

# Youth Voice & Participation

# Toolkit

2022



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# Introduction to the Toolkit

This toolkit was developed by Sefton Council, Health and Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) organisations, to guide the work of services for all young people.

In April 2015, members conducted a SWOT analysis of participation and youth voice which helped to frame the need for a vibrant participation and youth voice toolkit. This document is designed to maximise the strengths and opportunities for organisations and children and young people.

In June 2022, the Sefton Youth Voice Strategic Steering Group was set up that brought together key partners from across Sefton to discuss Youth Voice, this was set up following discussion at the Children and Young People's Partnership Board. At the first meeting, it was agreed that the Youth Voice and Participation Toolkit would be reviewed and updated by Sefton Young Advisors.

# What Is Participation?

Participation is about ensuring that children and young people are given opportunities to be involved in processes for decision making on issues that affect them. This means listening to what matters to them, and taking their views seriously.

A vital part of the participation process is telling children and young people what the plan is, and what is going to happen as a result of hearing their views and why. Participation should be accessible to all young people. Some children and young people require more time to say what they feel, and some may need more support and options.



## Participation Is...

- Sharing opportunities with those affected by them
- A basic right
- A choice for each young person who is involved
- An opportunity for everybody involved to develop skills, knowledge and ideas



## Participation Is Not...

- Always formal
- 'Ticking the box' to impress Ofsted or to help secure funding
- An 'added extra' to work with children and young people

# The Ladder of Participation

The ladder of participation is a model (shown on the next page) that was developed by Roger Hart (1992) to show eight different levels of young persons participation.

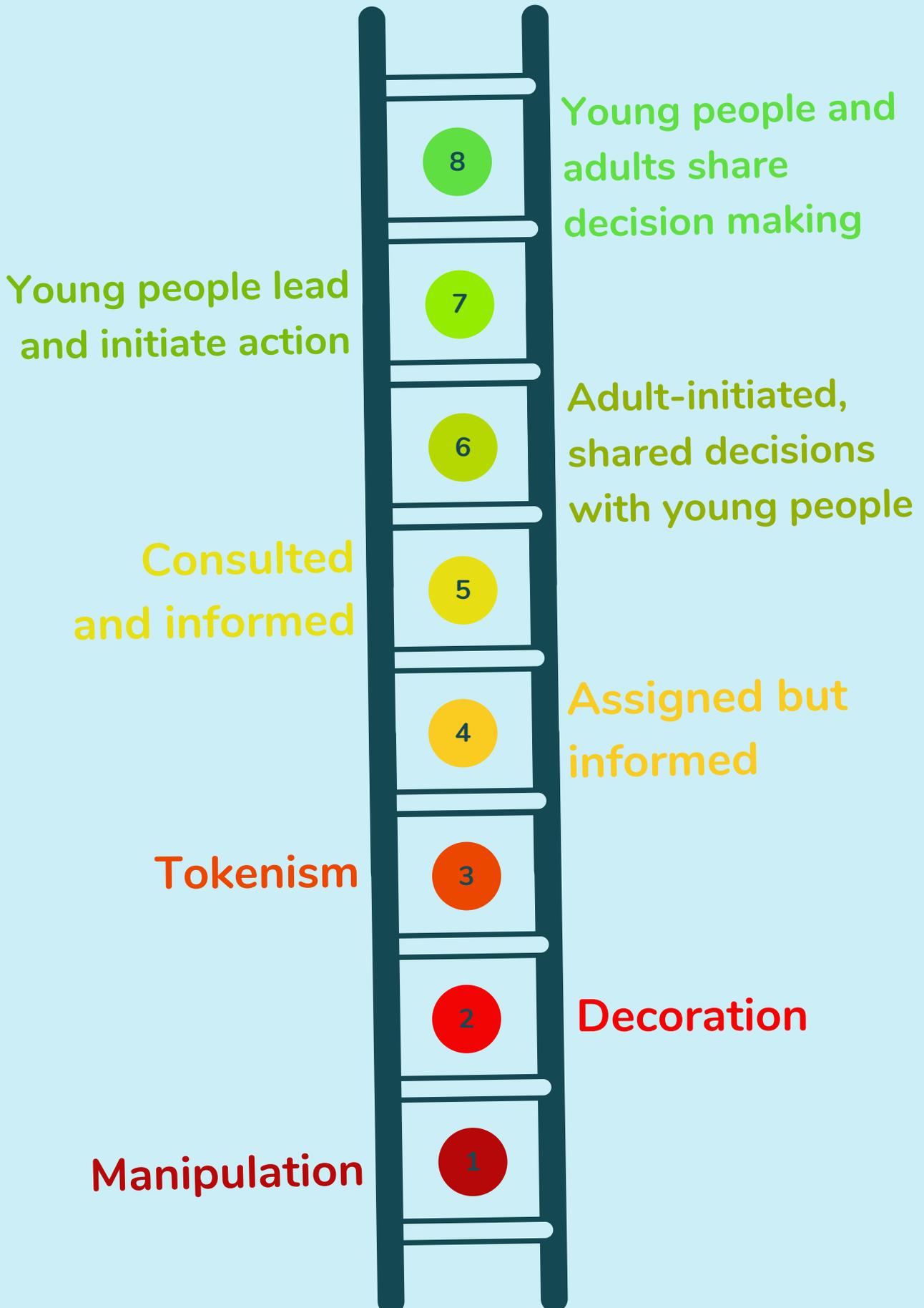
The ladder was designed by Hart to encourage those that work with children and young people to think about their process of participation and inclusion of children and young people in activities.

It is important to remember that steps 1 (manipulation), 2 (decoration) and 3 (tokenism) are **not** examples of youth participation and you are encouraged to move away from these steps and upwards for more meaningful participation with children and young people.

For a more detailed explanation of the Ladder of Participation please visit:

[https://www.unicefirc.org/publications/pdf/childrens\\_participation.pdf](https://www.unicefirc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf)

# The Ladder of Participation



# The 4 Key Principles of Participation

Below is a visual to show the four key principles of participation when working with children and young people.

**Children and Young People have equal opportunity to be involved**

**Children and Young People are valued and taken seriously**

**The involvement of Children and Young People is monitored, evaluated reported and improved**

**The involvement of Children and a visible commitment that is properly resourced**

# Benefits of Participation for Children and Young People

Participation can help children and young people to develop important and useful skills and feel valued and included.

## Children and Young People...

-  Have a real say in shaping their own lives
-  Feel better about themselves and their abilities
-  Build on existing skills and develop new ones
-  Are seen as and are valued citizens
-  Get services that can meet their changing needs and hopes
-  Have opportunities to achieve accredited training

# Benefits of Participation for Organisations and Services

Learning from Children and Young people about their: attitudes, needs, aspirations, barriers to accessing services and views on what makes a quality service.

- Demonstrates a commitment in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and current legislation and guidance
- Services are designed, delivered, and evaluated based on actual wants and needs rather than perceived ones
- Making the best use of limited resources
- Gives fresh perspectives and new creative ideas
- It will support social mobility and empowers young people to get involved
- Supports young people's safety and mental wellbeing

# UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is a legally-binding international agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.

The UNCRC consists of 54 articles that set out children's rights and how governments should work together to make them available to all children.

Under the terms of the convention, governments are required to meet children's basic needs and help them reach their full potential. Central to this is the acknowledgment that every child has basic fundamental rights. These include the right to:

- Life, survival and development
- Protection from violence, abuse or neglect
- An education that enables children to fulfil their potential
- Be raised by, or have a relationship with, their parents
- Express their opinions and be listened to

Source: Save The Children

**See Appendix**

# Participation Checklist

The checklist on the following pages has been developed to:

- Help you self-assess youth voice and participation in your service, a service you are using, have used or plan to use
- Help you to develop better youth voice and participation

## How to use:

You can use this checklist to rate youth voice and participation in services or use it as a tool to plan improvements and changes

## What does Now-Soon-Later mean?

**Now** = this is in place at the minute

**Soon** = there is a plan to develop or start this

**Later** = no plans for this (opportunity for development)

## Why and How?

The page offers examples on how we can involve children and young people and why it is important and beneficial

# Governance

The project, service or organisation...	Now - Soon - Later		
...has a policy outlining how young people will be involved and supported in decision-making opportunities	N	S	L
...allows young people to sit on boards/steering groups and be supported to engage in meetings effectively	N	S	L
...gives young people the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience about youth culture and the needs of young people	N	S	L
...makes sure that when changes are made, young people know	N	S	L

# People

The project, service or organisation...	Now - Soon - Later		
...ensures that all staff and volunteers are trained and have the right resources to champion youth voice and participation	N	S	L
...ensures all safeguarding is in place and that staff and volunteers are trained and understand the policies	N	S	L
...ensures that the voice of the child is a priority	N	S	L

# Values

## The project, service or organisation...

## Now - Soon - Later

...ensures young people are involved in how decisions are made, why and how this affects the service

N

S

L

...acknowledges, recognises and celebrates the contribution of young people to the organisation

N

S

L

...is willing to adapt and change to reflect the youth voice and participation needs of young people

N

S

L

...wants to connect with and engage with young people as equal partners

N

S

L

...believes in the value of having fun

N

S

L

...is a safe, positive place to belong

N

S

L

...ensures that everyone who will be affected by a decision are given the chance to contribute to the decision-making process

N

S

L

...makes sure young people know how they can participate, if they want to

N

S

L

# Diversity

## The project, service or organisation...

## Now - Soon - Later

...involves young people from different cultural backgrounds and ethnic minorities

N

S

L

...promotes diversity, inclusion and differentiation

N

S

L

...promotes access for all young people (eg. posters, equipment, spaces)

N

S

L

# Activities and Access

The project, service or organisation...	Now - Soon - Later		
...is committed to making opportunities accessible for everyone	N	S	L
...helps young people to attend meetings and arranges meetings at times that suit them	N	S	L
...is flexible and understands that young people have different schedules compared to adults	N	S	L
...encourages and supports all young people to access opportunities to have their voice heard and participate	N	S	L
...provides training and/or information to young people to help them participate fully in decision-making	N	S	L
...creates opportunities for young people to talk directly to key decision-makers	N	S	L
...is willing to support and encourage young people to implement their own projects, ideas and activities	N	S	L
...provides opportunities for young people to develop and grow skills and knowledge	N	S	L
...does not use language or terms that are not fully understood by children and young people	N	S	L
...promotes and provides opportunities for youth leadership	N	S	L
...promotes links with youth voice groups and networks	N	S	L

# Why and How?

## Sharing Ideas and Information

Opens up discussions to look at how things will change and receive feedback. This can be done by: 'you said, we did' activities, community events and performing arts to name a few examples.

## Sharing Views and Experiences

Allows children and young people to share experiences of using services, explore aspirations and barriers and share ideas for change. This can be done by: focus groups, forums and councils.

## Sharing Decision Making

Allows children and young people to be involved in delivering and reviewing strategies and plans. This can be done by: co-production groups and involving children and young people in recruitment and commissioning.

## Sharing Leadership

Children and young people to have involvement in leadership activities. This can be done by engaging in: formal meetings and public speaking.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation and thanks to the organisations involved in the original toolkit and to Sefton's Youth Voice Strategic Steering Group for their input into the update for this version of the toolkit.

## Sefton Young Advisors Contact Details

For more information or advice please contact:  
[young.advisors@seftoncvcs.org.uk](mailto:young.advisors@seftoncvcs.org.uk)



1  
DEFINITION OF A CHILD



2  
NO DISCRIMINATION



3  
BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD



4  
MAKING RIGHTS REAL



5  
FAMILY GUIDANCE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP



6  
LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT



7  
NAME AND NATIONALITY



8  
IDENTITY



9  
KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER



10  
CONTACT WITH PARENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES



11  
PROTECTION FROM KIDNAPPING



12  
RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS



13  
SHARING THOUGHTS FREELY



14  
FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION



15  
SETTING UP OR JOINING GROUPS



16  
PROTECTION OF PRIVACY



17  
ACCESS TO INFORMATION



18  
RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS



19  
PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE



20  
CHILDREN WITHOUT FAMILIES



21  
CHILDREN WHO ARE ADOPTED



22  
REFUGEE CHILDREN



23  
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES



24  
HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, ENVIRONMENT



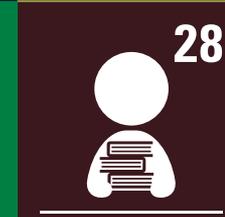
25  
REVIEW OF A CHILD'S PLACEMENT



26  
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HELP



27  
FOOD, CLOTHING, A SAFE HOME



28  
ACCESS TO EDUCATION



29  
AIMS OF EDUCATION



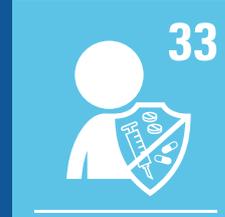
30  
MINORITY CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION



31  
REST, PLAY, CULTURE, ARTS



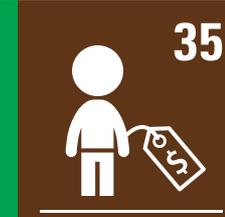
32  
PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL WORK



33  
PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS



34  
PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL ABUSE



35  
PREVENTION OF SALE AND TRAFFICKING



36  
PROTECTION FROM EXPLOITATION



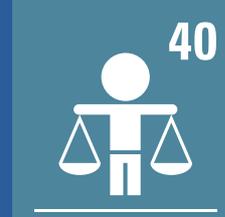
37  
CHILDREN IN DETENTION



38  
PROTECTION IN WAR



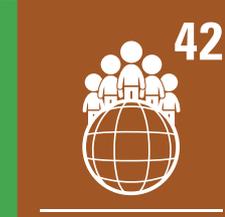
39  
RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION



40  
CHILDREN WHO BREAK THE LAW



41  
BEST LAW FOR CHILDREN APPLIES



42  
EVERYONE MUST KNOW CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



43-54  
HOW THE CONVENTION WORKS

# CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

# Appendix B

**Alder Hey CAMHS**  
**Buddy Up, Sefton**  
**Brighter Living**  
**Citizens Advice Sefton**  
**MAD Group**  
**Liverpool John Moores University**  
**Merseycare**  
**Merseyside Youth Association**  
**NHS**  
**Sefton Care Leavers Centre**  
**Sefton Coast Landscape Partnership**  
**Sefton Council**  
**Sefton CVS**  
**Sefton Emotional Achievement Service**  
**Sefton LSCB**  
**Sefton's Members of Youth Parliament**  
**Sefton Women's and Childrens Aid (SWACA)**  
**South Sefton College**  
**Sefton Youth Council**  
**YMCA Sefton**  
**Sefton Young Advisors**  
**Youth Offending Team, Sefton**