



Children, Young People, Carers and Parents

Buckinghamshire

Participation

Network

LISTENING RESPONDING ACTING

INTERESTED IN HAVING YOUR SAY?

Email: 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. 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 4th and 5th 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 involve group members in deciding if they would like to be involved in the network.
- 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 establish feedback systems.
- To be willing to provide background information on your group.

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

Appendix One

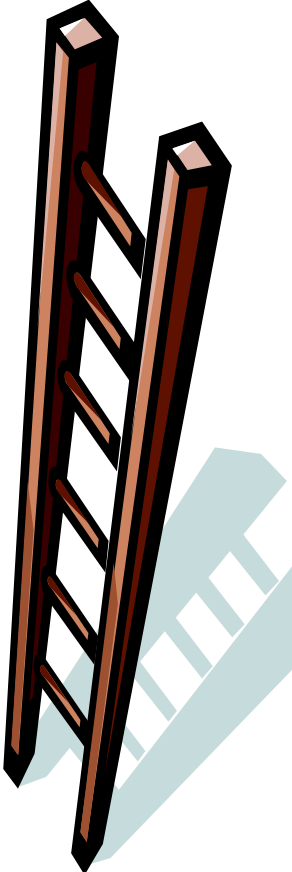
THINKING ABOUT PARTICIPATION

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.

| | | |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>8th rung – young person initiated; shared decisions with adults</p> <p>7th rung – young person initiated and directed</p> <p>6th rung – adult initiated; shared decisions with young person</p> <p>5th rung – consulted and informed</p> <p>4th rung – assigned but informed</p> <p>DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION</p> <p>3rd rung – tokenism</p> <p>2nd rung – decoration</p> <p>1st rung – manipulation</p> <p>NON-PARTICIPATION</p> | <p>L A D D E R</p> <p>Adults working with children and young people should aim to move away from manipulation or tokenism towards meaningful involvement in decision-making.</p> <p>The top five rungs of the ladder indicate various degrees of participation.</p> <p>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.</p> |
|--|---|--|

Appendix One cont.

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

| Rung | Example | Characteristics |
|--|---|---|
| Eighth Rung - 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 |
| Seventh Rung – 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 |
| Sixth Rung – 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 |
| Fifth Rung – 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 |
| Fourth Rung – 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 |
| Third Rung – 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 |
| Second Rung – 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 |
| First Rung – 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 Registration Form

| | |
|--|--|
| NAME OF GROUP / ORGANISATION | |
| NAME OF KEY CONTACT PERSON | |
| CONTACT DETAILS (Address/ Tel No's/ Email of key contact person) Email must be included | |
| FOCUS OF GROUP / ORGANISATION | |
| AGE RANGE OF MEMBERS | |
| NUMBER OF MEMBERS | |

If you would like an electronic copy of this form please email emallam@buckscc.gov.uk

Appendix 3

Buckinghamshire Participation Network Monitoring Form

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

| OBJECTIVE | ISSUE with an example | YOUR GROUP'S EVIDENCE |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| To be involved in Participation Network | Members of group to be involved in decision to be part of the Participation Network. Able to demonstrate the process that informed decision making e.g. date when discussion took place with group members. | |
| To have a nominated person who will link with Participation Network | Contact details of a link person to be made available and updated as necessary. | |
| Group/organisation actively committed to concept of participation and the framework as identified above (pages 4 and 5). | Explain commitment to participation e.g. vision statement of group and details of previous involvement in participation projects or consultation exercises. | |

| OBJECTIVE | ISSUE with an example | YOUR GROUP'S EVIDENCE |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| Group to maintain records of children, young people and families involved in participation activities. | Record of names maintained and changes recorded. Age range of children and young people and adult's details. | |
| Record available of significant issues discussed and impact of work. | Network to be provided with a brief summary on a yearly basis. Group to have a record of issues discussed and changes made as a consequence. | |
| Established feedback systems in place. | <p>Explain how group members are made aware of any decisions / changes that are made.</p> <p>Explain how feedback from wider consultations are passed on to group members.</p> | |
| To be willing to take part in appropriate consultation exercises. | When there are opportunities for groups to be involved in consultation exercises groups 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. | |

| OBJECTIVE | ISSUE with an example | YOUR GROUP'S EVIDENCE |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| Have you appropriate ethical / governance in place? | Please explain if there are ethical issues that have to be considered when involved in consultation work and that you are familiar with these requirements. | |
| Identify remit of group. | Why is this group set up/what is it's purpose? e.g. School Council, Parent's Forum, sports club, youth centre. | |
| 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

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