



Championing Children and Young People in England

Guidance for the recognition and reward of participation activities



Introduction and Context

Children and young people are engaged and involved with us in many different ways and on many different levels. On a large number of occasions, this will involve children and young people travelling to attend one of our participation activities. This might be to be take part in our children's and young people's advisory group, Amplify; through planned activities via contacts in our participation network; and the Children's Commissioner's Takeover Day.

Whenever children and young people work with or reach out to us, we want them to be safe, feel secure and trust that we will do whatever we can to create a listening, supportive and welcoming environment and protect them from harm.

All participation work with children and young people will be informed by, and explicitly demonstrate, an ethical value framework based on the following principles:

- 1. Respect for the rights of children and young people**
- 2. Ensuring the voices of children and young people are heard**
- 3. Promoting wellbeing, ensuring safety and avoiding harm**
- 4. Informed consent, voluntary participation and feedback**
- 5. Confidentiality**
- 6. Equality and diversity**

Office of the Children's Commissioner Participation Strategy 2013-2014

This guidance provides a **recognition and reward framework** for the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) as we inform, consult and involve children and young people in our work.

It explores the principles for recognising and rewarding, ensuring that all our projects and staff reward fairly and equitably whilst understanding that participation is a voluntary activity. It is important for children and young people to understand and value the role of having their voice heard and taken into serious consideration as this will help develop sense of agency or empowerment in their own lives and encourage active citizenship.

This guidance is for all staff at the OCC who would like to involve children and young people in their work. It will help staff to consider the levels of incentives, recognition and rewards for the time, energy and ideas that children and young people contribute allowing thought to be given to any resource that may be required.

It is also available for our partners and organisations who work with us to support the implementation of our Participation Strategy.



Why should we recognise and reward participation?

It is essential that we give relevant and timely recognition and feedback for the valued contribution that children and young people make to our work and for it to be a meaningful and fulfilling activity or process. This also demonstrates our commitment to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - which states **all children and young and people have a right to have their views heard on the decisions that affect their lives and for their views to be taken seriously.**

All contributions from children and young people will be acknowledged and valued in some way. This may be through offering recognition, certification or reward and also by feeding back how their contributions have influenced our work and decisions. Some or all of these approaches may be viewed by young people as a thank-you and/or an encouragement for them to participate.



Giving consideration to the ways in which we recognise and reward

This guidance emphasises the importance of the recognition aspect for children and young people. Suggestions are made for ways in which children and young people can be rewarded which reflects a meaningful thank you to them for taking part but can also help the development of skills and learning. For example, a certification programme may help with the children and young people's CVs, work experience or employment opportunities.

It is important that any recognition, certification or reward is discussed and agreed with the organisation facilitating the engagement of children and young people; the children and young people taking part; and OCC staff leading the work.

We need to take into consideration that some organisations may have their own ways in which the children and young people they work with are recognised and rewarded for their involvement and in some cases this may be through payment to young people (but not children) for their time.

Our approach is not to directly pay for children and young people to take part (apart from the reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses) – instead £10 shopping vouchers may be used to thank individuals for their contribution to our work.

However we still need to discuss and agree with the organisation facilitating what would be fair and equitable. It may be an organisation invoices us to cover some of their time and resources to recognise and reward children and young people. These decisions will need to be agreed by a member of OCC Leadership Team before going ahead with the work.



Ethical Principles

With regard to ensuring this policy complies with our ethical principles of participation (as outlined above) we have identified the following six specific principles in relation to recognition, certification and reward:

- 1. Equity** – The use of incentives, recognition and reward should be equitable across all our work and not discriminate, directly or indirectly, against any individual or group of children or young people.
- 2. Inclusion** – The role of the OCC is to encourage and think through the inclusion of less-heard groups. We will want to consider the levels of incentives and rewards when working to engage with particular individuals or groups that are under-represented in a consultation or participation activity.
- 3. Good and timely communication** – The levels of incentives, recognition and reward to be used will be clarified as far as possible in advance of the participation activity.
- 4. Reimbursement** – Children and young people should never be ‘out-of-pocket’ as a result of their involvement in activities. All costs will be covered in advance, this includes travel, food and accommodation.
- 5. Giving time without payment and valuing volunteering** – There is a balance between setting appropriate levels of recognition and reward and over-recognising and rewarding. It is always important to communicate that the young people should be willing to give time freely and without remuneration. This helps them understand charitable giving and active citizenship volunteering principles.
- 6. Right level for age and abilities** – Make sure you have considered recognition and reward arrangements that are appropriate to the age of the child or young person involved as well as their abilities and interests.



What do we mean by ‘incentives’, ‘certification’, ‘recognition’ and ‘reward’?

Incentive: something that encourages involvement:

- All costs covered such as transport, food and accommodation
- Being listened to and influencing decisions; making new friends; having fun.

Recognition: demonstrating that involvement is valued and appreciated

- Thank you letters; references; certificates
- Gaining positive publicity and being quoted in publications
- Nominations for awards and receiving awards
- Celebration event
- Feedback on how views and ideas provided have helped to influence decisions.

Certification: formally recognising qualities and skills young people have developed

- Learning opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in particular areas
- Opportunities to use learned knowledge and skills
- Certification outlining specific skills and qualities demonstrated based on formal criteria.

Reward: giving something tangible that is of value to a young person

- Going out for a meal
- An ‘outdoor’ activity at a residential centre
- Tickets for an event; book, music, sports or shopping voucher; competitions and prizes.



Examples of participatory activities and recognition/reward offered

As mentioned, OCC staff, in discussion with the Participation team, will need to make their own decisions about the range and level of recognition and rewards to provide. The table below gives suggestions:

Activity	Recognition / Reward Offered
Stakeholder event where young people have been invited to attend	Costs and expenses covered, Thank you, Commitment to feedback
Taken part in interview panel to recruit organisation or staff	Costs and expenses covered, Thank you, Commitment to feedback
Participation in a focus group / session	Costs and expenses covered, Thank you, Shopping Voucher, Commitment to feedback
Member of Amplify	Costs and expenses covered, Thank you, Celebration Event, Certification programme, Commitment to feedback



Activities

Activities that might be recognised include:

- Taking part in a survey to find out the views of children and young people about a particular work area
- Being on a steering/working group for a particular project or work area
- Being an active member of Amplify through:
 - Online discussions
 - Main meetings
- Helping with a one-off activity such as a focus group
- Being involved in the recruitment and selection of staff and taking part in an interview panel
- Participation networks activities:
 - Introductory visits
 - Sessions on particular work areas or projects.

Types of activity, reward, expenses, training and learning for consideration

There is a range of ways in which children and young people may be involved in our work and there are many types of rewards that we can offer as thanks and recognition.

The table below helps to identify types of activity from informing and consulting through to being involved and participating in decision-making. You should consider and agree what type of reward would be suitable to give and it is advisable to involve children and young people in these discussions too.

Involvement activity	Recognition or Reward
Informing Informing people of what is planned or has been decided	Expenses to specific invitees.
Consulting Consulting on decisions, offering opinions, listening to feedback at events	Expenses to specific invitees. Thank you letters and certification of attendance may be appropriate, giving feedback on what has happened as a result of listening. A £10 shopping voucher may also be suitable.
Involving and acting together Involve e.g. deciding together, encouraging additional ideas or options, seeking joint decisions, working in a regular participation group such as Amplify or a steering group. Acting together, not only deciding jointly what to do, but actually doing it together 'in partnership'	Expenses to specific invitees. Thank you letters and certification of attendance may be appropriate, giving feedback on what has happened as a result of listening. A £10 shopping voucher may also be suitable. Mainly these activities are where young people are engaged over a period of time and there may not be any financial remuneration but more emphasis on training and personal development opportunities which could be certificated. Fun days out and residential visits ways we also recognise and reward contributions young people have made.



References

Some of the children and young people we have worked with have requested references to highlight some of the knowledge and skills they have gained through sharing their views and experiences within a group setting. Whilst we cannot specifically write an employer's reference for their participation work with us we have developed a template for a factual reference which we can use.

This will allow us to provide children or young people who have worked with us over a long period of time (such as with Amplify) a personal letter which outlines:

- how long they've worked with us
- specific areas of work they have contributed to
- any additional projects they supported or events they've attended
- key skills they have demonstrated during their time with us.

The children and young people will then be able to share this with prospective employers and schools, colleges or universities.



Certification

Further to factual references, we have considered how to offer a certification programme for any child or young person who has worked with us over a long period of time as a means of recognising some of their learning with us.

This means the children and young people will have some evidence of the experiences and learning they have gained from working with us and after a discussion with Amplify in July 2013, it is clear that something personal to the individual is important to them.

Having researched many of the available accreditation and certification programmes we could 'buy-in' to, we have begun to develop our own specific programme which we will pilot and review in March/April 2014.

We have identified, and discussed with Amplify, four main areas for learning and skill development and will offer these as a pilot project with Amplify members. The offer of certification will be completely on a voluntary basis as with all our participation work but could easily be incorporated into the 1-1 we have with every Amplify member at each main meeting to check out how they are doing and identify any additional support requirements.

We will explore with children and young people who are interested in the certification process how we will agree they have developed in certain areas and also the ways in which they might like to receive a certificate e.g. through the post or at an Amplify meeting.

Four pilot areas and criteria where we will offer for certification are outlined on the following page:

Communication Skills: Speaking and Listening	
Body Language	For example: Smiling, making eye contact with those being communicated to.
Speech	Speaks clearly, confidently, concisely and not too fast. Uses every-day language rather than jargon.
Interaction	Builds a rapport with those being communicated to, perhaps by getting them involved.
Persuading and Negotiating	Backs up their points with logic and facts and shows tact to those they disagree with.
Gathering information	Asks open questions and clarifies and summarises what others are saying
Listening	Accurately hearing what people are saying, expressing interest and showing empathy.

Group Work Skills	
Participation	Participates enthusiastically in discussion
Spoken Expression	Expresses his/herself clearly and coherently.
Originality of Ideas	Introduces new ideas or builds constructively on the ideas of others.
Quality of Thought	Analyses the problem well and gets to the root of the problem.
Influence on Others	Makes a point which is accepted and influences the direction and nature of the discussion.
Open Mindedness	Listens to carefully to other members views and incorporates the points made by others into their own.
Facilitation of the Discussion	Makes a direct attempt to help another person.

Active Participation within the OCC	
Influence	Have been involved in work that has actually influenced the work of the OCC.
Commitment	Attendance and engagement at Amplify main meetings and involvement in some opportunities inbetween
Complex Issues	Been able to work on complicated topics and issues and shared their thoughts, views and experiences about what's important to them.
Analysis and Evaluation	Able to take lots of information and, with support, analyse and evaluate things that can be used to influence ours and others work.

Knowledge of the UNCRC	
Understanding	Able to explain what the UNCRC stands for, what it is and who it applies to.
Article 12	Able to explain Article 12 without using jargon.
Key Areas	Demonstrate a general understanding of the 6 areas of the conventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General principles • Civil rights and freedoms • Family environment and alternative care • Basic health and welfare • Education, leisure and cultural activities • Special protection measures
Further understanding	Demonstrate a further understanding of one of the key areas above.



Costs and expenses

Children and young people who participate should not lose out or be financially disadvantaged as a result of their involvement in the activities.

The OCC will cover most costs in advance of any participation activities. Where these can't be covered in advanced, for example car mileage, these will be paid for by OCC petty cash.

If young people, their parents or carers incur any out-of-pocket expenses a timescale for reimbursed should be agreed in advance, so the young person/parent or carer knows how long it will take to be reimbursed.

Travel

The OCC will book in advance and cover the costs of the return trip from home (or place of work/ educational establishment) to the venue on public transport e.g. bus, train.

If the parent or carer of the young person would prefer to provide return transport to the activity venue in private car or other motorised vehicle and this is cost effective, the rates shown in the table may be claimed.

Type of vehicle	Rate per mile
Private car	40p
Other motorised vehicle	23.8p

Food / Subsistence

The OCC should arrange for healthy refreshments to be provided, free of charge, to children/young people attending meetings and events. This should include all meals where any part of a young person's return journey to the activity venue falls in the following times:

- Before 10am – Breakfast
- Between 11.30am and 2pm – Lunch
- After 4.30pm – Evening Meal

If it is not possible for the OCC to provide these meals (usually because they will be purchased before or after they are in the care of the OCC), they should be reimbursed through petty cash.

Amounts claimed or spent are capped and are based on time away from home. These are available in the OCC's financial procedures.

Overnight stay

Children and young people may sometimes be invited to attend an event that involves an overnight stay. In such cases accommodation will be booked in advanced by the OCC. On the very rare occasion where it has not been possible to book overnight accommodation in advance, a member of the Leadership Team will be asked to approve the use of petty cash or a claim for costs by a member of OCC staff.

Amounts claimed or spent are capped are available in the OCC's financial procedures.

Taxis

If it is necessary to use a taxi they will be booked in advanced by the OCC or covered by petty cash. This might be:

- Where it is cost effective due to numbers travelling together
- For journeys for which there is no other suitable method of public transport
- Where heavy luggage has to be transported to or from the place of departure or arrival
- Where it is late at night or early in the morning
- Where the time saving is important.

If the young person is travelling in a taxi and is not accompanied by their parent, carer (or someone designated by them) or an OCC staff member, a taxi company who can provide DBS (previously CRB) checked drivers will be used.

Reimbursement of care costs

We understand that given the OCC's remit requires us to reach out and engage with children and young people whose voices are less heard, this may involve children and young people who, without additional support, would struggle to attend sessions. Therefore, in order to promote inclusion, on an individual basis and with prior agreement from the manager of the activity, the following care costs can be considered and paid. As with the reimbursement of any costs all receipts must be produced before payment can be made.

Support workers

Where a young person needs the help of a personal assistant or support worker to fully engage with the activity, these support costs can be reimbursed at the usual rate. The exact arrangements need to be discussed and agreed in advance.

A young parent can only claim for care costs that are higher than those they would normally incur – e.g. if the child would normally have been in childcare when the meeting takes place, no claim may be made. Payments for care costs may be regarded as taxable income by the Inland Revenue.

Where a participant needs the support of another individual to enable them to attend a meeting or activity then the carer or personal assistant in this situation may be entitled to their care costs being paid by cash or voucher for the time they are working. This must be agreed in advance and any payment received must be declared to the relevant tax and benefits authorities by the person receiving the payment.

Childcare

Payment of up to £5 per hour per child for registered childcare will be reimbursed where supported by receipts. The amount paid cannot exceed the amount receipted. Registered childcare includes nurseries, childminders, play schools and nannies, but does not include payments to a participant's friends or family.

Dependent care

Where a young carer needs to employ a registered care agency to look after their dependent while attending an involvement activity.