

Policy Writing With Children and Young People Toolkit

Created July 2017

Rationale

Why consult and create policies with children and young people?

Children and young people have the right to participate in decisions which affect their lives, their community and the larger society in which they live. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them.

The benefits of consultations and policy writing with children and young people?

- Children and young people have lots to offer from their experiences and knowledge of issues on various subject matters that affect them or someone they know.
- Projects, policies and people can all benefit from the enthusiasm and energy that children and young people can bring through participating in the subject.
- Children and young people can think creatively and have lots of inventive and practical ideas or solutions to problems that they are involved in or aware of.
- It also facilitates the personal development and skills of children and young people and encourages active participation about matters now and in the future.

What are the objectives?

- To help the process of increasing the level of participation of children and young people in decision making and policy-making.
- To help ensure consistency and quality of consultations and policy-making, ensuring participation from diverse groups.

The consultation process

1. Identify what you want to find out about and write out your objectives
2. Clarify who should be involved in carrying out the consultation and identify roles
3. Write out a timeline – be prepared for things to take longer than you think. This may not be a priority for young people with busy lives!
4. Identify which groups of children and young people you want to consult/work with
5. Identify how you will access these children and young people
6. Clarify any ethical or confidentiality issues
7. Decide on the consultation methods to use (with identified group and any further consultations and views from other children and young people).
8. Collect and record the information
9. Depending on the method chosen analyse the information
10. Collate and give feedback to the children and young people who participated

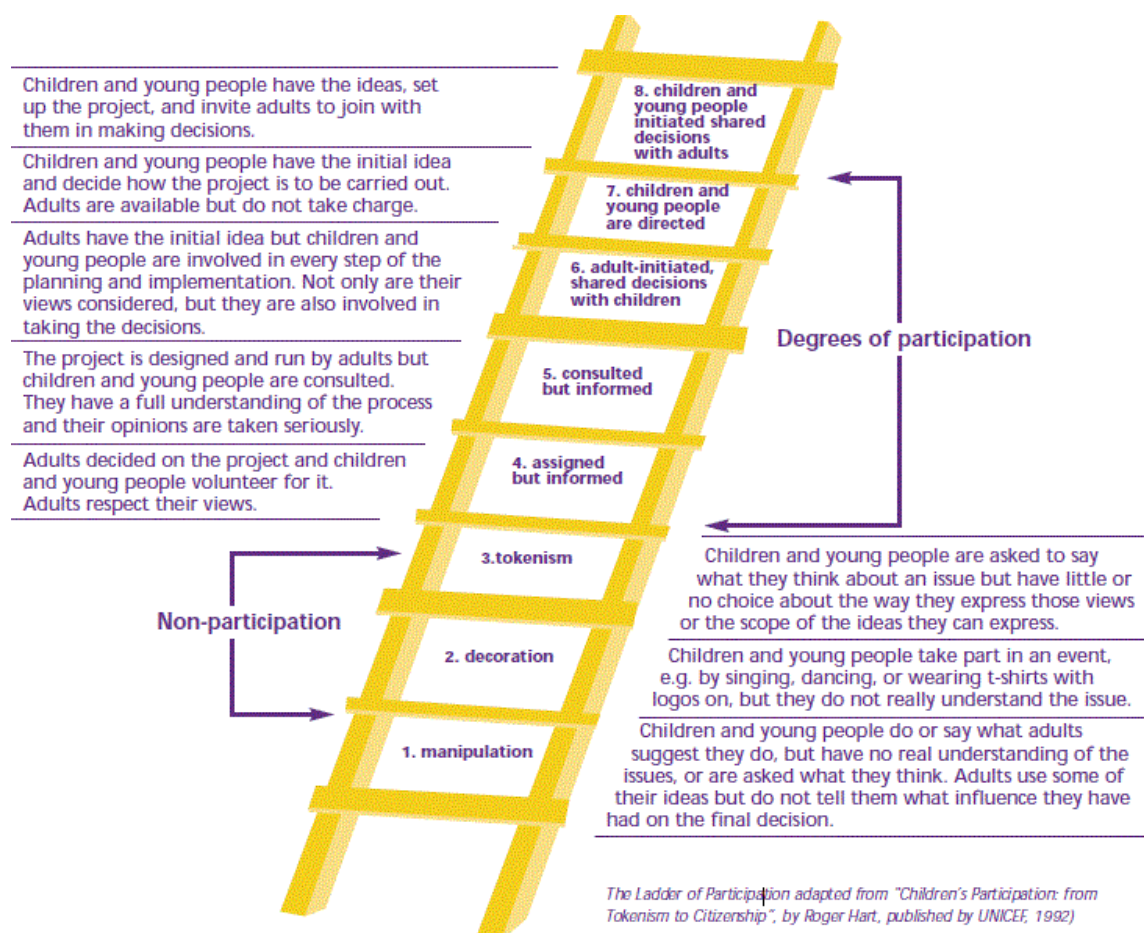
Consolidating feedback

Once the feedback has been received from the group, it must be compiled and processed to filter out conflicting ideas. It is important to be clear with the participating group that you are not discounting any ideas; yet establishing the most appropriate compromise, and ensure the group agree with the reasoning. This is important at every stage.

Consult on your drafts

It is important for the facilitator to put together a draft of the new policy based upon the review work carried out. At this stage there is an opportunity to conduct a secondary consultation on the draft policy, and find out any input from the secondary consultation period, if undertaken, should be discussed and any appropriate changes made. This stage of consultation is about content and checking people's understanding. Seek collective agreement before publishing a written policy – see

Hart (1992) illustration of the ladder of participation adapted from 'Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship' as an important reference.



Finalise and approve the policy

Ensure the children and young people working group, the facilitator and any appropriate head or chair of associated policy group agree and approve the policy before it is published. If the consultation and consolidation of views have been participant centred this process of approval will be straightforward.

Implement the policy

Identify how the policy will be implemented and applied within all appropriate settings. Continue to monitor the implementation of the policy, and establish how the policy will be reviewed and revised in the future.

Example – Misty Isle Youth Forum and Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy and Guidance.

The Misty Isle Youth Forum (MIYF) identified the need to update the Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy which was due to be updated. They discussed this with the Head of Service with responsibility for the policy in June 2017 and it was agreed they would take the lead in reviewing and updating this policy.

MIYF participated in the Equality, Diversity and Children's Rights CPD training in November 2017 in Portree High School.

The facilitator (Health Development Officer) met with the identified young people:

- The group revised the previous equality, diversity and children's rights training and the importance of the policy being accessible to all through flip chart activities to capture the whole group's views.
- The facilitator then used focus groups to generate ideas and to facilitate group discussion to explore issues in depth views around bullying within education settings, and what they believed should be the process around bullying behaviours, and what should be included and excluded within the policy – this was all recorded.
- The facilitator then divided the group into smaller workshops groups where the young people identified what they would they thought should be included in the policy and guidance and the format on subject headed flip charts. The young people all had a chance to work on each subject and agree, or enhance the previous group's views. This was all recorded and reviewed to the young people with further discussions and alterations were made.
- The young people then created survey questions they to give the opportunity for all children and young people in Highland to voice their opinions on bullying prevention, and the process after a bullying behaviour has occurred.

The facilitator and the Youth Development officer created a survey that was sent to through various channels to hear the voices of different children and young people.

The facilitator gathered all the opinions of the young people and formatted a first draft of the policy to send back to the young people.

The young people analysed the draft and responded with their reviews through email (due to the distance and exam period, this may have been better as another working group with the facilitator there).

The facilitator made further changes from their responses, and also included direct quotes from the MIYF and survey results from the MIYF survey they issued to other children and young people.

The facilitator also contacted the graphic communication department to ensure the correct formatting and branding with included.

The final policy and guidance was then sent to the MIYF and the Equality and Diversity Group's chair for approval, before publication in June 2018.

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