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If you would like this information in an accessible format (for example in large print, on tape or by email) or another language please telephone: 01904 551550.

This information can be provided in your own language.

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

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# Listen To Me



**Guidance** enabling participation  
and listening to children and young people



**'Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinion taken into account'**

**UNICEF**

UN Rights of the Child Article 12  
[www.unicef.org.uk](http://www.unicef.org.uk)



Photographs and comic strips can be used to share what children like to do with others





### Dear Parent, carer and professional

Welcome to the "Listen to Me" series of booklets. We have always enjoyed listening to children and young people and know that most are very keen to be heard. Their opinions are really important to us and have definitely shaped priorities for services in the City of York. Clearly some children and young people require more support to be involved and we know that parents and practitioners are eager to help them do this.

I am therefore delighted to recommend these booklets to you. They include practical and innovative examples of how children can express their views. I want all children and young people in the City of York to know that they are valued and to have every opportunity to achieve their full potential. Being actively listened to is an important part of achieving that aim.

**Pete Dwyer**, Director, Learning, Culture and Children's Services

## Principles of participation

This leaflet is for all adults: parents, carers and professionals who are working with children and young people.

### This guidance aims to help you:

- listen to children and young people
- help children and young people to say what they want
- help children and young people to make decisions

**This leaflet is designed to draw together good practice to support you in achieving this.**

## Guiding principles for parents, carers and professionals

- Children and young people's views are as important as everyone else's and should influence the decisions made about them
- Children and young people should be given support to communicate their views in the most effective way preferred by the child. Time and space should be allowed for creativity if this is required
- Children and young people need to understand why their views are being sought and with whom these will be shared
- Children and young people should be aware of all the information being shared about them (unless this could be damaging to their emotional well-being)

**Participation is part of every day life for every child.**



## Meetings

### The room matters

- Try to use an informal room setting, although getting people together often means using a school setting
- Creativity in moving furniture can give the room a celebratory feel. Try balloons
- Consider bringing the child into the room before the professionals arrive
- Encourage the child or young person to welcome people. It will help foster a sense of ownership
- Include food

### How to organise the meeting

- Meetings can take different forms - be flexible
- If the child does not want to stay for the whole meeting, ensure they know their views will continue to be important after they have left
- Form filling can be done later to summarise discussions held in the meeting
- Give feedback afterwards, especially if the child chooses not to be there



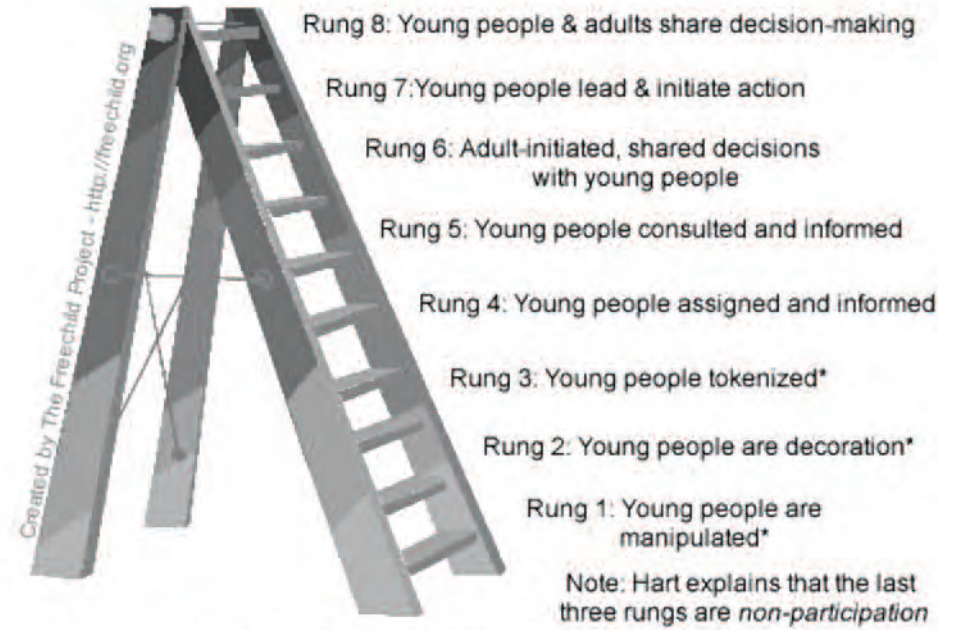


Choosing photographs for a review



Learning to travel independently

### Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

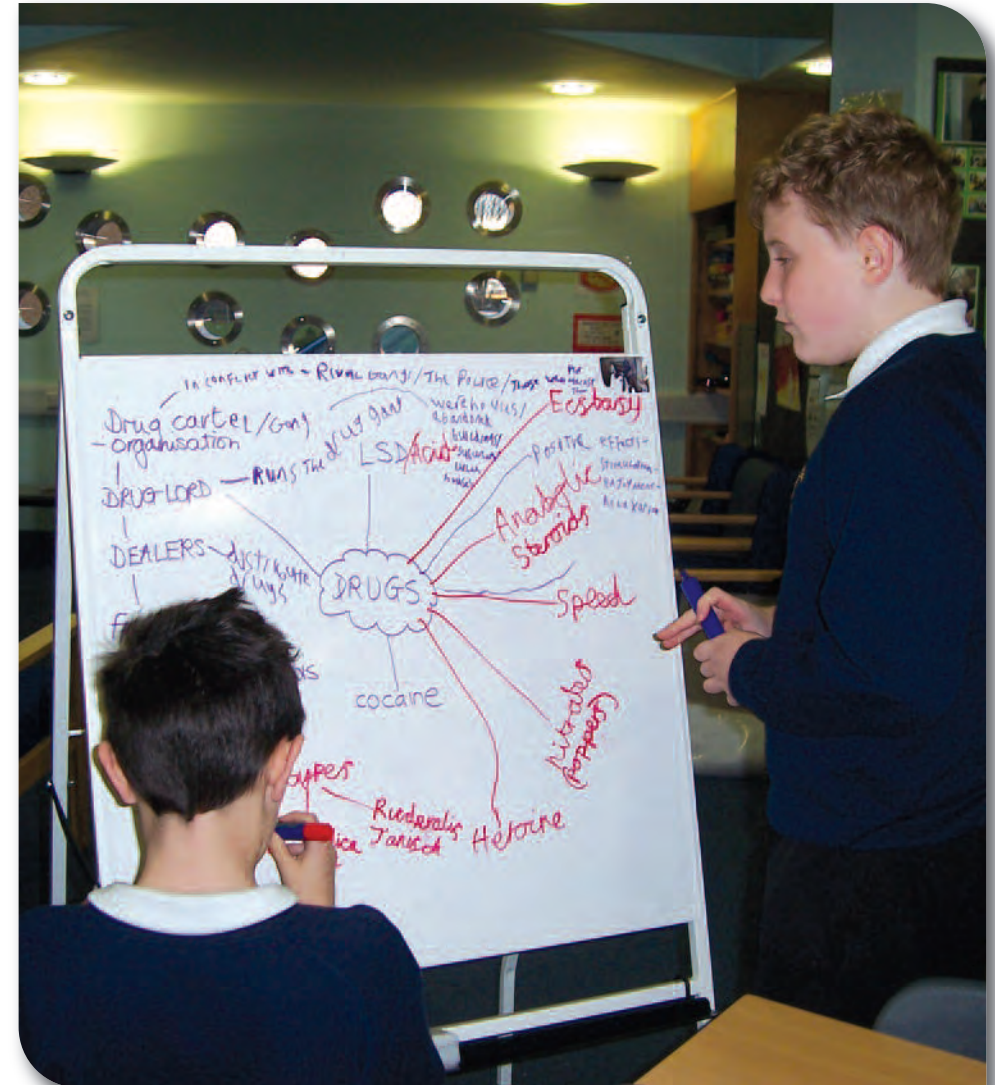
This image was sourced from <http://freechild.org/ladder.htm>

## How well do we ensure that ...?

- we ask for the views of children and young people with profound, severe and complex difficulties
- children and young people are able to choose how to present their views and are supported to do this
- we explain to children and young people that we will be able to do some of the things they ask for but may not be able to do everything
- children and young people understand the purpose of gathering their views
- children and young people understand the purpose of any meeting or review

## Decision making

Children and young people may want to invite people to attend **their** meetings.



## Some ideas to reflect a child's choices

### Children and young people could:

- Give a presentation
- Share something made or valued eg model, cake or diary
- Bring a portfolio to include significant achievements eg travels independently to school or can now remain calm while near a dog in the park
- Show a video of their favourite activity
- Display a photo gallery
- Share a school work portfolio

### Adults could:

- Bring a record of the child's response to an activity
- Listen to records of conversation, with the child or young person's permission
- Describe a child's response to photographs of their activities

## Useful questions for children and young people

What do we like and admire about...?

What is important now for...?

What is important in the future for...?

What is working well...?

What is not working...?

What issues would you like to raise...?

# Taking Active Part

Support for Children and Young People Taking Part

## Ineffective



## Taking Part



## Effective

A one-off meeting just before the review

Participation is tokenistic, such as filling in a form just before the meeting

Children and young people feel powerless

Regularly collecting children and young people's views over time

Providing a range of options to enable children and young people to express their views

Enabling children and young people to feel central participants

## 'Done to'



## Taking Part



## 'Done With'

Adults assume they know what children and young people want

Children and young people do not understand what is happening to them and why

Children and young people feel they are not included in plans

Adults support children and young people to share a picture or representation of themselves

Adults ensure that children and young people understand that their views matter even when they cannot be acted on

Children and young people know that their views are central to planning

Children and young people feel powerless

Children and young people feel central participants