

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

North East Community Assembly Report – September 2009



This work is being carried out by the Children and Young People's Empowerment Project in partnership with Sheffield Futures and has been commissioned by Sheffield City Council on behalf of the Sheffield 0-19+ Partnership.



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 across 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+ Participation and Consultation Strategy, and has been overseen by the Multi Agency Participation (MAP) Group, a sub-group of the 0 to 19+ Partnership Board.

1.2 Sheffield's Context

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 and 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 the involvement of young people 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 2010. 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) within each Community Assembly area, and 'City Wide' activity (available to young people from across the city.)
- To audit and assess the level of young people's participation in existing youth provision from both a practitioner and young people's perspective.
- To compile these findings into reports and present these to service providers and decision makers at events in each Community Assembly area. Through workshops and discussions, encourage attendees to improve and increase opportunities for young people's participation.
- 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 work in two Community Assembly areas from November 2009 to March 2010 to support young people to begin to set up participation structures and activities. This will include piloting school and community based models and evaluating the effectiveness of these.

2. Methodology

Mapping of Provision

Desk top research was undertaken to identify current deliverers of projects and activities 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%). These asked them about the levels of participation they thought young people had within their group, the organisation and the wider community.

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.

Young People's 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).

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.

Schools

All secondary schools have been included in the mapping exercise and most 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.

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.

3.1 Adults' Questionnaires

Nine questionnaires were returned for the North East Community Assembly.

- 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	0
Young people have some involvement	7
Young people have a lot of involvement	2

Examples given included:

"We have programme planning meetings which involve the young leaders"

"Young people decide what that they do through participating in issues and discussions around 'Youth Opportunity Fund' bids and by helping to run clubs/projects. The young people influence the centres programme development in both youth clubs and within projects"

"Our girls range from 5-17 years old. Obviously the older ones have more say in what we do, but all girls are given a choice. We listen to their suggestions or requests. Sometimes it is feasible, sometimes it isn't"

- 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	8
Young people's ideas are listened to and used extensively	1

One example given was:

"We've tended to have a small group of young people called "negotiate" who discuss and plan activities and were really involved. More recently it was hard to find young people keen to be part of this group so we've had more short discussions with the young people at the end or beginning of normal sessions. We also have a number of older young people involved as "younger leaders" (where they do a little bit of training alongside having

some responsibilities) and they also feedback at the end of each session as we complete a session report and evaluate the session. This is also a key time for them to be involved in shaping what we do”.

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

Young people are not involved at all	0
Young people have little involvement	1
Young people have some involvement	6
Young people have a lot of involvement	1

An example was:

“When we develop strategies, we talk to the young people to hear where they’re at, etc. and when it comes to practical ideas again we do talk to the young people for ideas, etc. Also young people are being offered opportunities to be part of the decision making. One of the older young people has just been elected by the children and young people to represent them in the Parochial Church Council (the decision making body of the Church, the body that ultimately has final responsibility for all the work with children and young people”

- 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	2
Young people have some involvement	3
Young people have a lot of involvement	4

Examples given were:

“Apart from a few local young people being involved in groups like Youth Forums and School Councils, I don’t believe many young people at the moment feel they can either have an influence or would want to anyway? Many that we currently work with only seem to want peripheral involvement. I think if Citizenship, Political Education were given real credence opportunities in schools (as well as through the sort of ways we work); we might see less apathy generally in the community in the longer term. We need to get local councillors out to talk to and engage with young people where they are, rather than expect them to turn up to public meetings”

“Sadly, I don’t feel young people are given a lot of opportunity to influence those community decisions (I think as an adult I feel the same powerlessness when it comes to being able to influence those type of decisions!)”.

“Young people constantly make decisions which affect their own lives. Their influence on the community in which they live is harder. Let’s hope they make it a better place to live in”.

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

Yes	7
No	2
Not Sure	0

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

No effect at all	0
Have little effect	0
Have some effect	4
Have a lot of effect	3

Please note: not all workers chose to answer this question

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

Their group?

- Funding for staffing to run additional sessions e.g. focus groups etc,
- Their own lives can be very hectic / messy and just making it hard for them to be involved in something like this,
- It might not be the latest cool thing to do in their friendship group,
- The energy it takes to facilitate this is not always there,
- The room they meet in is sometimes a barrier to certain activities,
- Peer pressure not to step forward,
- They are involved, but in groups one person could and sometimes does swerve the rest,
-

The organisation?

- Time and a member of staff facilitate the necessary meeting time,
- Traditionally it's easier for men to be involved in decision making than women. This applies to young women but this is definitely changing,
- Sometimes it might feel like the energy is needed somewhere else and we might not give youth participation seriously enough,
- Where vision / strategy of the young people wanting to get things moving is dissimilar to the vision / strategy / aims of the organisation?
- We come under the authority of the Church of England and the only barrier would be things like opposing the Christian view of things,
- Limited understanding of legal requirements,
- Sometimes their ideas wouldn't be practical or would involve too much expense. Sometimes they haven't thought it through and when they find out what it involves, realise it's not what they want after all.

Their communities/areas?

- Information,
- Communication,
- Young people's lack confidence to influence decisions. When they experience empowerment i.e. their voices are listened to, they become more confident,
- Involvement in the community, especially things like youth councils and organisations who have to meet targets and have their own agenda's, often lead to the involvement of the young people being more symbolic/tokenistic and not real. The system is very established and strong and feels not very accessible to people at a local level, let alone young people, who already feel that other people will decide for them anyway. The youth council that was set up in this area had no clear reporting lines as far as I know and wasn't asked to come into being by the decision makers in the first place (which perhaps puts them in a very difficult place?),
- The biggest barrier is most don't want to be involved,
- Young people feel they are not listened to by adults in their community,
- Peer pressure,
- They are young, wouldn't have the time to get involved and would feel that they wouldn't be listened to.

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

Yes	7
No	1
Not Sure	1

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

Yes	3
No	2
Maybe	4

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

Definition of participation	1
Barriers of participation	1
Methods of participation	6
Sheffield Participation Strategy	4

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	3

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.

Four focus groups took place in the North 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?"

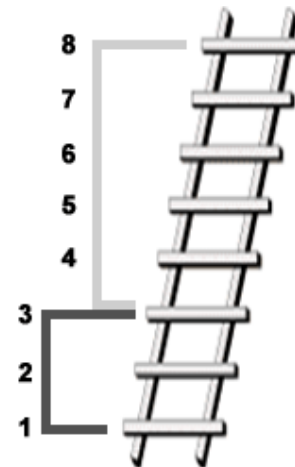
In response to why they come to their group the following answers were given:

Cos we usually enjoy it	Because we can trust people who work here	To see friends (x9)
Cos we love Carol/Steph	the leaders (x2)	To meet new people
Get out of trouble	To make friends	Cause it's fun (x6 It's sooooo fun!
We come cos there's nothing better to do	To get out of lesson (x3)	To learn new stuff
Because someone dropped out and my teacher told me I was in student council	To learn about the community and problems around the area	Instead of staying in the house and not doing anything
To get away from my family	I enjoyed Brownies	Trips like Light-water valley
Badges/collect badges	To have some time with my mates	Because I like it! Because I love it
It's something to do and you learn different things every time and for fun!	It's something to do on a Wednesday and I have lots of fun	Because it's fun and friendly people are there - also something to do
Church	To build up me girls team	My mum is a leader
Come to learn about the community	Everyone is kind	To help the school change
It keeps me off the streets	To be kind to people and help and share with girls	Evie/Georgia makes me laugh!
Activities like Camping I like to do lots of different things	To learn more and also learn to respect and make friends	Laughs!
To complete challenges	Democracy	To give people a say
I was voted in by my year	To help the school committee	Because I was voted in by my form

- **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.

Activity 1. Focus Group responses

Young people undertook the task of ranking statements about Participation. The results below suggest that the participating groups generally have a good understanding of what very high and low levels of participation are.

Statement	Order young people put statement on ladder			
	Groups			
	A	B	C	D
Young people have an idea. Adults join them in making it happen.	4	6	6	5
Young people have an idea and make it happen. Adults are there to help but aren't really involved.	5	5	3	4
Adults have an idea. Young people join them in making it happen.	6	2	5	6
Adults have an idea and make it happen. Young people have a full understanding and give their views. Adults respect and consider young people's views.	1	4	4	3
Adults have an idea and make it happen. Young people have some understanding and give their views. Adults respect but don't consider the young people's views.	2	3	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.	3	1	1	1

In response to what their group does, Young people wrote their answers on post-it notes and placed them onto flip chart paper. Young people placed some of these activities against the statements listed in Activity 1. The following table identifies young people's activities and the statement numbers the young people felt they related to:

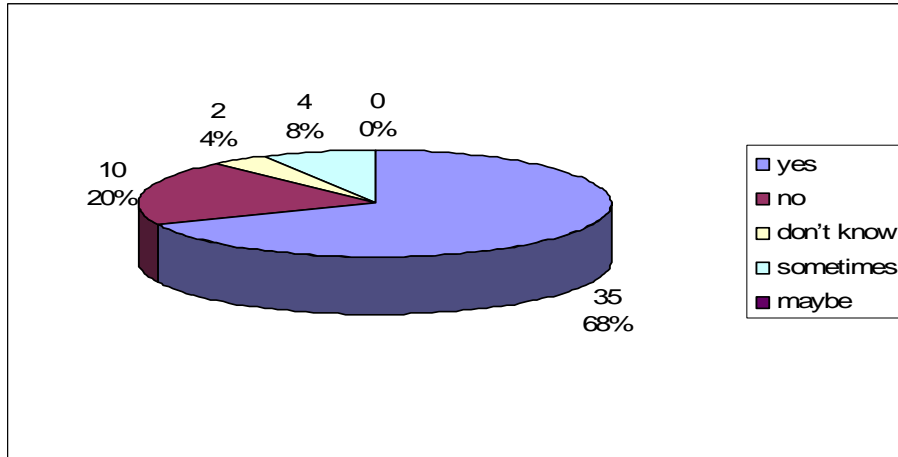
	Statement Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Activities			Design Minibus	Residential	Sleepover	Kingswood Christmas Party Our conference Do fun/cool stuff

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

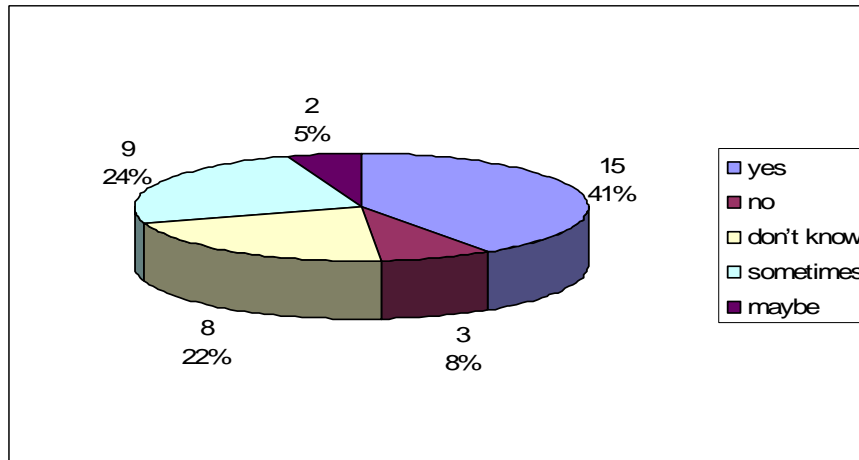
This activity was an opportunity for young people to ‘vote on your feet’ to a series of questions asked by the facilitators. Young people responded by standing in front of the card that had the answer on that they agreed with. The following outlines the facilitators question and the young people’s response.

1.

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



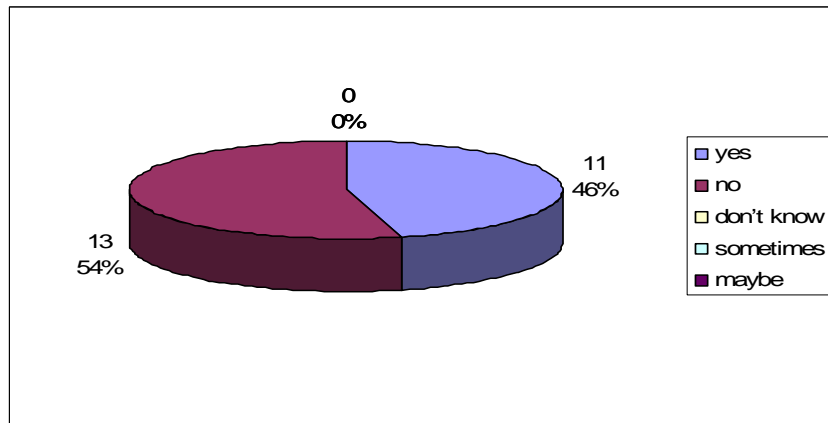
B) (For those saying yes) Have you used any of the skills you learnt from training?



How/What for?

- Leant how to be a good mum
- Learnt how to be safe on the minibus
- Peer research

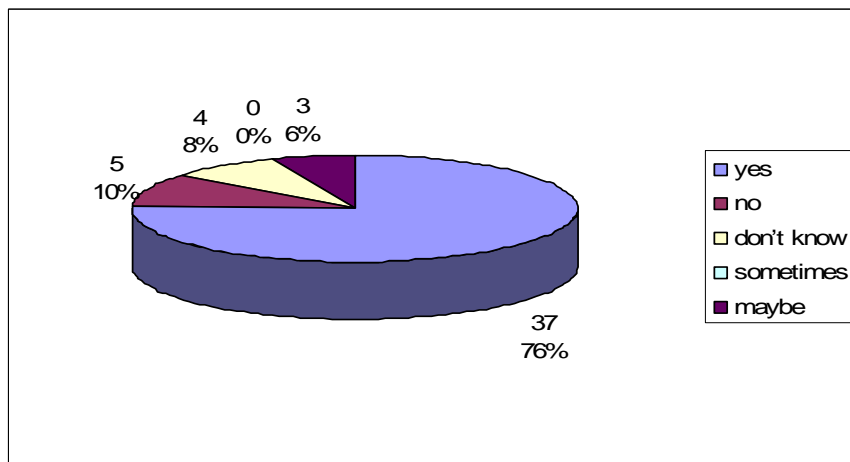
C) (For those saying no) have you done other things that have developed your skills and confidence?



Examples:

- Rock climbing
- Discussion groups
- Fire course
- Tackling bullying
- Team building

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?

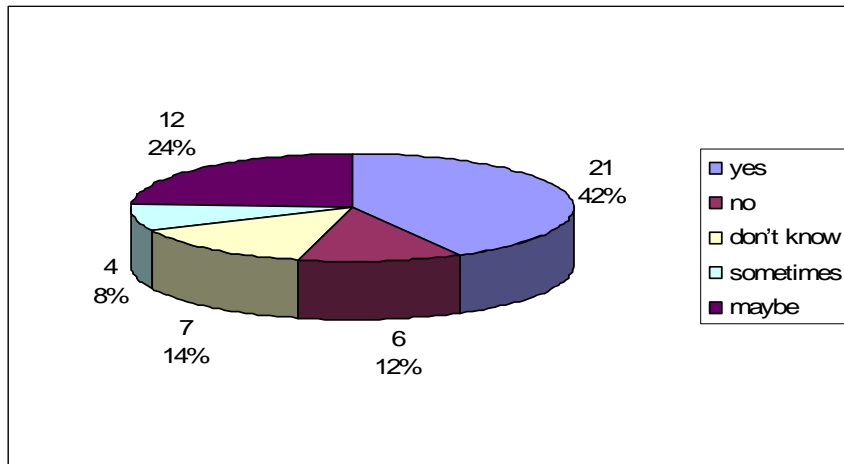


Examples:

- Go on trips
- Meet people we've helped
- More activities
- Go to factories and see how things are made

2.

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



If yes - when & who to? If no – would you like to do this?

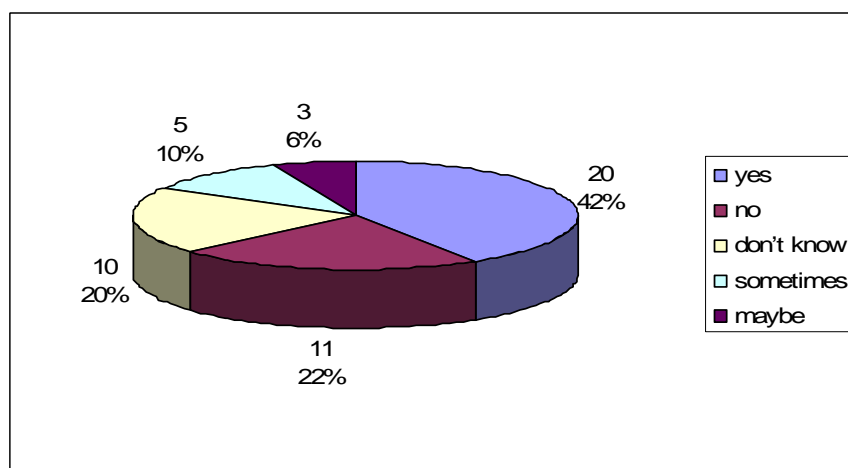
Yes

- School Council
- Conference we did
- We did a survey on the school canteen and then the results were given to Miss Stone.
- Football nets – we wanted more set up and it happened

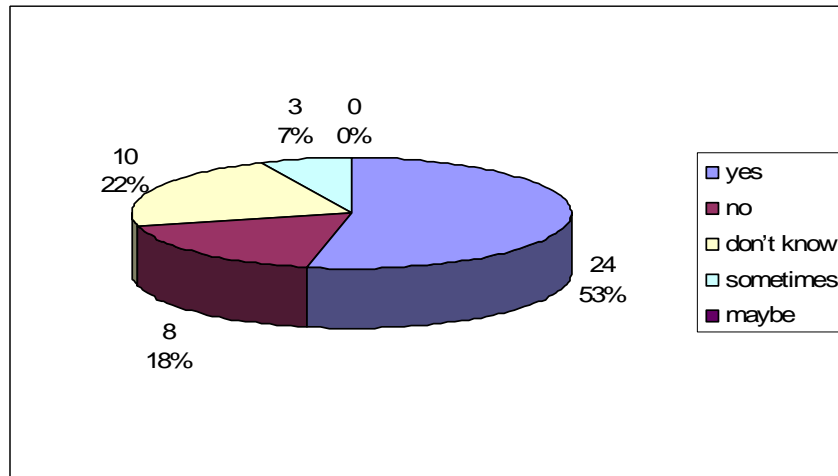
No

- Those who answered no were not sure whether this was something they would like to do and so did not give a definite answer

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



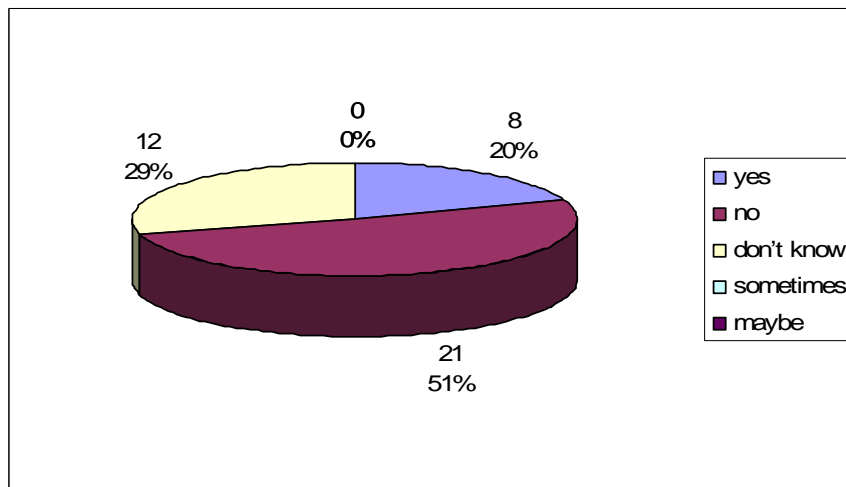
G) Has anything changed, been set up or improved in your area because of what you've done?



Give examples:

- NSYF conference – did research around alcohol and did a drama project about it
- We got a minibus
- We got YOF money to do up our building

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



If Yes or No – Why?

Yes

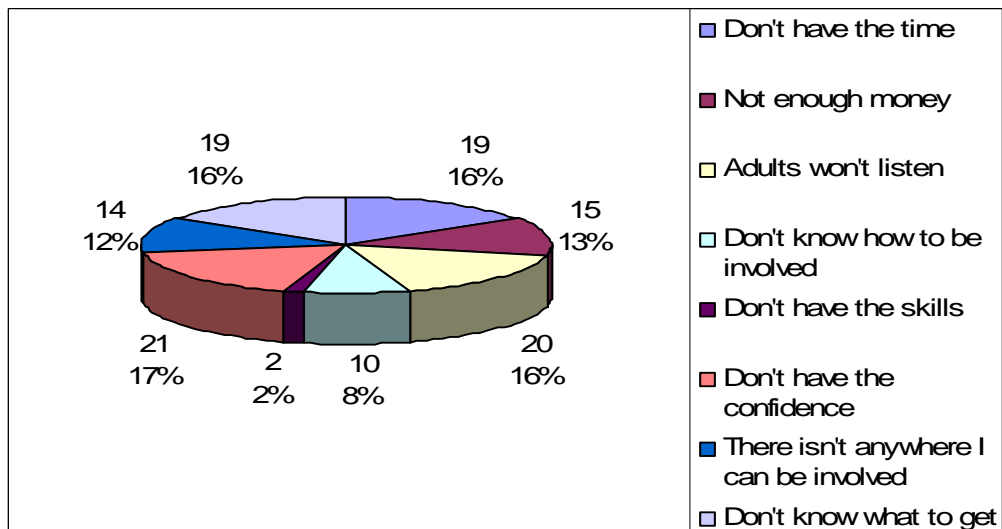
- No-one chose to say why they felt listened to

No

- Lack of confidence stopped me from taking part
- **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 where to go to be heard. Who do we address issues to?
- I've got somewhere else to be.
- I don't get on with the people there.
- I don't feel safe getting to the venue.
- I don't get enough notice about where/when to go to events.
- When places & things are not accessible to wheelchair users.
- Bad things I've done in the past may stop me doing things.
- Transport.
- Don't want to be manipulated by adults
- Community support and stereotypes
- Peer pressure
- People think they're better than everyone else

- **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:

- Ask around in neighbourhood; student advice; research; going to other groups.
- Research; finding out what you're able/not able to do.
- Apply for funding; fundraising.
- Do it in front of one person to practice; ask for help; work together; try and be brave
- Persuasion; try and talk when they're not busy; sign a petition
- Don't just shout – get evidence and be polite
- Believe in yourself and have confidence
- Talk to adults/ ask parents

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 in the North East Community Assembly area. The practitioners' questionnaire and young people's focus groups has provided confirmation that young people are participating in activities at varying levels.

The findings suggest that young people within the North East Community Assembly have a mixed understanding of what good participation is within their own youth provision. Young people have been engaged in many fun experiences within their own groups. Practitioners are keen to include young people in planning and evaluating activities and just as importantly, implementing changes. Young people provided many examples of activities they had taken part in and had high levels of involvement but also examples of where they did not feel as involved or included. Young people who were committed members of their school council had much more knowledge of participation, however some young people admitted that they only joined the council to get out of lessons and as such, appeared to have a lesser understanding of participation than their peers who were more committed to the principle of the council.

The main consensus throughout this report is that the young people do not feel listened to by their communities and therefore lack general confidence and belief in participation activities. Although the majority of the young people said that they are able to come together with adults in their communities, they are not able to discuss issues that affect them they are not necessarily listened to. Practitioners felt that within their roles they accommodate young people's ideas and views, but this is difficult to implement within their organisations or communities. Both young people and practitioners appear disheartened and frustrated about this position. Young people want their ideas, feeling and opinions listened to but also to be considered. Practitioners have commented upon restricted resources placed upon them and the young people in their areas.

Next Steps

A participation event held at Longley Park College on Tuesday 27th October from 1pm till 4pm to present the findings from this work to key decision makers, service providers and community organisations. At this event, young people presented the findings as well as providing an overview of what their groups do and what they have achieved, and a toolkit developed to support the involvement of young people was launched.

There was also an opportunity for everyone to discuss these results, consider how the involvement of young people could be increased and improved across the Community Assembly area and identify how everyone could contribute to this. The next phase of this project will be piloting methods to support young people's involvement at the Community Assembly level. Two approaches will be taken – a school-based model in the South West area and a community-based model in the East area. This will then be evaluated to inform what needs to be put in place to enable young people to get involved in all areas of the city.

5. 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:

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

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

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