

**A STRATEGY FOR THE
PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

Publication and Review Date

This strategy was approved by the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership in July 2006. It will be subject to a review after two years.

A Strategy for Participation for Children and Young People in Nottinghamshire

1. Aims and Objectives

1.1 This is the Strategy for Participation of Children and Young People in Nottinghamshire. It has been produced by the Participation Workstream of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. The aims of the strategy are as follows.

- To establish a vision for participation for children and young people in Nottinghamshire.
- To establish the reasons for and benefits of effective participation.
- To provide a practical approach for practitioners working with children and young people to ensure consistent and effective participation.
- To set out an action plan for the development of participation across Nottinghamshire.

2. Vision for Participation of Children and Young People in Nottinghamshire

2.1 In Nottinghamshire, all children and young people will have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives. They will have access to services which they need and the opportunity to shape how these services are planned and delivered.

3. Principles for Participation

- That participation is driven by the needs of children and young people.
- That all children and young people have an equal opportunity to participate.
- That we will work to support the involvement of groups of children and young people who face the greatest barriers.
- That children and young people's participation is based around a properly resourced framework, which includes an effective mechanism for feedback.
- That participation brings mutual benefits for children and young people and service providers.
- That participation leads to positive outcomes, which are communicated to and agreed with children and young people.
- That all agencies working with children and young people should work together to support and promote participation.

4. The Context for Participation

4.1 It is children and young people's right to be involved in the decisions that affect them. If we involve them in active participation our services will be more effective, better targeted and more cost effective. If we are to improve the general standard and participation in our democratic

processes, children and young people must be involved in decision making at the earliest opportunity.

- 4.2 There are many benefits from participation of children and young people. These include their ideas and creativity, their views and opinions – all of which can shape better services for the future. Children and young people can help design services and policies from the outset. This approach ensures that our policies and services reflect their actual, rather than assumed needs and can lead to better value for money.
- 4.3 For children and young people, participation can help build on existing skills and develop new ones. They will begin to understand how organisations work and how decisions are made. Equally, children and young people will benefit from the new and improved services which their views help to shape. This will lead to a more vibrant and empowering local democracy and an inclusive community.
- 4.4 Under any circumstances, children and young people have the right to be heard and involved in their areas, just like any other citizen. Services provided by public authorities affect them and they should be able to participate in shaping and evaluating what is on offer in their communities.
- 4.5 None of this is to say that all children and young people have to be involved. Of course, it is their right not to be, just as it is for an adult. At the same time, the level of participation should suit the circumstances of the individual and the task. In theory, there are no limits to the participation of children and young people. In practice, how they participate will vary. In many instances, participation will be incremental, following the principles set out in Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation¹ and Shier's Model of Participation. Our strategy recognises this and seeks to make the case for a consistent approach to participation, which enables children and young people to participate at a level which is appropriate for them. To do so will bring benefits for children and young people, benefits for service providers and benefits for communities.

5. Definition of Terms

- 5.1 Many terms are used to describe the involvement of children and young people. The following definitions are taken from the **Making Consultation Work (Dialogue by Design 2005)**.
 - **Engagement** – a term used to describe any process which involves contact with the public, from providing information to running formal consultation processes.

¹ Eight Levels of participation – Roger Hart (adapted from Sherry Arnstein).

- **Consultation** – used to describe relatively formal and structured processes through which citizens and stakeholders can comment on and contribute to the decisions and policies which affect them.
- **Participation** – stakeholders have some control of the process, the agenda and the decisions. Participative processes differ from consultation processes in that they involve the participants more deeply, they tend to involve the same people through several stages, and the results are more transparent.

The following definitions of citizenship and empowerment are from Save the Children.

- **Citizenship.** Implies that children and young people develop values, skills and understanding which enable them to become responsible adults. It recognises that children and young people now have civil and political rights to participate and to represent themselves in political, social and economic processes and systems. It is also about their entitlement to be empowered to participate in society effectively as active, informal, critical and responsive citizens.
- **Empowerment.** The outcome of any successful participation process will be empowered children and young people.

The right to participate is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Article 12 grants every person aged 17 and under the right to express their views, and to have these views given due weight in all matters affecting them.
- Article 17 gives children and young people the right to receive, seek and give information.
- Article 13 gives every child the right to freedom of expression – using words, writing, art and any other media – so long as they respect the rights of others.
- Article 23 gives disabled children and young people the right to active participation in their community.
- Article 2 requires all of the rights in the Convention to be implemented for every child, without discrimination.

6. Practical Guidance for Effective Participation

Stage One – Sign up to the Principles

In order for participation to be effective in an organisation, it requires commitment at a senior level. As the first stage in gaining this commitment, it is recommended that organisations sign up to the principles contained within section 3 of this strategy. This process will require organisations to identify a key person/s to act as the champion for participation and to seek commitment to the principles at the highest level.

Stage Two – Undertake a Participation Self Assessment

A self assessment will help identify what is happening now and any gaps. It will also assist with the development of an action plan to address areas for development. There are many tools available to help organisations undertake a self assessment. In Nottinghamshire we recommend Shier's Model of Participation as a good starting point. In Shier's model, there are 5 key areas to take into account when assessing an organisation's strengths and areas for development in relation to participation.

- Are children and young people listened to?
- Are children and young people supported in expressing their views?
- Are children and young people's views taken into account?
- Are children and young people involved in decision making?
- Do children and young people share power and responsibility for decision making?

Appendix One sets out the full self assessment tool for organisations to use.

Stage Three – Develop a Participation Action Plan

Using the examples and barriers from the self assessment an action plan can be developed to build on good practice and address areas for development. Appendix Two provides a template for the action plan.

It is recommended the involvement of children and young people in Stages two and three.

Stage Four – Consider the Adoption of Standards for Participation

Some organisations may wish to consider the use of standards for effective participation. We recommend the Hear by Right Standards as the most effective. Hear by Right was developed jointly by the National Youth Agency and Local Government Association and the standards provide a framework against which organisations can map what is being done to build in children and young people's participation and take action to improve. Hear by Right offers a structured approach to participation against seven areas.

- Shared values.
- Strategies.
- Structures.
- Systems.
- Staff, board members, Elected Members and volunteers.
- Skills and knowledge.
- Style of leadership.

For more information about Hear by Right, go to www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright

Nottinghamshire County Council and Connexions Nottinghamshire have signed up to Hear by Right.

7. Securing the Commitment Necessary for Long Term Success

7.1 Services for Children and Young People are on the cusp of significant change in the shape of the Children Act 2004 and Youth Matters. More organisations in the public sector (and which provide services to the public sector) are aware that a commitment to participation is both mutually rewarding and necessary for success. It is recognised that much has been done in Nottinghamshire already. It is recognised also that organisations are at differing levels of awareness, commitment and implementation of effective participation strategies. That aside, the effectiveness of Nottinghamshire's Strategy for Participation relies on top level commitment which builds on progress made so far. As part of the developing culture which will accompany the implementation of the Children Act, top level commitment must be accompanied by resources, in order that participation becomes embedded in all organisations which provide services to children and young people. This will require a prioritisation of participation on a new scale, ranging from the dedication of staff (often through permission to spend time in this area) through to ensuring that commissioning of services includes an expectation that providers have an effective strategy for participation. Whilst the Participation Work-stream can assist in this process, it will also require systemic, cultural change, backed up by real commitment and resources.

8. Action Plan to Support this Strategy

8.1 There is much to do to support the effective participation of children and young people across Nottinghamshire. As a consequence, a key element of this strategy is an action plan which supports its implementation. Appendix Three sets out the action plan for the Participation Work-stream, and includes the following key areas:

- How we will ensure top level sign up to the strategy and its implementation, including a role description for organisational champions and our plans for a multi-agency conference to launch the strategy and raise the profile of participation across Nottinghamshire.
- How we will develop a charter for children and young people, which organisations can use to set out their commitment to participation.
- How we will support organisations and individual managers and workers with multi-agency training.
- How we will build on the audit of participation which supported the Children's Services Annual Performance Assessment, and use this to share good practice.
- How we will ensure that our work links with regional and national developments.

- How we will develop resources to support the strategy and how we will make these as accessible as possible.
- How we could pool resources which are currently applied to participation so as to maximise their potential.
- How we could develop a “kitemark” for effective participation which would recognise the commitment and actions of an effective organisation in participation.

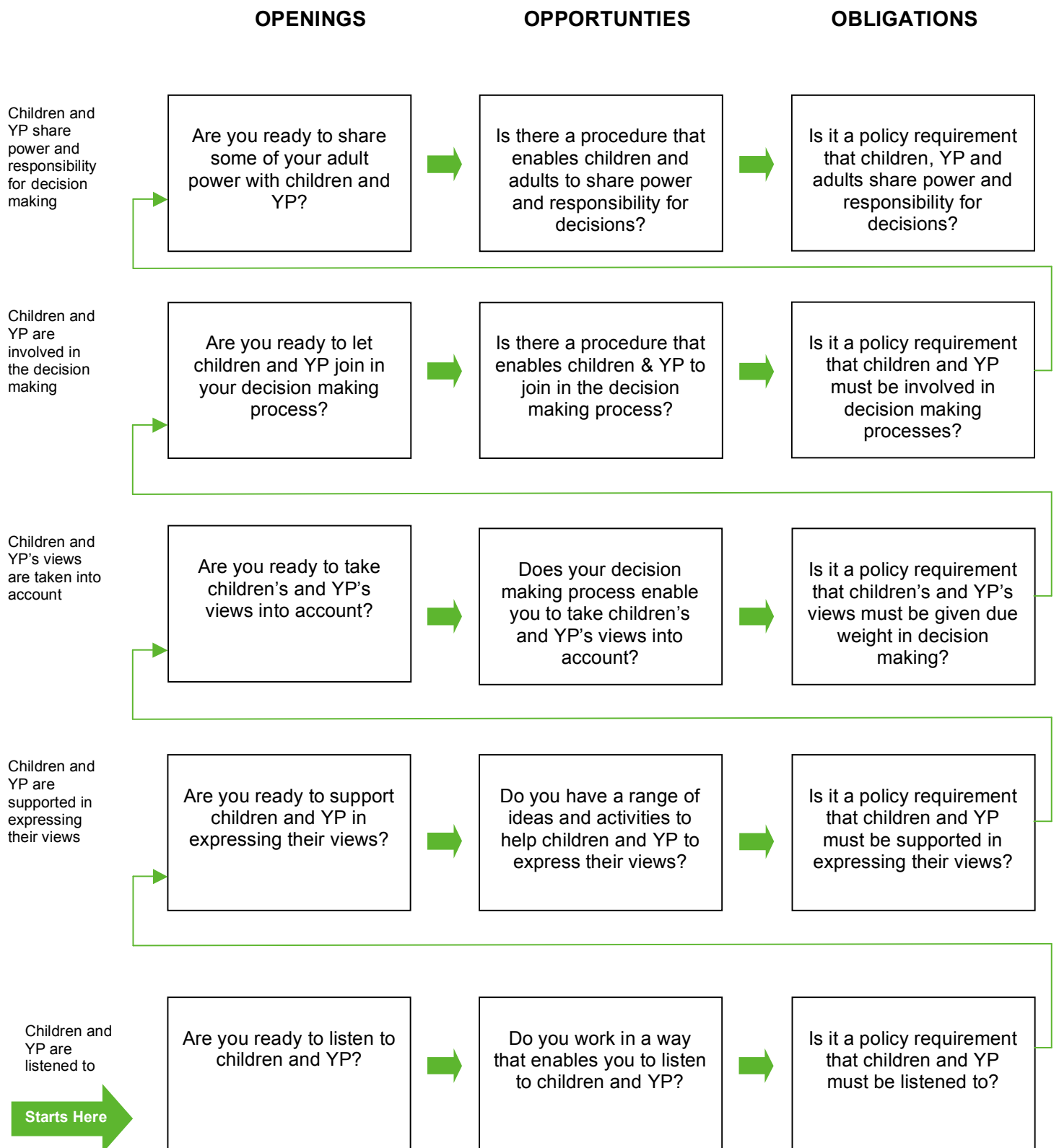
9. Monitoring and Evaluating this Strategy

- 9.1 This strategy will be monitored by the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership. Responsibility for its implementation and evaluation will rest with the Participation Work-stream, which is accountable to the Strategic Partnership.

10. Useful Resources and References to Support this Strategy.

- 10.1 The participation of children and young people has become more prominent in the policy agenda in recent years. Inevitably, this has been accompanied by the development of a wide range of supporting resources and references. Appendix Four lists those which are considered by the Work-stream to be the most useful.

Appendix 1: Young People's Participation self assessment Tool



OPENINGS

OPPORTUNITIES

OBLIGATIONS

Children and YP share power and responsibility for decision making

Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Children and YP are involved in the decision making

Are Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Children and YP's views are taken into account

Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Children and YP are supported in expressing their views

Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Children and YP are listened to



Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Examples

Barriers

Appendix 2: Children and Young People’s Participation Strategy

For staff to use in conjunction with the self assessment tool.
Go through each stage of the tool, identifying barriers and further work needed, then complete this form.

	What needs to be done	By who?	When for?
Listening to children and young people			
Supporting children and young people to express their views			
Taking children and young people’s views into account			
Involving children in the decision making process			
Sharing power and responsibility for decision making with children and young people			

Priority 1: Agreement and implementation of the strategy						
Objective	How we will do it	Timescale	Who	How children and y/p will be involved	Links	Impact Measurement
To gain approval of and sign up to the strategy.	Submit it to the new Children's Services Leadership Team.	By the end of January 2006	Anthony May	By extending the work completed by Sarah Walters and Mandy Tyson on their version of the strategy—developing a charter for engagement.	Links to the work with children and young people underway on the charter.	Strategy is approved and senior managers sign up to implementation in their service areas.
	Submit it to the Children's Services Executive.	By the end of May 2006	Anthony May		Also links with the Children's Services Parents Sub Group led by Susan Twemlow and to the overall approach to consultation.	Schools are aware of the strategy and its value (through CSLT and the Local Education Officers). GP's are aware of the strategy through Health Service representatives of the work-stream.
	Submit it to the Children's and Young People's Strategic Partnership.	By the end of July 2006	Anthony May			
	Individual partner organisations raise awareness of the strategy and seek adoption.	By the end of July 2006	Members of the work-stream, ensuring that managers and practitioners are aware of the strategy and the developing charter.	Through young people who are representatives on governance groups such as Connexions LMC and Play Notts. Also through young people's groups such as the District Youth Assemblies.		
To ensure that the strategy is integrated with the key Children's Services planning mechanisms	Strategy included in the Children and Young People's Plan and Making a Positive Contribution section of the APA	By the end of May 2006	Anthony May		Nigel Farrow and Di Morton for the Plan and APA.	Strategy is included in the Plan and APA and monitored through the Single Priorities conversation.

<p>To launch the strategy across Nottinghamshire</p>	<p>To organise a launch event. This will combine the launch of the strategy and a promotion of participation. We will request funding from Nigel Farrow's budget.</p>	<p>November 2006</p>	<p>Anne Sheldon Kerry Jacques Mandy Tyson Sue Shaw Neil McCarthy</p>		<p>A group of children and young people to assist with planning and implementation of the day.</p>	<p>Strategy is launched to a cross section of organisations and delegates take away a personal commitment/action plan to implement locally.</p>
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Priority 2: Develop a charter for Children and Young People						
Objective	How we will do it	Timescale	Who	How children and y/p will be involved	Links	Impact Measurement
To develop a charter for children and young people setting out their expectations for participation.	By working with a group of children and young people to develop the charter, which will be produced under the auspices of the work-stream.	Charter produced by September 2006.	Sarah Walters and Mandy Tyson	Group have already met and will continue to develop the charter, led by Mandy and Sarah.	Links to the work with Children's Services Parents Sub Group and Consultation and Communications Sub Group.	A charter will be in place and distributed as widely as possible through services, web-sites etc. Children and young people will be aware of the charter – tested through the Have Your Say survey.

Priority 3: Develop Multi Agency Training						
Objective	How we will do it	Timescale	Who	How y/p will be involved	Links	Impact Measurement
To develop a range of training (courses, materials and resources) suitable for multi agency use.	Form a sub-group of the work-stream to manage the development of the training package.	Sub-group to be formed in January 2006.	Kerry Jacques Neil McCarthy Jo Baker Sarah Walters Ruth Muncaster Andy Marks Phil Kirkland	We will seek the views of young people through existing mechanisms in the development of training packages and resources.	Children's Services Training sub group and the common core of training.	There will be a core training package, suitable for a range of levels of experience and understanding, available through the Children's Services Training Section and Training Sections of partner organisations. This will be delivered as part of the normal commissioning process for training. Package will include e-learning opportunities available on line.
	Recommend a core range of training and accompanying resources in an initial report to the Work-stream. Ensure that the training reflects the varying levels of need – three tier approach; emerging, intermediate and advanced.	Report by July 2006.	Sub Group		Training and organisational development leads of partner organisations.	
	Produce core training programmes and materials.	September 2006.	Sub Group			
	Nominate members of the work-stream to link with the Training Sub-Group for Children's Services (and eventually the commissioning groups for training	December 2006	Sub Group			

	in the new Department) to commission effective training in participation, based around the core packages.					
	Appropriate members of the work-stream will be nominated to act as co-trainers to ensure the appropriate level of expertise is available.	December 2006	Sue Shaw Mandy Tyson Neil McCarthy			

Priority 4: Develop resources to support the strategy (information, sharing good practice etc)						
Objective	How we will do it	Timescale	Who	How y/p will be involved	Links	Impact Measurement
To create a virtual library of resources to support effective participation and the implementation of the strategy	Create a page on the Every Child Matters web site.	September 2006	Bridget Lloyd Helen Richardson	We will seek the views of young people through existing mechanisms in the development of the web site and resources.	Nigel Farrow. The Communications Sub Group. County Council corporate e-content team. Web/e-content teams of partner organisations	A web page will be in place which is "hit" regularly by practitioners seeking to utilise the resources to improve their practice.
To publish a participation toolkit for managers and practitioners.	A toolkit will be compiled using the work which is currently underway in the East Midlands region.	September 2006	Sarah Walters	We will seek the views of young people through existing mechanisms in the organisation of the event.		There will be a greater level of awareness of the benefits of effective participation amongst managers and practitioners and a more consistent level of practice.
	Toolkit will be launched at the strategy launch and available in a range of formats, including on line.	September 2006				
To act as a conduit for the development and/or endorsement of appropriate participation related policies (use of rewards, for example.	The work-stream will identify areas which would benefit from a consistent policy and develop or adopt appropriate model policies for partner organisations to use.	Process to begin in January 2006	Anthony May	Children and Young people will be asked to endorse policies through existing networks such as District Youth Forums and the Connexions LMC		A range of model policies will be utilised by partner organisations to improve practice with children and young people.

Priority 5: Pooling of resources so as to maximise potential						
Objective	How we will do it	Timescale	Who	How y/p will be involved	Links	Impact Measurement
To make the most effective use of resources which are currently being applied to participation.	Audit current situation.	December 2006	Anthony May		Children's Services Leadership Team, Children's Services Executive and the Children's and Young People's Strategic Partnership. The 2007/2008 Children and Young People's Plan.	An audit will be completed which will inform future use of resources. This will be used to develop a strategy for the development of pooled budgets. A business case will be completed investigating the strengths and weaknesses of a central Participation Unit.
	Identify opportunities to make better use of resources and the potential for pooled budgets.	April 2007	Anthony May			
	Explore the potential for the development of a Children's Services Participation Unit	September 2007	Anthony May	Children and Young people will be asked to consider the options through existing networks such as District Youth Forums and the Connexions LMC		

Priority 6: To develop a quality (charter) mark for participation						
Objective	How we will do it	Timescale	Who	How y/p will be involved	Links	Impact Measurement
To ensure that partners undertake effective participation throughout their organisations.	By developing a light touch “charter mark” checklist of standards which will indicate commitment to and implementation of the strategy. Use existing work such as the YWCA respect scheme.	To develop the checklist by April 2007.	Sub-group of the work-stream.	Charter mark will link with the Children and Young People’s Charter to ensure that it reflects the aspects of participation which are important to them.	In time, this accreditation could be linked to commissioning of services with providers expected to have or be working towards the charter mark.	Organisations will be able to demonstrate that they have an effective participation strategy at all levels.

Priority 7: To ensure appropriate linkage to regional and national government						
Objective	How we will do it	Timescale	Who	How y/p will be involved	Links	Impact Measurement
To ensure that Nottinghamshire is appropriately represented in the regional and national development of effective participation	Conduct an audit of existing representation at regional and national level.	April 2006	Nominated lead of the work-stream			The development of participation in Nottinghamshire will reflect regional and national best practice (and vice-versa).

Appendix Four: Resources to Support the Effective Participation of Children and Young People

Resources to Assist in the Effective Participation of Children and Young People²

Section One.:The Policy Context

- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).**

Unicef has produced supporting material on its website at: www.therightssite.org.uk

- **The Human Rights Act 1998**

For more information about how the Human Rights Act affects children and young people, see Drew S. (2000), *Children and the Human Rights Act*, Save the Children.

- **Every Child Matters, Youth Matters and the Children Act 2004**

For more information, go to the Every Child Matters website at: www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters

- **Learning to Listen**

The Children and Young People's Unit published this in 2001 and it sets out the core values underpinning children and young people's participation in the planning and delivery and evaluation of government policies and services. Got to:

www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/downloads/LearningtoListen2-older.pdf

Section Two: Organisations Promoting Participation

- Article 12 – www.article12.com
- Barnardo's – www.barnardos.org.uk
- British Youth Council – www.byc.org.uk
- Carnegie Young People's Initiative – www.carnegie-youth.org.uk/html/publications-test.htm
- Children's and Young People's Participation and Learning Network – www.uwe.ac/solar/ChildParticipationNetwork/Home.htm
- Children's Rights Alliance for England – www.crights.org.uk/uwhat
- The Children's Society – www.childrenssociety.org.uk
- 4Children (formerly Kids Clubs Network) – www.4children.org.uk

² Many of these references have been drawn from the National Youth Agency's publication, *Involving Children and Young People – where to find out more.*

- Groundwork – www.groundwork.org.uk
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation – www.irf.org.uk
- Local Government Week (for Local Democracy Week) www.lga.org.uk
- National Children’s Bureau – www.ncb.org.uk/
- National Council for Voluntary Youth Services – www.ncvys.org.uk/
- Play Train – www.playtrn.demon.co.uk
- The National Youth Agency (for Hear by Right) – www.nya.org.uk and www.youthinformation.com
- Save the Children – www.scfuk.ork.uk/rightonline/index/html
- Schools Council UK - www.schoolcouncils.org/
- United Kingdom Youth Parliament – www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk

Section Three: Publications, Frameworks and Training Packages

- Badham, B (2004), *Act by Right: skills for the active involvement of children and young people in making change happen*. The National Youth Agency.
- Badham, B and Wade, H (2005), *Hear by Right: Standards for the active involvement of children and young people*. The National Youth Agency/Local Government Association.
- Involving children and young people is something we believe in.... (2005). Nottinghamshire Children’s Fund
- *Keeping it Safe: a young person centred approach to safety and child protection, standards and guidelines* (2002). National Council for Voluntary Youth Services.
- Lightfoot, J and Sloper, P (2002), *Having a say in health: guidelines for involving young patients in health services development*. Available at: www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/havesayhe.pdf
- Marchant, R and Jones, M (2003), *Getting it Right – involving disabled children in assessment, planning and review processes*. Triangle Services Ltd.
- Miller, J (1996), *Never Too Young: how young children can take responsibility and make decisions*. Save the Children/National early Years Network.
- Morris, J (1998), *Don’t leave us out: involving disabled children and young people with communication impairments*. YPS for JRF.

- *Promoting children and young people's participation through the National Healthy Schools Standard* (2004). NHS Health Development Agency.
- *Ready Steady Change* (2005), Children's Rights Alliance for England.
- Sheperd, C and Treseder, P (2002), *Participation – spice it up*. Save the Children.
- *The Study Support Code of Practice – improving the quality of out of hours learning* (2004). DfES
- Wright, P and Haydon, D (2002), *Taking Part Toolkit: promoting the real participation of children and young people*. Barnardo's
- *Young People's Charter of Participation* (2001), The Children's Society.

Contact for Further Information

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