

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

South 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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### **Appendices**

#### **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](http://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.

Eleven questionnaires were returned.

#### 3.1 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	0
Young people have some involvement	8
Young people have a lot of involvement	3
Total responses	11

#### An example included:

*"At the beginning of each term we discuss their ideas and put the programme schedule together as a joint exercise – young people and adults"*

- 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	4
Young people's ideas are listened to and used extensively	7
Total responses	11

#### Examples given included:

*"When preparing sessions throughout the year we ask the young people for their ideas on what they want to do and try to implement their ideas as much as possible"*

*"Young people devised their own group and applied for funding which allows them the freedom to negotiate and choose their activities and take ownership"*

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

Young people are not involved at all	2
Young people have little involvement	1
Young people have some involvement	6
Young people have a lot of involvement	1
Total responses	10

**An example included:**

*"Depending what they want & what is available we try to deliver what they have asked for. If not we discuss other alternatives and agree on it"*

**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	1
Young people have little involvement	2
Young people have some involvement	5
Young people have a lot of involvement	2
Total responses	10

**Examples given included:**

*"Young people attend community forum meetings"*

*"Young people are taking part in a media project, which is trying to break barriers against stereotyping young people within the community and wider area".*

*"I don't really feel they have any influence or are asked for this in the community other than the activities they attend"*

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

Yes	10
No	0
Not Sure	0
Total responses	10

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

No effect at all	1
Have little effect	0
Have some effect	4
A lot of effect	4
Total responses	9

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

**Their group?**

- Peer pressure.
- Sometimes different age ranges can be a barrier as older ones make decisions for everyone
- Confidence - peer pressure - feel intimidated by some groupings of young people.
- Training & understanding of participation
- Barriers can be level in communication, abilities, skills, behavioural & emotional issues
- Young Peoples' own imagination.
- Young Peoples' capacity to get on with each other
- Lack of confidence, understanding of the purpose of the group, lack of commitment to the group

**The organisation?**

- None other than maybe funding issues.
- Contract led.
- The cost of activities the YP want to do and the staff needed.
- Funding.
- Lack of access
- Not all within org understand participation - law - ie. Have to be certain age to be recognised as a director etc.
- Clearer guidelines & processes (Lack of)
- Levels of participation (Lack of)
- 

**Their communities/areas?**

- I don't think they are approached or asked
- No young people's forums
- Stereotyping of and also fear of young people
- No youth forum or action group
- Lack of organisations approaching them
- Conflict with young people
- Adults/key workers don't listen or just pay lip service - don't understand participation
- Young - old divide - lack of respect
- Acceptance of young people, stereotypical views, particularly in relation to crime.
- Interest (Lack of)
- Young People need coercing into involvement in community matters
- Prejudice from the community/stereotyping about "young people today

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

Yes	4
No	6
Not sure	0
Total responses	10

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

Yes	8
No	0
Maybe	2
Total responses	10

**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	8
Methods of participation	8
Sheffield Participation Strategy	6

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

Yes	7
No	1
Maybe	1
Total responses	9

### 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.

Two focus groups took place in the South 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:

(Please note, only one group completed this exercise)

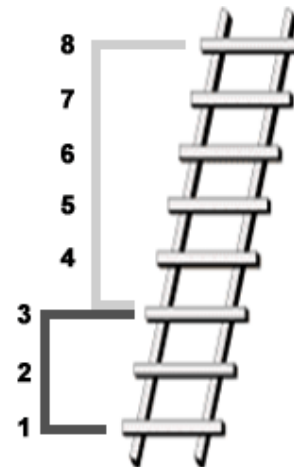
- Get some space
- Get outa house
- Something to do at night
- Hang around with friends
- come to annoy Rich

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 Hart's 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:

Two groups took part in this exercise.

Young people undertook the task of ranking the statements. The results below suggest that the participating groups had a varied understanding of the levels of participation. The groups agreed upon 3 statements which were placed in the correct ranking order. There was a general consensus that statement 1, 2 and 3 in the above table constitute low levels of young people's participation.

The groups strongly differed when deciding upon a definition of very good participation. It could be argued that the participating young people are confused between young people owning an idea and adults not supporting their ideas and young people and adults working in partnership successfully.

Statement	Order young people put statements on ladder (Read results vertically)	
	Groups	
	Group A	Group B
Young people have an idea. Adults join them in making it happen.	3	5
Young people have an idea and make it happen. Adults are there to help but aren't really involved.	5	6
Adults have an idea. Young people join them in making it happen.	4	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
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
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

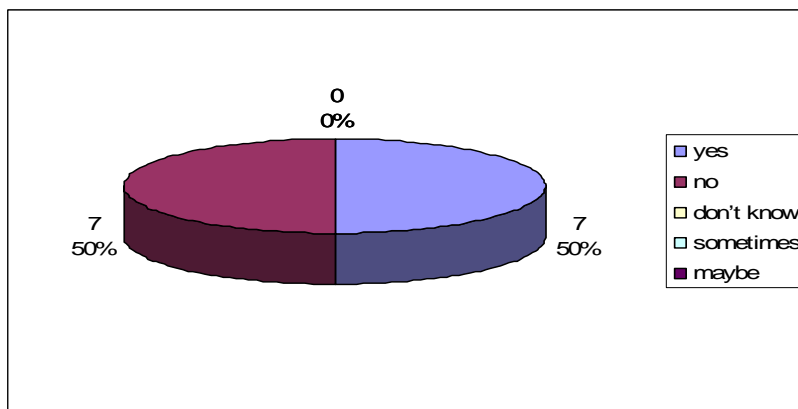
Young people placed the activities identified in activity 1 against the statements. The following table identifies young people's activities and the statement numbers the young people felt they related to:

	Statement Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Went to pleasure island</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Went to Arnside Mill on residential</li> <li>Tobogganing</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bowling</li> <li>Media Project</li> <li>Woodseats Festival</li> </ul>	

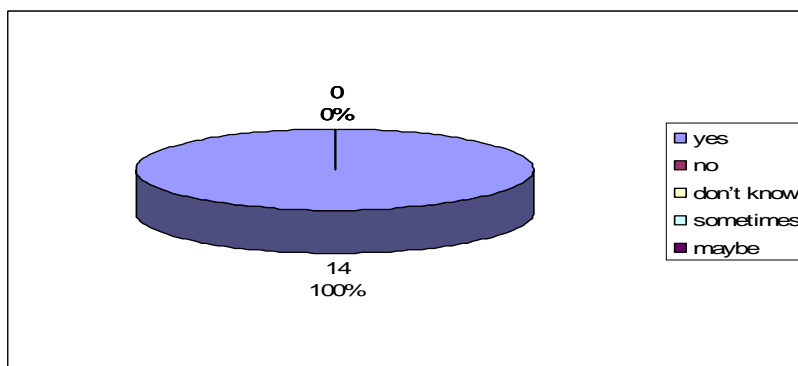
**• Activity 3: Making a Difference\_(Vote on your feet)**

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.

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



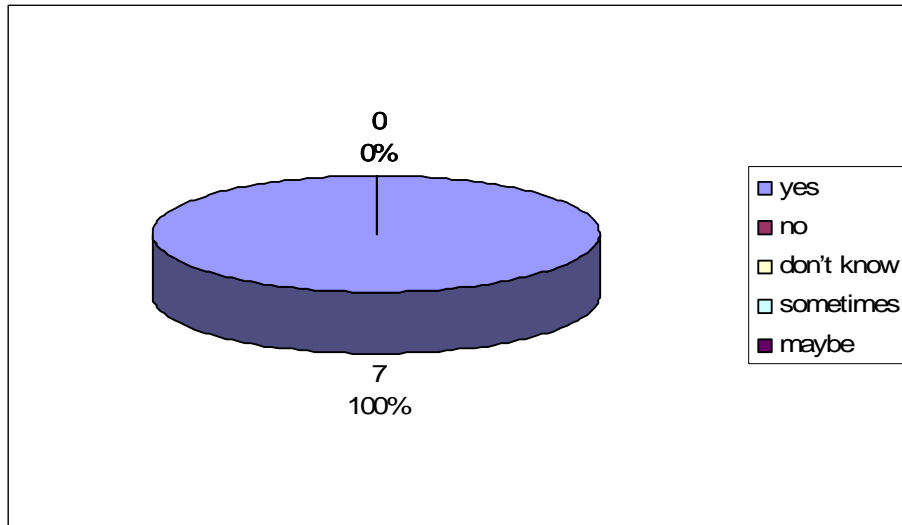
B) (For those saying yes) Have you used any of the skills you learnt from training? How/What for?



**Examples:**

- Using it now to do interviews for media project
- General confidence

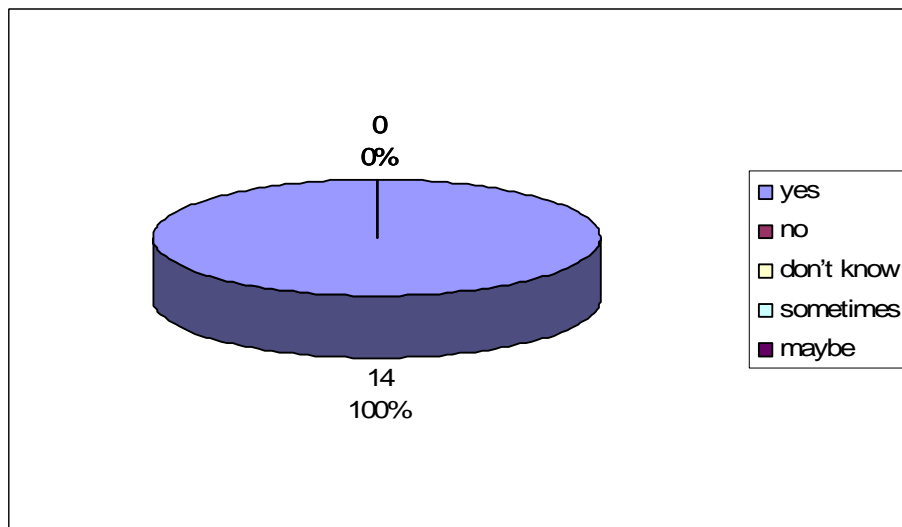
C) (For those saying no) have you done other things that have developed your skills and confidence?



**Examples if yes:**

- Only Dance training, but one member has done 'Lifewise' project as part of group

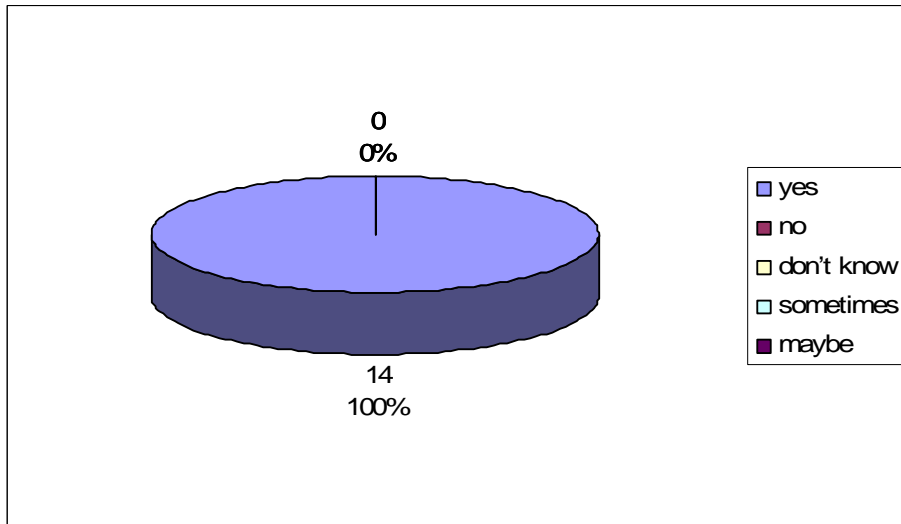
D) Would you like the opportunity to do some training, learn new skills and develop your confidence? Can you think of anything you'd like to do?



**Examples:**

- Arranging sports events
- Fundraising
- Keep fit/healthy lifestyle
- Getting involved in voluntary work

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

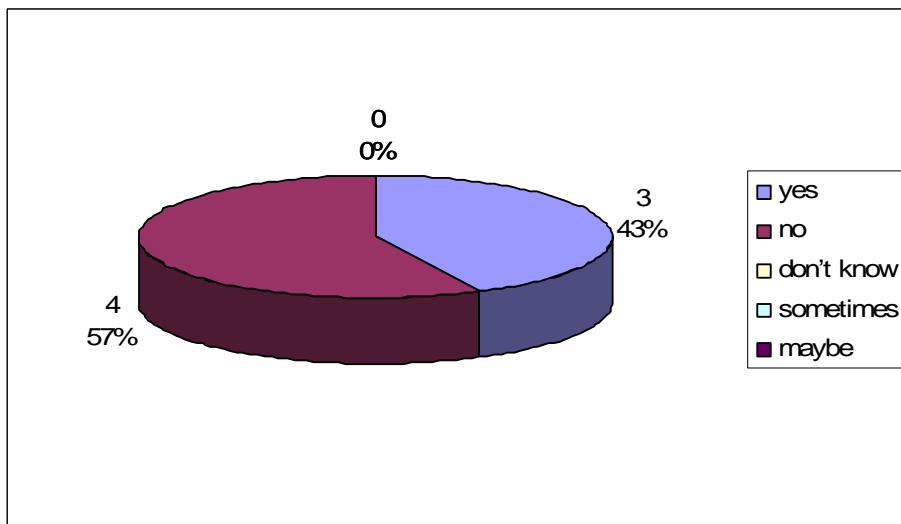


**If yes - when & who to? If no – would you like to do this?**

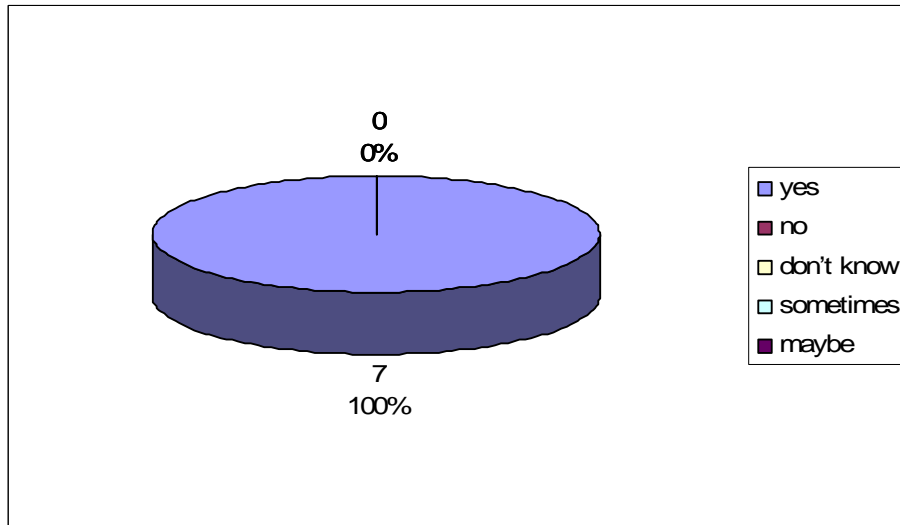
**Yes examples:**

- Woodseats festival
- Met Mayor & other people from police , Council and Housing to show how good our group is and that we need the Money

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



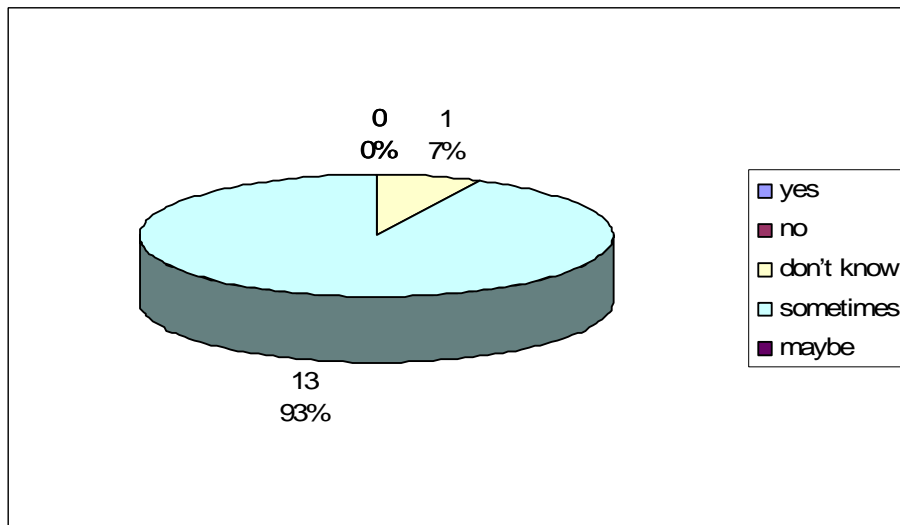
G) Has anything changed, been set up or improved in your area because of what you've done? (Only group B responded)



**Examples:**

- We have a good dance group now and we love it

H) Do you feel listened to by the people in your community/the area where you live? If Yes or No – Why?



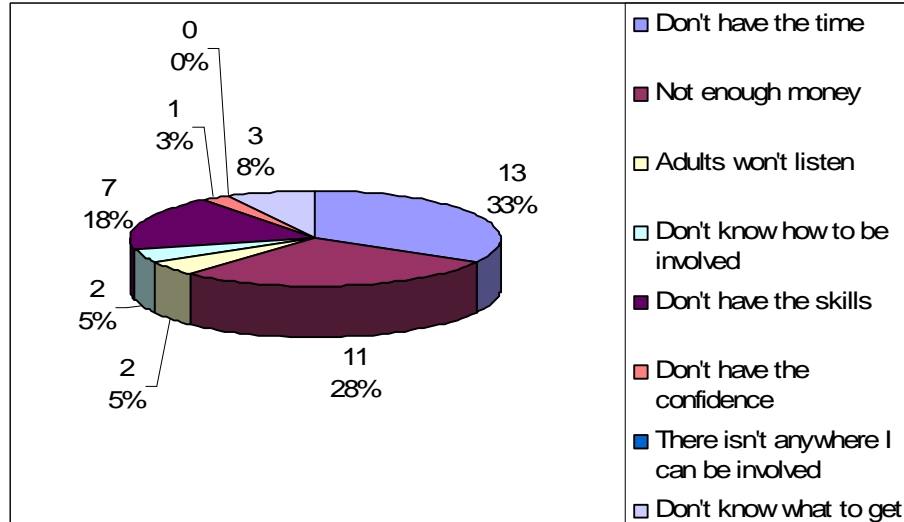
**Yes examples:**

- Through media project
- Doing Dance 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?**

- We want it to stay our group but we are not sure about funding buildings and other stuff
- Courage to get involved and ask questions
- Lack confidence
- Don't have right communication skills
- People judge young people who may not be living with their family

- **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:

- Have club open more days and in holidays
- Get training
- Learn skills
- Ask people/workers and organisations about things
- Get a job
- Do some fundraising
- Apply for money

#### **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 within the South Community Assembly area. The practitioners' questionnaire and young people's focus groups have provided confirmation that young people are participating in activities at varying levels. The young people suggest that generally adults initiate ideas and the young people participate in developing them. Practitioners have commented that there are few structures supporting young people's participation, particularly noting the absence of a community Youth Forum.

The young people had participated in training and enjoyed using their skills, but feel that their confidence and skills do require further development. Most young people feel listened to within their own groups, and sometimes within their communities, and gave examples of this, feeling that things had been changed or improved because of this.

The young people felt that there are varying barriers for them when trying to get involved with participation and when attempting to express themselves to decision makers and their wider community. Young people within the South Assembly recognised funding as an issue and also confidence and communication skills. Some young people worried about being judged for their personal circumstances.

Practitioners commented on barriers for young people within their groups including peer pressure, conflict and personal perceptions and circumstances and lack of training and understanding. They recognised structural and institutional barriers within their organisations and the wider community, and felt that negative attitudes towards young people and a lack of interest and willingness to involve them in decision making were significant factors.

All of the young people said that they would like to undertake training, learn new skills and develop their confidence. The identified activities appeared to be achievable within the context of their own groups. However, the overall aim is to increase confidence which in turn will encourage young people to engage in participation activities.

#### **Next Steps**

A participation event will be held at the Salvation Army Centre, Psalter Lane on Thursday 29th October from 1pm till 4pm to present the findings from the activities and this report to key decision makers and organisation within the community.

The events will consist of a group of young people presenting some of the findings and hopefully groups of young people who 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 there will be training to support the use of the toolkit.

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

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See [www.sheffield0to19.org.uk/participation](http://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](http://www.sheffield0to19.org.uk/participation)

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