

# Factsheet #1

## Methods and Levels of Participation

Engaging with young people takes many forms, from supporting an individual to make decisions about their own life, right up to participating in strategic decision-making. All levels of engagement are valuable and valid, both to young people and to adult decision-makers, however different outcomes will require involving young people in different ways and at different stages in the process.

### Methods of engagement

#### Engagement

The processes and methods of empowering young people to recognise their right to and the benefits of getting involved in decision-making; and supporting them with the skills and tools to do so.

#### Participation

"A process where someone influences decisions about their lives and this leads to change."

*Treseder, 1997<sup>1</sup>*

#### Involvement

The inclusion of children and young people in decision-making processes at one of four levels: being informed, expressing an informed view, having that view taken into account, and being the main or joint decision-maker.

*Lansdown, 2005<sup>2</sup>*

#### Co-Production

"A way to working that involves people who use [...] services, carers, and communities in equal partnership; and which engages groups of people at the earliest stages of service design, development and evaluation."

*NHS/Coalition for Collaborative Care<sup>3</sup>*

**"My voice is heard  
and my opinions  
mean something"  
FLARE member**



<sup>1</sup> Treseder, P., (1997) *Empowering Children and Young People*, London: Save the Children

<sup>2</sup> Lansdown, G., (2005) *The Evolving Capacities of the Child*, Save the Children, Unicef

<sup>3</sup> NHS/Coalition for Collaborative Care, <http://coalitionforcollaborativecare.org.uk/a-co-production-model/>

At all levels of engagement, it is important to recognise that decision-making abilities change over time, and young people's evolving capacities should be taken into consideration. In addition, no decision should be taken as concrete; a decision reflects the young person's situation and thoughts at the point that it was made, and these may change.

## Levels of participation

### Individual participation

- Involves children and young people in decisions that relate directly to their own lives.
- Involves children and young people in decisions that affect their support and care.
- Involves children and young people in decisions about day-to-day activities.
- Primarily impacts the individual and their outcomes.
- Allows young people to build the skills, confidence, self-esteem and awareness of their rights to be involved in decision-making.
- Considers which decisions individuals are able to take part in, how they choose to take part, and when.

**For example:** A young person is fully involved in writing their Educational, Health and Care plan. They make a video about their needs, achievements, interests and aspirations to share with other stakeholders, and then work with adults to develop their plan based on this information.

"You can't do the plan without knowing what the children and young people want or need?" FLARE member



**"Things actually happen. We make a difference."**  
FLARE member

### Operational/ Service participation

- Affects the individual as well as other service-users and beneficiaries, both now and in the future
- Concerns what happens in the day-to-day running of a service or organisation
- Includes decisions about planning, delivery and evaluation
- Can be about specific projects within a service or organisation
- Can be about what individuals want from the service, as well as being involved in decisions about the existing provision
- Aims to improve the quality of service provision

**For example:** Young people work together with adults to make improvements to their youth centre. Young people share what they think about the youth centre, including any challenges they face in accessing its services or gaps in provision. They work with adults to create an action plan of how these issues will be addressed, and are involved in monitoring these changes.

“I want to help professionals to help me, by advising them as someone with personal experience of the health and social care systems”  
Hannah, FLARE



### Strategic participation

- Concerns long term planning
- Concerns what kinds of services are needed and how much money should be spent on them
- Requires a supportive organisational or cultural ethos and commitment
- Can take place within formal strategic decision-making processes, or via mechanisms which input the views of young people from individual feedback, projects, or services
- Influences policy and practice at a local, regional or national level
- Requires a partnership working approach between the decision-maker and the contributing individuals or services
- Includes meaningful roles in terms of priority setting, monitoring and designing services project

*World Class Commissioning project, 2009<sup>4</sup>*

**For example:** Young people met with their local MP. She asked them about their experiences of using doctors and hospitals, and how GPs can give young people better help and support. She will share those experiences and suggestions with the local CCG and Healthwatch. They have arranged to meet with the group give feedback to the young people about what changes will be made as a result.

"If you involve young people in strategic decision making you make much, much better decisions because what you are making decisions about is their lives not your own"  
Amba, FLARE

This resource is part of the Making Participation Work programme, a joint partnership between the Council for Disabled Children and KIDS, and funded by the Department for Education. For more information about the Making Participation Work programme, visit us at <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/our-work/participation/practice/making-participation-work>



<sup>4</sup>World Class Commissioning Project (2009)