



Children, Young People, Carers and Parents

**Buckinghamshire**

**Participation**

**Network**

**LISTENING RESPONDING ACTING**

**INTERESTED IN HAVING YOUR SAY?**

Email: [participation@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:participation@buckscc.gov.uk) for more information

## Participation Network within Buckinghamshire

### Introduction

Participation is a key concept in developing and delivering services for children, young people and their families within the current Every Child Matters agenda - for more information see [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk). The definition of participation that is used to support this work in Buckinghamshire is:

*'Participation is a term increasingly used by those working with children and young people to mean children and young people thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, and interacting in a positive way with other people; it means involving children in the decisions which affect their lives, the lives of their community and the larger society in which they live.'*

(Source; Introduction to Policy on Children's Participation - Save the Children)

This definition can also be applied to participation by adults.

As participation has been identified as a core value by the Children and Young People's Trust the overarching multi-agency group responsible for taking the children and young people's agenda forward, this work is being given a high profile. It is planned to ensure that all participation work relates to the Participation Ladder developed by Sherry Arnstein and Roger Hart (see **Appendix One**). This includes consultation (see 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> rungs of the ladder).

The Children and Young People's Trust vision for children and young people is:

*"In Buckinghamshire we want all our children and young people to have the best start in life and to be able to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives, and to be able to make a positive contribution to their communities and to society. Our aim is to ensure access to a range of universal services as well as developing more targeted services to meet their specialist needs"*

A multi-agency Participation Sub Group of the Children and Young People's Trust has been established to take the lead on delivering the participation agenda and this group has agreed the following aim:

*'To establish a framework for the active involvement of parents / carers, children, young people families and professionals in decision making processes that affect their lives across Buckinghamshire so that services provided by all agencies better meet their needs.'*

As the above aim indicates, participation is the term used to refer to work involving children, young people and their families in decision-making and relates to their ongoing involvement but will of course also include specific consultation exercises. It is within this framework that the Buckinghamshire Partnership Network is being developed.

## **Purpose of the Participation Network**

The purpose of a Participation Network within Buckinghamshire is to coordinate the range of activity that is taking place in the county.

The Participation Network is open to both groups and individual members (**aged 13 years plus only**) to join.

All groups/individual members affiliated to this network will continue to work within their own remit but will be part of a more coordinated approach to participation across the county. The advantages of being part of such a network include:

- More effective coordination of work.
- Help to avoid duplication of participation projects.
- Individual groups benefiting from being part of a countywide organisation.
- Opportunities to effectively support the active involvement of parents, carers, children, and young people within democratic processes.
- Opportunities to be directly involved when specific consultation exercises are undertaken.
- Opportunities to directly influence the wider agenda within the county.
- Opportunities to share good practice.
- Dissemination of information about what is happening across the county.
- Opportunities for children and young people to continue involvement in these processes when they are no longer eligible for the specific age group you are working with.

## **Agreement**

If you wish to be part of this network **you (for individual members only) or your group members and your organisation** will need to agree to a number of conditions by completing the attached Registration and Monitoring Forms (**Appendixes Two and Three**). These include:

- To be actively committed to the concept of participation.
- To be willing to take part in appropriate consultation exercises.
- To be able to demonstrate the impact of participation initiatives.
- To be willing to provide background information on yourself.

Members of the network will receive details of opportunities to take part in decision making and consultation projects, examples of good practice, information about training opportunities and conferences and how information the network receives is supporting the wider agenda.

## **Participation Group Role**

The multi-agency County Participation Group, reporting to the Children and Young People's Trust Board, will continue to be responsible for coordinating the work and will play a key role in:

- Highlighting the profile and importance of participation.
- Producing an annual report about activities supporting the participation agenda.
- Sharing information between organisations.
- Informing local groups about what has happened in the wider arena.
- Feedback on information submitted and how it has impacted on the decision making process.

## **Conclusion**

The creation of the Participation Network presents an excellent opportunity to build on the many examples of good practice in this area of work and has a number of benefits to those who join.

We very much hope you or your group are able to take part. If you are, please complete and return the attached Registration and Monitoring Forms (**Appendixes Two and Three**).

If you have any queries on the Participation Network itself, or would like advice on completing the Monitoring Form, please contact:

**Ed Mallam**  
**Partnership Delivery Team**  
**Children and Young People's Services**  
**Buckinghamshire County Council**  
**Room 14, Old County Hall**  
**Walton Street**  
**Aylesbury**  
**Bucks HP20 1UA**

Tel: 01296 387657 or [emallam@bucksccl.gov.uk](mailto:emallam@bucksccl.gov.uk)

## Appendix One

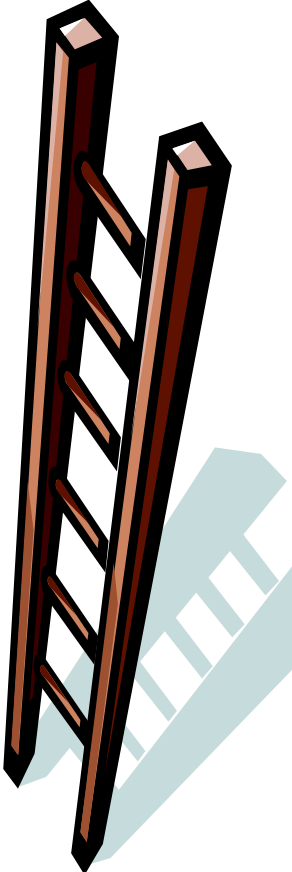
### THINKING ABOUT PARTICIPATION

In 1969 Sherry Arnstein created a “ladder of citizen participation” to critically evaluate public involvement in American housing and community development programmes.

Roger Hart adapted the ladder for UNICEF in 1992. Hart uses the ladder metaphor to examine participatory initiatives involving children and young people (see below). His work is now widely used as a framework in participatory work with children and young people. This framework can also be applied to the involvement of adults.

The ladder helps us to think about whether we are setting up situations where children and young people are being manipulated, or involved in a tokenistic way.

The ladder has eight rungs, the lower three of which are non-participatory ways of working.

	8 <sup>th</sup> rung – young person initiated; shared decisions with adults	<b>L A D D E R</b>
	7 <sup>th</sup> rung – young person initiated and directed	
	6 <sup>th</sup> rung – adult initiated; shared decisions with young person	Adults working with children and young people should aim to move away from manipulation or tokenism towards meaningful involvement in decision-making.
	5 <sup>th</sup> rung – consulted and informed	
	4 <sup>th</sup> rung – assigned but informed	
	<b>DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION</b>	
	3 <sup>rd</sup> rung – tokenism	
	2 <sup>nd</sup> rung – decoration	The top five rungs of the ladder indicate various degrees of participation.
1 <sup>st</sup> rung – manipulation		
<b>NON-PARTICIPATION</b>	There are many factors influencing the type and extent of participation – the age and understanding of the child, what they are interested in and the attitudes of staff and carers.	

## Appendix One cont.

The Ladder can be applied to children and young people in the following ways:

<b>Rung</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
<b>Eighth Rung -</b> Child or young person initiated where decisions are shared with adults	Some young people are worried about the level of bullying in a school. They form a group and write to key adults to say they want to do something about the problem. As a result of their efforts a peer counselling and advocacy service is developed.	The young people identify the issue and work with adults as equal partners in a project
<b>Seventh Rung –</b> Child and young person initiated and directed	A group of young people decide to raise money to attend a young people's rights conference. They agree a strategy for raising money, organise activities, collect the money and use it to finance the trip.	The idea and implementation of the idea comes from young people
<b>Sixth Rung –</b> Adult initiated, shared decisions with children and young people	Children and young people are involved in the recruitment and selection of staff.	Genuine partnership between managers and young people – young people fully involved in decision making process because each party has equal say in decision
<b>Fifth Rung –</b> Consulted and informed	A survey to find out children's and young people's views about a youth project opening hours. As a result a new policy is drafted and shown to them to check that their concerns have been addressed.	Project designed and run by adults but children and young people understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously
<b>Fourth Rung –</b> Assigned but informed	Children and young people are invited to attend a planning meeting and after everybody else has spoken they are given a "slot" to express their views.	Information obtained from young people but no effort made to explain how and if their views will affect decision making
<b>Third Rung –</b> Tokenism	Young people are invited to open a conference with little preparation on the subject, little support and no consultation with the young people who they apparently represent.	Young people are apparently given a voice but they have no choice about the subject, method of communicating or how the event is organised
<b>Second Rung –</b> Decoration	A young person from a youth centre is taken along to a council meeting with a team manager who is asking for additional resources.	Young person is asked to take part with no explanation of the issues or reason for their involvement
<b>First Rung –</b> Manipulation	Young people are visited by a senior manager who asks them what they think about a recent decision to close their youth project.	Tokenistic exercise which does not allow young people to influence or change the decision

## Appendix Two

### Buckinghamshire Participation Network Individual Member Registration Form

<b>NAME OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBER</b>	
<b>CONTACT DETAILS</b> (Address/ Tel No's/ Email of individual member) <b>Email must be included</b>	
<b>AGE OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBER (you <u>must</u> be aged 13 years or above)</b>	
<b>DO YOU WANT TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ON ALL OPPORTUNITIES OR CERTAIN AREAS?</b> (please tick box of your choice)	<b>All opportunities</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Certain areas only (if you only want info on particular things)</b> <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>Please list areas you would like to receive information about.</b> Some examples we have sent out are chances for children and young people to give their views on the age you can buy cigarettes, drug use and the use of the internet. We have also sent out opportunities to be involved in free and fun events, film making projects, photography competitions, web design, residentials and day trips. These are just a few examples. ..... .....

If you would like an electronic copy of this form please email [emallam@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:emallam@buckscc.gov.uk)

### Appendix 3

#### Buckinghamshire Participation Network Individual Member Monitoring Form

All members are asked to complete the 'Your Evidence' column on the below form when they join the Participation Network and to update it on an annual basis.

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>ISSUE with an example</b>	<b>YOUR EVIDENCE</b>
To be involved in Participation Network	Contact details of Individual Member to be made available and updated as necessary.	
Individual Member actively committed to concept of participation and the framework as identified above (pages 4 and 5).	Explain your commitment to participation.	
Individual Member to maintain record of involvement in participation activities.	Record of involvement kept.	

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>ISSUE with an example</b>	<b>YOUR EVIDENCE</b>
Individual Member to maintain record of involvement in participation activities.	Record of involvement kept.	
To be willing to take part in appropriate consultation exercises.	When there are opportunities to be involved in consultation exercises individual members will be contacted and asked if they wish to be involved. By being part of this network there is an expectation that members will be involved but the network is aware that there may be occasions when this is not possible either because of time constraints or that the issue is not directly applicable/appropriate.	
Any other information.	Please include any other information you feel the network would benefit from.	

**If you would like an electronic copy of this form please email [emallam@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:emallam@buckscc.gov.uk)**

Please return Registration and Monitoring Forms to:

**Ed Mallam  
Partnership Delivery Team  
Buckinghamshire County Council  
Room 14, Old County Hall  
Walton Street, Aylesbury  
Bucks HP20 1UA**

**Or email to: [emallam@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:emallam@buckscc.gov.uk)**