

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

South 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 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.

Eleven questionnaires were returned.

3.1 Adults 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	5
Young people have a lot of involvement	6
Total responses	11

Examples given included:

"Once a group is established, conversations around their needs begin, then a programme of activities is put together".

- 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	6
Young people's ideas are listened to and used extensively	5
Total responses	11

Examples given included:

"The Youth Forum is run by the young people - they make all the decisions only guided by adults if necessary".

- 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	2
Young people have some involvement	5
Young people have a lot of involvement	3
Total responses	10

Examples given included:

"Young people attend various consultation events and have access to voice and influence meetings"

"Consulted on the work of the organisation and gave us feedback"

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	5
Young people have a lot of involvement	2
Total responses	9

Examples given included:

"Disabled groups are not often at the forefront of people's minds when it comes to inclusion for all"

"They regularly attend forum meetings which give them a platform to voice their opinions; they also work very closely with their community development worker who gets them involved in the community on lots of different levels"

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

Yes	9
No	0
Not Sure	1
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	3
A lot of effect	5
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?

- confidence which we try and help young people build,
- some young people can be intimidated by other members of the group which could inhibit their decisions,
- group dynamics often deter from participating in decision making,
- not being seen as cool. Don't feel they have the skills to contribute,
- many just want to come and 'chill out' and meet their friends and that's all,
- N/A all members are encouraged to be part of the decision making process,
- image of student council/being seen as geeky/nerdy by peers,
- confidence, self esteem,
- run by college who have little structure to encourage participating,
- peer pressure, some young people do not want to be involved, GCSE, schooling.

The organisation?

- have meetings to discuss ideas,
- time constraints on staff and young people's perceptions of the company,
- sometimes staff are too tied up with mainstream work to have the time to involve young people in organisational decision making,
- staff confidence to involve young people,
- staff need to have more time to plan how they involve young people,
- within the bigger picture not all workers are willing to show patience to young people with disabilities,
- too many things are fixed by legal requirements - curriculum, attendance laws, Govt. requirements,
- unrealistic expectations from young people about the organisation,
- GCSE, parents,
- Being seen as geeky/nerdy by peers.

Their communities/areas?

- they try and get other youth involvement,
- the people in the community sometimes perceive the young people as uninterested or not willing to get involved so don't invite them to forum meetings,
- communities often pay lip service to young people and do what is best for the community and not the young people,
- no structures to involve young people,
- most groups only want young people involved when it suites them and don't listen to their ideas or act on them,
- stereotypical ideas of disabilities will always be their biggest barrier,
- standing up in front of peers & their families - fear of being different, in the limelight,
- confidence, self esteem, community groups not being responsible to young people,
- the language used. Tenants and residents seal their parent's opinions but not the young people, they are deemed not important,
- finding ways to articulate their needs.

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

Yes	9
No	0
Not sure	1
Total responses	10

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

Yes	7
No	3
Maybe	1
Total responses	11

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

Definition of participation	4
Barriers of participation	7
Methods of participation	4
Sheffield Participation Strategy	4
Total responses	19

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

Yes	8
No	2
Maybe	1
Total responses	11

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.

Three focus groups took place in the South 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:

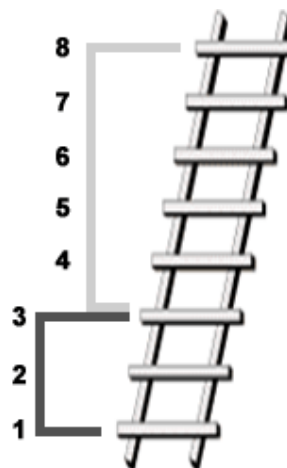
Because we enjoy it	Residentials	Receive help
Being safe	Freedom from parents and carers	Receive help
Experience new things	Get out of the house	Make friends
Have a say in the youth club programme	Learn new things	Give and receive advice
Having a say and being listened to	New skills (social)	Give and receive advice
Evaluate trips	Team work	Give and receive advice
theatre trips	Help each other	Give and receive advice
Trust each other	Give parents/carers a break	Fun - being happy
Common understanding	communicating with each other	Understand other's issues

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

Two groups completed this activity.

Young people undertook the task of ranking the statements. The results below suggest that the participating groups had a varied understanding of poor and very good participation. For example Group A and Group B did not agree upon any ranking positions.

It could be argued that the participating young people are confused between young people fulfilling an idea with the support of adults and young people and adults working together in partnership successfully.

Statement	Order young people put statement on ladder (results reading vertically)	
	Groups	
	Group A	Group B
Young people have an idea. Adults join them in making it happen.	5	2
Young people have an idea and make it happen. Adults are there to help but aren't really involved.	3	4
Adults have an idea. Young people join them in making it happen.	1	5
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.	4	6
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	1
Adults have an idea and make it happen. Young people have no understanding. Adults don't respect or consider young people's views.	6	3

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:

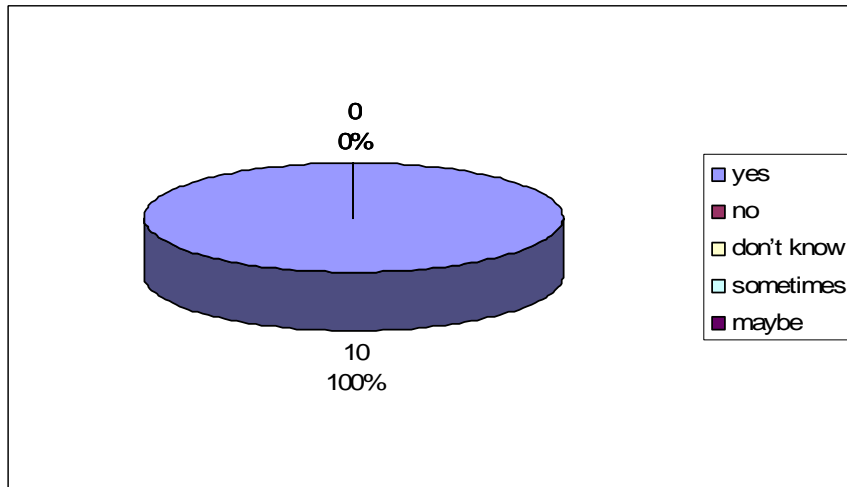
	Statement Number					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Activities		Programme was recruited to.		Programme was already written then we (yp) ran it.	Project in Sweden was run by young people.	

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

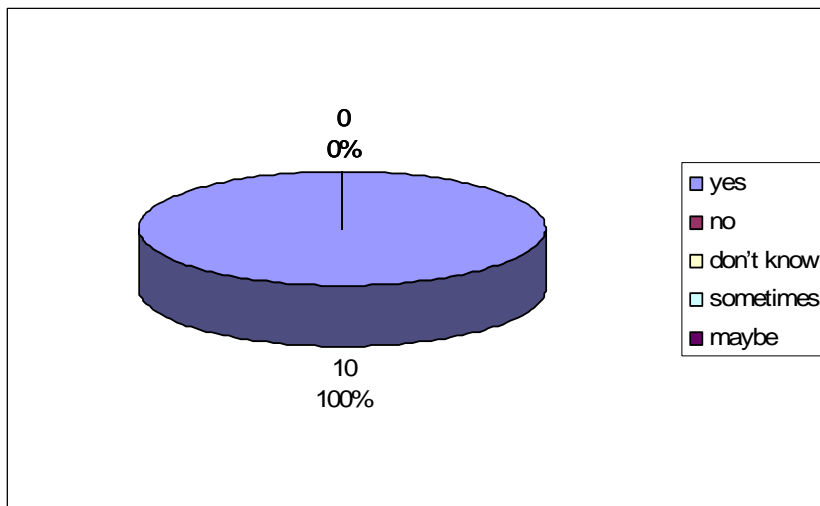
This activity was an opportunity for young people to 'vote on your feet' to a series of questions asked by the facilitators. Young people responded by standing in front of the card that had the answer on that they agreed with. The following outlines the facilitators question and the young people's response.

Q1)

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



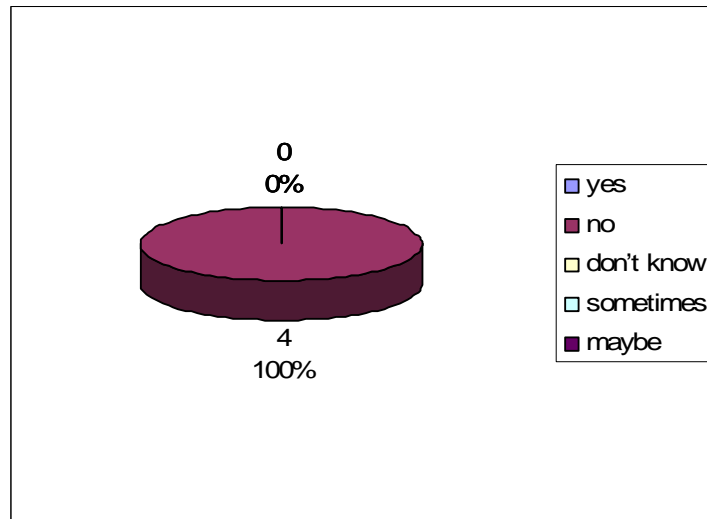
B) (For those saying yes) Have you used any of the skills you learnt from training? How/What for?



Examples:

- Gave presentations
- We set up European Question Time
- We discussed with politicians
- Ran workshops/ice breakers

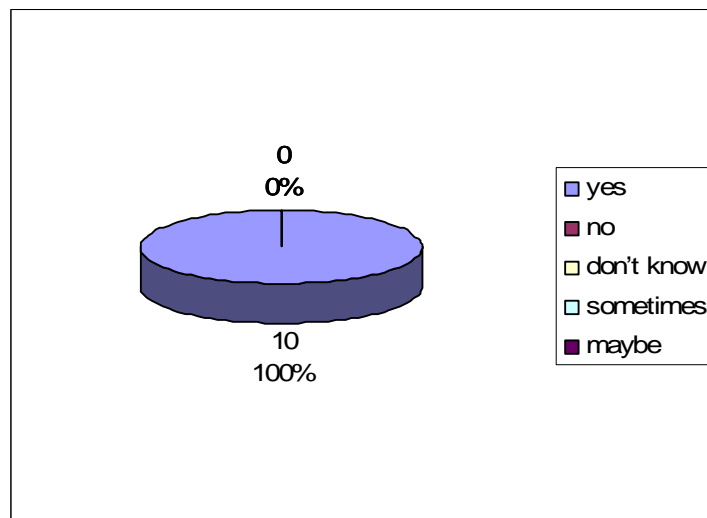
C) (For those saying no) have you done other things that have developed your skills and confidence?



Examples:

- Communication
- common sense
- working with others
- bridge between young and old people

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?

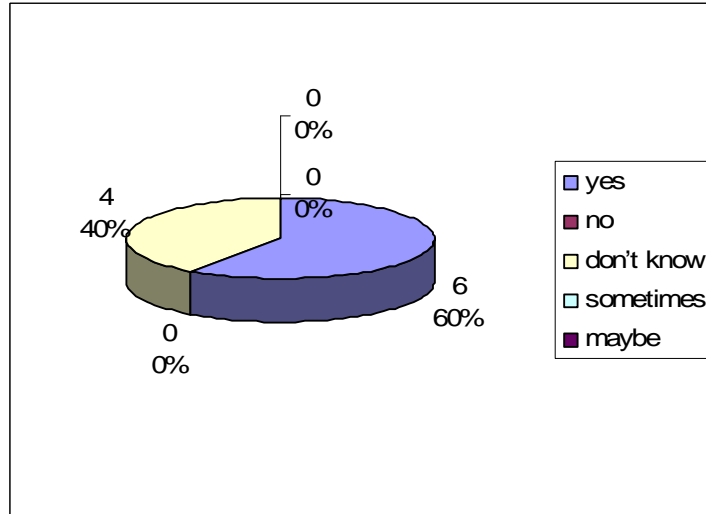


Examples:

- More ice breakers
- how to apply for European exchange funding

Q2)

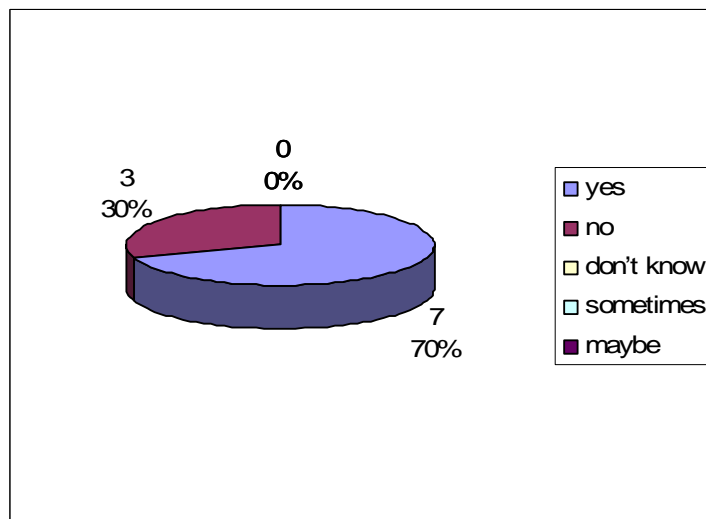
E) Have you ever been able to represent your peers to decision makers within the community?



Yes, for example:

- Three people in the group are Members of the Youth Parliament and met local MPs etc
- The whole group met with Euro politicians

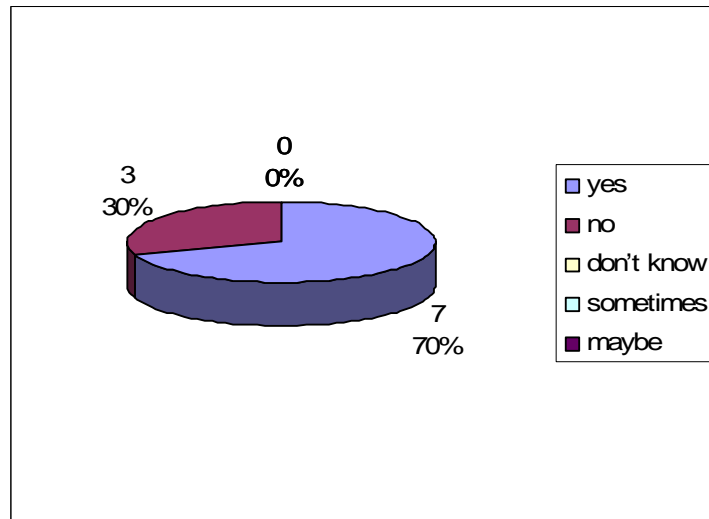
F) Do you ever get the opportunity to come together with adults in your community and discuss the things that affect you?



Examples:

- Members of the Youth Parliament have local young people numbers
- Community forum

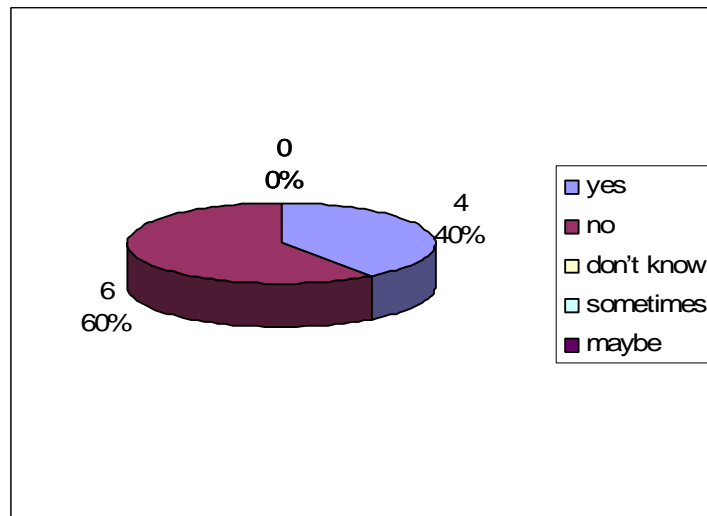
G) Has anything changed, been set up or improved in your area because of what you've done?



Examples:

- Have contributed to national change
- SRE
- Transport
- Pavilion - feel listened to

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



Yes, for example:

- Yes but not everyone

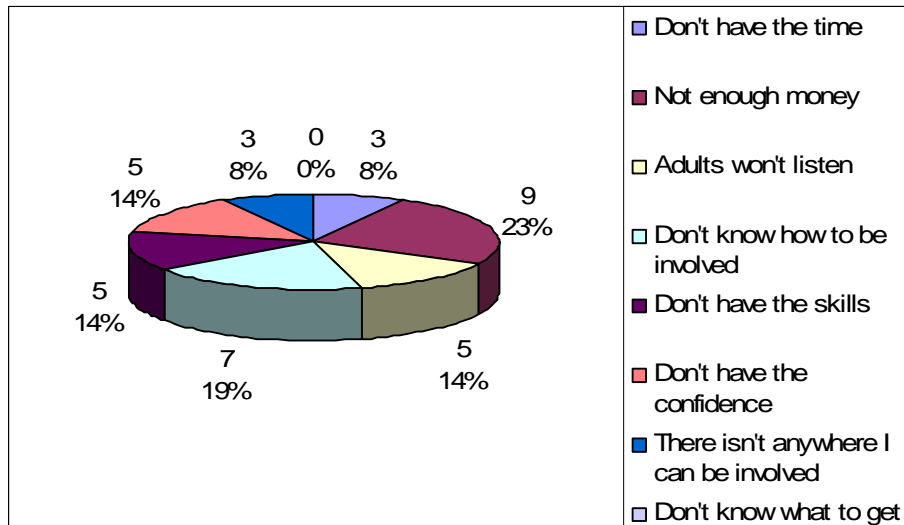
No, for example:

- We requested politicians to join us in seminar in Sweden but they never came with us

- **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?

- Not being taken seriously
- Stereotypes
- Trust
- Too young to have opinions valued
- **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:

- A letter of intent before project with dates
- Find a time which is convenient for everyone
- Workshops before project began
- Prove them wrong; Do more projects like this; show we can be trusted,
- Attend more meetings
- Learn to trust adults; show them respect & get respect back

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 East Community Assembly area. The practitioners' questionnaire and young people's focus groups have provided confirmation that young people feel that they are participating in activities at varying levels. Young people enjoy joining in activities initiated by adults but feel that they want to explore more of their own ideas by working together with adults.

Most Young people are motivated by the chance to have fun, have a break from their parents/carers, 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.

However, the data collated suggests that young people within the South East Community Assembly are not provided with sufficient and 'real' opportunities to become involved in participation activities. This view is strongly identified by both young people and practitioners.

The young people have participated in training and enjoyed using their skills, but feel that their confidence and skills do require further development. Although it is positive that the young people feel listened to within their own groups and communities, they are not fully consulted by decision makers or other organisations and young people have not been given an opportunity to do so. They recognise that they need to build relationships with adults and develop two way trust and respect.

Practitioners feel that they are time and resource limited by their communities and organisations. Within the report there was a general feeling that young people are reluctant to trust adults and practitioners have noted possible reasons why.

The participating young people have advised other young people on how to solve barriers that they may face in accessing participation provision and getting their voices heard.

Next Steps

A participation event will be held at Sheffield Futures – The Lodge on Monday 26th 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 local young people deliver 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.

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:

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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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