

The Participation and Consultation of Young People (13-19+) in Sheffield

Central Community Assembly Report – September 2009



Acknowledgements

The Children and Young People's Empowerment Project and Sheffield Futures would like to thank all the practitioners, organisations and especially all the Young People who gave up their time to take part in the activities that have led to the production of this report. Their support and commitment is greatly appreciated. We would also like to thank the young people who have agreed to take part in local participation events where this work will be presented. Thank you to all of those young people who have agreed to showcase their work at these events.

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1. Information on Groups mapped

1. Introduction

This report is one of eight that have been produced for Sheffield, (one for each Community Assembly and one City Wide Report) as part of the 13 to 19+ Participation Strategy Project carried out by The Children and Young People's Empowerment Project in partnership with Sheffield Futures. The project was commissioned by Sheffield City Council's Children and Young People's Department on behalf of the Sheffield 0 to 19+ Partnership Board (Sheffield's Children's Trust) as part of the delivery of Sheffield's 0 to 19+ Consultation and Participation Strategy, and has been overseen by the Multi Agency Participation Group, MAP (a sub-group of the 0 to 19+ Partnership Board).

1.2 Sheffield's Context

Within the context of the Sheffield 0 to 19+ Consultation and Participation Strategy, Consultation is defined as asking children and young people about their views on issues that affect them and acting on them or taking them into account. Participation is defined as the active involvement and inclusion of children and young people in decision making about the services they receive, the areas where they live, the communities of which they are a part of, the political decision making structures and processes that affect their lives.

The 13 to 19+ Participation Strategy Project is part of a series of wider activity under the 0-19+ Partnership's Strategy. The information collated from this work has contributed towards the development of a 13 to 19+ Toolkit which aims to encourage and support youth consultation and participation at any level.

More information on all of this and other work being undertaken to deliver the strategy can be found at: www.sheffield0to19.org.uk/participation

1.3 Sheffield's 13 to 19+ Participation Strategy Project

The project was established in August 2008 and runs until 31st March 2009. The remit of the project is to establish the current provision for young people across the city and identify the level of participation practice within these. To then disseminate this information across the city and support the development of participation activity. This is being achieved by completion of the following:

- To map the provision of activity for young people aged 13 to 19 (25 for those with additional needs) across the city within each Community Assembly area, and 'City Wide' activity (available to young people from all areas across the city.)
- To audit and assess the level of young people's participation within current providers of youth provisions from both a practitioner and young people's perspective.
- To produce a 13 to 19 Participation Toolkit to provide practical support to practitioners and decision makers to increase young people's participation in decision making
- To compile the findings into reports and present these to service providers and decision makers in each area at Community Assembly Events. Through workshops and discussions, encourage attendees to improve and increase opportunities for young people's participation within each area and across the city.
- To work in two Community Assembly areas from November 2009 to March 2010 to support young people to begin to set up participation activities and structures. This includes piloting a school and community based model and evaluating the effectiveness of these.

2. Methodology

Mapping of provision

Desk top research was undertaken to identify current deliverers of youth provision for young people aged 13-19+ across Sheffield. Groups were identified by utilising existing tools, practitioners, young people's networks and local websites such as 'Help Yourself' and 'Ask Sid'. The mapping exercise identified 300 organisations in Sheffield that provided services for young people.

Practitioners' questionnaires

Questionnaires were sent to the 300 organisations and 78 were returned, (26%) asking them about the levels of participation they thought young people had within their group, the organisation and the wider community.

Young Peoples' focus groups

All the practitioners who returned questionnaires were asked to invite the young people in their delivery groups to take part in a Young People's Focus Group. Of the 78 groups invited 32 focus groups were carried out, (42%), this being 11% of all groups mapped.

Schools

All secondary schools have been included in the mapping exercise and have school councils, however few returned questionnaires, so it was not possible to gather sufficient information about how effective young people's participation is within them to provide specific information. A separate audit is currently being carried out and results from this will be made available to Community Assemblies. Of those that did respond, their comments have been included in the general findings.

All of the practitioners and young people who took part in this project remain anonymous, consequently young people and practitioners cannot be identified. The methodology used for the purpose of this project was appropriate, ethical and efficient in producing the information required. The data collection strategy used in this project was a 'triangulation method' (Kelle and Erzberger, 2004, Flick, 2004). This approach combines multiple data collection strategies.

Four responses were received anonymously so it was not possible to know which area they were based in. It was decided therefore to include these in the city wide report.

3. Analysis of Results

A combination of graphs, charts, comments and quotes have been used to present the findings along with analysis and possible interpretations of data. Comparisons with whole responses gained from all participants have been provided in some cases to allow for meaningful comparisons to be made

Please note: not all the questions asked were answered by all participants. Four responses were received anonymously and have been included in the City Wide report.

Five questionnaires were returned for the Central Community Assembly.

3.1 Adults' Questionnaires

Adult Questionnaires

- Q.1)** To what level would you say young people are involved in deciding what the group/project does? (Please tick one)

Young people are not involved at all	0
Young people have little involvement	1
Young people have some involvement	1
Young people have a lot of involvement	3
Total	5

Examples given were:

"Through the intervention (initial) stage we consult with young people and explore ideas and issues they have and work together to develop ways of addressing them".

"We ask for young people's ideas for projects and performances and they are heavily involved in choreography dance routines. We also changed our group's location and day as per young people's request".

- Q.2)** Are the ideas of the young people in your group(s) listened to and are these ideas responded to in a realistic way?

Young people's ideas are not listened to	0
Young people's ideas are listened to a little	0
Young people's ideas are listened to & taken into consideration	2
Young people's ideas are listened to and used extensively	3
Total	5

- Q.3)** To what level are young people able to influence the decision making of the organisation?

Young people are not involved at all	1
Young people have little involvement	1
Young people have some involvement	1
Young people have a lot of involvement	2
Total	5

Examples given were:

"Through the deployment stages of our organisation, we put young people's ideas into change, through verbal and written consultation around company policy, which is also explained. We are transparent about any changes and feedback their opinions" (Youth Worker, Sheffield Futures).

"Although we look at club members choices, we find it difficult to give them what they want (e.g. Alton Towers) given funding constraints"

- Q.4)** To what level are young people able to influence decision making which affects their lives (e.g. in their communities or services that affect them)

Young people are not involved at all	0
Young people have little involvement	3
Young people have some involvement	2
Young people have a lot of involvement	0
Total	5

"Young people are currently at the early stages of participation; however we are hoping to promote benefits of young people's involvement in their communities to stakeholders to achieve this goal. Currently working with police to organise regular football matches and develop better links"

"Family expectations determine what young people do".

- Q.5)** Do you review and evaluate the activities young people take part in? (Please circle one)

Yes	5
No	0
Not Sure	0
Total	5

- Q.6)** Do the outcomes of these evaluations ever effect any changes within the group?

No effect at all	0
Have little effect	1
Have some effect	3
A lot of effect	1
Total	5

Q.7) What do you feel, if any, are the barriers for young people to be involved in decision making in:

Their group?

- Confidence,
- Lack of resources/ knowledge/ opportunity,
- Peer pressure and time,
- Not finding it interesting,
- Not unafraid to speak up but most seek approval from others,
- Wide age range and wide range of interests,
- Their understanding of finances,
- Some quieter group members are unlikely to speak out with their opinion.

The organisation?

- The young people have a little say in the youth side but we are a big organisation that isn't only youth,
- Will of young people to be involved in adult structures,
- Ever changing policies and contractual agreements with set targets,
- Not understanding working of company - budget/risks/insurance,
- The community affects the decisions we make - the wider community needs pleasing,
- Legal and funding constraints.

Their communities/areas?

- Motivation,
- Accessibility to groups,
- Interest (lack of it),
- No structure/will/ systems,
- Adults not seeing the benefits of youth involvement and/or using young people as tokens,
- Don't understand how to influence community,
- Not always taken seriously by older members of community - bad press.

Q.8) Do you offer any training for young people to support them to be involved?

Yes	2
No	1
Not Sure	2
Total	5

Q.9) Would you be interested in attending training around supporting young people's participation and involvement in decision making?

Yes	5
No	0
Maybe	0
Total	5

Q.10) If yes/maybe what type of things would you like to cover? (please tick all you require)

Definition of participation	3
Barriers of participation	5
Methods of participation	5
Sheffield Participation Strategy	3

Q.11) Would you be interested in receiving some tools/resources to support you with encouraging young people's participation and decision making?

Yes	3
No	0
Maybe	2
Total	5

3.2 Young People's Focus Groups

This section explains step by step the process of the young people's focus group as undertaken by a Participation Strategy Member. The results of each of the four activities are clearly detailed and discussed where necessary.

Five focus groups took place in the East Community Assembly area.

- **Activity 1: My Group**

Using flip-chart paper the participating young people were asked:
"Why do you go to your group?" and "What does your group do?"

In response to why they come to their group the following answers were given:

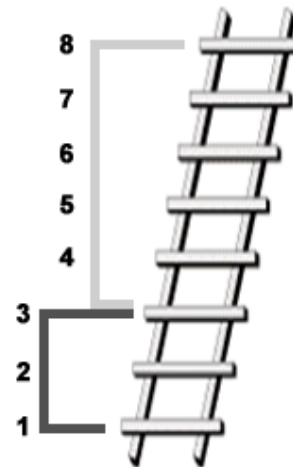
- make friends
- Learn new skills
- because its fun for the kids
- let my child meet new friends
- something to do with my day
- because all the kids can play
- To meet other young mums
- Play games with my friend
- Dance
- because I feel like I can be myself
- to have a good time
- to see people I wouldn't normally see
- the people (AKA Kinder) is really supportive
- it's amazing
- It feels like home
- to be supported
- I love it! I come here because I enjoy interesting conversations
- So we can have our say to improve our area
- To try and make Broomhall a better environment
- For friends and to improve Broomhall
- To see da Rev G!
- close community
- advice
- gain confidence
- mix
- a voice in the community
- guidance
- responsibility for actions
- to socialise with others
- social gathering
- talk to friends
- have a laugh
- meet new friends
- fitness
- keep out of trouble
- nothing to do

In response to what your group does Young people wrote their answers on post-it notes and placed them onto flip chart paper to be used in activity 2

- **Activity 2: Ranking Participation**

Hart's (1992) 'Ladder of Participation'

- Young people & adults share decision making and action
- Young people lead & initiate action
- Adult initiated, shared decisions with young people
- Young people are consulted and informed
- Young people are assigned and informed
- Young people are tokenized
- Young people are decoration
- Young people are manipulated



Adapted from Hart (1992)

Young people were issued with a set of adapted statements based around Harts ladder of participation. Young people placed the statements in a ranking order. The lowest ranking position started from the bottom and was identified as poor participation. The highest ranking position was at the top and was identified as very good participation. Very good participation was explained as the ideal way that adults and practitioner's work together with young people.

The following table denotes the adapted statements in correlation with Hart's 'Ladder of Participation'. The statements have a corresponding number which represents the level of young people's participation, the higher the number equates to high levels of participation:

Harts Ladder	Statement number	Statement
8	6	Young people have an idea. Adults join them in making it happen.
7	5	Young people have an idea and make it happen. Adults are there to help but aren't really involved.
6	4	Adults have an idea. Young people join them in making it happen.
5	3	Adults have an idea and make it happen. Young people have a full understanding and give their views. Adults respect & consider young people's views.
4	2	Adults have an idea and make it happen. Young people have some understanding & give their views. Adults respect but don't consider the young people's views.
3, 2, 1	1	Adults have an idea and make it happen. Young people have no understanding. Adults don't respect or consider young people's views.

Focus group responses

Young people undertook the task of ranking the statements. The results below suggest that the participating groups had a varied understanding of very good participation and a generally good understanding of poor participation. For example, Groups A, E and F disagreed with what very good participation is. It could be argued that the participating young people are confused between young people owning and fulfilling an idea with the support of adults and young people and adults working together in partnership successfully.

Statement	Order young people put statements on ladder (Read results vertically)				
	Groups				
	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D	Group E
Young people have an idea. Adults join them in making it happen.	3	6	6	5	5
Young people have an idea and make it happen. Adults are there to help but aren't really involved.	4	4	3	4	6
Adults have an idea. Young people join them in making it happen.	5	5	4	6	4
Adults have an idea and make it happen. Young people have a full understanding and give their views. Adults respect & consider young people's views.	6	3	5	3	3
Adults have an idea and make it happen. Young people have some understanding & give their views. Adults respect but don't consider the young people's views.	2	2	2	2	2
Adults have an idea and make it happen. Young people have no understanding. Adults don't respect or consider young people's views.	1	1	1	1	1

Young people placed the activities identified in activity 1 against the statements. The following table identifies young people's activities and the statement numbers the young people felt they related to:

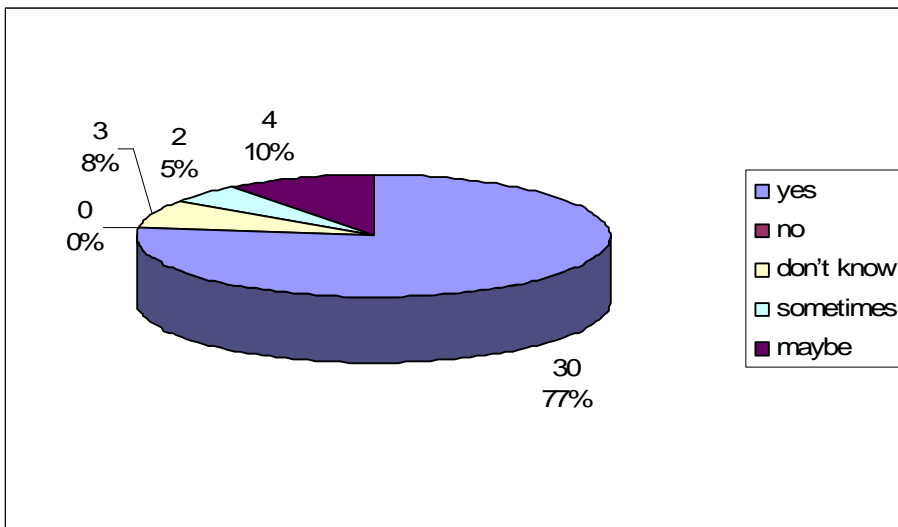
Activities	Statement Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pamper day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy Litter picking Residential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maths Design youth club logo Go on trips Basketball Table tennis Remote control cars Wii 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Butlins Art work Went to see a play Art 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flamingo land Cadbury world Cineworld Party Make-up Badge making Rich & famous party Smoothie making Movie Night Play on Wii Fancy dress party Baking Salsa lessons Have fun Chill's got talent

- **Activity 3: Making a Difference (Vote on your feet)**

This activity was an opportunity for young people to 'vote on your feet' to a series of questions asked by the facilitators. Young people responded by standing in front of the card that had the answer on that they agreed with. The following outlines the facilitators question and the young people's response.

1.

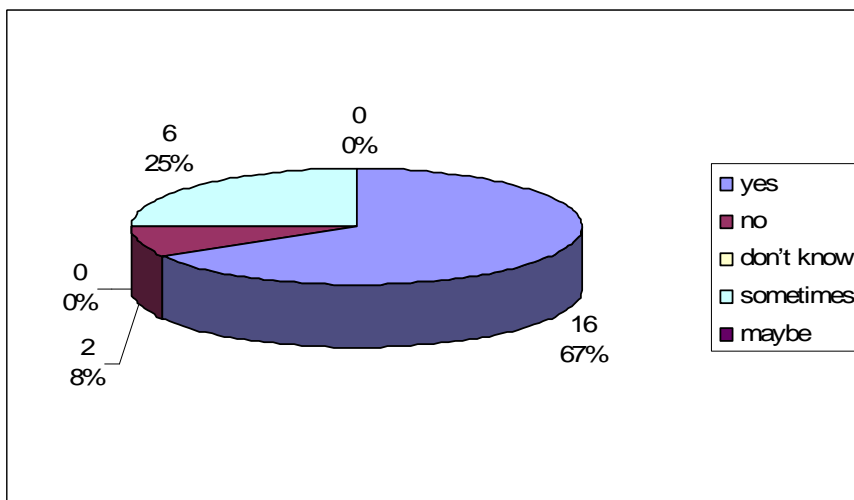
A) Have you ever done any training within your group?



Examples:

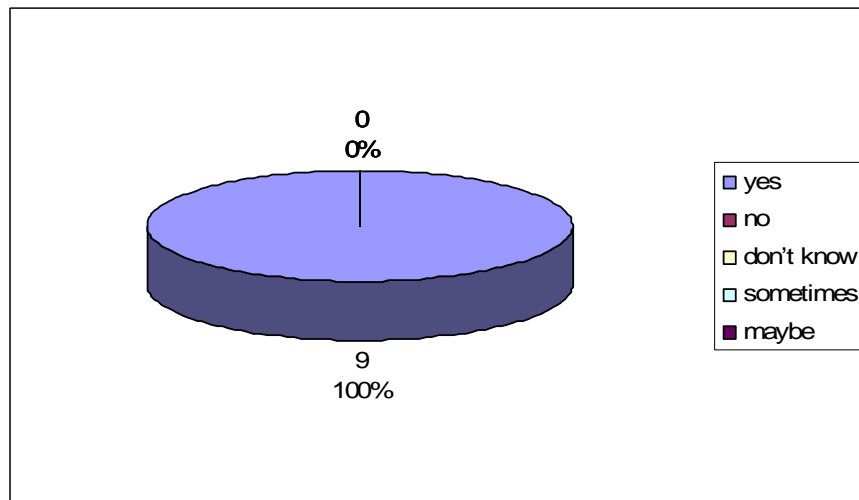
- Mosaic
- Calligraphy
- Circus skills
- Neighbourhood Youth Forums

B) (For those saying yes) Have you used any of the skills you learnt from training?



How/What for?

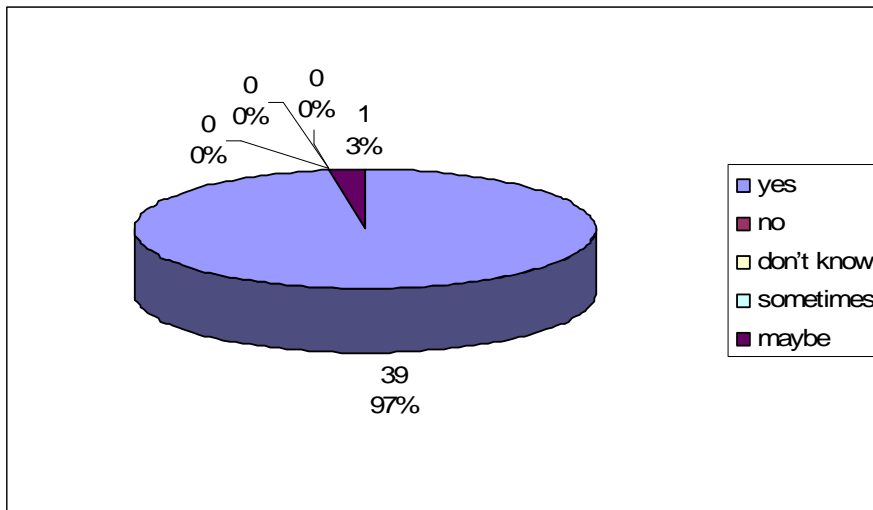
- Juggling!
- C) (For those saying no) have you done other things that have developed your skills and confidence?



Examples:

- None given

- D) Would you like the opportunity to do some training, learn new skills and develop your confidence? Can you think of anything you'd like to do?
- E)

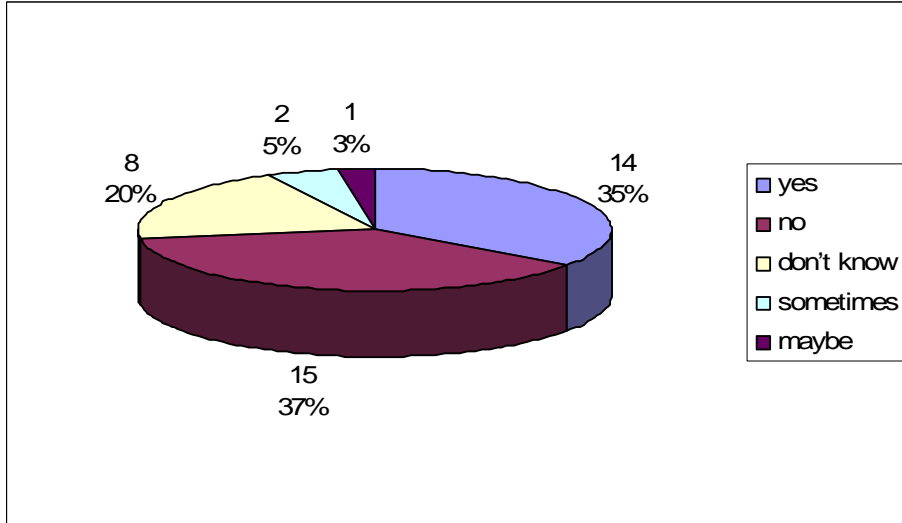


Examples:

- Key skills
- Health and safety
- Looking after a 'baby' (computerized model) for a week
- Beer goggles
- Dance
- First Aid
- Cookery

2.

F) Have you ever been able to represent your peers to decision makers within the community?



If yes - when & who to?

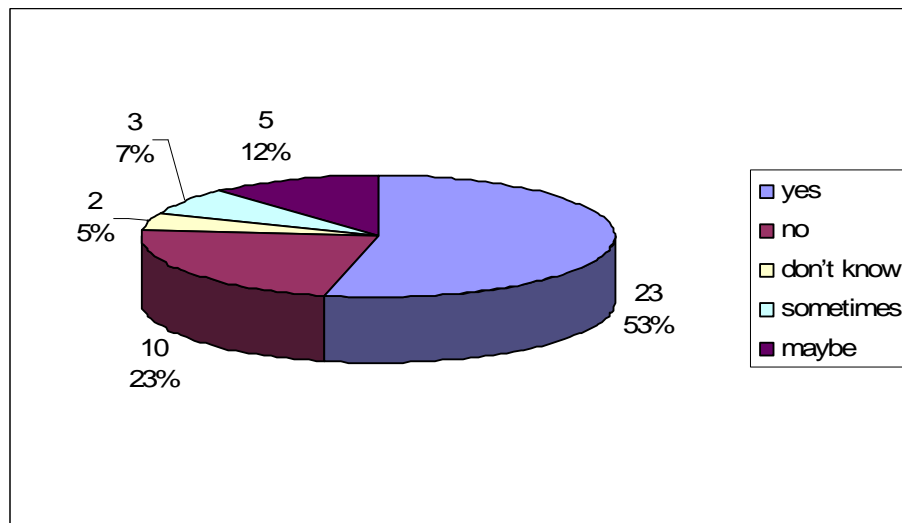
- One person has been to community meetings
- Met people from Council

If no – would you like to do this?

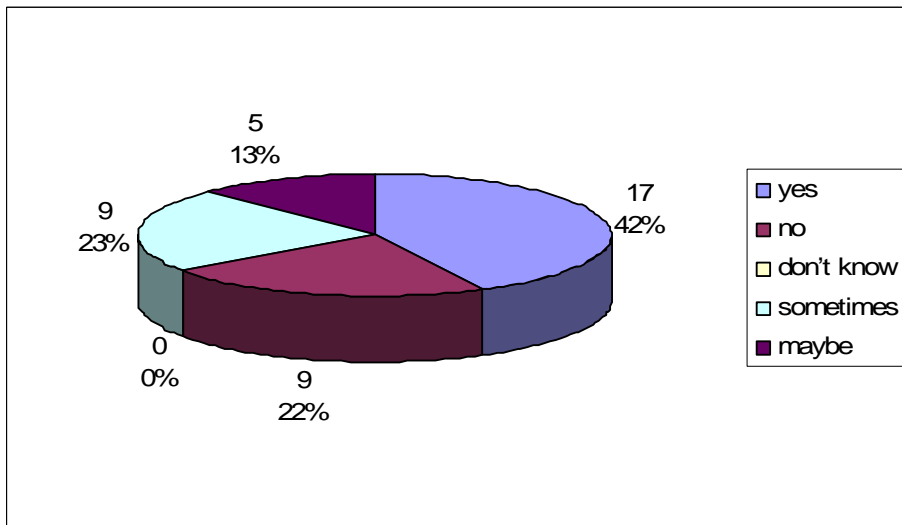
- No- one chose to say

G) Do you ever get the opportunity to come together with adults in your community and discuss the things that affect you?

H)



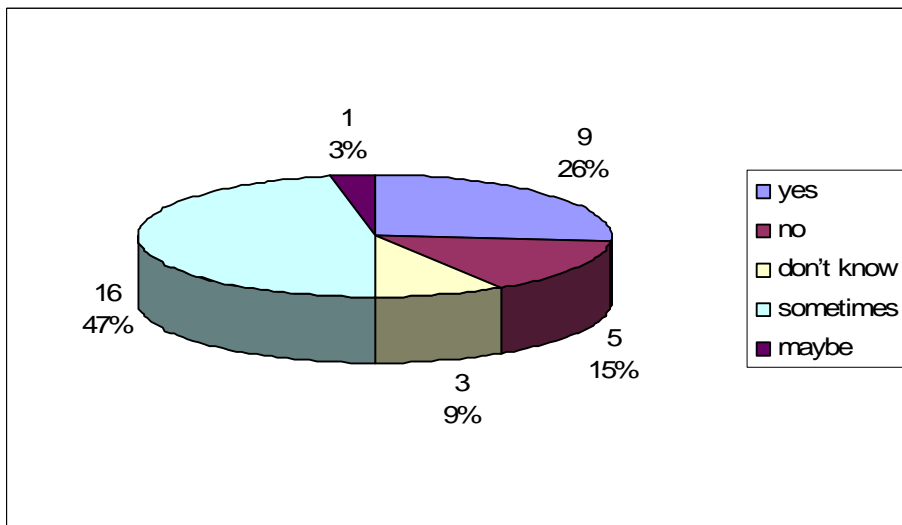
I) Has anything changed, been set up or improved in your area because of what you've done?



Examples:

- More police
- Lots within this group!
- CCTV cameras installed because the group told a worker that they wanted them there

J) Do you feel listened to by the people in your community/the area where you live?



If Yes- Why?

- PC Siobhan has good conversations with the group but other than that, they don't feel listened to

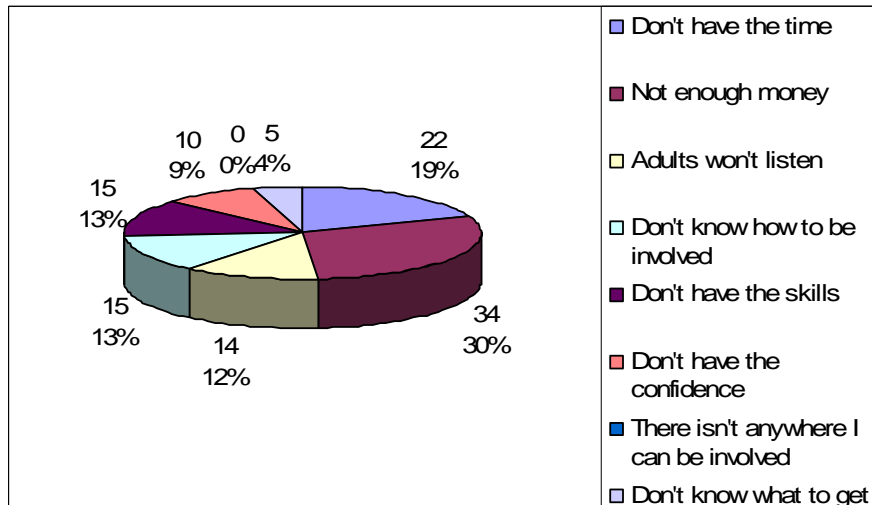
If No - Why

- 2 felt they were not listened to in their area but were listened to at YASY
- Feel listened to in this group but not really outside of it
- Decision makers listen but don't acknowledge. At the beginning there was negative feedback about the group

- **Activity 4: Barriers to participation**

Young people are often faced with barriers when attempting to get involved with participation and expressing themselves to decision makers and their wider community.

From a selection of possible barriers young people selected 3 barriers that they agreed and related to the most. Young people were also provided with an opportunity to reflect upon additional barriers that they felt were an issue to them.



Anything Else?

- Don't know who to go to
- Not enough places to go
- What's in it for me? What will I get out of it?
-
- **Activity 5: Getting Over them!**

Of the barriers that were identified by the young people we asked them to come up with suggestions about how they could try and get over them. They suggested:

- Get a job and training that is paid for
- Budget money better
- Getting out there and finding information
- Distance learning online training
- College
- Courses
- Volunteering
- Time management
- Find out about more funding; plan YOF bids better
- Communication skills
- Bug them until they listen!
- Be stubborn and assertive
- Give them proof e.g. pie charts
- Show them why we want it and that we understand the negatives
- Negotiate
- Apply for funding (YOF) and raise money
- Prioritise
- Do more in the holidays - ask for more days in the week!
- Contact local councillor

4. Summary of Key Findings

The aim of this report was to evidence the level of young people's participation within their groups, organisations who work with them and in the wider community. The practitioners' questionnaire and young people's focus groups have provided confirmation that young people are participating in activities at varying levels.

The findings suggest that young people within the Central Community Assembly have a clear understanding of what good participation is within youth provision. Young people have had many exciting experiences of participation work. Young people appear to work in partnership with practitioners to achieve their goals and fulfil their ideas. Young people have engaged in community discussions with adults and professionals alike and feel that they are in a position to implement improvements within their area.

Most Young people are motivated by the chance to have fun, meet and make friends, have positive relationships with practitioners, develop their confidence and self esteem, learn new skills and gain recognition, rewards and incentives as well as make a difference, voice their opinions and bring about positive change for young people. Young people felt that they and others faced barriers when trying to get involved in participation and when attempting to express themselves to decision makers and their wider community. Young people within the Central Assembly felt they do not possess the skills required to engage.

Practitioners felt that young people did not have such a great influence within their communities. Perhaps young people expect lower levels of involvement and their ambitions surrounding decision making is not as high as the practitioners who are working with them. Practitioners felt that the reasons underpinning young people's lack of engagement focused more upon young people's low self-esteem and because structures do not support their participation. Although the young people feel that they have had varying opportunities to engage in structured training programmes and had utilised some of the skills they gained. Young people still expressed a keen interest in undertaking more training programmes to further their skills and increase their confidence. Interestingly the programmes that they identified were generally straightforward courses of which youth related practitioners could deliver.

Next Steps

This report was launched at a participation event held at the Broomhall Centre on Wednesday 28th October. Both the report and event presented the findings from the mapping and auditing activities to key decision makers and organisation within the community.

At these events young people will be presenting some of the findings hopefully groups of young people will carry out short presentations about their group and what they have achieved. There will then be a discussion workshop for workers and organisations to talk about the results and look at ways that they can improve the involvement of young people in their decision making processes. We will be asking people to agree an Action 4 Involvement and hope they will commit to an organisational change within their workplace.

We are also launching a toolkit to support the further involvement and participation of children and young people within organisations, these will be available at the area event and, if required training will be available to those who would like further information or support on the use of the toolkit.

6. References

Flick, U. et al (eds) (2004) *Companion to Qualitative Research* London: Sage

Hart, R. (1992) *Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship* Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre

6. Contacts

If you would like this report in a different format, language, more copies or further information about its and the findings please contact:

13-19+ Participation Strategy Team
The Children and Young People's Empowerment Project (CHILYPEP)
Remington Youth & Community Centre
200 Remington Road
Parson Cross
Sheffield
S5 9AG
T: 0114 2403447
E: info@chilypep.org.uk
W: www.chilypep.org.uk

For more information about the Strategy for the Participation & Consultation of Children & Young People in Sheffield and its supporting documents please contact:

Joe Green
0-19+ Participation Manager
Integrated Youth Support Service
Floor 3, Howden House
1 Union Street,
Sheffield
S1 2SH
T: 0114 27 35582
M: 07814 872353
E: joe.green@sheffield.gov.uk
W: www.sheffield.gov.uk

See www.sheffield0to19.org.uk/participation website for any of these documents.

For more information about specific Community Assemblies and City Wide report please see the separate reports mentioned in the Introduction, available at www.sheffield0to19.org.uk/participation

For more information about your Community Assembly Area contact:

Rebecca Maddox
Central Community Assembly Manager
0114 205 3049
07764 290497
rebecca.maddox@sheffield.gov.uk

