

Bridgend County Borough Council



Participation strategy for children and young people

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Introduction

Bridgend County Borough Council is committed to giving all children, young people and their families every opportunity to participate and have a real say in decisions that affect them. We will involve them in the planning, delivery and evaluation of these services. This is underpinned by the fact that participation has been given a statutory basis under the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, which states that local authorities must “make such arrangements as they consider suitable to promote and facilitate participation by children and young people in decisions of the authority which might affect them, and to publish and keep up to date information about its arrangements.” Furthermore, the Welsh Government have recently introduced the Future Generations Act 2015 which makes public bodies think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and? to take a more joined-up approach. Children and young people will be central to the success of this legislation.

Participation is the active involvement of children and young people in making decisions about the services that affect them or which they use. This is not just consultation – asking for their views and opinions – but genuinely involving children and young people in the decision-making process and giving feedback on how their contribution has made a difference.

Participation is part of the process of valuing and respecting children and young people, and including them in a democratic society. This includes the involvement of children and young people at a number of levels:

- Where individual decisions are being taken about children and young peoples' lives
- Where services for, or used by children and young people, are being developed and provided locally.
- Where national policies and services are being developed or evaluated including consultation on broader issues that may have an impact on children and young peoples' lives.

Why do we need a strategy?

The Welsh Assembly Government has a vision of Wales as a country where children and young people are treated as valued members of the community. This means their voices are heard and their needs taken into account.

This is seen as crucial to the implementation of Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that:

Children have a right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.

In Wales, this commitment to the UNCRC is enriched in legislation with the Rights of Children and Young People (Wales) Measure, 2011. This is encapsulated within the seven core aims set in the Welsh Assembly's document 'Rights to Action' that seek to ensure that all children and young people:

1. Have a flying start in life;
2. Have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities;
3. Enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation and exploitation;
4. Have access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities;
5. Are listened to and treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised;
6. Have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional well-being;
7. Are not disadvantaged by poverty.

The Welsh Assembly Government has further reinforced this vision with a range of policies, initiatives and guidance, for example, 'Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes' and 'Extending Entitlement'.

In addition, Bridgend County Borough is committed to ensuring that all provision for children and young people are delivered in line with the core principles of the National Participation Standards which are outlined in Appendix B.



We recognise that there is already a strong commitment in Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) to the participation of children, young people and their families.

Building on this commitment, BCBC has established a 'Participation Strategy Group' to develop this strategy, which aims to further encourage participative activity, making sure that it is of good quality and uses consistent standards. BCBC is looking for a strategic local approach which is sustainable at all levels.

The strategy will also enable organisations and service providers to plan more effectively by working more closely with service users and with each other.

The strategy identifies the following key outcomes for children and young people to achieve under this core aim 5:

Every child and young person has the opportunity to:

- Engage in meaningful decision-making on issues that affect their lives;
- Become involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services;
- Knows about their rights and how to obtain them;
- Be valued and respected as a member of society;
- Be able to freely express their cultural identity and race;
- The strategy will;

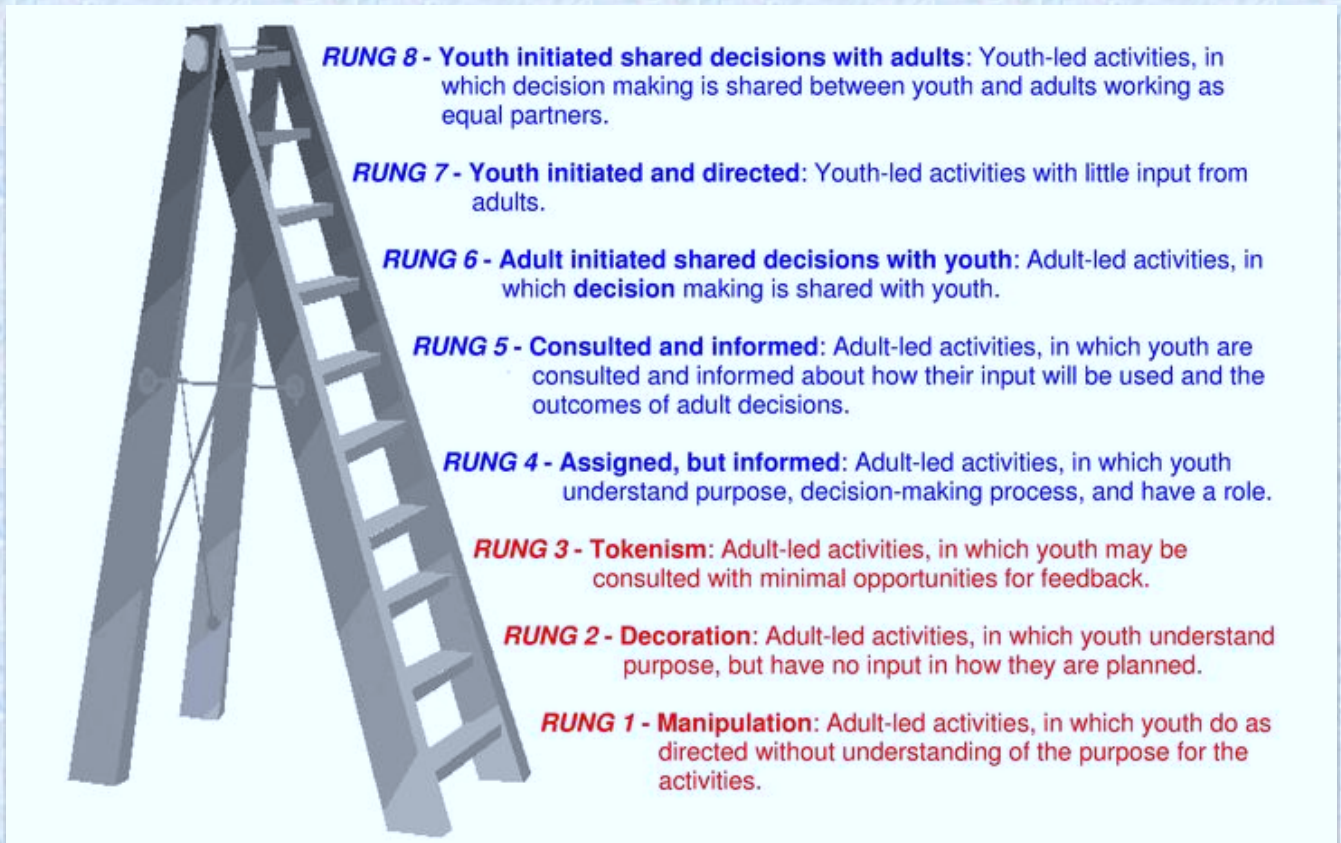
Ensure that participation activity is well co-ordinated.

- Take children's rights seriously;
- Ensure that hard to reach and disadvantaged children and young people are involved;
- The implementation of this strategy will help us deliver this priority and improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

How will we know?

The level of involvement of children and young people will increase as the participation strategy is developed.

One way of measuring the involvement of children and young people is the 'Ladder of Participation' developed by Roger Hart and published by UNICEF:



Benefits of participation

Evidence suggests that participation provides wide ranging benefits for children, young people and their families, the organisations working with them and for the communities they live in. These include:

Benefits for children, young people and their families include:

- They feel respected and listened to; and learn to listen respectfully to others, helping everyone to get on better;
- Can build their self-confidence and self-esteem;
- They feel that they have an opportunity to play an active part in their community and can make a difference to their own lives and others;
- They feel more motivated and achieve more;
- Less bullying;
- They can gain new skills such as problem-solving, decision - making, negotiation, listening, communication and feedback;
- They are likely to feel more involved in group and democratic processes, and will have a better understanding of the society in which they live;
- Improved services that meet their needs.

Benefits for organisations include:

- Services and policies designed, delivered and evaluated based on identified needs of children, young people and their families;
- Improved behaviour and enhanced relationships;
- Better targeting of resources; More effective services and improved outcomes;
- Enhanced credibility and reputation;
- Better safeguarding;
- Better quality and more inclusive decision-making;
- Increased capacity and sustainability.

Benefits to the community include:

- Enhanced relationships between children and young people and other community members;
- Healthier children and young people;
- Better designed facilities for children, young people and their families;
- Less vandalism;
- Less bullying;
- Reduced anti-social behaviour and crime-levels;
- Improves social networks and increases community cooperation.



Providers from both the voluntary and statutory sectors have tailored activities to the particular issue being addressed and the outcomes being sought. Examples of these different approaches include:

Aim	Activity	Gaps
Young people to be regularly consulted at key times about their views.	Involving children and young people in recruitment processes and in assessing services and plans for new developments.	Involvement of young people in recruitment and selection is patchy and mechanisms for this need to be enhanced.
Improve services by learning from the experiences of children and young people who are receiving services. Feedback into policies and practice to make changes.	Young people organising consultation events for/with other children and young people.	Young people's involvement needs to be further developed at a service design level.
For young people to have a sense of agency or control, to make a positive contribution. Help young people feel more like stakeholders.	Using a single large consultation exercise or working with smaller targeted groups or as part of a planned programme to gain the views of children and young people on specific issues.	
	Involving children and young people directly in service delivery by them producing materials to inform or to be used by other children and young people.	
	Children and young people have their voices heard through school councils.	
	Children and young people having their voices heard in a range of planning processes, both county wide and community-based.	
Map current local provision around the 7 National Participation Standards.	Through the participation strategy group, the level of participation around the national standards will be monitored and measured.	
i. Young people across Bridgend County Borough will understand their rights and will be encouraged to participate. ii. Frontline staff to be aware of and know how to promote rights and participation.	Dissemination of information; Social Media, Rights Respecting schools (supported by school councils). Adopt National Participation Standards – school and youth councils to get strategic membership/cabinet to agree and sign up to the standards.	

Embed children and young people's participation in all aspects of planning, delivery and reviewing of services across Bridgend County Borough.	Develop and introduce a Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) when proposing new policies, or changing existing policies.	
To ensure that young people are represented, and to have a voice among strategic networks which are relevant to the changes which might affect them.	Youth Council representation on Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, and/or Scrutiny reports to be sent to the Youth Council before being presented; representation of young people via the LSB and other strategic networks.	
To encourage young people's involvement and input within the implementation of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (2014), as well as the Shared Purpose Shared Futures (2015).	Implementation via the Public Service Board.	
Ensure the participation of all young people including the most vulnerable and disengaged young people.	Work with services/provisions delivering to young people specific to the nine protective characteristics – considering geographical spread.	

Promises

BCBC will require that all agencies and organisations working with children and young people sign up to the promises given below. This demonstrates a visible commitment to the CYPP's vision, and of working with and toward the National Participation Standards, which have been developed by children and young people themselves. We promise our information will be provided in appropriate formats/languages which will support children and young people to decide on whether or not they wish to become involved - standards 1 & 2

1. We promise to ensure that all children and young people have opportunities to be involved in participative processes irrespective of where they live, their needs or circumstances -Standard 3
2. We promise to respect and value the contributions of all children and young people - Standards 4
3. We promise that we will at all times endeavour to make sure that children and young people find participating a positive experience - Standard 5
4. We promise we will always keep children and young people informed of how their ideas have been used by giving feedback - Standard 6
5. We promise the way we work with children and young people will get better because we have/will take into account their views - Standard 7
6. We promise that we will take account of the views of parents and carers in fulfilling our promises to children and young people, where this is appropriate.



What are we doing well?

There are a number of aspects where BCBC and its partners are enabling children and young people to participate in decision making:

- All schools in BCBC have a school council and these make a significant contribution to the running of their schools.
- A Youth Review was undertaken in 2015 with 2,800 respondents. The findings from this review have identified gaps in service delivery. BCBC and partners are responding to these results.
- We have a Youth Council which annually elects a Youth Mayor.
- There is a strong commitment by all agencies to enable children and young people make a positive contribution to their communities.
- Elected members and senior officers have attended events to engage with children and young people in the design and evaluation of services.
- There are good opportunities for young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them.
- Children and young people can make a positive contribution to the way services operate.
- A very high percentage of children in Care contribute to their reviews and individual care plans.
- BCBC and its partners consult with children and young people in a variety of different ways.

Areas for development

We know that we can do better. A participation strategy group is being established to ensure we engage children and young people more effectively. Our plans include the setting up of specific interest groups of the Youth Council to directly influence services and speak to members and senior managers within all service areas.

These interest groups have been established by the Youth Council to reflect young people's current priorities in Bridgend County Borough, which include mental health, Young Carers, school issues, bullying/cyberbullying and community issues. Our activities include:

School councils can be supported to comment on broader issues affecting children and young people in the wider community, and to receive feedback on how their ideas are being implemented or reasons why this was not possible.

More participation of service users in some service areas, such as the introduction of a disabled young people's forum.



Having a positive and consistent approach will enable children and young people to be involved in the development of services across the range. For example, to ensure young people who are old enough know about their rights to information relating to every service.

The way forward

BCBC will promote and encourage those working with children and young people to begin using the 'National Children and Young People's Participation Standards Self-Assessment Pack', as a tool to determine this baseline, from which progress can be measured. We plan to measure, and monitor the implementation of participation across Bridgend County Borough through the following mechanisms which were set up as a benchmarking tool for quality assurance around participation: -

1. Participation Unit's Kite Mark for effective participation.
2. A local 'Participation Quality Assurance Model' in partnership with the CRU.
3. Save the Children's 'Spider Tool'.

Statement of intent

BCBC has identified resources to co-ordinate, develop, monitor and review participative activity, ensuring that the participation agenda is moved forward through partnership working, to achieve a consistent, county-wide approach.

BCBC will raise the profile and promote the benefits of participation and share current skills and good practice to agencies and organisations, children, young people and their families and to other community members, through existing networks.

BCBC will support partner organisations to develop the skills required to facilitate the widest possible participation of children and young people and their families, including those that are hardest to reach.

BCBC will build on and refine existing structures and forums to support and encourage participation at strategic and operational levels.

BCBC will identify a range of methods of communication which are known to be popular with children and young people, and will ensure that children and young people have better information and a proper understanding of their right to have their voice heard in decisions that affect them.

Legislation, policies, guidance and reports

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12

EU White Paper, A New Impetus for European Youth (2002)

Children and Young People: A Framework for Partnership (2002)

Children and Young People: Rights to Action (2004)

Children Act 2004

Stronger Partnerships for Better Outcomes (2006) (guidance on local duties to cooperate under the Children Act 2004)

Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond the Boundaries (2006)

Extending Entitlement: Supporting Young people in Wales (2002)

All Wales Youth Offending Strategy (2004)

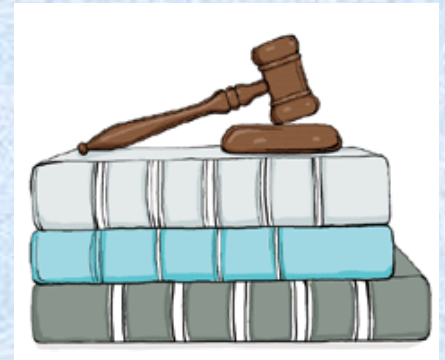
The Learning Country: Vision to Action (2006)

Communities First - Guidance for Local Authorities (2002)

Health Social Care & Well Being Strategy Policy Guidance (2003)

National Service Framework for Children and Young People and Maternity Services (200s)

Telling Concerns and Children Don't Complain - Children's Commissioner Reviews, published in 2003 and 2005 respectively.





Useful resources

Barnardo's

www.barnardos.co.uk

Children and Young People's Unit

www.cypu.gov.uk

Children in Wales

www.childreninwales.org.uk

Children's Commissioner for Wales

www.childcom.org.uk

NSPCC

www.nspcc.org.uk

Participation Unit, Save the Children

participationunit@savethechildren.org.uk

Save the Children

www.savethechildren.org.uk

Urdd Gobaith Cymru

www.urdd.org

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

www.participationcymru.org.uk

