

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

South West 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. 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.

3.1 Adults Questionnaires

Unfortunately, only one practitioner in the South West Community Assembly returned a completed questionnaire which was gratefully received. The following responses are reported but cannot be considered to be representative of the South West Community Assembly area as a whole.

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	0
Young people have a lot of involvement	1
Total responses	1

Examples given included:

"Group projects are decided and led by students"

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	0
Young people's ideas are listened to and used extensively	1
Total responses	1

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	0
Young people have some involvement	0
Young people have a lot of involvement	1
Total responses	1



Examples given included:

"The Abbeydale Grangers group is exclusively child led"

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	0
Young people have some involvement	1
Young people have a lot of involvement	0
Total responses	1

Examples given included:

"Some involvement via student voice"

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

Yes	1
No	0
Not Sure	0
Total responses	1

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	1
A lot of effect	0
Total responses	1

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

Their group?

- Confidence
- Peer pressure

The organisation?

- Confidence

Their communities/areas?

- Structure
- Legislation around schools



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

Yes	0
No	0
Not sure	1
Total responses	1

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

Yes	0
No	0
Maybe	1
Total responses	1

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

Definition of participation	0
Barriers of participation	0
Methods of participation	1
Sheffield Participation Strategy	0
Total responses	1

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

Yes	0
No	0
Maybe	1
Total responses	1



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.

One focus group took place in the South West 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 "what do you does your group do?" the following answers were given:

Light water valley	Outdoor cricket	Indoor football
have fun	Chill, play and make friends	Activities
Hip hop	Painting	Football
Play cards	Arts and media	Socialise with other young people
Have a good time	Dancing	Chill and play snooker
Participate in all activities	To talk to the youth workers	Group talk
Hand printing	make friends	Tree planting
Litter picking	Drug event	Gaza fundraising event
Ice skating	Cycling	Pleasure Island
Residential	Surprise parties	ASDAN fire station
Cinema and bowling	Arts and crafts	Walk

In response to "why do you go to your group?" the following answers were given:

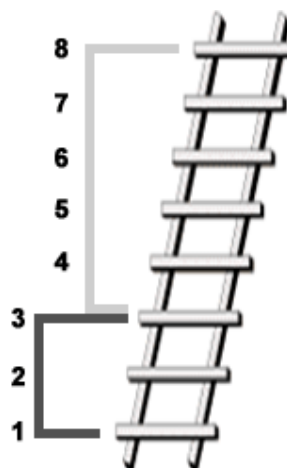
Because it's fun and you can play any games	Make new friends and chill	To have a good time
listen to music	To relax	To communicate with each other
Have fun (x4)	To get to know other YP	When we come we play all sorts of games like pool, badminton, football
To share our feelings	Go on trips in summer	Play activities
Love it	To spend time with each other	If I'm bored I go to youth club
To make other people attend	To take part in activities	

• **Activity2: Ranking Participation**

(The group did not complete this exercise)

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 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?

All 19 young people responded 'yes' to this question; some examples given were:

- Fife-fighting course
- ASDAN

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

Examples given were:

- Climbing a ladder
- Reaching various heights
- Using a hose-pipe

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

One young person identified that induction days would help boost confidence as a school induction day boosted confidence in lessons.

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?

All 19 young people responded 'yes' to this question and gave the following suggestions:

- Boxing
- Health-related training
- Voluntary work project, e.g. in social work

2.

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

All 19 young people responded 'no' to this question – several said they would like to if given the opportunity.

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

All 19 young people responded 'yes' to this question and gave an example of a local police officer, PC Tom visiting the group to talk to them about ASBOs.

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

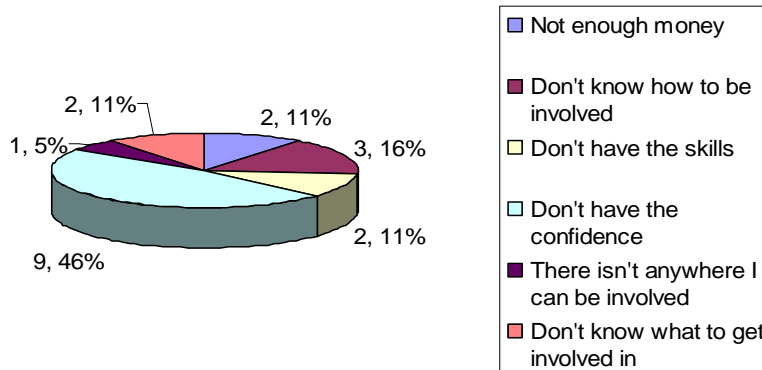
All 19 young people responded 'yes' and explained that following the meeting with PC Tom about ASBOs the club was given £2000 extra funding to help reduce the number of ASBOs given out in the future.

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

All 19 young people responded 'yes' and said that a girls only youth session had been requested and that this has been taken into consideration

• **Activity 2: Barriers and How to Get Over Them!**

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.



46% of young people said that they don't have the confidence to get involved in decision making, this being the highest scoring barrier.

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 the wider community. The practitioners' questionnaire and young people's focus groups have provided insufficient data to ascertain young people's participation. The South West Community Assembly Report is the only report lacking sufficient information. It appears that all providers of youth provision are not sufficiently linked together via networks or strategy groups. Therefore, practitioners appear unfamiliar with engaging in participation research and consultation.

Sheffield Futures currently do not occupy a community building within the Assembly which has significantly impacted upon the amount of research undertaken within the assembly due to available networks. However, Sheffield Futures began implementing regular youth provision within the assembly in September 2009. It is recommended that Sheffield Futures develop non-faith related provision for young people aged 13-19. This should encompass detached youth work, positive activities, targeted youth support work with vulnerable groups in both community and school settings.

A working 'Youth Providers Group', consisting of many organisations and individuals who work with young people, has been established to co-ordinate and promote activities for young people and increase opportunities for multi-agency working and delivery of youth provision. In partnership with Chilypep, the Youth Providers Group will increase participation activities for young people in the South West Community Assembly, especially involving the schools' youth council's.

This report will be launched at the South West Community Assembly Participation Event held at Eccleshall Parish Church Hall on Wednesday 21st October 2009.

It is recommended that this event be used as a platform for the South West Community Assembly to consider how to respond to the findings of the report presented and to plan together how they can take these forward and develop opportunities for young people's participation within their area.

Next Steps

A participation event will be held at Eccleshall Parish Church Hall on Wednesday 21st October from 4pm till 6.30pm 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. 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.

The South West will be one of the two pilot areas in the City to be supported to develop participation activities and structures for young people in the area.



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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