

Principles of youth participation



What is youth participation?

Youth participation is about young people having a say in decisions that affect their lives, organisations and communities.

In particular it means that:

- young people have an important contribution to make in decisions that impact on their lives, organisations and communities;
- young people have the skills, knowledge and confidence to get involved with decision making; and
- a culture exists within which young people's opinions and contributions are recognised, valued and acted upon by wider society.

Principles

We believe that the following principles should underpin youth participation:

1. Young people are involved because they want to be

The involvement and participation of young people is on a voluntary basis because they believe in the importance of the issue and that their participation will make a difference.

2. Young people have a choice about how they get involved and at what level

Young people have the opportunity and choice to get involved at any and all levels of decision making, through activities that are fun and creative and that suit their skills, abilities and interests.

3. The diversity of young people is valued

Young people's diversity of experience, background, belief and talent offers a unique resource for organisations, communities and society. Celebration of diversity is a key part of participation and increased understanding and acceptance should be an outcome.

4. Participation is accessible to all young people

All young people should be valued equally and opportunities offered fairly. Young people who need extra support to take up these opportunities should be given it. Anyone who discriminates against a young person should be challenged. This also means that decision-making processes should be accessible and welcoming to young people, whether in terms of language, location, timing, costs or other factors.

5. Everyone is honest and open about process

Adults and staff should be open and honest with young people about what they are trying to do, why they are doing it and how much influence or power young people will have.

6. There is equal partnership between adults and young people

Young people and adults can learn a lot from working together. Opportunities for adults and young people to work and learn together should be created and valued.

7. Young people are encouraged to come up with their own ideas and solutions

Young people-led approaches enable young people to take action themselves on issues they want to address or things they want to achieve, in a way that they feel happy with. This brings enormous benefits for young people and should be encouraged.

8. Barriers that stop young people from getting involved are challenged

If the way decisions are made or the way an organisation is set up prevents young people from getting involved and having a say, it should be challenged and where possible changed.

9. The value of young people's work, ideas and skills is recognised

It is important to recognise the contribution of young people, value it, use it and ensure that there are real outcomes for young people, both as a group through their impact and individually through their empowerment.

10. Young people's involvement makes a difference

Ultimately young people should have made a difference through their involvement and they should know it. Young people should receive feedback, be involved in monitoring, evaluation and deciding what happens next.

