNING	Are the aims and objectives clear? Consider how they might be shared with young people.	
	Will the project/questionnaire/etc. impact on service? Consider how.	
	Does the project/ questionnaire/etc. have support from above? Consider what you might need from the organisation.	
	Does the project/questionnaire/ etc. have a set timescale? Consider how much you can realistically do in this.	
	Do you have your resources ready? Consider whether they are accessible and how you will record your findings.	
LOGISTICS	Have you assigned the right staff to it? Consider if they will need any support.	
	Have you confirmed which young people you're working with? Consider how inclusive the group is (or targeted if that's the case).	
	Will they be rewarded for their time? Consider what is appropriate.	
	Have you supported access to participation? Consider transport and internet access needs (if applicable).	
SAFEGUARDING	Do you have consent from the young people? Consider how you will get it if it is to be done on the day.	
	Are there any ground rules for the activity? Consider how they will be shared with young people.	
	Do you have permission to record/take photos? Consider how you will get it if it is to be done on the day.	
	Will there be confidential data or material collected? Consider how you will protect this and let young people know.	
	Are safeguarding issues likely to arise? Consider how you and your staff will implement policy on this.	
	Do you have a risk assessment in place? Consider how you will brief staff on this.	
MOVING FORWARD	Have you considered how you <i>might</i> act on your findings? Tell young people there will be action, but manage expectations.	
	Have you considered how you <i>might</i> feedback to the young people involved (and beyond)? Let them know this.	

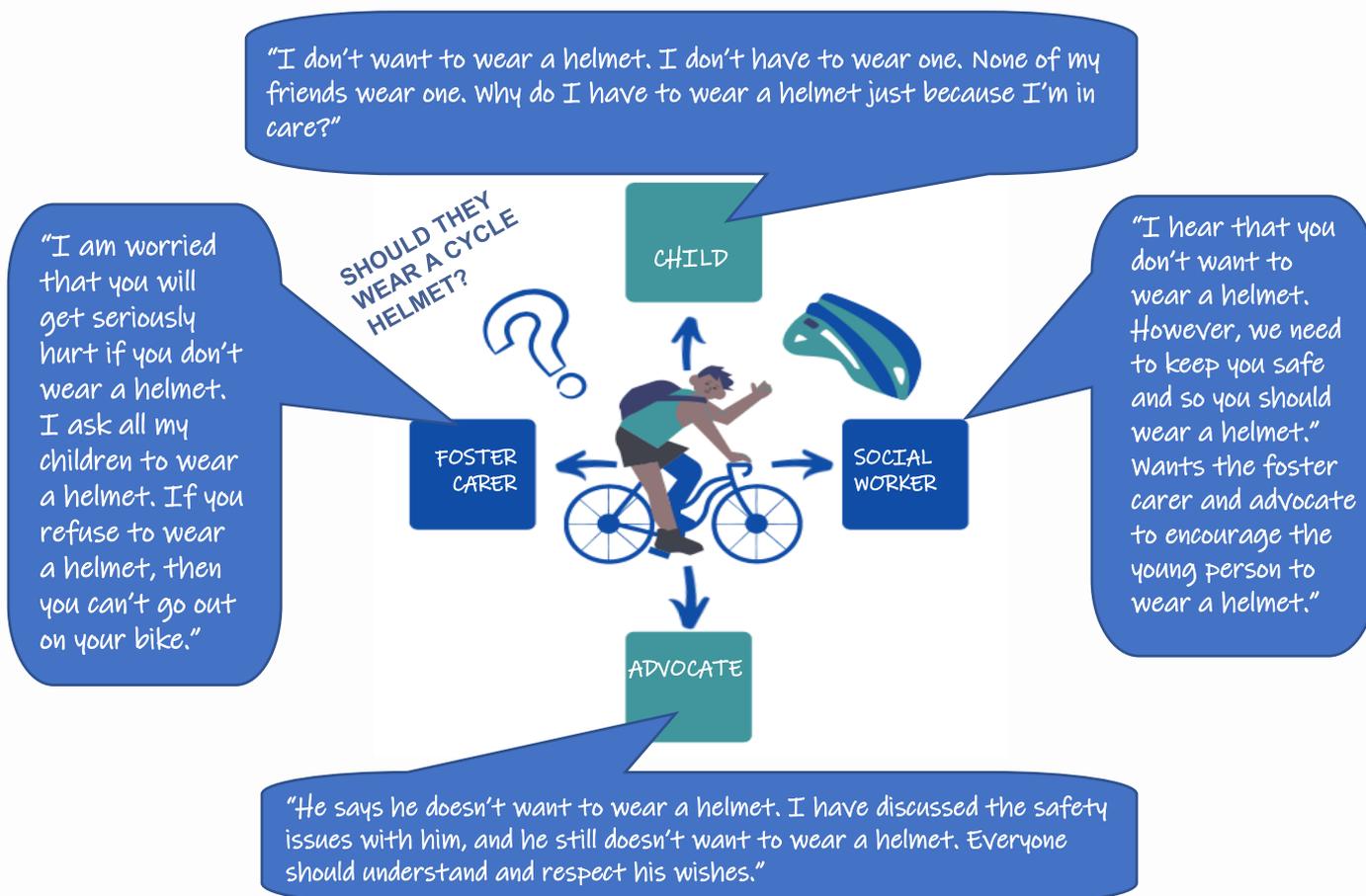
'When professionals get it right it makes a huge difference'



2.4 SUPPORTING WORKERS IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Part of good management is attributing worth to your team; celebrating good practice and the next page highlights some ways of doing this. Another part, however, is supporting your staff in difficult situations. While professionals should always listen to and understand a child's wishes, this has to be balanced against other considerations, like the resources available, or safety.

The diagram below is a good example of how 'rubs' and difficult situations are inevitable, even between professionals who all have a unique role to play. It doesn't mean that anyone is doing their job badly, so long as all have the young person's best interest at heart.



What can a manager do help their team members faced with a difficult situation like this?

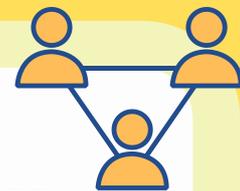
- Help to identify common goals and wishes.
- Reflect on what the motivations are behind different positions.
- Support the workers to explore all options with the child.
- Encourage flexibility and creative solutions; discourage any worker from being fixated on their position.
- Ensure there is a clear way forward through an open and honest dialogue.

The more a team can recognise that there is as much value in holding your hands up and saying 'this needs to be better, how do we support that?' as there is in saying 'this was amazing, let's do more of it', the more a culture shift will come. It is a combination of the two that is most effective.

Hear Me is the advocacy service for children and young people in Herefordshire. They provide a professional, confidential and independent service for children and young people when they need support in representing their views with the local authority.



'I was in a very dark space and the crisis team and NHS were able to keep me safe and supported constantly'



WAYS TO CELEBRATE GOOD PRACTICE

Some organisations already take time to celebrate staff going the extra mile with young people, using regular 'Shout outs!' Managers highlight great work and give a message of thanks.

**February 22
Shout outs!**



The value of this kind of praise and affirmation cannot be underestimated, but there are limitations: it relies on managers submitting the 'Shout outs', and only staff get to see it. So, there's no direct youth involvement.

TAKING THE MESSAGE FURTHER (AND INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE!)

Some counties take the approach of nominated groups/projects/individuals being awarded at a yearly ceremony. The [London Safeguarding Children Award](#) is an example that could be readily adopted.

As well as an awards evening (that could be organised by young people) there is also scope to have young people involved from the start.

For example, an online form on a website could allow for anonymous nominations by young people (supported by a parent/guardian), a young person's advocate or management. The reason for nomination could be chosen from a list of standards (a kitemark system) devised by young people (examples below).

Children's Champion Nomination

Form description

Who is making this nomination?

I am a young person

A young person's parent/guardian

A young person's advocate

A manager

Other...

How would you rate your nominee on the following standards (5 being excellent, 1 being not so good)

	1	2	3	4	5
They give me/the young person I support options and choices	<input type="radio"/>				

How would you rate your nominee on the following standards (5 being excellent, 1 being not so good)

	1	2	3	4	5
They always listen to me/the young person I support	<input type="radio"/>				

How would you rate your nominee on the following standards (5 being excellent, 1 being not so good)

	1	2	3	4	5
They act on what I/the young person tells them	<input type="radio"/>				

This could be ongoing to feed into the fortnightly 'Shout Outs', but also be the basis of the yearly awards for Participation/Children's Champions.

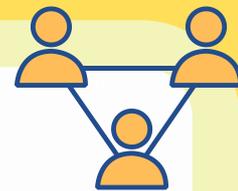
Touches like this generate a principle of praise, therefore motivating staff, but also keep a real focus on aims and outcomes with young people in mind. Another strong example of this is the work of the Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade ([JLGB](#)).

JLGB KITEMARK SYSTEM

The JLGB (Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade) youth forum devised a kitemarking system called SURGE to recognise high standards in youth participation and celebrate professional bodies that achieve them – see the link to the left for more information).

**PARTICIPATION
GOLD**

'Staff are normally very patient, kind, understanding and will adapt to your needs and accommodate anything you need for the best experience'



2.5 PUTTING VOICE OF THE CHILD ON THE TEAM AGENDA

THE AGENDA

As well as celebrating good practice within a team, there is also a need to share it. Putting Voice of the Child on the agenda (literally) sends a very clear message that it matters and that its role within service development is taken seriously.

For example, why not put 'Participation Toolkit' front and centre in your agenda:

WEEK ONE: Staff to look at digital copy of Toolkit and feed reflections back next week.

WEEK TWO: 5 mins feedback on reflections. Staff try an activity from the toolkit by next week.

WEEK THREE: 15 mins feedback on activities. Try one someone else did before next week.

WEEK FOUR: 15 mins feedback on how activities went...

CHALLENGE?

There can be a lot to get through in meetings, so finding the time to put participation on the agenda can be difficult. However, the benefits far outweigh the negatives.

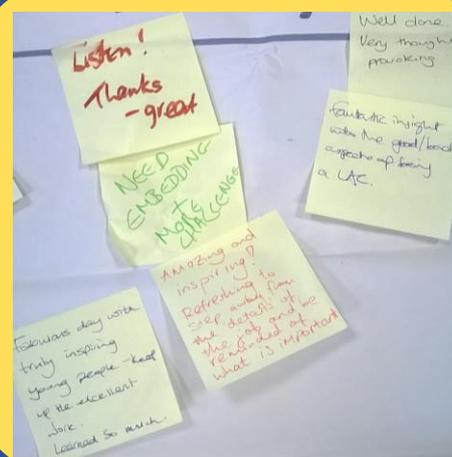
BENEFITS:

- Meetings start with a positive, boosting team morale for the rest of the meeting (actually increasing the pace of the rest of it).
- Taking time to focus on service improvement for young people can remind people why they are there, again boosting morale and therefore productivity.
- Sharing good practice in a team will automatically benefit the team as a whole and, as a result, the young people you work with.
- As a manager, it gives you an insight into areas for further development and potential training routes.

What about putting young people at the centre of training? Who better to train professionals on how to work with young people than the young people themselves? The delivery is often fresher, the discussion more meaningful and, certainly, more powerful.

Voice of the Child training was held by the Your Voice Matters group where young people devised the content and delivered the activities. The feedback (see to the right) was fantastic and the comment "refreshing to step away from the 'detail' of the job and be reminded of what is important" really sums up the value of having young people involved in a training process.

PARTICIPATION
GOLD



'Update your knowledge. There is so much new research and ideas about our systems, and many young people know these more updated ideas, so as professionals it's important not to be stuck in the past'



3. PARTICIPATION IN STRATEGIC PLANNING AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

3.1 WHY IT MATTERS AND KEY MESSAGES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

The people who are most affected by a service or organisation should be the key stakeholders in influencing how it is shaped. There are a myriad of ways to ensure that children and young people are involved in service design and strategic planning – from service-level feedback, to recruitment, to strategic planning, budget setting, and evaluations.

Involving children and young people in these ‘higher-level’ decisions can be incredibly insightful. It can help to identify problems that no one realised, understand where good practice exists that should be maintained, and ensure that young people’s lived experiences are understood, respected and valued.

For example, some messages that were pulled from the 2021/22 HSCP participation survey were:

‘We would like to be able to access help earlier rather than having to wait until any problem is really serious’

‘We would like better communication between services so that less of us fall through the gaps and we don’t have to keep repeating our stories’

If these messages are listened to, it would mean investing in preventative approaches and ensuring that children and young people can access them at the right time. It would also mean re-enforcing the message of the importance of multi-agency working, and finding innovative ways to prevent children having to repeat their stories.

Much of what young people pick up on in the survey is preventative approaches, and actually these are the ones that can improve a service longer-term and aid affective management of both time and resources. It’s also an aspect that young people feel particularly passionate about and have incredibly insightful ideas about – hence the importance of really meaningful participation activities. Where young people take up the mantle of change and drive the projects, the change can be far faster, smarter, and more impactful.

‘It feels like we aren’t really taken seriously when there’s something we care about’





3.2 EFFECTIVE WAYS TO GATHER VOICE OF THE CHILD

'We need to understand how to voice concerns we have about ourselves or others, especially if we are not in education/employment'

Gathering feedback on services can be as quick, lengthy, small, large, frequent as a service needs it to be. Flexibility is key not only to meet the demands of inclusion (see Section 1.5) but also to ensure that the scope fits the remit needed by the service. It is also essential to understand what difference your service is making.

HIS (Healthcare Improvement Scotland) has an exemplary resource in terms of different techniques. Just a few are highlighted here:

Comments cards

A simple and low cost way for service users to write down and post their thoughts and/or feedback.

Citizens' jury

A representative group of 12 to 25 people considers evidence from a range of experts and agrees some recommendations.

Electronic voting

People give their views on an issue using electronic means to cast and count votes. It can be useful during events and conferences as part of the wider participation process.

After Action Reviews

A facilitated discussion about an activity or project that allows the participants to review what happened, track progress, and capture lessons for the future.

Emotional touchpoints

A simple but powerful way of helping people share their experiences which can challenge assumptions about what matters to them.

Find out more



Each technique is explained and modelled further (as seen here).

HIS TOOLKIT IDEAS

Save the Children outlines what type of information gathering can be useful for different purposes. More can be found on:

[RE: ACTION CONSULTATION TOOLKIT](#)

Quantitative is most appropriate:

- When a detailed numerical description is required
- When you can measure something and measurements are clearly defined and meaningful (e.g. like or dislike)
- When there is no need to relate findings to the broader social or cultural setting, or this setting is sufficiently understood
- When the subject area is very clearly defined
- When repeatability of measurements is important (e.g. to measure changes in attitudes over time)
- When generalisability of results and a statistical comparison across or between groups is desired (e.g. different age groups)

Qualitative is most appropriate

- When meanings rather than a numerical description is required
- For exploratory work or when variables are unknown or their definitions are unclear
- For explanatory depth; when you want to relate particular aspects of behaviour to the wider context
- When the subject area is less clearly defined or unfamiliar
- When flexibility of approach is needed to allow for the discovery of the unexpected, and in-depth investigation of particular topics
- For studying selected issues, cases or events in depth and detail

Adapted from World Health Organisation (1996)

'To actually listen to them, just because they're young doesn't mean they're not smart enough. Work as a team and give the chances and opportunities to the young people'





One of the simplest methods of gathering views is the "Dot voting" way. This is being trialled at St. David's PRU in Hereford to create fast snap-shots that can then be used to improve student service (see poster). Topics will range every few weeks from 'How do you want to be rewarded for good behaviour?' to 'What should we offer for lunch?'

PARTICIPATION
GOLD

Dot voting

A quick and informal way for people to give feedback on, or prioritise, a range of options using sticky dots.

Location is everything with this one! The voting board is set up next to the canteen hatch and a voting 'dot' given with each drink/piece of toast. As it is quick, easy and accessible it enables young people that wouldn't normally necessarily participate to have a say.

SPEAK OUT DAY

HOW IT WORKS:

- HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE BOARD
- ANY FURTHER COMMENTS TO THE STAFF
- ANONYMOUS COMMENTS GO IN THE BOX

WHY?

- BECAUSE IT'S YOUR SCHOOL, AND YOUR VIEWS MATTER

LOOK OUT FOR THE 'YOU SAID, WE DID' POSTERS THAT WILL SHOW THE RESULTS!

CAPITALISE ON EXISTING STRUCTURES

There are pockets within society that are already well geared towards youth participation. Schools (as seen above) and youth organisations/voluntary sector are at an advantage because they work purely with young people. They therefore have a body of young people – be it a school council, or a youth scrutiny group, that are used to getting involved. Collaboration between service providers (the 'multi-agency' approach referred to throughout) is therefore hugely beneficial.

The work between [Herefordshire Healthwatch](#), [Strong Young Minds](#) and [John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre](#) is an excellent example of this (see the video link to the right).



[HEALTHWATCH
HEREFORDSHIRE -](#)

However, we must remember that not every young person is in education, training or employment. These young people may be better accessed through the voluntary sector, police, health and housing for example.

'We need to be asked more questions and have the questions be more varied to allow people to share important views they otherwise would not have been able to share'





ENCOURAGING POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT

Arguably, one of the biggest contributors to the success of engagement is surroundings and atmosphere, and therefore choice of place and activity is paramount.

This was put into excellent practice recently by [Talk Community Herefordshire](#). As stated on their website, the 'Let's Talk Children and Families survey' aimed to capture the views of children, young people and their families living in the county to aid understanding of what works really well in Herefordshire and what would make the county an even better place to live.

By combining the survey with a range of entertaining activities and taking it out to communities in settings that people are comfortable in, it meant that take-up was higher than normal, as was the sense of community.

See the video below to see the activities in action and the impact the project had.

PARTICIPATION GOLD

The list of opportunities to share views and enjoy every second was extensive: circus skills, art classes, Glo Parties, Kids Kitchen, Talking Sofa, Kids eat free after school, Hereford FC Bull, messy play, stay and play, party disco, team games, sensory play, DJ, quiet zone for children with SEND, Big Family Lunch, bikes and soft play, craft stalls, pancake races. They captured a mood of enjoyment as well as a sharing of ideas

TALK COMMUNITY

[Let's Talk Community Film](#)

Engagement in anything is reliant on it being enjoyable, as well as it being worthwhile, so if the activity/venue/plan is appealing, you are automatically boosting the chances of positive and meaningful engagement.

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT IN PARTICIPATION

With the uncertainty that covid-19 has brought over the past few years, it's hardly surprising that a lot of agencies have turned to digital platforms not only for their day-to-day work, but also for the purpose of youth participation.

[Young Minds](#) has developed a comprehensive booklet on [Digital Engagement in Participation](#) which has tips on how to engage, how to make it interesting and also how to tackle safeguarding from an online perspective (See more on this in Section 4.3).



[DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT BOOKLET](#)

'Give me questions I understand'



HSCP TAKE OVER CHALLENGE

A recent HSCP Take Over Day Challenge showed the benefit of this approach as 9 schools and voluntary groups took part. The numbers at these ranged from a group of 8 neuro-diverse 16-25 year olds (NEET), to over 300 participants in one school. A broad route like this also enabled the partnership to ensure inclusion with one in five young people in Herefordshire with SEND attending mainstream schools. In some of the schools that took part this was higher, for example 100 students at [Hampton Dene Primary school](#) which has an on-site special educational needs and/or disabilities resource base took part and students from the [RNC](#) and [PRUs](#) fed ideas into the initial concepts.

The HSCP Take Over Challenge aimed to gather the Voice of the Child but in a format that was very specific to the strategic needs of the partnership and service development, rather than gaining a general commentary on service provision. The potential direct link between voice of the child and meaningful change is therefore evidenced well here.

Four lessons were devised collaboratively with young people to go into schools across the county. At the start of each, a video explaining the challenge and the work of the HSCP was shown. To raise the profile of the service, as well as focus on its key agencies, it also featured Heads of Service describing the day-to-day decisions they have to make. (See the video link below)

HSCP TAKE-OVER CHALLENGE
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE
DECEMBER 3RD 2021
CALLING ALL SCHOOLS IN HEREFORDSHIRE...

Agents, we have a problem...
 The Heads of Service for Herefordshire NHS, Social workers and Police have been taken.
 Can you complete the tasks and crack the codes to free them??

The Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and No Wrong Door are encouraging all schools to get involved with their Take-Over Challenge

- Schools will be provided with ready-to-use lessons (age appropriate) that can be taught at any point in the day
- Lessons are based around a 'mission' and have been differentiated to insure access for all learners
- An entertaining way to give young people an insight into the work that goes into keeping them safe
- Feedback of tasks will help to inform future practice of the HSCP

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE ADDED TO THE MAILING LIST FOR THE RESOURCES, OR WANT TO FIND OUT MORE, CONTACT nwd.admin@hscps.org.uk

NO WRONG DOOR
 FOR THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T WANT TO FIND OUT MORE, CONTACT nwd.admin@hscps.org.uk

Safe guarding
 Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership



[Key Stage 2 intro video](#)

Lesson One:
 Task: Create a 'Safeguarding Superhero'
 Aimed at: KS2



[Key Stage 3/4/5 intro video](#)

Lesson Two:
 Task: Generate material to advise parents/carers on how to keep young people safe
 HSCP Priority: Neglect
 Aimed at: KS2/3

Lesson Three:
 Task: Generate material to advise young people of what healthy relationships look like and what to do if support is needed
 HSCP Priority: Peer-on-Peer abuse
 Aimed at: KS3/4



[Key Stage 3/4/5 close video](#)

Lesson Four:
 Task: Debate, prioritise and justify budget-spending
 HSCP Priority: Right Help, Right Time
 Aimed at: KS4/5

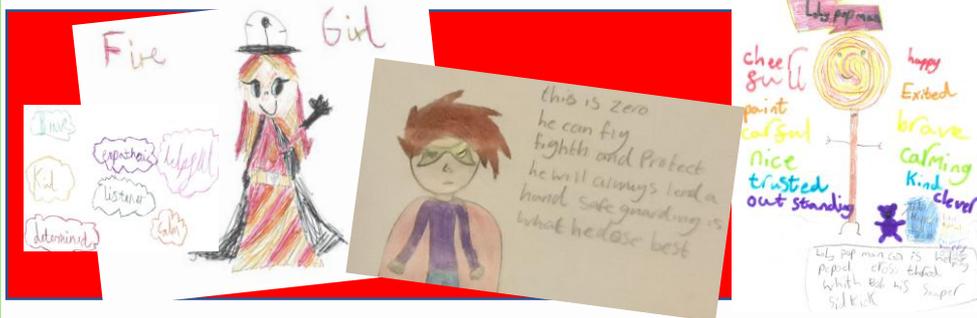


'Make whatever you do exciting'



RESPONSES TO TAKE-OVER CHALLENGE

As well as the participatory benefits (as explained on previous pages), some of the resources gathered will be of direct benefit to the partnership.



Time to get creative!

Think about what would make your 'Safe-guarding Super-Hero' really great

- A nice big picture of them
- Lots of colour (Superheroes are always colourful)
- A good Superhero name (put it at the top of your drawing)
- Words around them to show the qualities they have (and any special superpowers they could have to be even better at their job)

ON THE NEXT PAGE THERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF NORMAL SUPERHEROES TO GIVE YOU SOME IDEAS

LESSON 1

IDEAS

A leaflet that uses the 'Keep Me Safe' tag-line, words and images

Think about what would make a parent want to pick your leaflet up

A short advert using the 'Keep Me Safe' tag-line that could be shown on-line

Think about what would make your advert interesting as well as informative

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR GUIDANCE

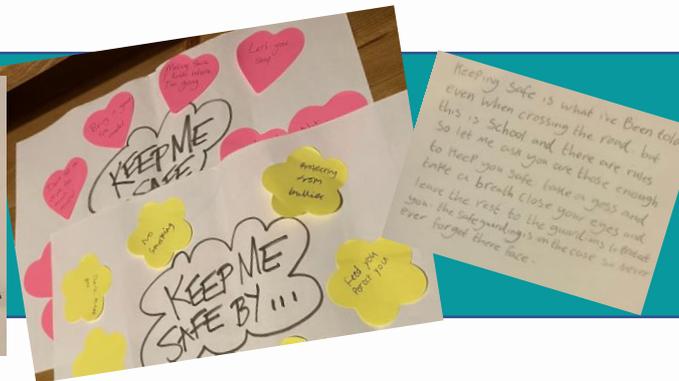
Remember, anything to do with safeguarding (the word we use when we want to stop young people from being hurt, physically and emotionally) can be very sensitive.

Make sure that the resource you create is appropriate for such a serious topic

KEEP ME SAFE!

Being safe is the best way to be. When I'm safe I feel like me. Sometimes things can be a little scary. So as my parents you should be wary. Danger can be anywhere but I won't always understand. To keep me safe I might need a hand!

LESSON 2



WHAT A HEALTHY PEER RELATIONSHIP LOOKS LIKE

Being kind
Being helpful
Knowing who you're talking to
Being honest
Being happy
Being confident
Being respectful

IDEAS

A leaflet showing what a healthy relationship looks like and where to get support (you will need both words and images)

Think about what would make a young person want to pick your leaflet up

A short advert showing what a healthy relationship looks like and where to get support that could be shown on-line

Think about what would make your advert have impact as well as be informative

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR GUIDANCE

A lot of the time, people get into bad relationships because they don't value themselves very much. How could you change this and make them realise it's not OK to be treated badly?

YOU MIGHT HAVE A DIFFERENT IDEA - JUST CHECK IT WITH YOUR TEACHER

A poem or letter written directly to someone who may be in a bad relationship

Think about the impact you would want it to have and what kind of tone would be appropriate

LESSON 3

LESSON 4

DIAMOND 12

PRIORITISE AND JUSTIFY

Take the cards (or write the topics on some post-it notes/scrap of paper) and in pairs or groups organise them into this pattern

You will have to justify your decisions in the following discussion so think carefully.

Remember, when justifying a point, it's not just about why your chosen area is the top priority (in your opinion), but also why it is more of a priority than the others

Think about the placement of these layers too

Top priority for investment

Lower priority for investment

SCHOOL MAINTENANCE AND BUILDING 11	MORE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE OR RESIDENTIAL CARE 4	EARLY HELP FAMILY SUPPORT 6	YOUTH CLUBS, SPORTS AND ACTIVITIES 10
TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS LIKE SOCIAL WORKERS, TEACHERS AND FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS 12	PARENTING COURSES 8	SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES THAT ARE STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY 7	HIRE MORE PROFESSIONALS LIKE SOCIAL WORKERS, TEACHERS AND FAMILY SUPPORT WORKERS 9
FREE SCHOOL MEALS IN THE HOLIDAYS 3	PARKS AND RECREATIONAL SPACES 7	SPECIALIST SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES 5	MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT 1

I would spend most on teachers and support, because if teachers had a level of education increases, level of education of people connected to crime rate, alcoholism and state of country in general. Educated person have lowest chances to do start violence behavior, stealing, bullying, etc. This is proved by loads of statistics and researches. Person with bad education will work on bad job, probably be depressed and his chances

'we need to be asked more about things like this in lessons to allow people to get their ideas and opinions out which could potentially improve things'



YOUNG PEOPLE'S SURVEY TEMPLATE

For a wide-ranging and large snap-shot of views of service provision, surveys are an easy tool to gather both quantitative and qualitative feedback. There are lots of ways to develop on-line surveys (whilst bearing in mind the issues discussed in section 4.3). Google Forms is a particularly quick and easy method and is used in each of the examples below.

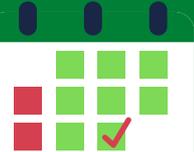
The Edge of Care/Home team use a family feedback form that they ask the children and families they work with to complete

HSCP Voice of the Child survey

This template can be used by any services, but also reflecting on the process of creating them prompts areas to think about:

- Is it clear at the start of the survey why you are asking the questions?
- Depending on the nature of the survey, does there need to be any form of trigger warning at the start?
- Is every question you're asking needed? i.e. Does it serve a purpose? (Either qualitatively or quantitatively)
- Is the survey accessible to all young people? Think about having multiple-language options, whether the literacy demands are age/ability appropriate (or would younger children/AEN need support in understanding elements?) and also consider whether there is a text-reading option for visually impaired students.
- How long will it take to complete? For example, if there are options/drop-down boxes a young person is far more likely to fill it in than if it is an open response box. If it looks like a lot of writing, or likely to take a lot of time, the chances are that the young person won't be keen and may disengage very early on.
- You may also want to consider paper forms or access to a computer, which may be easier to complete than through a phone for example.
- Should some questions be 'required' or do you want to offer elements of choice if some young people are uncomfortable with certain questions?
- Do open response boxes open up risks of safeguarding issues? For example, if a young person fills out an anonymous form but then describes a safeguarding issue, how would you be able to respond?
- Have you put follow-up guidance/support routes if you think it might be needed? (This can help mitigate for the example of safeguarding issues raised above).
- At the end of the survey, is it clear what you will do with the responses? How will you feedback? (Consider how this is going to be possible particularly if responses have been anonymous).

'My family worker was really good as he was straight on it - he asked the right questions'

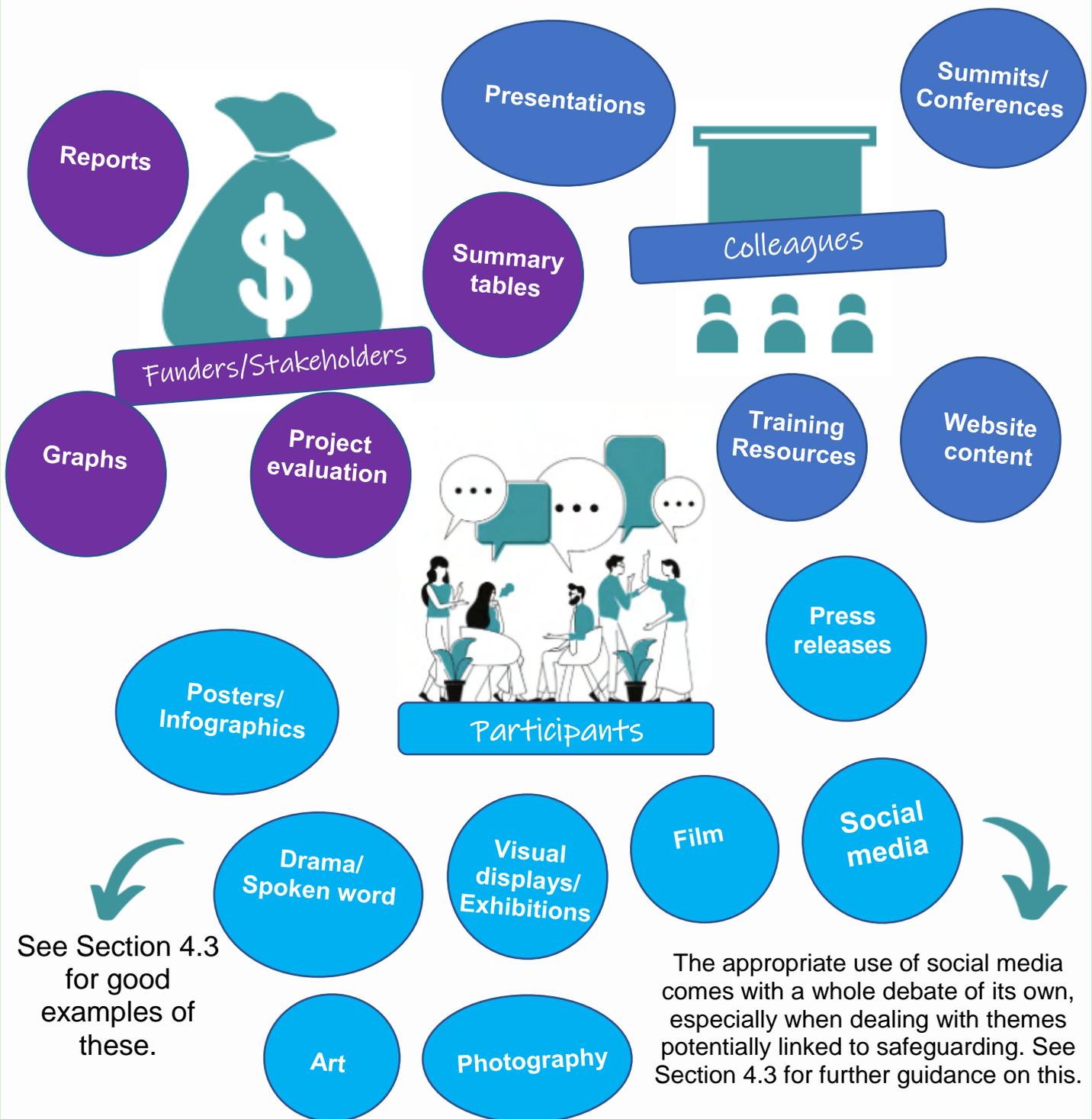


3.3 ACTING ON THE INFORMATION YOU'VE GATHERED

Fundamentally, there is little point conducting participation activities if the results don't have an impact, and if findings are not then shared (see section 4.1).

There are various methods of sharing the information gained from consultations, and the options will largely depend on who the target audience for the findings is.

The diagram below (written content adapted, in part, from *Save the Children Re:actions toolkit, 2001*) displays some of these with possible links to specific audiences.



See Section 4.3 for good examples of these.

The appropriate use of social media comes with a whole debate of its own, especially when dealing with themes potentially linked to safeguarding. See Section 4.3 for further guidance on this.

'I am taken seriously and things are put into place at the right time and at the right speed for me'





WHO LEADS?

There is significant scope to use data findings to highlight areas for development, adjust service and provide training (see Section 2.5). Where the use of information becomes even more valuable is in the creation of resources and systems that come directly from what young people have said.

Can you use material gathered to do the following (for example)?

- Feed into campaigns.
- Create stimulus for training.
- Use as consideration in budget decisions.
- Inspire materials for websites and resources.

Input from young people would therefore be feeding in to **adult-led** change, giving them an element of ownership over processes.



PARTICIPATION GOLD

Another example of adult-led possibilities is that of No Wrong Door's response to Covid and the young people-advised projects it led to. They recently represented Herefordshire in the High Sheriff sponsored National Crimebeat Awards, gaining second place nationally.



[FULL STREAM OF AWARDS EVENT](#)



[YOUTHWATCH](#)

Healthwatch Herefordshire's Youthwatch Project is an excellent example of the power of young people engaging with issues, asking questions and seeking answers from adults, therefore progressing the service. The link to the left shows the impact it's had.



PARTICIPATION GOLD



YOUTH-LED CHANGE

Youth-led change (see 'child-initiated' definitions in the degrees of participation diagram in section 2.1) can, arguably, have even more impact. The information gathered from young people, is then interpreted/given context by young people, projects addressing it are devised by young people, acted on by young people and provision is adapted/improved for young people. The advantages to this are vast, but as the coloured words show, essentially it is a system that gives ownership to young people of projects they will feel incredibly passionate about as, other than at the initial 'gathering' stage, nothing is merely done to the young people. It is all either by or for them.

This approach may need a good degree of professional facilitation, and it is important that the young people are guided to be focused and realistic in how they develop recommendations (i.e. SMART), summarise findings, etc. With good training, building of skills and a bit of guidance, projects like this can become sustainable and, as the adults loosen the reins, the less time is needed from them to facilitate.

Some of the youth-led winners at the National Crimebeat Awards exemplified this, and show the reality of what is possible. The next page outlines the winning project.

"Be open to our suggestions, give us more credit than we're given. We know what we need as well as anyone else"





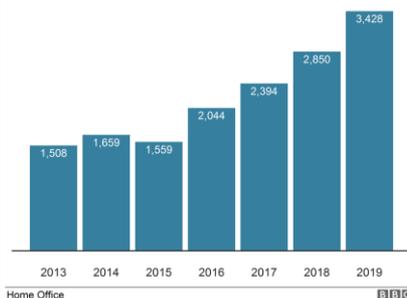
MODEL EXAMPLE

PARTICIPATION
GOLD

The following project was the inspiring winner of the youth-led National Crimebeat Award 2022 and epitomises all that is beneficial about youth inspired projects funded by agencies, but then driven by the young people themselves.

FRIDAYS

Knife crimes in the West Midlands
Recorded offences in year to 31 March



In 2019 the issue of rising knife crime and fire-arm incidents was identified in Coventry.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioning office donated £5000 for a project to find out what young people needed and 18 years old **Tyler Campbell** came up with the idea of 'Fridays'.



With pledges of support and money from local businesses and universities he was able to establish a club that keeps 15-17 year olds safe and off the streets. Young people are signed up with parents/carers' permission and escorted safely to and from the venue. Upstairs is entertainment; DJs, barber shops, activities, and downstairs the focus is on advice, life skills and guidance; mentoring, CV writing, even courses like FEEL (Fridays Empowerment, Entrepreneur and Leadership Programme).



The **Coventry Telegraph** has a video explaining the project in more detail, and, as they say, 'It is a brilliant balance of having a young mind engineer the process, but with the support and belief from the adults around them.'

[VIDEO EXPLAINING THE PROJECT](#)



There are now more than 200 young people engaging with the project each week and they've just received the National Crimebeat Award. As West Midlands Police engagement officer **Peter Sturgeon** said: "It has been immense really...It started off with a basic conversation in the police station at Park Street about an idea, a concept; we never thought it would end up getting a national award."

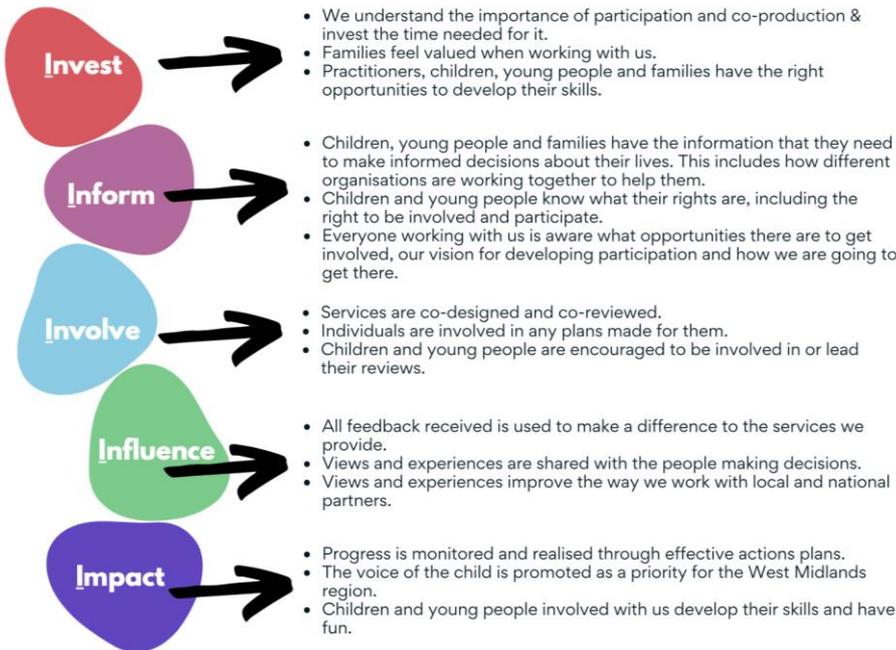
[CHECK OUT FRIDAY'S WEBSITE](#)

'Take them into account more, not just well-being and rules, but aspirations and interests, these are huge factors for young people feeling happy and content with their lives and surroundings'



3.4 EMBEDDING THE LINK BETWEEN VOICE OF THE CHILD AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

Bringing the 5 i's to life



To embed any form of change, structures and systems need to be in place to foster an organisational culture with a clear ethos.

The **West Midland's 5 i's** are a framework to think about participation within the whole system.

How it is actively used in conjunction with tools, exemplars of good practice and, most importantly, continuing input from young people will really define how embedded and successful it becomes.

It's also often easier to embed a culture/mindset if there is a mutual and tangible goal. Similar to the example in section 2.4 where professionals are rewarded on the basis of good practice measured against set criteria, the **NYA's Hear by Right** model allows that for a whole service. The process is explained a little in the NYA diagram to the left. The core values and impact of entering such a scheme are also shown in the young person made (and very quirky!) video from the **Hear by Right Gloucestershire** team.

Participation Pledge

Your Participation Pledge enables you to sign up to our Network of organisations that pledge their commitment to Participation
The Pledge allows you to explore and share your commitment across the Hear By Right values: Inclusion, Empowerment, Commitment, Impact.



Case Study

Your case study will evaluate and share the impact Hear by Right has had on your organisation. Using your Hear by Framework you should share what has been achieved, how it has been achieved and what impact this has made.

Hear by Right Framework

The Hear by Right Framework follows the 'Seven S' model for organisations. These are: Shared Values, Strategies, Structures, Systems, Staff, Skills and knowledge and Style of leadership. You will use these headings as guideline indicators (see above) to map and plan activity within them.

HEAR BY RIGHT GLOUCESTERSHIRE



'It felt like my voice mattered and somebody actually cared enough to listen'



In some cases, the involvement of young people at the very top can ensure a more direct link between voice of the child, organisational priorities, and service improvement. For example, in the commissioning process. One such project is the [Tameside Children's Fund](#) (extract taken from [Good Commissioning: principles and practice – Commissioning Support Programme](#)).

Tameside Children's Fund

Involving children and young people in commissioning ensures that services are meeting people's needs and aspirations. However, it can be difficult to implement this in practice. Tameside has pioneered a consistent approach to the participation of children and young people by establishing a Children's Participation Project as part of Tameside Children's Fund. The Participation Project, provided by the national charity Action for Children (AfC), engages with young people directly on behalf of the CYPSP. Following on from this, a wider Children's Participation Network (CPN) was established with membership from a wide range of partner agencies. The purpose was to bring together everyone involved in participation, to standardise it, share best practice and develop new techniques and skills for engaging children and young people.

The Participation Project supports three key areas of work:

- » building capacity and embedding a culture of participation across the CYPSP and the borough
- » the delivery of the strategic children and young people's plan
- » the development of local democracy: creating school councils, ensuring that young people are represented on district councils, and putting young people at the heart of the decision-making process.

Examples of work the project has undertaken with children and young people include:

- » working with a group of young people to help them participate in the commissioning exercise for a health mentors programme. Young people were trained so that they could sit on the tender evaluation panel
- » engaging a group of young people to be part of the tendering process for substance misuse services. This helped to make the service specification 'young people friendly' and it included developing scoring systems and interview preparation to support the tender process.

COMMUNICATION

Whatever level of participation there is, and whatever strategic routes are taken to improving it, what matters hugely is communication of this within the organisation.

If there is a really focused Participation Theory of Change or logic model to be adopted for example, it must be shared at all levels, and actually be something that all partners take ownership of. A shift to 'open-door', reflective working, in all senses, can not only aid participation and the sharing of good practice within it, but also generate more opportunities for constructive communication between different roles within an organisational hierarchy.



'Listen and respect them as much as you expect them to listen and respect you'



3.5 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Service improvement can certainly be driven by having the right professionals in the right roles, and having young people as a part of the recruitment and selection process can aid this. This is especially the case given that young people know what their needs are in terms of what makes a good professional, but also as so much of the role is relational, seeing a potential candidate with young people is really important.

The extent of the role played by young people in recruitment can vary; they could do as little as give candidates a tour of the building (still enough to gauge the way they talk to young people), or sit on a panel, or even come up with some questions. Why not let them choose an aspect of the criteria based on what they look for from a good candidate?

TEN WISHES

What Children and Young People in Plymouth want from you...

We want professionals to be easier to contact.

We want professionals to be on time, as they expect us to be.

We want professionals to be properly trained and for us to be involved in the training.

We want professionals to ask us what we need and not to assume.

We want professionals to do what they say they are going to do, to listen and stand up for us.

We want professionals to use words we understand.

We want professionals to reassure us something is being done and tell us how long it will take.

We want professionals to understand when we need to talk to them one-to-one.

We want professionals to ask us 'do you feel safe?'

We want professionals to respect us and how we feel.

The [Plymouth Young Safeguarders](#) have a clear list of 'wishes' for professionals that, for example, could form the basis of a question.

Some agencies go even further, so not just playing a role in recruitment and selection but being a regular advisory body. For example, the [Children's Commissioner for Wales](#) has a young people's advisory panel. It outlines the work they do as the following:

- Provide advice and support to the Children's Commissioner about the way they work with and represent children and young people in Wales. 
- Raise awareness of children's rights and promote the work of the Children's Commissioner for Wales. 
- Work with the Commissioner and team to review the work plan each year and provide them with new ideas and feedback. 
- Work with the Commissioner and team to review and improve how the advisory panel is working including



Comisiynydd
Plant Cymru
Children's
Commissioner
for Wales



'Teens know more than they're given credit for, and oftentimes insecure adults will ruin an experience'



4. ASK, LISTEN, ACT, FEEDBACK

4.1 WHY IT MATTERS AND KEY MESSAGES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

As seen in consultations with young people across the county, there is a distinct gap between the support available and their perception of that. Quite often young people will present the view that 'there's no help in Herefordshire', 'professionals don't take any notice of what we say' and, most disheartening of all, 'professionals don't care about us'.

This was, unfortunately, typified by one of the anonymous comments in the survey:

'I opened up to them about a serious matter and they didn't do anything about it and referred me to a support worker who hasn't actually been put in place after months. Made me feel very invalidated as I don't like to open up very much and it clearly wasn't a serious matter to them as they did nothing to help'

Despite this view, there is much good work happening to listen to young people and improve support for them. Professionals consistently fight for funding for projects to improve levels of support, they attend course after course to improve practice and respond to issues that arise, they choose to work in an area that is incredibly hard because they care deeply about young people. So why the disjoint?

Part of it is down to perception and the *tone* of what's being delivered, rather than the service provision itself (see section 1.2) but a large proportion of the mismatch lies with the fact that young people simply don't know about the work that goes on. The implication of this is huge. Children who are in need may not access the relevant support, others may not even see a point in trying and professionals can feel misunderstood and, to a degree, attacked. In terms of participation and Voice of the Child the implication can, likewise, be stark. If they don't see/hear about the difference their opinion makes, why would they continue to bother to contribute? It can, sadly, be perceived as a tick-box exercise rather than something of value that leads to definite change.

Processes to mitigate against this are relatively simple, as other young people identified:

We need a way to feedback our service experiences (and not just at the end of the process)

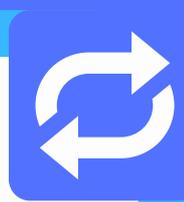
We would like to know how our feedback is acted on/used

We need regular updates when we're involved in services

However, they do require an integrated and systematic approach.

'Services told me they would be in contact and then immediately closed my file, so a better follow up would improve the service'





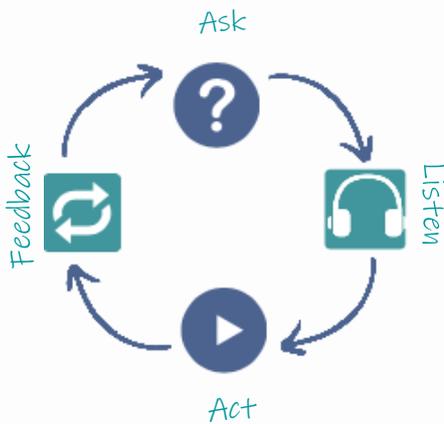
4.2 LOOPED MODEL: ASK, LISTEN, ACT, FEEDBACK

In order to resolve many of the misperceptions discussed on the previous pages, the need for a culture shift away from 'Ask and listen' and even 'Ask and listen and act' to 'ACT, LISTEN, ACT AND FEEDBACK' is a real necessity.

This is the case at every layer of the multi-agency structure, not merely practitioner level (Section 5.3 emphasises this in particular).

It's also important not to view the looped model in isolation. It's completely logical given that young people, their views and needs evolve over time, that so should the process of participation and Voice of the Child. Only then can service provision evolve.

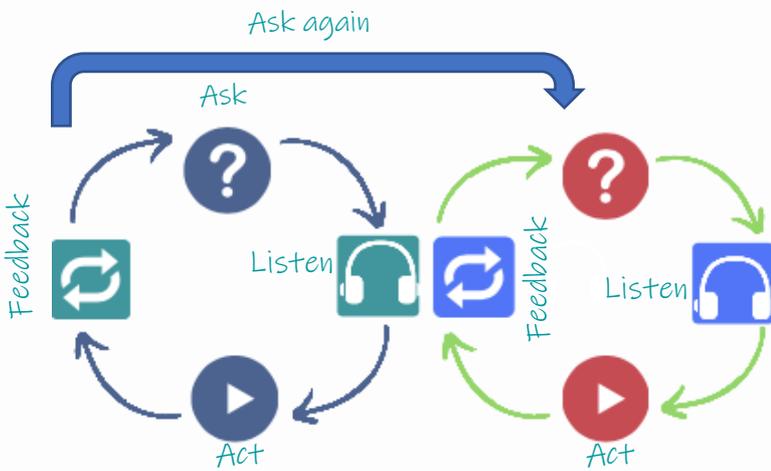
For example, model A shows a successful looped model, but only in isolation.



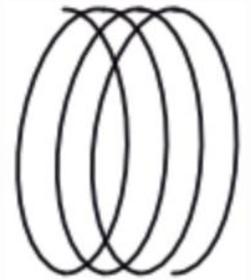
An accompanying analogy may be something like young people are asked where dangerous areas in Herefordshire are, the police and exploitation team listen, and then act to create a rotating patrol around those hot-spot areas. They feed the changes back to the young people that they initially asked, as well as feeding back to the community at large. This would certainly be a participation success.

However, if that was then the end, what if the hot-spots changed? Or what if, as result of the previous action, young people were now finding interior locations – stairwells, school toilets, on buses? If the process of asking again is not done, then the same problems are continually faced and services fail to keep up with evolving behaviours.

Model B is therefore a far more advanced and progressive model in terms of service development.



Instead of having a few quick wins, you have a service that constantly evolves and constantly speaks for young people, which then has far greater long-term benefits.



[ARTICLE ABOUT GENERATION Z](#)

One example of evolving service is that of Hereford FC and their Generation Z project. They had previously run boot camps in the holidays and Going for Goal schemes for young people, integrating football and agencies such as West Mercia Police in response to needs identified by young people. However, as projects ended and feedback was sought again, young people said they'd loved it, it had kept them off the streets, it had given them something to do, but what now? Instead of closing the project on the basis that aims were met and all had benefitted, they refocused on the 'what now?' responses from young people and have now established a youth night called Generation Z (see link to article to the left).



'They listen and find out more about you and then they keep adapting'



4.3 GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT THERE: FORMATS THAT WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

There are many examples of great engagement and decisive child-centred service improvement occurring, but if it is only reported in a word document on a website or emailed to schools and ends up at the bottom of an inbox, the likelihood is that young people won't know.

Using 'youth-friendly' mechanisms of feedback is therefore essential, thinking about language, design, placement and means of dissemination.

LANGUAGE

Getting the language-base right, whether orally (as discussed to a degree in section 1.2) or in written form, can be difficult. One anonymous young person's guidance shows the complexity:

Don't treat them like idiots and small children and don't treat them years above their age but actually treat them their age like and equal. Don't talk down to them and don't act like they're stupid, make sure you're understanding and patient and won't get offended if they yell, obviously they're going to get defensive if you're treating them like they're five. If you're working with a younger person like eight and under don't act like they're adults, they're not, they're kids - for all you know they could be scared of talking to some strange person they don't know. Don't over-act anything, be natural and nice, don't be over nice just talk to them like a human. If they're over nine they are old enough to be treated like an adult, tell it straight, say it how it is - at that age no-one needs you to speak like they don't have a brain cell - yeah, they might be a kid, but don't sugar-coat it at any age. Be calm and more careful with eight and under but not like they're dumb 'cause they'll shut down, won't talk to you and nothing will happen'

As seen, often young people will react differently in different circumstances and this may be age-based but more likely just down to the individual. The safest approach, always, is to simply check readability and tone with a young person before putting it out there. In terms of content, clarity is key, and, again, the best 'proof-reader' is a young person.

DESIGN

Font makes a huge difference. Take the examples below. Two are 'youth friendly' but even then, it would depend on the age of the young person (pink example would be great for primary age young people, but patronising for older ones for example).



'Don't speak to young people like they are stupid, it just makes us switch off and stop listening to you'



Visual designs also need to be bright, bold, age/ability appropriate and, where possible, branded. If the message going out is that the organisation is listening and acting on the Voice of the Child, then young people need to be able to recognise what the organisation is and that means raising its profile.

PLACEMENT

Posters similar to this one that have a simple format and are easy to adapt could be used in a variety of ways. For example, whilst there is a lot of remit for use on social media (see next page), it's also worth thinking about where young people go, where they wait, where they see posters. So, for example, GP waiting rooms, school/college corridors, youth centres, police reception areas, sports clubs, supported housing shared kitchens, council offices etc, etc.

DISSEMINATION

As young people take in information in a variety of ways, and have a variety of preferences, disseminating feedback from projects and outcomes generally in a range of ways makes absolute sense. Section 3.3 outlines some of these, and a website well worth looking at to see how the Voice of the Child can be interpreted in engaging and accessible ways is the Points of View Rural Media project.



[POINT OF VIEW WEBSITE](#)

Point of View is a project from Rural Media consulting with and sharing the voices of 14-25 year olds in rural Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire. Young people are empowered to lead, but also to share views in creative ways such as photography, film, podcasts, art and blogs.

PARTICIPATION
GOLD

'I was accepted for my opinions and they wanted to know more and what they could do'

4.4 USING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS



Using social media as an outlet to get the message out to young people (as well as involve them in participation generally) is an obvious choice in a time when young people are so invested in it.

TikTok, Twitter and Instagram have sped up the ability to feed information back at speed and in engaging ways, as well as to larger numbers than other means of communication can reach.



However, there are extra safeguarding issues to consider when working online. A full understanding of these should allow professionals to capitalise on the benefits of social media, rather than fear it and therefore disregard it as a method of participation.



A really comprehensive resource on this is provided by the NSPCC which covers all of the points to the right.

[NSPCC ONLINE SAFETY](#)



- policies and procedures.
- appropriate language and behavior.
- privacy and consent.
- setting up and managing online forums and communities safely.
- livestreaming safely.
- recording live online sessions.

The firmest piece of advice is to have codes of conduct and online policies in place that protect both the young person and the professional.

So, for example;

- Make sure that devices used by a professional are work-related rather than personal.
- Make sure privacy settings are strong on ALL social media (young people will search and find you!).
- For young people, what is safe for them to share and what is not? This may also vary dependent on the child (for example, those in care) so having very clear guidelines is important.
- What are your procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues that arise? Having boundaries in any work with young people is vital, but with social media this is even more-so the case. For example, if a young person makes a disclosure at your work-place in office hours, there are clear policies to take that forward in the safest way possible for that young person. What if they tweet your service at 2 in the morning though?
- What is your policy on monitoring content and comments?

There are easy ways to manage online forums and communities that can help this and, again, the NSPCC link is fantastic.

There are also online safeguarding audits available on the link and online safety training courses.

Online safety training

Our elearning course will teach you how children use the internet and how you can keep them safe from abuse online.

Take the course

'They listened to me and kept trying different tactics to help me get better'





5. SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SERVICE EVALUATION

5.1 WHY IT MATTERS AND KEY MESSAGES FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

When the results of the HSCP Participation Survey were taken to focus groups, it was possible to dig further into the reasons why results varied so much:

Why were some young people taken more seriously than others?

Why did some feel their voices were acted on, whereas others weren't?

Why were some aware of changes that happened and others weren't?

The phrase that kept returning time and time again was 'It depends...'



"It depends how old you are"

"It depends on whether you live in Hereford or in a rural location"

"It depends on whether you're white middle-class or not"

"It depends which worker you get"

"It depends on whether your family has had problems before"

"It depends on how able you are to understand what they say"

"It depends on whether you've got access to the internet"

"It depends how good your school is at passing messages on"

"It depends on your gender"

"It depends on your gender identity"

"It depends how loud you shout and how much of a fuss you make"

"It depends on how posh you sound"

(All abbreviated)

The reasons for these perceptions have been explored a little in Section 4.1, but whatever the cause, there needs to be less variables and 'it depends...' responses to provision, especially in terms of safeguarding.

Meaningful self-assessment and evaluation is always valuable for practitioners, but is also the starting point for a service to develop a really informed road-map to move forward.

This then enables targeted quality assurance at every level and also ensures that support is made available where this is needed.

'Keep listening and trying to support/help'





5.2 PROJECT EVALUATION TEMPLATE

Useful resource: Participant project feedback form

1/2

Your name:

Project name:

When you joined: Today's date:

About your experience

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
I got the practical info about the project meetings (e.g. what time and where) in enough time before each meeting to feel prepared						
I got enough info about the purpose and content of any meetings beforehand to know what to expect and what my role would be						
It was always clear what decisions in the project young people could and couldn't influence, and why						
I always received feedback within a couple of days of meetings with clear info about the final decisions made at the meeting and the actions being taken as a result						
The way the project was run allowed all young people involved to have an equal say in it						
Adults and young people involved in the project had equal influence on it						
In between project meetings I felt informed and involved						
I received enough support before meetings						
I received enough support during meetings						
I always received any travel or other expenses in good time						
I feel that my contribution to this project was valued and appreciated						

Whether it is the asking, listening, acting or feeding-back element of a process, any project needs to be evaluated. Again, it is part of developing good practice and ensuring that any form of participation is meaningful.

There are various models for this and it will largely depend on the nature of the project as to which you might use.

Useful resource: Participant project feedback form

2/2

What difference did the project make?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
I believe this project will make a positive difference around young people's mental health						
I have learnt more about young people's mental health and/or topics related to this such as participation in this area by being involved in this project						
Through this project I have developed skills that will be useful in other parts of my life in this project						
As a result of being part of this project, I am more likely to take up other opportunities (like volunteering and participation) to have a say around mental health						
I have been introduced to information and resources on this project (e.g. about mental health, volunteering etc.) that will be useful in other parts of my life						
Being part of this project has met my hopes and expectations						

Final thoughts!

What has been the biggest benefit for you personally in taking part in this project?

What have been the best parts of being involved in this project?

If we did a project like this again, is there anything we should change?

The templates shown here are available from the [Young Minds Amplified Evaluating Participation Toolkit](#) (link below). Though the questions are linked to mental health in particular, it is easy to adapt and covers a lot of the key questions that will be useful in assessing successes and routes forward.



[YOUNG MINDS TOOLKIT](#)

For templates to use with younger children, the [Participation Works Toolkit](#) authored by [Amanda Mainey](#) also has excellent examples.

[PARTICIPATION WORKS TOOLKIT](#)



'I had had the same things said to me multiple times, even when what was said previously had made no difference with helping me'





5.3 EVALUATING PARTICIPATION AT ALL LEVELS

Useful resource: Staff project feedback form

Your name (optional): _____

Your role (optional): _____ Today's date: _____

About your experience

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Not sure
Young people's participation in mental health services is important for service development						
Parent and carer participation in mental health is important for service development						
I am confident in being a part of a project that involves young people and carer's participation						
I have the resources to be part of a project that involves young people and carer's participation						
I feel supported by leadership to use participation in my work						
There are opportunities for young people and carers to be involved in the organisation						
Participation is embedded in the culture of the organisation						

What has been the most important message or learning point for you from this project?

What about this project worked really well?

If we did a project like this again for others, is there anything you would change about how it's run?

As with any project evaluation, it's important to reflect on your role as a practitioner. Self-assessment like this can be incredibly helpful and doesn't always need to be fed back. In fact, the more we self-assess rather than 'be assessed' the more likely there is to be genuine change driven by culture shift and desire rather than obligation or fear of missing targets.

Again, [Young Minds Amplified Evaluating Participation Toolkit](#) (link in Section 4.4) has useful templates for this (as shown to the left).

Similar audits and feedback forms can help in framing the quality of participation in a department as well. The onus here is also on the follow-up (mapping followed by planning) and managers can easily develop evaluation plans using existing templates out there. (Such an example below and from the same link as above).

Example evaluation plan

Outcomes	Measures of Success	How we will collect this? (tools/ methods)	Ethical considerations	Who will collect this?	When will we collect this?	Was this evaluation user led? How?	Baseline	Target
Intermediate Outcomes								
Better resources and information are available to young people and carers	% increase of CYP and P&C's who report information is relevant and accessible after resources are co-produced	Experience of service questionnaire	Data protection	CYPMH Service	October - December	CYP analysis of data	47% report information is relevant and accessible before resources are co-produced	80% report information is relevant and accessible after resources are co-produced
Participants feel listened to	% of people who report feeling listened to after the engagement event	Engagement event feedback questionnaire	Informed consent and data protection	CYP's	Event in April	CYP designed feedback form	N/A	75% report feeling listened to in event feedback
Services are more accessible to young people and parents	% of CYP and P&C's who feel service meets their needs	Experience of service questionnaire	Data protection	CYPMH Service	After 5 sessions, or at the end of period of care if less than 5 weeks	No	N/A	80% of respondents feel service meets their needs
Long Term Outcomes								
Participants have increased self-esteem	Increase in participants ratings of their self-esteem	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	Informed consent and data protection	Participation lead	At the start and end of the project	No, as the CYP involved in the project	To be measured at start of project	Increase in self-esteem from baseline measure

'When I have mentioned topics to professionals on a feedback basis, they just ask the same question periodically and hope for change to naturally occur'



As discussed in section 3.4, embedding quality participation that leads to tangible outcomes can be done in a variety of ways. Having clear criteria across an organisation that practice can then be evaluated against, is a very logical step in this. Also mentioned in section 3.4 is the [NYA's Hear by Right](#) standard framework. Though it can be used as a mechanism for rewarding good participation, it can also be used as a free self-assessment tool for services.

The [NYA](#) outlines the tool in the following way:

The **Hear by Right Self-Assessment Tool** makes it easy and practical to map evidence of current participation in your organisation and then develop your strategy to build on it. It has been produced with Participation Works for Voluntary, Community and other Third Sector organisations to help you measure and improve participation in your organisation and show evidence of this to funders and commissioners of services.

More detail is available by visiting the [National Youth Agency website](#)

The service is audited/mapped according to criteria and within this mapping (as seen below) young people also comment on progress of how the indicator is being met. This, once again, encourages services to put young people at the heart of what they do, but also ensures valuable discussion prior to planning (for example, if there is a gap between service self-appraisal and young people's views).

1 SHARED VALUES: MAPPING

1 - In place and effective; 2 - In place, but needs improving; 3 - Currently being established; 4 - Not in place

Indicator	What is the evidence of meeting the indicator?	What do the children and young people say about how this indicator is being met?	Score 1-4 (as above)
Emerging	1.1 The active involvement of children and young people is a central commitment of the organisation		
	1.2 The organisation adopts shared values for the active involvement of children and young people, see for example the <i>Hear by Right</i> Shared Values on the inside cover		
	1.3 The organisation adopts the Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognising Article 12's central role		
Established	1.4 Children and young people take part in reviewing and agreeing the shared values for the active involvement of children and young people		
	1.5 The shared values are made visible and accessible to a wide range of staff and children and young people by, for example, mission statement, charter, pledge or entitlement card		
Advanced	1.6 Shared values are agreed with partner organisations and community groups		
	1.7 The agreed shared values are used to set policy and review performance across the organisation and with partners		

PLANNING ↓

'It helps me to talk and find a way around a problem'



This gives an overview of the categories, with the first few markers for each one (most range up to 7, as seen on the mapping sheet for point 1 on the previous page).

Shared Values

1.1 We have a central commitment to participation

1.2 We show clearly our shared values on participation

1.3 We recognise and promote Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Strategies

2.1 We have undertaken an audit of our resources that support participation

2.2 We have a strategic plan for participation

Structures

3.1 Young people tell us how they want to participate

3.2 We have lots of different ways for young people to participate

3.3 We make sure lots of different young people are included in participation

Systems

4.1 We have a range of policies in place to support participation

4.2 We have budgets and finance systems in place to support participation

4.3 We record and promote 'what's changed' because of participation

Staff

5.1 Job descriptions of key staff include skills and commitment to participation

5.2 Young people participate in the recruitment and induction of key staff

5.3 Supervision and appraisal of key staff includes progress on participation

Skills & Knowledge

6.1 Young people receive participation training

6.2 Staff receive participation training

6.3 Young people have enough information to participate fully

Leadership

7.1 Senior managers and leaders are champions for participation

7.2 Senior managers and leaders support innovation in participation practice

7.3 Senior managers and leaders take an active part in participation events

Whatever system a service adopts (and there are others out there), deciding upon the success criteria is vital, but a broad approach to categories is also advised. Every part of the organisation should be built into the process (the above titles of shared values, strategies, systems, structures, staff, skills and knowledge and leadership enables this).



'Better supplies in the Mental Health sector so that waiting lists aren't months long, and more training for councillors would make a big difference'



There is also an argument for making greater use of an existing self-assessment mechanism that safeguarding partnership organisations complete as part of their duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004. This is a self-assessment or a self-audit form completed by a representative from each agency within the partnership.

The example from the [Surrey Safeguarding Children Board](#) below, shows how a local authority has adapted its self-assessment, to a broader focus on participation without re-inventing the wheel. The full matrix is shown below.



Standard	Examples of Evidence	Score	Descriptors
7.1 Business/Service plans are informed by the views of children and families, including groups who are often excluded e.g. disabled / Looked After Children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer feedback processes, e.g. survey, forums, staff feedback. Business plans for own and contracted organisations have statements that reflect input from children and families Evidence of implementation. Trustee minutes of informed decisions. Evidence referenced in service plan. Assessments illustrate that staff 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence submitted / No service plan or views of children and families not included.
		1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service plan has been developed indirectly from evidence base of children and families. No or little correlation between client wishes and service plan content.
		2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct correlation between service plan contents and the evidence base from children and families. Reference to specific items in evidence base within service plan. Evidence that assessments undertaken illustrate that staff understand the value of equality and diversity
		3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service plans developed in sequence with evidence collection and interpretation. Programme of client feedback and information gathering timed to influence development of service plan. All areas of organisation include client informed decisions. Evidence of children and their families influencing the service plan development, verifying, prioritising and agreeing sign off together with the organisation and their partners. Evidence that assessments undertaken illustrate that staff understand the value of equality and diversity.
7.2 The service design and review process takes into account the views of young people and their families. Consideration is given to the way in which a service can be improved to ensure children's safety and welfare, and information provided is in a format and language that can be easily understood by all service users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures in place to encourage this as an automatic process. Children's wishes and needs being reflected in service design/delivery 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence submitted / No process to gather individual child views.
		1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process in place to gather wishes during client consultations which are then used in case decisions. Some evidence in case files of this process. Evidence that some information given to service users is in a format that they understand and this is documented in records
		2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child views are gathered and recorded early in contact process and at each appropriate point thereafter. Evidence of how these views influence case decisions is detailed. Evidence that information given to service users is in a format that they understand and this is documented in records
		3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and families are part of the "team". Their views are recorded throughout the case file and are encouraged through interactive sessions, tasks and activities around understanding their views. Processes are designed to take into account views and form an essential part of the daily interaction with clients. Evidence that information given to service users is in a format that they understand and this is documented in record

'They are able to compromise and adapt a situation to make everybody happy'



<p>7.3 Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse. This is achieved through information made available for children, young people and parents about where to go for help in relation to maltreatment and abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Websites, posters, prominent display, child guides. Individual case file management involving information given to specific children. Code of conduct. 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence submitted / the organisation does not promote a safeguarding culture.
		1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic promotion through posters and other mass communication means.
		2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes ensure children are informed of the right to be safe at the first interaction and at other appropriate points. This is reinforced by prominent display of posters and leaflets.
		3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organisation utilises a wide variety of communication methods ensuring vulnerable children and hard to reach groups also understand the right to be safe. The information is kept up to date, refreshed and modified to fit the client group. Constantly looking for ways to reach new audiences and keeping messages fresh and appealing.
<p>7.4 Children are listened to, taken seriously and responded to appropriately, including during individual case decision-making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of a culture of listening to children's voices. EHA forms, referral forms, feedback, children and young people surveys, young person panels, forums, audits, case file comments, publicity material, individual responses. When a child is not able to provide their views because of age or ability, the case files record the views of other parties, but make judgements on the child's perspective and needs. Evidence in case file 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence of consultation on population or individual child basis. No evidence submitted No response process for children's voices.
		1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic levels of opportunity for children to be listened to and some evidence of response to children's voices.
		2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidenced opportunities for children's voices within case files and through other forums such as surveys. Policies in place to ensure children's voices are acted upon Evidence that assessments undertaken illustrate that staff understand the value of equality and diversity. Evidence that this is monitored and reviewed by audits.
		3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that assessments undertaken illustrate that staff understand the value of equality and diversity. Evidence that this is monitored and reviewed by audits. Programmed child involvement, planned and co-ordinated. Each child contact provides and evidences an opportunity for the child to be listened and responded to. Regular child forums, opportunities for individual and population feedback
<p>7.5 As a minimum the organisation evaluates outcomes from the perspective of the child or young person.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From referral/ initiation of a service to closure activities and outcomes are evaluated from the perspective of the parents and children. Policy and procedures Pro-formas with outcome recording 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence submitted No evaluation undertaken. CandYP are not identified in evaluation processes as a separate client or potential contact group.
		1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic or inconsistent evidence of child's perspective in outcome evaluation
		2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies ensure that outcomes are evaluated from the perspective of children and young people, in line with the organisation's legislative requirements.
		3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people's perspectives are evidenced throughout the organisation. Outcome targets are developed, written and evaluated with the input from Children and young people's

Again, there are various ways to adapt a model, but the key point is that self-assessing how well you are listening to children, acting on their views and feeding back to them should be paramount.

Continuity of practice and quality assurance has to be in place to ensure ALL young people get the help they need. It shouldn't depend on post-code, or practitioners in a particularly strong department, or which young person shouts the loudest, it is a right of ALL children to receive the very best service that can be provided.

'Let children know that they are important, don't abandon them, make sure they're alright'

CONCLUSION

This toolkit is designed to give all professionals who work with children in Herefordshire – from front-line practitioners to managers and strategic leaders – the understanding and tools to improve how children and young people’s voices are heard and have an impact on matters that affect them.

As a final summary, consider:

- Do your practitioners have the tools, skills and understanding to listen to the views of children, and to ensure that children’s views influence decisions about them?
- Do you support and encourage your team to engage with children and young people in a participative way?
- Do children and young people have the opportunity to feedback on services that affect them?
- Do children and young people have the opportunity to influence your organisation strategically, for example by being involved in priority-setting, or recruitment?
- Do you regularly feedback to children about how their views have had an impact, in a way that is accessible to them?
- Do you self-evaluate how your organisation includes children’s views and opinions, to ensure that you can build on good practice, and correct gaps or poor practice?

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This Toolkit is available online from the [Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Website](#).

Contact admin.sbu@herefordshire.gov.uk for more information.

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