

Everyone in your community has something to offer. Engaging with and involving young people in your Community Led Plan or other planning process, will help to ensure that their opinions and ideas are heard.

Where to start

You need to decide what level of involvement you want from the young people in your community. Do you want to:

- Gather opinions from young people on what services they want in their local community?
- Carry out research into the needs of young people?
- Support young people to explore an issue they define?
- Involve young people in the evaluation of a current service?

The more involved young people are in the planning process, the more committed they will be to getting involved with action points that are identified. However, beware of raising false expectations. All too often young people are involved in identifying services they would like, only to find there is no money to see this happen.

Different age groups from all geographical areas of the community may want to be involved, but be realistic. Ask your young people how much time they are willing to give and what issues are important to them **before** you try to set up a new consultation group.

You need to go to the young people. Existing groups such as schools and youth clubs can

provide a ready made audience in a safe environment. Contact the head teacher or group leader to ask for their support. You will need to negotiate ground rules, set small goals, log achievements and provide regular positive feedback. Be prepared to go with new ideas that the young people have and think about using the ways in which they communicate e.g. Facebook, text messages and internet surveys.

Remember you may need parental consent and you must ensure that the young people and anyone working with them are kept safe throughout.

Building Trust

Meaningful youth participation will only develop when you build up a degree of trust. You need to consider the young peoples' concerns and priorities which may differ from your own.

- Participation should be voluntary – no pressure
- Be honest about goals, milestones and timescales
- Let young people take the lead
- Go at their pace
- Use appropriate language
- Be concise
- Don't promise what you can't give
- Have some fun along the way!

Define your aims

- Decide who you want to involve and who sets the agenda.
- Decide how information will be collated and used.

Build relationships

- Consult the young people; consult existing groups.
- Establish clear ground rules and set small milestones.

Feedback

- Once you have the information you set out to get, communicate it.
- Let everyone know what will happen next.

Key questions to ask

Before you begin any discussions, ask the following to help decide what consultation methods to use:

- How old are the young people?
- How can you meet/engage with them?
- Have you an issue you want to discuss?
- Can the young people raise their own issues?
- Will you or the young people take the lead?
- When should this take place?
- What groups can you work with?
- How will you let the young people see the results?
- What happens next?

Keep safe

Make sure to adopt safe working practices. You have a duty of care to keep the young people and any volunteers safe. If you are working with a school or an existing group, follow their Safeguarding Policy. If you are starting from scratch you should undertake safeguarding training.

- Never work alone
- Make sure the young people know who you are and what your role is
- Contact local agencies e.g. the police, if you are engaging in street work
- Let parents know what is happening; consider a leaflet drop
- You may need a DBS check

Methods and techniques

Discuss: Talk about what other people might think about the community; this can help clarify their agenda.

Drama/role play: Use props with young people to act out how they think other people in the community view different issues. You could invite drama or theatre groups to investigate the issues being considered.

Interview people: Work with the young people to prepare questionnaires for their peers to complete. Try to help them to identify ways of recording the main points.

Map people and places: Provide details of planning meetings to inform the young people about any plans for new buildings or other development. Write the issues on a map to illustrate what they think and why.

Arts and crafts: Be creative; get the young people to photograph, draw or paint their community. Videos can be used to capture interviews which can then be used as a focus for discussion groups.

Levels of participation

Young people participate when they are given an opportunity to think freely for themselves and become involved in the decisions which affect them on a voluntary, informed basis.

Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



- Rung 8:** Young people and adults share decision making
- Rung 7:** Young people lead and initiate action
- Rung 6:** Adult initiated, shared decisions with young people
- Rung 5:** Young people consulted and informed
- Rung 4:** Young people assigned and informed
- Rung 3:** Young people are tokenised *
- Rung 2:** Young people are decoration *
- Rung 1:** Young people are manipulated *

* The last three are non-participation

More information

Visit the ACT website for additional Community Led Planning information and guidance.

Other useful websites:

www.cya.org.uk (Cumbria Youth Alliance)

www.cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk

**For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on
Tel: 01768 425 666 or visit our website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk**

ACT champions community and rural issues

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria, Room 11, Redhills House, Redhills Business Park, Penrith CA11 0DT
T: 01768 425 666 | www.cumbriaaction.org.uk | info@cumbriaaction.org.uk | Follow us @ACTCumbria
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