'The only game in town'

Embedding a culture of participation in
youth provision

Findings from research into participation
across youth provision in the Western
Education and Library Area

Introduction

This reports documents findings from research carried out into participation in the Western Education and Library Board area between September and November 2006 engaging a wide range of organisations across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. Discussions focused on with individual youth and community workers, (both full and part-time), area teams, youth officers and service users including young people in GLAD Groups.

This report outlines the context with which participation has evolved and the current focus on it in light of the recent developments including 'The Big Deal'. It also details my approach and highlights a number of key recommendations that have resulted that should help embed participation across youth provision. I have also highlighted the various aspects of provision which focuses on how young people can be engaged and have tested this, albeit on a small scale, to determine priorities.

I have specified the type of environment in which participation will grow and the necessary steps to be taken to ensure that this environment is nurtured. In addition to this I have proposed a Model of Practice and recommended a resource to help support collation of evidence by practitioners.

The exercise that I have embarked upon has proven entirely useful in providing guidance and direction for developing participation among youth provision across the WELB area. The opportunity to examine participation has been welcomed by young people and practitioners alike and the process of soliciting opinion on a range of related matters provides a 'springboard' from which to build on.

It has been my pleasure to be tasked with such a project and I sincerely hope the outcomes from this research provide a first step in moving the 'Participation Agenda' forward. The introduction of 'The Big Deal' provides an excellent opportunity to build upon already existing work across the WELB Area but more importantly embed a culture of participation where it's viewed as a natural part of a process and not merely an event or product.

I commend this report to you and believe that Participation is 'The only game in town.'

Fergal Barr

Participation Worker
Northern Ireland Youth Forum (WELB Area)

Context

Participation is not rocket science, it's not some great mystery and it should not be viewed as something that works in isolation from other events within youth provision, be that in any statutory, voluntary or community setting.

It's now as well accepted as it is documented that participation is not an event but a rather a process. It's a journey that doesn't always have a staring point nor an end product for that matter but a series of experiences linked together by a range of events across a vast array of settings that go beyond what is commonly accepted as the traditional youth setting or settings.

> *Participation is a way of working, rather than an event, a project, an unachievable dream or a box to tick….a culture of participation from top to bottom and side to side…..Participation is a dialogue between adults and young people as equal partners in a process where decision-making occurs and change happens.. (Shenton)*

Participation is not a means to an end, nor is there one commonly accepted approach among practitioners who engage with young people in any setting. This in essence is the difficulty with which the subject of participation finds itself. Until the debate surrounding participation is resolved, i.e., what it is and essentially how and what should be implemented it will remain the cause of great consternation and with the end result being a poorer service for young people.

The issue of participation in Northern Ireland has been brought sharply into focus again with the introduction of 'The Big Deal' Project. This is further impressed upon us by the more than pro-active approach of Gerard Doran, Head of Youth Service, to ensure participation is embedded within our practice.

This 'push', if we can call it that, allows for greater exploration of the theme and also provides for a more challenging context from which workers will have to evidence participation in their everyday practice. This means however that the necessary resources to support workers in evidencing participation must be available. This point I will go on to address in further detail.

When meeting and asking practitioners and young people what they understood participation to be it was and still is based on the assumption that participation is something that is right, a means of working that we should aspire to and work towards.

If we are in agreement that Participation should be central to our work we can assume that there is much we can and should change in our delivery. We can also therefore assume that there can be improvement in how we do things and reflect in a much greater way the means by which we engage and involve young people.

But why has participation become the key that will unlock young people's involvement in youth provision and beyond? Cleaver, (2001) describes participation as having become

An act of faith in development, something we believe in and rarely question. This act of faith is based on three main tenets: that participation is intrinsically a 'good thing' (especially for the participants); that a focus on 'getting the techniques right' is the principal way of ensuring the success of such approaches; and that considerations of power and politics on the whole should be avoided as divisive and obstructive.

Never at any point during my conversations with practitioners and young people did I ever hear anyone question why we should deliver participation. Most practitioners talked about participation in a very positive way whilst many of the young people I spoke with echoed many of the same sentiments.

When asked to consider participation comments like *taking part*, *having your voice heard*, *the opportunity to make decisions* were among the more common replies but most were in agreement that it was more than just this. And whilst practitioners raised concerns around the use of the most appropriate methods young people expressed concern in being able to access methods to allow them to participate more. Whilst being marked up as a difference it actually serves as common ground in that as Cleaver describes 'getting the techniques right' as the main issue.

Cleaver's assertion that power and politics should be avoided fails to consider many of the other key factors that contextualise participation, particularly in Northern Ireland. For example, the development of *The Big Deal* has provided a visible and practical means to consider the delivery of participation among young people in Northern Ireland.

Participation is one of the central tenets of the Model for Effective Practice whilst much of the work of organisations working to deliver participation 'on the ground' e.g., NICCY, is based on the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).   The Council of Europe and European Commission also view participation as political tool.

Europe's young people are central to the success of this vision for a truly united, peaceful and fair Europe. The rise of youth participation up the political agenda reflects significant developments in the thinking and emphasis given to youth policy and youth work within Europe….The notion of participation of young people in society, particularly in the civil and political organisation of society is developing. Participation in this context means more than mere consultation with young people about changes and initiatives that will affect their lives and shape their futures…..For society to really benefit from engagement of young people, all young people must be given the means and the opportunities to take up their right to participate. It is essential that

young people with fewer opportunities, indeed with fewest opportunities, can get involved and make their contribution felt, not least because it is their fundamental right as much as any other young person….The participation of young people with fewer opportunities is a barometer of the underlying health of our democracies and societies.

Feedback from young people also argued that participation was more than a methodology that exists within unit settings. The focus on developing and supporting Youth Councils provide further evidence of approaches that not only facilitate the development of skills but also have political overtures for among the issues explored is governance.

Existing models of participation, particularly Arnstein's are geared towards political participation. As practitioners we also recognise the benefits of Participation, i.e., developing the skills, confidence and self-esteem of young people and by this we ourselves become political albeit with a small 'p'.

There is therefore recognition that participation is good but we must get the delivery right and one of the strongest ways to do this is to ground ourselves in a 'Rights' based approach. If, as we seem to now accept Participation is a process and not a product we must champion the cause of getting young people beyond the 'passive participant' stage where they are engaged and taking ownership of their learning and contribution to society

There is also recognition among many 'key players' to give young people a greater say in how services should affect them. For instance, both health authorities either side of the Border have developed the Young People's Participation Project which aims to engage young people in exploration of a range of needs and making providers accountable in responding to those needs.

Over the last few years the emphasis on young people having a direct input into the development of services has gathered momentum. It's our obligation to contribute to this by first of all considering the impact of our own role with young people in our respective settings. The settings we operate in can have a major influence on how young people perceive their ability to make a lasting contribution in society.

> *The environment inside a club can be viewed as a microcosm of a local community. Democracy and involvement is dependable on people overcoming the problems that arise in getting consensus, and from the tendency of the most powerful to get their ideas taken on board. The way that youth club workers use their power and authority in the youth club is a model for young people in their own dealings with others.*

Our need to take cognisance of the role we play is further underlined by the Northern Ireland Youth Work Strategy. If we are to get young people to fully engage in decision-making processes at all levels in society we have no

option but to enshrine participation across all practice so as to ensure that young people can make their presence felt. As the youth work strategy outlined in 2005, practice should

> *Ensure that young people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to make informed choices about their lives, are at the heart of designing, managing and evaluating youth work policy and practice, and can make a meaningful contribution within public and political decision-making processes.*

The impact of changes that the RPA (Review of Public Administration) will have on service delivery must also be considered. If we are to achieve that which is envisaged in the Youth Work Strategy we must act now to anticipate the changes that this will bring.

Both the WELB and SELB are working collaboratively across their respective areas to develop a joint approach to service delivery. Working together in an effort to contribute to the Youth Work Strategy can only be positive for young people but it does present challenges.

These factors and arguably more must be considered in the current climate where participation is evolving across the WELB area. The development of participation is not only a conscious act but one that needs to be informed by an awareness of events at both micro and macro levels.

My findings evidence a great disparity in what is understood by the very term participation not to mention the less than co-ordinated approach to delivering participation on the ground. There is a glaring need for a number of key matters to be addressed if all units' (statutory and non-statutory) delivering youth provision across the WELB area hope to genuinely address the participation at all levels.

Research

My approach to exploring the theme of participation was to pose a series of questions with the aim of identifying measures that would make the implementation of participation easier. These measures come in the form of recommendations that I believe if acted upon will enhance the delivery of participation at all levels.

The questions I posed were as follows:

(i)   what does participation means to you?
(ii)   what are the obstacles to participation?
(iii)   what current participative structures exist within your unit and
(iv)   how can the role of Participation Worker support you in your work?

I engaged with a broad range of groups and individuals, all of which are listed alongside a number of other meetings I have held since I came into post in September 2006 (see Appendix 1).

I have elected not to detail all responses to the questions posed (for some examples see Appendix 6) but rather construct the information gathered in such a way so as to concentrate on informing the approach of the WELB in relation to implementing participation.

This minimises the obligation on the reader to trawl through a litany of information but rather enables him or her to merely concentrate on action points. Whilst I go on to list this approach in more detailed fashion I have summarised below what I view as the key points for taking participation forward in the WELB area:

- Agreed Model of Practice
- Action Plan
- Framework for Delivery
- Examination of Recommended Resource and it's implications for delivery

Key Points in more detail

These proposals are key to the further and successful development of participation. With regard to my proposal for a model of practice (Appendix 8) I envisaged a continuum that would take cognisance of a range of other factors. I wanted to be sure that any model I commend can 'stand up' so to speak by linking both theory, practice and knowledge. The table below encompasses all that I considered important for developing a model of practice.

- **Proposed Model of Practice: Scoping Approach**

Something that relates to the Youth Service **Model of Practice**
Connects with broader skills development of young people, i.e., **Top Ten Generic Skills** Framework
Outlines various levels of **Inclusion** at different stages and the **Principles/Beliefs** that should govern our approach
Provides young people with **Personal Development**, the worker with examples of **Practical Involvement** and pays reference to NYA's *Hear by Right* Evaluation Framework: Skills & Knowledge, System, Strategy, Structure, Style of Leadership and Shared Values
I nforms the **Role** of worker
Nominates the approximate **Age** of when things should happen
Gives the process **Focus**

There are many actions required in order to take participation forward. The box below summarises where actions should happen. For further details see Appendix 9.

- **Action Plan – recommendations in following areas**:

Research	Marketing	Events	Training	Personnel
Strategy	Young People	Units	Resources & Funding	Evaluation

The means by which we deliver participation is as important as the Model of Practice itself and actions that go with it. We need to recognise that participation exists at all levels. It extends beyond the unit and affects young people in their everyday life. Therefore any framework should make reference to the various facets of everyday life and its design and approach should be inclusive.

I suggest one way of doing this is to set up Participation Development Sub-groups in various locations across the WELB area. These locations would be determined by the locations of full-time units. Practitioners in each unit would bring together Participation Development Sub-groups made up of representatives from a wide range of sectors, i.e., health, education, business, housing, etc.

These groups would have a remit for developing structures that nurture participation in their area. The main task of these groups would be to reflect upon their own practice/profession and in doing so contribute to 'normalising' participation.

These groups would feed into a Reference Group consisting of young people who critique proposals and ideas drawn up in the sub-groups. There would be linkage between both Reference and Sub-groups - a number of young people will sit on both groups. However, some thought will need to be given to this as to avoid situations arising where young people sitting on the Sub-groups feel 'out of their depth' or 'intimidated' by adults or the situation at hand.

The remit, terms of reference and roles of both groups need to be defined but essentially the sub-groups will work towards developing a culture of participation in their respective areas whilst the Reference Group will determine the effectiveness of proposals that evolve.

Overseeing the process will be a Stake Holders Forum. This Forum will be a representative body and should aim to have a 50/50 breakdown with regard to those under and over 25. Their task is to manage the Framework for Delivery Both the Stake Holders Forum and Reference Group will feed the development and implementation of a participation strategy. The Participation Worker will service both groups and process by co-ordinating actions as required.

- **Framework for Delivery**

Stake Holders Forum

Participation Worker

Participation Strategy

Reference Group

Participation Development Sub-groups
(Reps from the community. Youth Club/Organisation central to process)

In an effort to ensure that practitioners are able to evidence participation and to support them in meeting the demands that embedding a culture of participation in youth work practice brings it is important that an agreed resource is made available. I make the recommendation that *'Checking the Scoreboard'*, a resource developed by the New South Wales Children's Commission in Australia, be adopted or adapted.

Its format is easy to follow and goes to great lengths to ensure that both practitioners and young people are *'singing from the same hymn sheet'* when it comes to implementing participation. Below is a quick snapshot of the framework, which it uses. However, it is recommended that practitioners makes themselves familiar with the fuller version in order to fully understand how to use it.

- **Recommended Resource**

*Participation: **Checking the scoreboard*** (New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People)	*Running on to the field, Getting into the Game* and *The Cheer Squad* is split into 9 steps examining a range of questions	Steps 2 to 9 is divided into three parts to encourage people to think about participation:
Split into four sections *1. Coach's Handbook* *2. Running on to the field* *3. Getting into the Game* *4. The Cheer Squad*	1. Why involve kids? 2. Kids have a say about different things 3. Kids participate in different ways 4. Helping kids to participate 5. Kids have access to decision makers 6. Kids understand how decisions are made*)* 7. Kids are appreciated 8. Kids feels participating is worthwhile 9. Reviewing how kids' participation is working	***Check:*** what the organisation is doing now, ***Reflect:*** what other things the organisation could do ***Act:*** what they could do to make these things happen

Other recommended resource

Young Voices – Guidelines on how to improve children and young people in your work (National Children's Office, Children's Rights Alliance and NYCI)

Whilst these four Key Points constitute the main thrust of embedding participation there are a number of other essential actions that need to be implemented to assist the process. This includes:

- Development of Participation Strategy for all youth provision across the WELB Area led by a Stakeholders Forum

- Pro-active approach to promoting participation at all levels through all available mediums
- Training for Staff to ensure participation is happening
- 'Evidential Commitment' from staff to participation and mechanisms developed for capturing evidence of this
- Funding and resources made available to support the implementation of participation in very localised settings either through 'The Big Deal' or by other means
- Rolling programme of events and activities to not only raise the profile of participation but to help enshrine practice
- Stronger links with the community so as to put participation in a more contextualised setting
- More pro-active approach to reaching out to marginalised young people
- 'Evidential Commitment' to ensure Young people are central to the entire process through clearly defined action points

Many of these measures are geared towards those with responsibility for delivering participation, namely practitioners - essentially they have to feel confident and comfortable with the various mechanisms needed to implement participation. They also need to feel supported and informed. However, responsibility for delivery must not fall on practitioners alone and must be shared between all stakeholders and must be broadened to incorporate the communities that practitioners find themselves located in.

Participation should no longer be viewed as merely practice that takes place within the unit but forms part of a young person's development within the context of the area they grow up in. Units should be alter their approach and become the focus or the medium which facilitates the process of participation evidencing where young people connect with others.

And what about young people themselves? What allows young people to feel confident and comfortable about participating in any form of youth provision. The matrix (overleaf) outlines the key features (as described by young people themselves) that are essential if young people are to engage.

Whilst not exhaustive nor will any of it come as a surprise to workers, the challenge to us all is how we put this into action. How do we translate this information into a format that workers feel connected with but also allows young people to gain maximum benefit from their involvement?

The feedback I received from young people when questioning them about participation provides clear answers. I supplemented the more general question of what participation means to them with a number of questions on what motivates them, i.e., why they take part, why they keep coming back, what connects them with the organisation, etc?

I have taken the liberty of framing these with a particular focus so as to offer a structure with which I believe could be used to guide or certainly monitor participation. For example, the framework below could be used to compliment

existing evaluation methods or could be constructed in such a way so as to form a 'tool' to measure levels of participation.

No matter how it comes to be used the responses solicited from young people and the focus that is incorporated into the framework offers a clear and succinct guide as to what young people want from organisations or projects if they are to engage in a more in-depth way. There must be an emphasis on these elements and workers must become more accountable with regard to these if the central theme of participation is to be effectively addressed.

However, we must also be conscious that ultimately participation will only grow in an environment where:

- All stakeholders are willing to engage in the process

- All stakeholders are open to process and willing to embrace change

- All stakeholders can find their place in the process

- The process is geared towards building a culture of participation for the future

So what are the key elements that engage young people? Below is an outline of the feedback I received from young people and should help offer practitioners some assistance when formulating programmes and projects.

What ensures young people will engage?					
Opportunities	'Decision Making is serious business'	Generating/ Sharing Ideas	Opportunity to be heard	Sharing experiences /opinions	Friendship
Recognition	Certificates	Incentives & Money/financial reimbursement	Achievement	Profile	
Personal	Socialising	Fun	Personal Development	Relevance to career/education	Connections with other people/meeting with peers
Worker	Support	Mentoring	Positive Relationships	Information	
Practical	Duration - succinct	Central locations (ease of access)	Small Groups	Variety/Choice of activities	Training
Principles	Equality/Respect	No Hierarchy	Team Work	Commitment from Adults	Partnership with adults

Focus	Addressing Issues important to young people	Debates/Discussions			
Benefits	Seen to be making a difference	Can impact on their lives/lives of others lives	Makes connections with other projects	Unique	

Asking young people's opinion was not only useful and valuable in uncovering what they viewed as important but it also offered the opportunity to go one step further and test this with a small core group of young people from cross-community organisation, Reach Across.

I developed a small one-page questionnaire based on headings contained above and asked to rank their importance, i.e., 1-5 in terms of importance or 1 – 2/3/4 as it was with some headings. I aggregated the scores and divided by the number of respondents to provide an average. For a complete breakdown of scores see Appendix 7 but below is how young people outlined their preference:

Opportunities - friendship with others
Recognition - recognition for achievements
Personal - the chance to socialise with others
The Worker - positive relationship with the worker
Practical Things - variety & choice
Focus - addressing issues important to young people and Debates/Discussions
Benefits - seen to be making a difference by others
Principles - team work

The process of soliciting opinion, views and ideas from not only young people but also with practitioners and other individuals provided me with an opportunity to think more than ever about how participation can and should work.

There is a great paradox in that most youth workers will tell you that participation is happening in one shape or another but the opinion of most young people I spoke too would counter at least the perceived levels of participation. This is not to suggest for one minute that participation isn't happening - there are of course some very good examples where participation is arguably strong. 'Youth Bank' is one example in particular. There are examples of other units where individual young people are confident, articulate and on the surface seem to be very much involved and taking a leading role in the affairs of their unit.

The difference in opinion though seems to underline the importance of achieving a consensus among all stakeholders as to what participation means, how it operates on a daily basis and just as important as to how we measure and evidence it. Participation forms part of the Model for Effective

Practice but in my opinion requires a model independent but complimentary of this if it is to be further advanced or more to the point if we are to 'bring it alive.'

One thing that struck me during my consultation is the fact that no practitioner has documented the work they are doing into a Model of Practice. They of course document their work using various tools but at no time could any practitioner put their hand on something that outlines clearly the process that young people go through when they engage with their respective organisation. Nor did any of them consider the need for a model of practice to ensure the delivery of participation within their respective setting.

This is (and again I must emphasise) only my opinion but I would contend that it is absolutely vital and necessary that practitioners write up their own Model of Practice – it provides great benefits, not least of all it offers practitioners with reference points or 'markers' when trying to evidence participation. This I must point out is not a judgement on the work that practitioners are doing, all of whom believe that various levels of participation is occurring within their units. However, it is essential that practitioners either develop a model or at least agree to develop one.

It's with this in mind that I have worked on trying to develop a model which is by no means the *'all-singing all-dancing end of the journey the search is over for now'* type but with further discussion and debate certainly provides a basis from which to reach consensus on how practice should evolve. This can and should lead to agreed understanding of how and what participation looks like and how it manifests itself on the ground.

To put the proposed Model of Practice into context I first of all considered existing Models of Participation (Appendix 4) that have been developed over the years. I identified what I thought to be common threads, i.e., different stages that run on a continuum-like basis, namely, beginning at a point where there is no genuine or real involvement, i.e., 'passive participant', through engagement to ownership followed by partnership and finally ending with leadership.

This enabled me to establish a basis from which I could build upon and incorporate other elements including underlying principles, actions and appropriate (approximate) ages that correlate with the various stages as well as a Generic Skills Framework and an emphasis on the focus or drive of practitioners work.

The proposed Model of Practice is further underpinned by those elements in the above framework (engaging young people). I have cross-referenced these to ensure that they form part of this proposed model so as to provide evidence that this proposal is based on actual feedback from young people and considers best practice of workers and takes cognisance of previous models of participation.

At a practical level, there is a lot of work to be done with regards to enshrining a culture of participation across provision. Whilst certainly not exhaustive I have included an Action Plan broken into a number of headings. These actions require further examination in terms of clarifying whom, when and how. I have made suggestions to this end and as well as this also cross-referenced these with The Big Deal/Youth Forum objectives/work plan to ensure continuity.

Ensuring participation has implications for units with regard to how much young people are involved in the life of their unit. The table below outlines clearly where young people can be involved in the life of a unit.

Planning and running activities	Project Management	Policies	Marketing
Developing Rules	Managing budgets	Networking	Systems
Buying Equipment	Planning and developing services	Planning	Administration
Fundraising	Recruitment and Selection of Staff	Funding	Meetings
Information Design	Developing policies and procedures	Membership	Finance
Research Projects	Monitoring and Evaluation	Aim	Issues
Training	Representation	Staff Management	

For further detail see Appendix 3

Some of the steps taken to ensure this happens

- Some units become 'Guinea Pigs' for Action Research projects in implementing participation
- Rolling programme of events and activities to not only raise the profile of participation but to help enshrine practice
- 'Evidential Commitment' from staff to participation and mechanisms developed for capturing evidence of this including
- Staff developing Ideological or Motivational Statements that relates to their Model of Practice and articulates how their work will ensure participation happens
- Pro-active and co-ordinated approach to developing and co-ordinating 'Participation Development' sub-groups in their local area
- Units should develop and document a localised Model of Practice
- Units should develop materials on Participation that are complimentary to their work and fit within their community setting

- Units commitment to implementing 75% of agreed participation methodologies
- Young people to carry out 'participation checks' on units

Summary

The first thing I would like to point out is that this report was carried out over a short period of time with a broad yet not exhaustive number of people and whilst this has uncovered much to guide and advise the development of participation within the WELB area in the future it is necessary to recognised that if only marks the beginning of a longer-term process.

I have found respondents open and honest in their assertions and conclude that with support and access to resources practitioners will I believe embrace the opportunity to contribute to the development of participation.

An agreed definition (not yet) set within a Model of Practice and Framework for Delivery can establish the foundation from which to further develop and drive the 'Participation Agenda'. Coupled with an Agreed Action Plan containing many if not all action points within this report and perhaps more thereafter should begin to set the wheels in motion' and pave the way to embed a culture of participation across among youth provision across the WELB Area.

Appendix 1

Groups of young people engaged			
Derry Travellers Support Group	Strabane Youth Council	**Limavady Youth Council**	Youth Bank
Brandywell GLAD Group	Long Tower	Young Leaders at Limavady HS Youth Club	**Foyle Youth Council**
Rural Foyle Youth Council	**Reach Across**	Caw Youth Club	St. Brigid's College
Clubs/Units engaged			
New Buildings	Carrickmore	Station Centre	Omagh Youth Centre
St. Columb's Park House	Opportunity Youth	Derry Area Team	Youth First
Long Tower	St. Mary's Youth Club	Pennyburn Youth Club	Rosemount Youth Club
Pilots Row	Youth Action	Youth Information	NICCY
Area Workers	Shantallow Controlled Youth Club	Derry Travellers Support	Community Relations Officer
Reach Across	Glen Community Assoc	Outer West Integrated Youth Initiative	Strabane Youth Association
Young People's Participation Project (Cross-Border)	Children In Crossfire	Derry Shadow Council	Strabane Area Team
Bytes Project	Limavady Area Team	Strathfoyle Youth Club	
Other Meetings			
Big Deal Roadshow	Curriculum Development Unit Residential	GLAD Meeting	**NI Youth Forum (Full Staff Meetings & Big Deal Staff Meetings)**
Big Deal Research Officer	Tri-partite with WELB and NI Youth Forum Reps	The Big Deal Launch	The Big Deal Induction Meeting
Supervision Meetings			

Groups in bold where more than one meeting took place

Appendix 2

Ways in which young people can be involved

Consultation	Indirect Consultation	Service Planning, Review & Evaluation
Consumer Panels/Advisory Groups	Representative Groups	Working Groups Governance
Delegations	Staff Recruitment and Development	Part of staff team/volunteering

Values and principles underpinning participation

Respect	Equality and equity	Confidentiality	Accountability
Mutual Respect between young people and adults	Valuing difference, treating young people as equals, same rights, opportunities and choices as adults	Respecting information that young people bring to workers	Accountability to young people and other stakeholders
Reflective Practice Commitment to continually evaluating, reviewing and changing	**Anti-oppressive practice** Actively challenging discrimination and oppression	**Choice** Young people give their consent to being involved in the process	**Empowerment** Commitment to the process of empowerment

(Shenton)

Appendix 3

Examples of what young people can be involved in within units

Planning and running activities	Project Management	Policies	Marketing
Planning and running activities Staff meetings Programme Planning Group Workshops with peers to generate ideas	**Project Management** Boys work Rural Work Peer Education Girls work Trips, visits & residentials Political Education Social Education Informal Education Work with minorities, i.e., ethnic, gay and lesbian, disabled, Transitions	**Policies** Reviewing Discipline, Rules & Control	**Marketing** Community Analysis Publicity Promotion
Developing Rules Group Meetings 'Citizen Jury's' Workshops	**Managing budgets** Completing Cheque ledgers Setting up spreadsheets	**Networking** Social Services Police Health Boards Schools Inter-Agency Work, social, political and civil, employment, community and family, voluntary sector, public and private services, Links with area workers, youth officers, the wider community, etc	**Systems** Decision Making Committee Cycle Security Monitoring Reporting/Recording: internal/external
Buying Equipment: Selecting Equipment Accompanying worker to wholesaler Checking Catalogues	**Planning and developing services** Forums Citizenship and Democracy	**Planning** 5 year business plan Annual Plan Monthly Plan Individual Plan Unit Plan	**Administration** Time Sheets Car Mileage Records Booking System Financial Control Wages Correspondence
Fundraising: Collections	**Recruitment and Selection of Staff**	**Funding** Short/long term Searching	**Meetings** Staff Planning

	Interviews Short-listing	Form Filling Applications Sponsorship Events	Policy Supervision Task Group Committees
Information Design Establish a Youth Info Point Youth Information Sub-group	**Developing policies and procedures** Workshops to review policies Questionnaires	**Membership** Registration	**Finance**
Research Projects The Needs of young people	**Monitoring and Evaluation** Developing and compiling questionnaires Facilitating workshops with peers	**Aims** Keeping them off the Streets Somewhere to go Something to do Someone to talk to Association Socialisation Space of our own Peer Groups	**Issues** Exhibitions Displays Workshops Youth Information Points
Training Staff Volunteers Committee Personal	**Representation** Panels Quangos Unions Management Committee's	**Staff Management** Supervision Appraisal Induction	

Appendix 4 Existing Models of Participation

	Models Stages	**Sherry Arnstein** (1969) – relates to adult participation	**Roger Hart** (ladder or participation) – assumes that participation at lower levels is less valuable	**Phil Treseder** – similar to Hart – 'children need to be empowered to be able to participate'	**Sheir –** this model also contains references to 'Openings', 'Opportunities' and 'Obligations'	**The Children, Young People and Families Directorate '***Building a Culture of Participation'* Report	Stages/ Process
8	**Degrees of Citizen**	Citizen Control	Youth Initiated, shared decisions with adults	Child-Initiated and Directed		Children and young people make autonomous decisions	**Leading**
7		Delegated Power Power	Youth Initiated and directed	Child-Initiated, shared decisions with adults	Children share power and responsibility for decision making	Children/young people share power and responsibility for decision-making with adults	**Partnership**
6	**(minimum level to achieve UNCRC)**	Partnership	Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth	Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children	Children involved in decision making process	Children/young people are involved in decision-making (together with adults)	**Ownership**
5	**Tokenism**	Placation	Consulted but informed	Consulted and informed			
4		Consultation	Assigned but informed	Assigned but informed	Children are listened to	Children/young people's views are taken into account by adults	**Engagement**
					Children are supported in expressing their views		
3	**Non-participation**	Informing	Tokenism				**No genuine or real involvement – 'passive participants'**

Appendix 5

Participation: Checking the scoreboard
(NSW Commission for Children and Young People)

Participation – Checking the Scoreboard is made up of four parts:

Coach's Handbook Will provide an overview of Participation – Checking the Scoreboard and is your guide on how to use it with staff, children and young people		Running on to the field For children and young people are part of groups and organisations that are starting to think about participation. It is written in language that is suitable for a younger age group	Getting into the Game For children and young people who are part of groups or organisations that have invested time and energy in participation strategies. It is written in a style that is suitable for older children and young people	The Cheer Squad For adult members of a group or organisation that wants to assess or improve children and young people's participation
Step 1		Why involve kids? Write down five reasons why your school/club/youth service should ask you for your ideas and opinions? *(Why should they ask me what I think?)*	Why involve kids? Write down five reasons why your school/club/youth service should ask you for your ideas and opinions? *(Why should they ask me what I think?)*	Why involve kids? Write down five reasons why your school/club/youth service should ask you for your ideas and opinions? *(Why should they ask me what I think?)*
Steps 2 to 9 Divided into three parts to encourage people to think about: ***Check:*** what the organisation is doing now, ***Reflect:*** what other things the organisation could do ***Act:*** what they could do to make these things happen	**Step 2**	Kids have a say about different things *(Having a say about different things)*	Kids have a say about different things *(Having a say about different things)*	Kids have a say about different things *(Having a say about different things)*
	Step 3	Kids participate in different ways *(Having a say in different ways)*	Kids participate in different ways *(Having a say in different ways)*	Kids participate in different ways *(Having a say in different ways)*
	Step 4	Helping kids to participate *(Things that help me have my say)*	Helping kids to participate *(Things that help me have my say)*	Helping kids to participate *(Things that help me have my say)*
	Step 5	Kids have access to decision makers *(getting to talk to people who make decisions)*	Kids have access to decision makers *(getting to talk to people who make decisions)*	Kids have access to decision makers *(getting to talk to people who make decisions)*
	Step 6	Kids understand how decisions are made *(Understanding how decisions get made)*	Kids understand how decisions are made *(Understanding how decisions get made)*	Kids understand how decisions are made *(Understanding how decisions get made)*
	Step 7	Kids are appreciated *(Feeling appreciated)*	Kids are appreciated *(Feeling appreciated)*	Kids are appreciated *(Feeling appreciated)*
	Step 8	Kids feels participating is worthwhile *(It's all worthwhile)*	Kids feels participating is worthwhile *(It's all worthwhile)*	Kids feels participating is worthwhile *(It's all worthwhile)*
	Step 9	Reviewing how kids' participation is working *(Finding better ways to get kids involved)*	Reviewing how kids' participation is working *(Finding better ways to get kids involved)*	Reviewing how kids' participation is working (Finding better ways to get kids involved)

Appendix 6 Sample of responses to some questions

What does participation mean to young people?	Going through the door, senior member committee's, youth councils/forums, Taking Part, Connecting with others, Getting Involved, Team Work, Socialising, Generating Ideas, Learning, Communication, Sharing, not just about senior member committee's, going out on the streets,
What are the obstacles to participation?	Workers – afraid of handing over power, geographical remit, resources, some young people just want a chill out space, self-confidence, levels of commitment, education, transport, balance between chill out & courses, understanding of concept, personal development Vs accreditation, danger of making non-formal into formal
How can the role of Participation Worker support you in your work?	Reaching out to other areas, networking/acting as a link between clubs in respective areas, providing support on a par with Senior Youth Workers, guidelines around participation, workshops for young people, training for part-time workers
What keeps you coming back?	Craic, 'Leefal', Laughter, Diversity, Socialising, Opportunities, Activities, Courses, The Worker, Confidence, Friendship, Mixing with others, Rewards, Achievements, Certificates, Finding out new things, Information, Experiences, Drop In Element, Training, Responding to issues, Career/Education Prospects, Community
What connects you with the organisation?	Good craic, importance of relationships, CV – towards career, makes a difference, support, personal development, profile, money/finance, being able to make an impact, partnership with adults, achievement, certificates/recognition

Appendix 7   **'WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT'**

Below there are 8 headings divided into a number of statements. These statements are based on what young people said was important for them if they are to participate in projects. We now want to test this by asking you to prioritise the most important.

Please begin by completing the exercise on your own. Rank in order of priority, 1 being most important, 5 being least important. Where there are less than 5 options, please prioritise using the same system, i.e., 1, 2 or 1, 2, 3 etc. Then come together in your small group and agree a final rank for each heading.

If you think we have missed anything please use the space at the bottom to write these in and prioritise. Also raise these in your small group and agree a rank.

	Average	Group choice
Opportunities		
You have the opportunity to make decisions	3	4
You have the opportunity to be able to generate share ideas	4.3	5
You have the opportunity to be heard	2.7	2
You have the opportunity to share experiences/opinions	2.85	3
You have the opportunity to gain friendship with others	2	1
Recognition		
You get certificates for completing work	2.57	3
There incentives to get you involved	3.71	4
You get money or financial reimbursement, i.e., expenses for work you have done	4	5
You are recognised for your Achievements	1.71	1
Profile, i.e., public awareness of your work	2.85	2
Personal		
You have the chance to socialise with others	2.42	1
Activities are fun	2.71	2
You will get personal development	3.14	4
It will help or contribute to the development of your career or education	3	3
You can build connections with other people or meet with your peers	3.42	5
The Worker		
The worker offers you support as and when you need it	2.28	2
The worker provides a mentoring role allowing you to complete project/piece of work	3	3
You have a positive relationship with the worker	1.71	1
The worker is able to provide information on an on-going basis	3.71	4
Practical Things		
Duration - meetings don't take long	4	5
Central locations – easy to get too	2.85	3
Activities are done in Small Groups	3	4
There is plenty of variety & choice of activities available	2	1
Training	2.71	2
Principles		
Equality/Respect – everyone is treated the same	2.57	2
No Hierarchy – no one is more important than anyone else	3	3
Team Work	2.42	1
There is commitment from adults to the project	3.28	4
The project is based on a partnership with adults	3.71	5
Focus		
Addressing Issues important to young people	1.42	1
Debates/Discussions	1.42	1
Benefits		
The project you're involved with is seen to be making a difference by others	1.71	1
You can make an impact on their lives of others	2	2
You're able to make connections with other projects	3.57	4
You're part of a unique project, it's like no others	2.57	3
Others		
Equity – everyone is treated with respect as you can't treat everyone the same		

Appendix 8	WORKING MODEL OF PARTICIPATION									
Stages	No genuine or real involvement – 'passive participants'		Engagement		Ownership		Partnership		Leadership	
Top Ten Generic Skills Framework		Finding and Using Information	Understanding contexts and situations	Communication – getting your message across,	Thinking – problem solving, prioritising, forming an opinion and argument	Planning and organising meetings and events	Working in teams and Networks	Raising Funds and managing money	Campaigning and Lobbying	Negotiating, representation and advocating on behalf of others
									Ensuring equal opportunities and access; making people feel valued and accepted	
Level of Involvement	No participation	Some involvement Supports efforts of leaders/group	Made some contribution through action and words	Takes an active role on at least one occasion each week/month	Takes an active role on more than one occasion each week/month	Is active on a prolonged basis	Demonstrates empathy skills, e.g., encouraged others, listened to ideas, etc	Demonstrates organisational, planning and motivation skills,	Demonstrates ability to work on own initiative , sees results of work	Clearly defined roles, exhibiting previous plus l'ship potential
Personal Development	On the Streets, not using provision/services	Passive participant – goes along with it to try it – takes part in activity organised by others but feels a connection	Begins to take an active interest, starts engaging with unit with and without support of friends and/or leaders	Interest develops – able to express needs and articulates desire to put responses/interests into actions	Expressing opinions, ideas, solutions and proposes ways of responding to needs	Developing confidence and self-esteem necessary to be part of process	Becomes more comfortable with process exercising growing self-awareness, i.e., knowledge, relating to others, etc	Growing confidence and self-esteem, able to articulate and express oneself in a thoughtful and constructive manner	Combining confidence and knowledge to make valuable contribution	Confident individual who exhibits potential or greater in areas which are vital to the life of the unit
Examples of Practical involvement	No involvement	Registers with unit and joins in on low level activities and/or uses drop-in element, takes part in discussions, debates, etc	Previous plus attends day trip, summer scheme, residentials, etc. Starts to consider issues important to him/herslef	More than occasional attendance, begins to become involved in running of unit	Regular to firm attendance, takes on some shadow roles, e.g., coffee bar, assisting leaders in work, involved in consultations,	Informal groups developing action plans, part of representative groups, recognition for work	Previous plus represents Unit on Reference Groups, conferences, seminars, connections with others outside of unit, Training	Previous plus Involvement in Man Comm & internal sub-groups/working groups, advisory panels	Previous plus Represents Unit on Youth Councils, Forums, Man Comm, delegations, etc	Assumes roles commensurate with staff responsibilities, e.g., Staff Recruitment and Development, governance
Role of worker	Active PR to engage young people	Emphasis on welcoming aspect of unit	Encouraging and Supporting Exercising leadership Evaluation./'Digest' Experiences		Ensuring Accessibility, Providing Information, Facilitating process Evaluation/'Digest' Experiences		Mentoring, Providing Information Supporting & Endorsing Change Evaluation/'Digest' Experiences		Reference point if needed Partnership developed & in place Evaluation/'Digest' Experiences	
Age (approx)	10-12				12-15		13-16		15-16+	
Focus	Fun, Friendship and Relationship Building		Space to be themselves, Safety in no's and Security……		Space, Recognition of achievements and Affirmation		Space, Affirmation of individual strengths and process of reflection		Building on strengths, reflection & planning for future	
Principles	Young people can 'opt in/out'; Participation in unit relates to life within the community; Increased knowledge & understanding; Developing essential skills; values evolving; partnership									

	PROPOSED ACTION PLAN		
Area	**Actions**	**NIYF Objects**	**Who**
Research	Continue to identify various models of participation across the WELB area and document these so as to have an up-to-date picture of participation	1.2, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 & 3.1	**PW**
	Carry out Action Research projects in 3 units as basis for developing Models of Practice	1.4, 1.10, 1.11, 2.4	**PW**
	Questionnaires to determine baseline with regard to levels of participation in youth provision across WELB area and to measure perceptions	1.5	**PW**
	Action Research to look closely at how young people get to the point where they are 'fit for participation'		**PW**
Marketing	Promotion of The Big Deal with evidence documented		**PW**
	Promotional Materials of Board's commitment/approach to participation developed and launched – tied in with The Big Deal		**PW & YP**
	Pro-active approach to promoting participation at all levels through all available mediums including the development of promotional materials to support raise awareness/profile of concept of participation		**PW**
	Ensure Clarity of information and advice and support for staff so as to ensure effective practice		**PW**
	On-going visits to units – planned and on-spec with purpose of supporting groups considering Big Deal applications and any groups working on theme of participation		**PW & YP**
	'MyGroup' or similar site is developed and used by Participation Worker to support staff and young people with regard to theme of Participation		**PW & YP**
	Development of E-group to keep young people, practitioners and policy makers 'up to speed' on developments with participation		**PW & YP**
	Use of Terminology for existing mechanisms within units, i.e., Senior/Junior Member Committees, etc to be examined – consider other appropriate terminology to make bodies more accessible and approachable		**UW & YP**
Events	Conference among workers to discuss issues raised as outlined in work plan and Participation Worker report – issues identified include management responsibilities vs engaging young people, use of Area Workers to support participation in units, moving beyond the same young people participating in same structures all the time, expectations of workers – what should they be delivering, the role of the Participation Worker, how can training be enhanced to deliver participation, getting to an agreed Model of participation, 'measuring the intangible' – how to evidence/measure change		**PW, AW, AO & SYW**
	Conference among young people to solicit their views and opinions on participation		**PW, RG & AO**
	Rolling programme of events and activities to not only raise the profile of participation but to help enshrine practice	1.1	**PW & RG**

PW: Participation Worker **AO:** Area Officer **UW:** Unit Workers **AW:** Area Workers **YP:** Young People **SYW:** Senior Youth Worker **RG:** Reference Group

Area	Actions	NIYF Objects	Who
Training	Training for workers on implementing participation	3.3	PW
	Workers to receive training in Human Rights and UNCRC so as to help inform delivery and also to demonstrate how structures encourage and promote participation		PW, AW, UW
	Address issue of monitoring and evaluation so as to practitioners determining how participation has happened or not	2.6	
	Develop tailored training materials that workers can access so as to help implement participation		PW, AO, UW's
	Training for young people in capacity building around research so they can carry out actions identified under research heading	1.9	PW/PRW
	Develop Accredited Training Course for Workers	3.3	PW
Personnel	Develop role of Area Worker to support and compliment 'centre based' workers, which includes detached/street work and liasing with local community players so as to develop geographical participation plans		AO, AW's & PW
	'Evidential Commitment' from staff to participation and mechanisms developed for capturing evidence of this including all staff developing Ideological Statements that relates to their Model of Practice	1.8	PW, AW's, & PW
	Re-defining roles to take cognisance of emphasis of Participation		PW, AO, AW's, UW's
Strategy	Pro-active and co-ordinated approach to developing and implementing Participation Strategy led by Stakeholders Forum that both young people, adults and workers can endorse, support and implement. A number of sub-groups to be set up to co-ordinate delivery at various levels and in various geographical areas	4.1, 5.1, 5.2 & 6.2	AO, PW, UW's
	Redefine and agree a definition of what participation is		ALL
	Consultation on proposed Model of Practice leading to an agreed Model so as to inform implementation		ALL
	'Evidential Commitment' to ensure Young people are central to the entire process through clearly defined action points		PW, AO, YP
	More pro-active approach to reaching out to marginalised young people including consideration of Detached and Street Workers		PW, AW's,
	Develop clear links with organisations generally accepted as working with excluded young people, e.g., PBNI, YJA, NIACRO, Youth First, Off the Streets		PW, UW's

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Area	Actions	NIYF Objects	Who
Young People	Create list of young people to be nominated to Children and Young People's Forum	7.1	PW, UW's, & YP
	Participation Training to begin with Junior Members		PW, YP
	Securing funding to appoint young people as 'Champions of Participation' across council areas (possible group of 'Champions' drawn from GLAD groups)		PW, YP
	Train groups of young people in evaluating participation – young people then carry out 'participation checks'	2.6 & 3.5	PW, YP
Units	Offer training in 'Organisational Change' so as help support workers in developing participation structures within their unit	1.6 & 1.7	PW, UW & AW
	Link SLA's to 'Commitment to Participation' where workers must demonstrate in their SLA how they will implement participation in their unit		PW, AO, UW's
	Units should develop a documented Model of Practice that relates to the eventual overall agreed strategy		PW, UW's, YP
	'Commitment to Participation' Charter developed – link to Youth Forum Objective of establishing Charter Mark Status for organisations involving young people in practice	1.8	PW, UW's, YP
	Units should develop materials on Participation that are complimentary to their work and fit within their community setting		PW, UW's, YP
	Units should display Participation Charter		UW's
	Each unit to be furnished with list of 'Practical list of Participation Methodologies' and commitment to implementing 75% of these secured		UW's, PW
	Links with wider community to underpin commitment to participation so as to acknowledge that participation is set within the context of the area young people live		UW's, PW, YP, AW's
Resources & Funding	Identify resource implications of implementing strategy and secure funding to support this including making resources available in localised settings either through 'The Big Deal' or by other means including possibly incorporating participation budgets into overall unit budgets		AO, PW
	Stock-take and review of existing resources with a view to 'Practitioners List' of effective Participation resources	6.1	PW
	Development of methodologies with regards to measuring and evaluating participation, e.g., adoption of or adaptation of 'Checking the Scoreboard' mechanism (New South Wales)		PW, UW's, AW's
Evaluation	Develop relevant means by which to evaluate programmes and projects		PW, UW's, AO
	Initiate occasional evaluation events to aid evaluation process		PW, AO's

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