

FOI Status: Public	CHILDREN AND YOUNGER ADULTS DEPARTMENT	Version: 1.1 Review Due: December 2012
--------------------	---	--



A STRATEGY FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES IN SERVICE PROVISION

DECEMBER 2011

Vision Statement: All children, young people and their families have the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect them.

1. Aims and Objectives

- To establish and monitor practices across CAYA that ensures all children, young people and families are given the opportunity to be involved in decisions which affect them at:
 - Individual service provision level.
 - Service planning and provision at a local level.
 - Service planning and provision at a departmental strategic level.
- To encourage participation of children, young people and families in decision making processes, quality assurance of services, service reviews and evaluations, and research.
- To adopt and publish a Charter of Participation within CAYA.
- To agree and adopt definitions of participation and consultation.
- To develop and adopt a set of principles, guidance and standards for working with children, young people and families to enable meaningful consultation and participation.
- To ensure that opportunities for participation and consultation are provided in a planned, purposeful, coordinated and collaborative manner.
- To develop and implement an action plan designed to deliver the strategy, including monitoring and review functions.
- To involve children, young people and families in planning and developing participation and consultation activity.

2. Principles for Effective Participation and Consultation

- Children and young people are treated honestly i.e. their expectations are managed and are informed about the boundaries of their involvement. Be clear about what can and cannot be done.
- Views and contributions proportionate to their age are listened to and acted upon.
- They receive quick and clear feedback about the impact and value of their contributions.
- Their involvement is acknowledged and rewarded.
- Everyone will be valued equally and should not be prevented from participating on the grounds of appearance, race, religion, sexuality, gender, disability, or background.
- It is acknowledged that children and young people may need help to be heard. Support and opportunities for training are provided so they can contribute effectively.
- Provide information in appropriate jargon free formats – check out that they understand it and what happens with the information they give.
- Take a proactive approach to target those least likely to become involved

- Create a way of enabling participation or doing consultation that they can feel comfortable to say what they want.
- Quality standards for participation and consultation are provided, monitored and continuously reviewed. All consultation is coordinated to ensure that the principles and standards are adhered to.
- Participation and consultation must be meaningful – not tokenistic.

3. Standards

Standards reflect how the principles are put into practice.

- Participation and consultation activities are coordinated across CAYA.
- Children, young people and families are supported and encouraged to be involved in planning, delivery and evaluation of services. Equality of opportunity is promoted.
- Feedback from children, young people and families is used to inform planning, delivery, evaluation and development of services.
- Regular feedback on the resulting impact of their participation is provided.

4. Steps towards delivery

A whole system approach towards achieving participation of children, young people and families will be used to implement this strategy, addressing aspects related to culture, structure, practice and review systems.

5. Monitoring

Planning and monitoring of this strategy will be undertaken by the department's Involvement Group.

APPENDICES

1. Context

Over the past few years there has been increasing recognition of the rights of children and young people to be involved and be able to influence decisions on things that affect their lives and increasing research and good practice evidence of the benefits that arise from their participation and them being consulted. Article 12 of The UN Convention on the Rights of Children clearly sets out children's rights to have their say in decisions affecting them. The government has set out a commitment to designing policies and services around the needs of children and young people and this is reflected in legislation, guidance and Inspection/Appraisal requirements. The Children's Act 2006 and ECM outcome framework endorses the benefits of participation.

The principle of promoting participation of children, young people and their families, is well established in CAYA services and this, in the main, is delivered through various consultation opportunities. A scoping exercise has been undertaken recently and a paper (Appendix 1) offers a position statement.

2. Definitions

The terms 'involvement', 'participation' and 'consultation' are commonly heard in the department and can be used in a way that suggests they all mean the same thing. Defining the meaning of these terms is an important pre – requisite for developing a strategy. The following definitions are taken and adapted from 'Listen and Change: A guide to Children and Young People's Participation Rights'. Participation Works. Feb 2008.

Involvement: describes the inclusion of people in some form of decision making, so should be used as an 'umbrella' term for a range of activity.

Participation: is the process by which individuals and groups of individuals can influence decision making and bring about change. It is as relevant to individual decision making as it is to local or strategic decision making that affects the wider population. It requires that the individuals are well informed, prepared and supported in being able to develop their views and ideas for influencing decisions and bring about changes.

Consultation: is the process by which people are asked their opinions: this can be about a specific issue or have a broader agenda. It requires a commitment to listen and give consideration and due weight to the views expressed. It can be informal and everyday, or formal and one off.

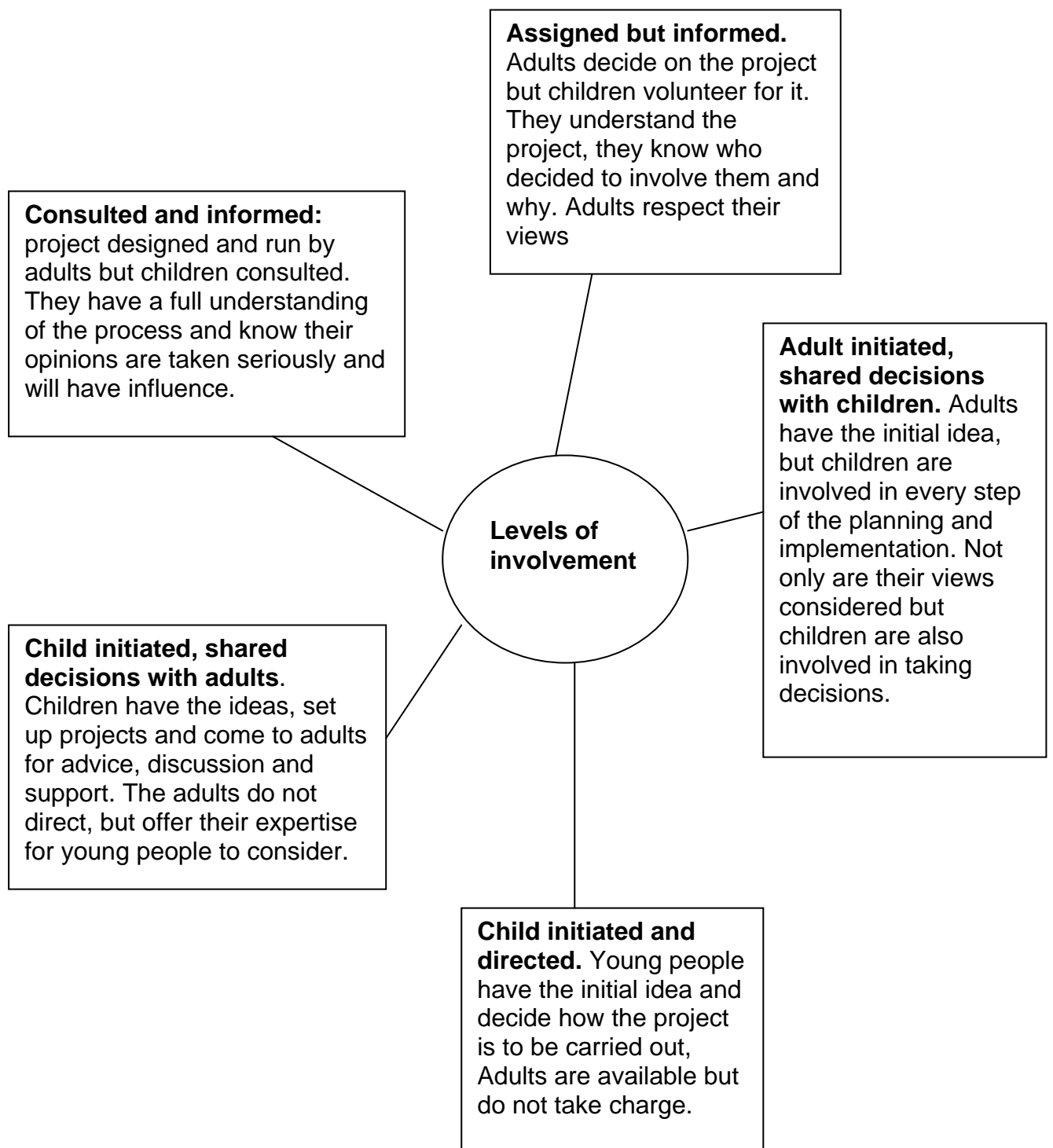
Action to ensure involvement and participation requires activity on a number of levels:

- Where individual decisions are being taken about children's own lives
- Where services for, or used by children are being developed or provided locally
- Where national policies and services are being developed or evaluated

The action might involve a range of approaches that reflect age, maturity and understanding – consultation being an integral part of this.

3. Models of Involvement

Children and young people should be able to participate confidently and effectively within the differing levels of involvement appropriate to the particular circumstances for their consultation and participation. The diagram overleaf illustrates and describes different levels of involvement.



4. Benefits

Why should participation and consultation be the norm?

Research and practice highlights benefits for services and organisations; for children, young people and families; and for the wider community. It benefits everybody.

Benefits for services and organisations:

- Services and policies can be designed, delivered and evaluated based upon actual rather than presumed needs. Information can be gained from parents, Carers, children and young people about their changing attitudes and needs, their views about quality in services provision and accessing
- Services can develop knowledge, attitudes and skills to be able to involve children and young people more within services.
- On an individual level, listening to children enables services to better meet individual needs to bring about better outcomes.
- Can bring about increased access, use and positive experience of services by users.

Benefits for children, young people and families:

- Can build on existing skills and develop new ones, increasing confidence and self-esteem – promotes personal development.
- Increase understanding of particular organisations and how to influence them.
- Can lead to increased citizenship and social inclusion for example; fulfilling their rights under Article 12 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; increasing belief in their ability to create change; increasing political and social knowledge; increasing levels of responsibility; improving perceptions of young people among communities, professionals and peers.
- Can bring about new and better services that have changes and improved in response to their needs.

Benefits for the community:

- More vibrant local democracy.
- Fosters community cohesion.
- Empowering environment that can raise aspirations amongst children, young people and the wider community.