



Listening, hearing and acting

*Approaches to the participation of children
and young people in decision making –
a review of the literature*



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Introduction

The engagement and participation of children and young people in statutory child protection systems continues to receive widespread attention in Queensland and other Australian states and territories. Whilst there is a commitment to the participation of children and young people amongst all stakeholders within the child protection system, it is acknowledged that the system lacks a consistent framework for capturing their voices in the development of policy, services and practice.

It is against this backdrop that the Department of Child Safety undertook to develop a *Children and Young People's Participation Strategy*. A cross stakeholder working party, known as GFORCE was formed to support the development of a strategy including a three year action plan for building capacity across the department, carers and non-government service providers to facilitate the engagement and participation of children and young people. GFORCE is undertaking a range of activities to inform the development of the strategy action plan. One of these activities is the identification of models for the engagement and participation of children and young people in statutory child protection systems.

In May 2006, the Department of Child Safety commissioned a review of relevant work of other Australian jurisdictions, literature and research to identify models of engagement and participation that have been demonstrated to be successful in relation to:

- case planning and ongoing intervention
- provision of feedback on service delivery
- engagement in service planning processes
- engagement in the development of policy and procedures
- collecting data about participation for evaluation and service review processes
- models of peer to peer research and facilitation.

The commissioning brief highlighted the requirement to identify where models are appropriate or specific to particular age groups or subsets of children and young people within the service system including those who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, those from culturally diverse backgrounds and those with disabilities.

This paper, *Listening, Hearing, and Acting*, reports on the outcomes of the literature review.

Approach to the review

The approach taken to reviewing literature and research about models of engagement and participation included a:

- comprehensive search of academic literature using search terms as detailed below
- web search of national and international organisations involved in policy, research or practice with children and young people
- Internet search using the same search terms as detailed below.

The search terms included:

- level 1: children and young people
- level 2: participation, involvement, consultation and decision making
- level 3: disability and Aboriginal

Reference lists of relevant literature and research were scanned and any references additional to those already found were accessed, where available.

Other sources of information included state and territory government departments responsible for child protection and state and territory centres of the CREATE Foundation. The department contacted other Australian jurisdictions to request information about current initiatives or projects being undertaken. However, no specific projects or initiatives were identified other than those already in the public domain. The CREATE Foundation requested that its state and territory centres provide information about current initiatives or projects. A range of CREATE reports and other literature were provided.

Contents of this report

- Section One Provides an overview of the key messages arising from the review including gaps in current knowledge and practice.
- Section Two Sets the context of participation. It explores the definition of participation and discusses the relationship between participation and protection.
- Section Three Identifies the benefits of and barriers to participation.
- Section Four Details a whole-of-systems approach to participation and the key elements of effective participation.
- Section Five Discusses the foundations for effectively engaging and involving children and young people in decision making as individuals and as groups.
- Section Six Examines children and young people's involvement in decision making about them as individuals.
- Section Seven Examines children and young people's involvement in decision making about them as a group.
- Section Eight Identifies approaches to supporting and resourcing carers and staff to engage and involve children and young people in decision making.
- Section Nine Identifies approaches to evaluating the impact of children and young people's participation.
- Appendix One Identifies useful websites and tool kits.

Section one: Key messages

Context of participation

Participation is a multi-layered concept and needs to be defined along a number of dimensions. These include:

- degree of autonomy held by children and young people in the decision making process, and the roles played by adults
- individual or group focus of decision making and the content or subject of the decision to be made
- types of informal or formal activities being used to engage children and young people
- frequency and duration of the participation activities
- children and young people involved.

Children and young people within the child protection system are a diverse group. However, much of the literature on the participation of children and young people focuses on older children and young people. Activities and processes used to engage children and young people need to address their diversity and be inclusive.

It is essential that groups or organisations develop a shared understanding of participation and what they are striving to achieve.

In child protection, opportunities need to be provided for children and young people and adults involved in their care or in working with them to explore the relationship between ensuring the protection of children and young people and enabling their participation in decisions and actions that impact on them.

Benefits and barriers

The benefits of participation include:

- better services
- promoting citizenship and social inclusion
- personal and social education and development.

Self-advocacy and advocacy on behalf of peers promotes resilience in children and young people who face adversity.

The barriers to participation include:

- attitudes toward children and young people and their capacity to be involved in decision making
- relationships between children and young people and those people involved in making decisions about them that underpins decision making
- structures and processes used by adults for decision making
- lack of understanding of what participation means, consistency in approaches, capacity of those involved in working with children and young people, and the resources necessary to support participation.

Barriers to participation may be magnified for vulnerable children and young people as they may lack confidence and not expect to participate due to past experiences.

A whole-of-system approach

A whole-of-system approach is required to translate a commitment to participation into practice and to affect change. The four key elements of a whole-of-systems approach are:

- develop a culture
- develop a structure
- develop effective practice
- develop effective review systems.

Effective participation is underpinned by ensuring that:

- children and young people's participation is part of an organisation's culture
- children and young people have a place in decision making
- adults adapt to children and young people's ways of working
- time and opportunities are provided for adults to develop strong relationships with children and young people
- children and young people's time and effort is valued and has some real effect on outcomes for them.

Foundations for engaging and involving

Communication and building relationships are foundational to the effective engagement and involvement of children and young people in decision making as individuals and groups. The building blocks for effective communication and relationships are:

- developing mutual trust and respect
- having conversations, listening, learning, understanding, responding and being open
- taking action and providing feedback on the outcomes
- reducing the power imbalance between adults and children and young people
- informal and formal support for children and young people
- providing appropriate choices.

Communication and relationships with children and young people can also be enhanced by organisations fostering wider relationships between children and young people, with parents and carers, and with the wider community.

Children and young people's involvement in decision making about them as individuals

There is little literature on the participation of children and young people in decision making about them as individuals. What literature is available tends to focus on promoting the importance of their participation, and to a lesser extent, their views about participation.

Informal interaction between children and young people and those involved in their day-to-day care and lives is the most common way that children and young people are involved in decision making about them as individuals. Informal interactions are more important to them than their participation in decision making structures and processes developed by adults.

Case planning structures and processes are not child and young person friendly. Some work has been done on how to make case planning structures more child and young person friendly but further research is required to assess how this impacts on their experience and capacity to participate in such forums.

Further research is required on the participation of children and young people in family group conferencing or meetings. Small scale studies indicate that children and young people feel able to participate with appropriate preparation and support including having access to individual advocates.

There is limited documentation of approaches to ongoing case management and intervention and how they support engagement and participation of children and young people.

Individual advocacy is recognised as an important strategy for promoting the participation of children and young people in decision making about their lives due to their vulnerability, the range of people and organisations with an interest, the perception of some that they are not listened to or heard, previous failure to provide appropriate opportunities for their participation, and the belief of some that they do not have someone who can advocate on their behalf.

There are few examples of children and young people within the child protection system having access to formal individual advocacy in Queensland or other Australian jurisdictions, particularly in formal structures and processes such as case planning and family conferences or meetings.

Children and young people's involvement in decision making about them as a group

There is increasingly more documentation both in Australia and overseas about the involvement of children and young people in decision making about them as a group. However, this is largely descriptive in nature and focuses more on the process than on the outcomes.

Examples of children and young people's participation at different levels of the service system and across different areas of decision making such as operations and management, service planning and development, policy and legislation development are available.

A range of participation strategies are used to engage children and young people including consultation, large scale events, advisory or reference groups, network of groups, parallel structures, and committee places. The approaches are not mutually exclusive and each has its strengths and limitations.

The effectiveness of these strategies is dependent on ownership and relevance, representativeness, and the quality of partnership between the children and young people and adults concerned.

In Australia, much of the documented work on the participation of children and young people as a group has been undertaken by CREATE Foundation. Some of this work has been commissioned and funded by State and Territory government departments responsible for the protection and care of children and young people.

The examples of children and young people's participation in decision making as a group serve to illustrate what is possible and highlight that the major barrier to participation is the capacity of adults to engage and partner children and young people.

Supporting and resourcing

The importance of supporting and resourcing both children and young people and carers and staff to engage and involve children and young people in individual and group decision making is emphasised.

However, there are very few training programs and toolkits available to support and resource participation. There are even fewer that relate specifically to children and young people within the child protection system.

Evaluating participation

There is concern that whilst children and young people's participation both individually and as a group has increased, there is little evidence of their participation having an influence or impact.

There is therefore increasing emphasis on the need to quantify the participation of children and young people in decision making and to measure the impact of their participation on outcomes.

Some practical tools and exercises have been developed that support the evaluation of participation.

At a more formal level, the establishment and monitoring of standards has been highlighted as a primary means of evaluating performance.

Section two: Setting the context

The participation of children and young people is increasingly recognised in a range of contexts including the family, school, community and government. The context of this report is the participation of children and young people in the child protection system, a system that seeks to protect them from harm, and in some instances, to provide ongoing protection and care.

In Queensland, the participation of children and young people within the child protection system is recognised and promoted by the *Child Protection Act 1999* and the policies and procedures of the Department of Child Safety¹. The Act has clear requirements for seeking and considering the views of children and young people, and includes a charter of rights for those children and young people who are in the custody or guardianship of the chief executive. Most recently, the department has developed a quality assurance strategy for government and non-government child protection services. The service standards include a standard on the participation of children and young people and families in decisions that affect their lives and in the way services are delivered. Other standards refer to seeking feedback from children and young people about the services provided and using this information to inform service development, and ensuring access to appropriate complaint mechanisms.

Defining participation

Participation is a difficult term to define. It can be used to describe different things in different circumstances. Terms such as 'participate', 'involve', 'take part' and 'consult' are often used interchangeably without clarifying the way in which the term is being used, how it is applied to different types of decisions or how it is applied to children and young people of different ages or who are at different stages of development.

In acknowledging this, Kirby et al (2003a) suggest that participation is a multi-layered concept and identify a number of dimensions along which children's and young people's participation in decision making can be described.

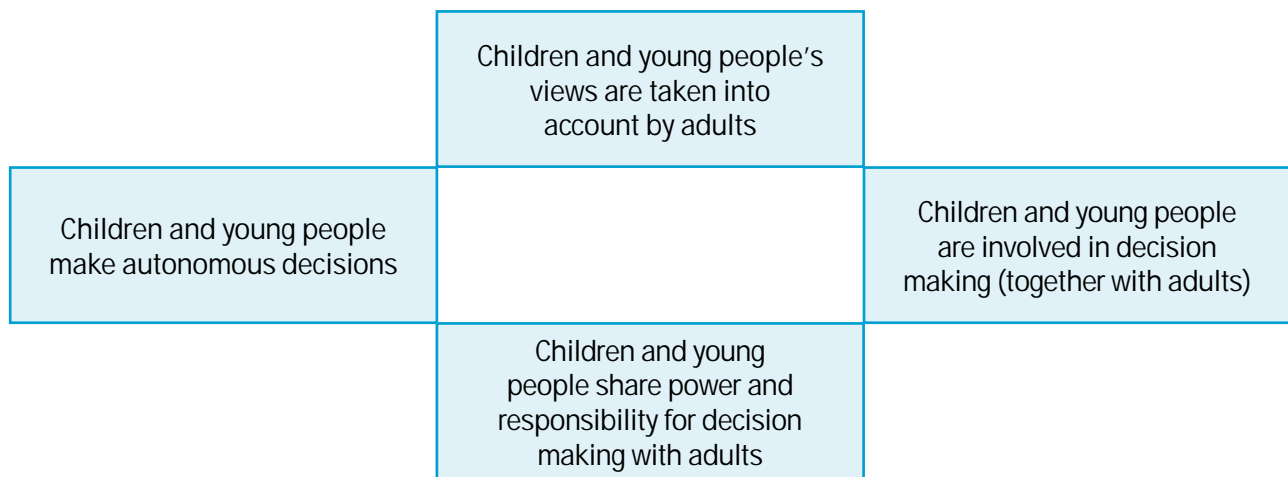
Level of participation

First, the level and nature of active engagement and involvement varies. This is usually described in terms of the degree of autonomy held by children and young people in the process and the roles played by adults.

There has been a significant shift in how levels of participation have been described. Hart's adaptation of Arnstein's ladder of participation consists of eight rungs of participation. Rungs one to three represent non-participation, whilst rungs four to eight represent degrees of participation. The usefulness of this model has been challenged as it values higher levels of participation where children or young people initiate and have greater control (Healy, 1998, NSW CC&YP, 2003a, Kirby, 2003a). Alternative models have been developed that are not hierarchical and which suggest that different levels of participation may be appropriate to different situations.

¹ Department of Child Safety policies and procedures will be reviewed as part of the project to identify and address any gaps in promoting participation and providing appropriate guidance to staff.

A full description of each of the models of participation can be found in the NSW Children and Young People Commission's *TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously* resources (2003a).



Kirby et al (2003a) developed a four level categorisation taking as its starting point the requirement that children and young people's views be taken into account when making decisions affecting their lives. The model is non-hierarchical, as no level is assumed to be better or works better than another. The appropriate level of participation would be determined according to circumstances, capacity and wishes of the participating children or young people.

Kirby et al (2003a) note that, 'These models help highlight the need to understand and distinguish different levels of empowerment afforded to children and young people in organisations. They prompt us to ask: what level of participation is appropriate for which activities; what level does a project or activity aspire to; at what level does it actually operate?'

Focus and content of the decision making

The focus of a distinction is drawn between the involvement of children and young people in individual or personal decisions and group or public decisions.

In child protection, the content or subject of individual decision making and associated processes includes:

- need for protection and the action necessary to ensure protection (investigation and assessment, Family Group Conferencing²)
- removal from parental care
- placement in out-of-home care
- day-to-day living and activities
- care and developmental needs (including safety, recreation, culture, family relationships, health, education and employment) and services required to meet those needs
- establishing goals and case plans (case planning, Family Group Conferencing)
- schooling

² Family Group Conferencing is referred to as Family Group Meetings in Queensland.

- contact with family
- contact with friends
- family meetings (foster care)
- house meetings (residential care)
- longer term care arrangements including return to parental care, kinship care, long term foster care, guardianship to a third party and adoption
- transition from care
- experience of decision making and services received (feedback and complaints).

In addition, it is about the informal interactions between children and young people and those involved in their day-to-day care and lives.

The content or subject of group decision making and processes includes:

- local area service planning – identifying needs and services required
- service development – identifying how services can be organised and delivered
- service organisation – recruitment of staff, development of resources for carers and staff, involvement in management committees
- service review, monitoring and evaluation
- policy, procedures and legislation development, review and evaluation
- research.

Nature of the participation activity

There are a range of ways in which children and young people can be engaged in decision making. These can be informal or formal. Far more attention in the literature is given to formal mechanisms than to informal approaches. Informal approaches include ongoing dialogue, observation, listening to spontaneous communication and engaging in joint activities, whilst formal approaches involve dedicated mechanisms such as one-off consultations, regular group meetings and suggestion boxes (Kirby, 2003b). In child protection, a major focus of participation literature is on children and young people's involvement in case planning meetings. The *Having a say* report indicated that adults are more focussed upon the suitability of formal structures and processes, whilst children and young people were more focussed on informal interactions, attitudes and relationships, (Spall et al, 1998).

Frequency and duration of participation

Participation activities vary in how often they are held and how long they take. This can impact on children and young people's motivation to be involved and to maintain involvement. It can also impact on the influence that children and young people can have on decisions.

Children and young people involved

Children and young people are not a single group. They differ in terms of their age, gender, development, cultural and linguistic background, disability, the nature of their contact with the child protection system, and their experience of the child protection system. Activities and processes used to engage children and young people need to address this diversity.

As noted by Kirby (2003a) some activities, by their nature, only involve small numbers of children and young people. These activities include representation at events, youth councils, conferences, and small

scale forums or surveys. Whilst these are important means of involving children and young people, they do not replace broader strategies that appropriately engage larger numbers of children and young people and that better reflect their diversity.

A review of the literature indicates that children and young people may not be involved equally. Older young people and females are the most likely to be involved in public (group) (Kirby and Bryson, 2002). Age and gender variations are less clear at the individual level. In the *Being Heard* project in Queensland, children and young people aged over 12 and females were more likely to report that they have a say, although there is some variation across locations (CREATE, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). However, a study of children and young people's satisfaction with out-of-home care found no age differences in reports of caseworkers' willingness to listen (Delfabbro et al, 2002).

Limited reference was found to young children, Indigenous children and young people, children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children and young people with a disability. In particular, it would appear that where specialist knowledge and understanding is required to access and communicate with some groups of children and young people these groups miss out. In Australia, there is more recent evidence of actively seeking the views of Aboriginal children and young people about their experiences in out-of-home care (CREATE, 2005c; Higgins et al, 2005). In the broader context, there is some material being generated by people working with young children (Clark, McQuail and Moss, 2003, Willow in Neale, 2004), and children and young people with a disability (Cavet and Sloper, 2004, Franklin and Sloper, 2005) that may assist in bridging this gap – at least for those groups.

The dimensions of participation assist in defining participation in relation to its purpose, the decision making context, the nature of the activity, and the appropriate level of power sharing between adults and children or young people.

Wright (2006) states it is essential that in promoting participation organisations or groups develop a shared understanding of participation and agree on the aims and objectives of the initiative – 'In clarifying... aims and objectives, the organisation should identify what will be achieved or changed, for whom, when, how and by whom. An effective definition of participation will therefore encompass an understanding of participation as an activity and as a process that aims to achieve positive outcomes for children, young people and organisations.'

Participation and protection

Children have a right to participate and a right to protection. 'Establishing the 'right' relationship between ensuring protection and enabling their participation in decisions and actions is difficult with all children' (Marchant and Kirby in Neale, 2004). The discussion of the relationship between participation and protection is primarily focused on decisions and action that impact on the individual.

Marchant and Kirby identify four dilemmas:

- children's rights versus parent's rights
- establishing boundaries around children's participation and making choices
- young children's autonomy and increasing fears about the perceived risks and the dangers that they face
- ensuring young children's safety and wellbeing.

The relationship between participation and protection is more difficult to establish in the context of the protection of children and young people from harm and, where necessary, their ongoing protection and care (Healy, 2002). Issues of risk and harm, and the responsibilities of those involved in their protection and care, compound the dilemmas identified by Marchant and Kirby (in Willow, 2004), 'With the best of intentions, adults sometimes exclude children from having a say because of their own fears or concerns or anxieties'. A study of participation in the early stage of the child protection process undertaken by CREATE (2000a) found that, '...the vulnerability of children and young people and the circumstances that bring them to the attention of statutory agencies can lead to 'protective' and 'caring' responses from service providers which can inadvertently limit the participation of children and young people. This can be expressed in range of ways including:

- not wanting to bother the child or young person
- not wanting to upset the child or young person
- not wanting to make the child or young person responsible
- not wanting to expose the child or young person to further trauma.'

These attitudes convey a message to children and young people about their vulnerability and their ongoing dependency on adults that limit their participation (CREATE, 2000a).

In a study of professionals' views about the participation of children and young people in decision making, Shemmings (2000) identified two distinct and opposing attitudinal positions – Rescue (protection) and Rights (participation). In a child protection context, considering the diversity of children and young people and the range of decisions that impact on their lives, neither position if rigidly held is useful.

In considering participation and protection, a shift in emphasis is necessary that, 'requires working with children and young people rather than working for them, understanding that accepting responsibility for someone does not mean taking responsibility away from them' (Kirby et al, 2003b). Marchant and Kirby (in Neale, 2002) suggest, 'We need to create safe open forums for these issues to be resolved. Children's voices must be heard in these forums'.

Marchant and Kirby (in Neale, 2002) conclude, 'We suggest that the starting assumption should be that children will participate in making choices and taking action, and where they do not, this needs to be carefully considered and justified. There may be valid reasons to exclude young children, but these need to be considered explicitly, especially where decisions are being made about children in public care'.

Section three: Benefits of and barriers to participation

Benefits of participation

The United Kingdom's government guidance on listening to children and young people (CYPU, 2001) identified three broad areas of benefit from participation:

- Better services. It is accepted that the effectiveness of services depends on listening and responding to customers. Giving children and young people an active say in how policies and services are developed, provided, evaluated and improved should ensure that policies and services more genuinely meet their needs.
- Promoting citizenship and social inclusion. Promoting early engagement in public and community life is crucial to sustaining and building a healthy society.
- Personal and social education and development. Good participation opportunities produce more confident and resilient young people.

The findings of a research study (Kirby, 2003a) that explored the experiences of 29 statutory and voluntary agencies in seeking to listen to young people and to take action on what they said in a range of contexts identified the following benefits:

Practical benefits to services:

- Improved service development – services and practices changed and improved, and new services were introduced, which better meet the needs of service users.
- Improved client support – listening to children in personal decisions enabled services to better meet individual needs.
- Increased access and use of services – involving and listening to young people helped increase their access, use and positive experience of services.
- Increased participatory practice – services developed their knowledge, attitudes and skills to be able to involve children and young people more within services.

Citizenship and social inclusion:

- Children's rights – involving children helped fulfil their rights under Article 12 of the *United Nations Charter for the Rights of Children*.
- Empowerment – increased belief in their ability to create change and levels of control over elements of their lives.
- Citizenship and political education – increased children and young people's political and social knowledge, and awareness of rights.
- Responsibility – increased levels of responsibility.
- Relationships – improved relationships and the perception of young people amongst communities, professionals and peers.

Personal development:

- Increased confidence and self belief.
- Developing group skills.
- Promoting pro-social behaviour.

- Positive career choices – including those considered at risk.
- Future active involvement and greater responsibility.
- Gaining practical skills.

In relation to children and young people in care, Cashmore (2002) suggests that apart from legislative requirements, the reasons for involving them in decisions that affect their lives are more cogent than those for children and young people who are not in care. These reasons include:

- The number of adults, their relationship to their child, and the number and type of decisions being made are quite different for children and young people in care.
- The potential impact on self-esteem and confidence is particularly important for children and young people who have been abused or neglected as it may give them some sense of being active agents in relation to their own care rather than the powerless victims of the whims of adults.
- There is some evidence that when children and young people in care have some choice over their placement, those placements tend to be more stable.
- Participating in decision making with support and guidance is a vital part of the socialisation of children and young people to prepare them for future independence and autonomous decision making. This is particularly important in preparing young people to successfully transition from care.

Grover (2005) suggests that self-advocacy and advocacy on behalf of peers promotes resilience in children and young people who face tremendous adversity. Grover argues, 'It is time we organise child services... in such a way as to enhance the possibility for children and young people to demonstrate their competency for self-advocacy and advocacy for others'. This involves acknowledging and supporting their attempts and enabling the use of advocates.

Barriers to participation

The barriers to the participation of children and young people are well documented (Spall, Testro and Matchett, 1998, CREATE Foundation, 2000b, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Wright, 2006). The Having a say report (Spall, Testro and Matchett, 1998) identified barriers relating to attitudes, relationships and structures and processes.

Attitudes

For children and young people to participate in decision making their needs to be an acceptance of adults, and of children and young people themselves, of their involvement.

Relationships

Decision making is underpinned by the relationship between those about whom the decision is being made and those sharing responsibility for the decision. This is particularly important in out-of-home care where children and young people have experienced disruption and inconsistency in their relationships with significant adults in their lives.

Structures and processes

Adults saw the inadequacy of structures and processes as providing the greatest barriers to the participation of children and young people in decision making. In contrast children and young people identified attitudes and the absence of 'listening relationships as the reason for their lack of involvement'.

Other barriers identified include a lack of:

- understanding of what participation means
- consistency between policy, procedures and practice
- confidence, knowledge and skills amongst those working with children and young people to encourage and facilitate their participation
- time, resources and funds to support effective participation.

The issue of time has been repeatedly raised by the CREATE Foundation as a major barrier to the effective participation of children and young people in general, but particularly in relation to consultations around legislation and policy developments, seeking the views and experience of children and young people. Accessing and preparing children and young people for participation takes time.

Wright et al (2006) argue that, 'disadvantaged or 'vulnerable' children and young people often face barriers to participation for far less visible reasons than age and impairment' McNeish (1999 in Wright et al, 2006) identifies some of the factors that serve to magnify barriers to participation for these young people:

- Young people who have had difficult life experiences are less likely to have the confidence and self-esteem to participate.
- If their views have not been taken into account in the past, they are less likely to be motivated to participate in the present.
- If their experiences have included mistreatment by adults, they are less likely to trust the current intentions of adults trying to engage their participation.
- Negative assumptions and stereotypes that can be applied to young people generally may be even stronger for certain groups of young people.
- Young people are likely to be put off if they had previous problems communicating in groups.

As noted previously, the relationship between ensuring the protection of children and young people and enabling their participation in decisions and actions can be difficult for adults. This can be a major barrier to participation and opportunities should be provided for these issues to be explored.

Section four: Whole-of-systems approach

In response to organisation's and individual's struggle with translating a commitment to participation into practice, there is increasing emphasis on the need for a more holistic and systematic approach (Kirby et al, 2003, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2003b, Wright et al, 2006).

There is a need to move beyond specific events to a broad based, comprehensive approach if participation is to be embedded within an organisation or system. The Social Care Institute of Excellence (Wright et al, 2006), with Barnardos (UK), have proposed a whole-of-systems framework for developing the effective participation of children and young people in the design, delivery and review of services. The framework identifies four elements of a whole-of-systems approach:

- **Culture** – refers to the ethos of an organisation, shared by all staff and service users, which demonstrates a commitment to participation.
- **Structure** – refers to the planning, development and resourcing of participation evident in an organisation's infrastructure.
- **Practice** – refers to the ways of working, methods for involvement, skills and knowledge which enable children and young people to become involved.
- **Review** – refers to the monitoring and evaluation systems which enable an organisation to evidence change affected by children and young people's participation.

Key elements of participation

Consistent with a whole-of-systems approach, the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People (2003b) identified five key elements or principles of children and young people's effective participation in decision making.

Children and young people's participation is a part of an organisation's culture

Organisations that value the participation of children and young people develop a culture of participation in their every day work and in how they describe themselves. They develop ways to support day-to-day and long term participation in decision making, document it in their policies, make it part of staff duties and practice genuine, not tokenistic, participation.

Kids have a place in decision making

Participation is most effective when organisations and the kids they work with are clear about the decision making process. These organisations involve children and young people in how they work, decide together how they will participate, are open about the limits of participation and set aside funds and staff time to help participation happen.

Adults adapt to kids' ways of working

Organisations often try to fit children and young people into a decision making framework that suits adults, even though this generally won't meet the needs of kids. To really benefit from the contribution they can make, organisations need to create an environment in which children and young people feel comfortable in participating.

Strong relationships with kids

Children and young people see the world through their relationships with others. Therefore, adults who are able to build strong relationships with kids are more likely to be successful in encouraging their participation in an organisation's decision making processes. Organisations can help staff build these relationships by giving them time and opportunities to get to know the children and young people they work with. The quality of the relationship between a worker and a child or young person is one of the most significant factors affecting participation – the better the relationship the better the participation.

Participation rewards kids and organisations

If children and young people are to maintain their interest in participating in decision making, their experience should be enjoyable, challenging and fun. They must feel that their time and effort is valued and has had some real effect on the outcomes for them. The organisation should not only give kids a say but listen to what they say and give due weight to this in its decision making. Listening to kids can enhance the performance of the organisation and improve the service it provides to children and young people. The more practice that kids have in participating, the less staff time is required and the better the outcomes achieved.

Whilst these frameworks have been developed to assist organisations to engage children and young people to participate effectively in decisions that effect their lives at an individual or group level within an organisation, they can also be applied to the overall service system or sector, such as child protection. The use of a common framework across organisations and stakeholder groups would provide a shared language, encourage consistency and assist in monitoring the impact of actions taken.

Section five: Foundations for engaging and involving children and young people

Communication and building relationships are foundational to the effective engagement and involvement of children and young people in decision making as individuals and as groups.

Kirby et al (2003b) identify a number of building blocks necessary for organisations to develop positive relationships with children and young people.

Mutual trust and respect

The reciprocation of trust and respect is important in order to enable a relationship of mutuality in which the child or young person and adults can develop. Without this shared respect they are unlikely to engage openly with adults. This requires positive worker attitudes, showing a genuine interest in them, as well as being interesting. Part of being respectful is recognising children and young people's individuality and responding to them on this level. This means moving past stereotypes, putting aside judgments and values, and being guided by their expressed needs and interests.

Dialogue

Having conversations with children and young people enables them to play an active role in their relationships with adults. Both have something to offer and learn from each other; neither has all the answers. The best way for children and young people to communicate their needs and ideas and for adults to respond appropriately is through positive dialogue:

- listening to each other
- learning from each other
- attempting to understand others' perspective
- responding constructively to each other
- adults being open and up front about what they can offer.

Adults need to share something of themselves if they are to have meaningful relationships with children and young people. This includes their views, experiences and knowledge, and offering appropriate direction. Sharing information and asking questions can also help develop critical thinking skills.

Action and feedback

Integral to meaningful participation is listening to children and young people and ensuring their views and experiences influence change -where change is suggested. This happens too rarely. If we are not genuinely prepared to take on board what they say, their involvement will be tokenistic. If we are, then we need to plan from the start how we will respond and act on suggested changes and the boundaries to children's and young people's influence.

Feedback to children and young people is also essential. This cannot be an afterthought or something that happens long after a piece of work. Feedback has to be ongoing. They need to know how their views are taken into account in any decisions. Lack of feedback can breed resentment and an unwillingness to become involved in the future. Feedback can be given informally, individually and in groups, or more formally through presentations, meetings and in writing.

Reducing power imbalances

To develop more positive and equitable relationships with children and young people, adults need to address imbalances in power. This does not mean equal power in all situations but it means moving away from structures and practices which seek to control children and young people, to more flexible environments in which they feel safe and able to have a say. This can be done simply through everyday behaviour, by bringing down some of the barriers that symbolise power differentiation.

Adults can also support children and young people to increase their power in areas where traditionally they have little. They can act as brokers between younger and older people.

Support for children and young people

Informal support can be important for developing understanding and relationships between children and young people and adults. Formal support for groups may take place through meetings, workshops, and training. For individuals, it may include supervision, one-to-one meetings to discuss carer, adult mentors, advocacy and training.

Providing appropriate choices

Respecting children and young people's competency to make decisions, with support, is integral to participation. This means increasing opportunities to have a say, where previously they have not. They are often barred from making simple choices that adults take for granted. If rules exist that stop them from doing things, we need to think carefully about why these are in place and whose interests they serve.

Enabling children and young people to make decisions does not necessarily mean providing limitless choices. Instead it is about appropriate and genuine options, based on what is achievable and sometimes using adults' knowledge of children's and young people's abilities and preferences.

Kirby et al (2003b) also stress that not all children and young people will want to participate.

'Children and young people must have the option not to participate. This may be difficult in settings where attendance is often compulsory (for example, school and health services), but here participation can still be meaningful, rather than passive: keep them informed, ask opinions, provide choices and offer increased responsibility. If children (or young people) do not want to participate that is fine. Think carefully however about why they may not want to get involved and how the context could be changed in future to make it more appealing and appropriate.'

What children and young people want to participate in and how they want to participate may change over time.

A range of pointers or examples are provided to illustrate the points being made and questions are provided to assist individuals and organisations to consider their current practice in each of the areas.

In addition to building blocks for organisations to develop relationships with children and young people, Kirby et al (2003b) also highlights the importance of organisations developing wider relationships:

- between children and young people
- with parents and carers
- with the wider community.

Fostering wider relationships can:

- assist children and young people to take responsibility for each other and to actively participate in developing peer relationships and community wellbeing
- support parents and carers to let children engage in activities without their intervention
- engage the community and develop positive relationships between the community and children and young people.

Further, fostering wider relationships is particularly important in organisations where staff lack the knowledge and skills to engage and develop relationships with particular groups of children and young people such as small children, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and those who have a disability. Individuals, groups or organisations with specialist knowledge and skills can facilitate communication and the development of relationships, and can act as 'navigators' for both children and young people and organisations.

Section six: Children and young people's involvement in decision making about them as individuals

This section examines children and young people's involvement in decisions about them as individuals, and identifies approaches, models or tools developed to promote their involvement.

There is little literature on the participation of children and young people in individual decisions that affect their lives. What literature is available tends to focus on promoting the importance of their participation and, to a lesser extent, their views about participation. There is therefore, little available in the way of approaches, models or tools to support their participation in decisions about them as individuals. It is likely that there are pockets of good practice that have not made their way into the literature or have not been documented and made available to others. However, this is also likely to indicate that practice is patchy, inconsistent and not well supported.

Key aspects of children and young people's participation in decision making about them as individuals identified in the literature include:

- informal approaches
- participation in specific structures and processes such as case planning meetings and family group conferences
- approaches to case management and ongoing intervention that seek to promote their involvement
- the place of individual advocacy.

Finally, this section identifies approaches, models or tools that resource and support carers and staff to involve children and young people in decision making about them as individuals.

Informal approaches

The most common way in which children and young people are involved in individual decision making is through informal interactions between them and those involved in their day-to-day care and lives. Kirby et al (2003a) refers to this as 'being with them – that is, actively listening and observing child or youth-initiated communication, engaging in informal dialogue and jointly in activities ... to develop a greater understanding of children and young people's individual needs ...'.

The importance of informal interactions is highlighted by Spall et al (1998) who note that children and young people preferred informal processes and having relationships with trusted individuals as their primary means of participation.

Kirby et al (2003a) also refer to focussed dialogue about specific issues and communication systems and tools as activities to engage children and young people informally and formally. Communication systems and tools include formal systems used by children and young people with communication impairments to express their views and feelings, and to initiate communication.

Participation in structures and processes

Case planning

Case planning processes and meetings are the formal processes and structures used to identify the needs of children, young people and their families, establish goals, identify services required to meet the needs and achieve the goals, and to review progress over time. There may be different levels of planning undertaken by the statutory department and, where a child or young person is placed in out-of-home care, the agency responsible for providing that care.

Much of the literature about individual decision making focuses on the involvement of children and young people in case planning processes and structures (Spall et al, 1998, Sinclair, 1998, Thomas and O’Kane, 1999, CREATE Foundation, 2001, Sanders and Mace, 2006). Issues identified include a lack of clarity in the purpose, the formality of the process, the number of people attending, the time and location of meetings, the lack of preparation and support of children and young people, the lack of feedback to them and lack of action taken. Sanders and Mace (2006) sum up the issues raised in the literature, noting, ‘the inherent contradiction of trying to promote children’s direct participation in a process that is inherently not geared towards their direct involvement’.

In 2003, as part of a broader initiative to promote participation, *TAKING PARTicipation seriously*, the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People developed a resource, *Meeting Together – Deciding Together* (2003c) to assist organisations to enable the participation of children and young people in case planning decisions that affect their lives. It describes a participation model for meetings involving three stages:

- Stage 1: Before a meeting – preparing for participation
- Stage 2: At a meeting – supporting participation
- Stage 3: After a meeting and between meetings – building for future participation

The principle underpinning the model is, ‘In everything you do, pass on information and skills to children and young people to help them learn more about decision making and how they can be involved’ (NSW Commission for C&YP, 2003c).

Participation checklists are provided for each stage of the process. In addition a range of practical participation tools are provided that can be used by workers to encourage and support children and young people to participate in case planning or related forums. These tools include:

- An Information brochure for children and young people about participating in case planning: *‘Taking part in meetings about you’*.
- Pre-meeting and post-meeting ‘Give me a say’ cards that can be used to help prepare a child or young person for a case planning meeting or to debrief afterwards.
- ‘What’s important to me’ activity to discuss what is important to a child or young person before a meeting or to build a relationship.
- A non-identifying contact card to record worker contact details.
- An invitation template to invite a child or young person to a case planning meeting.
- An agenda template to create an agenda for a case planning meeting.
- A minutes template to create child friendly, easy to read minutes from a case planning meeting.

The NSW Commission's work was underpinned by a review of the literature and the active involvement of children and young people. In addition, the proposed participation model and tools reflect the views of children and young people in care about case planning meetings as detailed in a number of studies (Spall et al, 1998, Sinclair, 1998, Thomas and O'Kane, 1999, CREATE, 2001, Sanders and Mace, 2006). As noted by Thomas and O'Kane (1999), '...the next stage of progress – in promoting involvement in decision making – is likely to demand some radical rethinking of systems and processes. Sitting in a formal meeting is not the answer to participation for all children... there is a need to move away from a single meeting as constituting a review, and to think of a process that may incorporate a series of discussions between people'. Sanders and Mace (2006) call for the engagement of children and young people as the 'foremost advisers' on how to make child protection processes, and the broader system, more child friendly.

Family Group Conferencing

The use of Family Group Conferencing as a means of formally involving families in decision making about the protection and care of their children is growing in Australia and internationally. Whilst originating in New Zealand, it is now used in a range of forms across the world. The American Humane Association has developed a *National Center of Family* (<http://www.americanhumane.org/>), which is a useful source of information about developments and research in the United States and internationally. In Queensland, it is a legislative requirement that a Family Group Meeting be held within 30 days of the decision that a child is in need of protection, or within the timeframe set by a court on an adjournment.

Notwithstanding these developments, until more recently, there has been little examination of the participation of children and young people in such forums and how this can be promoted. Studies reported by Holland and O'Neill (2006) and Bell and Wilson (2006) indicate children and young people felt that they were able to participate in family group conferences and, in the latter study, felt empowered. In an earlier report, Holland et al (2003) reported briefly that, 'Factors that appear to help the child include being well prepared, usually with the help of an advocate or informal supporter, and having formal or informal support from an adult to speak in the meeting'. However, these are both small scale studies and they do not report in detail on the factors that impact on children and young people's participation and their perceptions of whether their participation influenced the outcome.

In a study of the Wiltshire Family Group Conferencing, Horan and Dalrymple (Undated) found that, when independent advocates were offered as an alternative to family supporters, 51 of 68 young people chose to have an independent advocate for their family group conference. Six decided that they didn't need any support and 11 chose a family or network advocate. Horan and Dalrymple argue that '...taking into account the family and professional power dynamics within Family Group Conferences, independent advocacy should be available as a right to the children and young people involved.'

Bell and O'Neill (2006) state that Family Group Conferences '...are not a panacea for all ills or necessarily the route to empowering practice for all children or all families. There are clearly some family groupings where discussion of some issues is either unhelpful or disturbing to some members, such as children – and where the social workers and/or the convenor need to exercise some control over who is present, what is discussed and how. Where there are contra-indications to children's presence, other means of ensuring that the child's views are included need to be found'.

Family Group Conferences are also used at other points in the child protection process. In a study of young people's views of family group conferencing who were deemed 'high needs' young people and placed in 'resource intensive placements', Dawson and Yancey (2006) reported that young people were positive about their involvement but that young people criticised the conference where the placement recommended at the conference was not realised. The two major recommendations were to '...give youth a developmentally appropriate sense of control about their role in the conference, and... (to) be mindful that disappointment may happen, and plan for it'. Further, they suggest 'In achieving this, it is necessary to have honest, respectful communication with youth to explain that there is no guarantee that an FGC will result in a placement with a family'.

Further research into the involvement of children and young people in family group conferences is required to inform and support practice.

Approaches to case management and ongoing intervention

There is limited documentation of approaches to ongoing case management and intervention and how they support engagement and participation of children and young people.

Assessment

The views of children and young people are not well represented in child protection assessments (Scott, 1998, Holland, 2002) and planning (Sanders and Mace, 2006).

The Department of Child Safety uses the Child Strengths and Needs Assessment Tool for the ongoing assessment of children and young people functioning across domains or areas of their lives. It is used to inform the development and review of a case plan in conjunction with other available information. The *Child Safety Practice Manual* emphasises the importance of involving the child and seeking their views in the assessment process including explaining the purpose of the assessment, informing them about the areas of assessment, informing them about other people who may contribute to the assessment, encourage them to ask questions and identify and address any fears that they may have. However, the procedures and practice guidelines do not appear to require the recording of whether the child or young person was involved, or their views. The tool itself does not note whether the child or young person was involved, nor is there a section that records the views of the child or young person. No commentary or evaluation could be found in the literature on the impact of SDM, or the assessment tool in particular, on the participation of children and young people. Nor is it clear how the assessment process and completion of the tool is integrated in practice and the documentation of that practice. Further work is required to assess the impact of SDM on the participation of children and young people and the recording of their views in child protection assessments and planning.

Looking After Children

Looking After Children (LAC) is a comprehensive approach to assessment, case planning and review designed to promote positive development outcomes among children and young people living in out-of-home care.

LAC was developed in the United Kingdom and is now used in a range of other countries including some parts of Australia (parts of New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, Western Australia and

Tasmania). The LAC Project in Australia is a joint initiative between Barnardos Australia, the University of New South Wales and the UK Department of Health (Barnardos, 2004).

Barnardos (2004) state that LAC:

- directs attention to the ordinary everyday goals of parenting
- assesses children's progress across a spectrum of developmental dimensions including health and education
- ensures that all essential information is recorded in one accessible plan and is regularly updated
- strengthens partnerships between children and young people, parents and teachers and helps others listen attentively to children and young people and reflect on their successes as well as their problems
- rationalises documentation and creates consistency across agencies
- facilitates improvements in the quality of care provided.

One of the principles underpinning LAC is the involvement of children and young people in the assessment, planning, action and review phases of the case management process. This principle is supported in instructions to involve children and young people in the process and record their views, and in the way the forms are constructed. However, it is unclear whether LAC, where implemented, has improved the participation of children and young people.

Two evaluations of LAC (Wise, 1999, Kufeldt et al, 2000) indicate that children and young people are generally positive about the use of LAC. Wise (1999) reported, 'some young people... reported that involvement in completing the records had a positive impact on their lives, however this concerned their relationships with care providers and the attention that was associated with completing the records. There was no indication among the children concerned that completing the records influenced their feelings of control over decisions that affect their lives'. Further, Wise (1999) stated that young people reported several benefits of the use of the records over care-plan and case-plan meetings.

Further work is required to assess the impact of LAC and other approaches to case management on the involvement of children and young people in decision making and its impact on decisions made.

Individual advocacy

Individual advocacy is an important strategy for promoting the participation of children and young people in decision making about their lives. Recognition of the need for individual advocacy (Spall et al, 1998; Dalrymple, 2003, 2005, DoH, 2002, Sanders and Mace, 2006) has arisen from acknowledgement that:

- children and young people are vulnerable
- when children and young people come into contact with the child protection system there are a range of interests that may compete and be in conflict including those of parents, other family members, carers, staff of non-government and government agencies involved in their protection and care
- some children and young people in child protection systems do not feel listened to or heard
- adult systems set up to make decisions about their lives have, in the past failed to provide opportunities for their participation
- some children and young people in child protection systems do not believe that they have someone that advocate on their behalf.

Arguably, even in a well functioning child focussed system for the protection and care of children and young people there would be some need for access to independent advocacy.

In Queensland, and more broadly Australia, there is little background in providing children and young people with access to individual advocacy within the child protection system. The *Department of Child Safety Practice Manual* refers to a child's right to have a support person or legal advocate present during different parts of the child protection process including interviews and meetings. However, there is no clear reference to the use of advocates to promote children and young people's involvement in decision making.

The recent expansion of the Community Visitor Program (Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian) in Queensland has increased capacity to monitor children and young people who have been placed in out-of-home care. Community Visitors visit children and young people in their out-of-home care placements. The stated role of Community Visitors (CCYPCG, 2005) includes:

- helping to resolve children and young people's concerns and grievances
- seeking information about, and helping children access support services provided by relevant agencies which are appropriate to their needs
- assessing the adequacy of information given to children about their rights
- assessing the physical and emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

However, whilst this description indicates that Community Visitors are able to assist and advocate for children and young people with issues arising from their care, it does not appear that they are able to take on an active and ongoing advocacy role and promote the participation of a child or young person in a decision making processes such as case planning.

Article 12 (2003a, 2003b) is a Queensland organisation providing individual independent advocacy to children and young people within the child protection system. Article 12 provides individual advocacy for children and young people at key decision making points in the child protection process. The processes include engagement of the child, preparation of the child, attendance at meetings, and follow up with the child. Article 12 has advocated for approximately 50 children and young people over the past three years. These children and young people have been referred to Article 12 by child safety service centres.

In the United Kingdom, the large numbers of children's advocacy organisations led to the development of *National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services* (DoH, 2002). The standards were specifically developed for, 'looked after children and young people and those in need including care leavers and disabled children'. The standards set the minimum level that children and young people can expect from people providing advocacy services. They provide a framework to plan, develop and review advocacy practice at all levels. Voice for the Child in Care developed a guide for explaining the standards to children and young people (VCC, undated).

In addition, *Advocacy 2000* (2002) details principles and standards for the operation of independent advocacy organisations and groups. The practice of an Independent Advocacy organisation is described, including details of the work that such organisations do in finding or providing support for individuals or groups. The practice of independent collective and self-advocacy groups is described and ways of supporting such groups is detailed. It provides indicators of minimum practice and that an organisation is working according to the principles.

Section seven: Children and young people's involvement in decision making about them as a group

This section examines children and young people's involvement in decisions about them as a group and identifies approaches, models or tools developed to promote their involvement.

There are a range of methods or strategies identified in the literature that can be used for different areas or that occur at different levels of the service system to engage children and young people in decisions that affect them as a group. Participation activities and initiatives often use more than one method or strategy and the same methods or strategies can be used at different levels of the service system.

The following table identifies the levels of the service system, the areas of decision making and the methods or strategies used to engage children and young people.

Levels of service system	Area of decision making	Methods or strategies
Service	Operation and management – staff selection and training, representation on boards, parallel structures, service review and evaluation	Consultations – activities, survey, focus groups, networks, website
Local/regional	Planning and development – identifying needs and strengths, identifying service responses, commissioning services	Specific purpose projects – co-facilitating workshops, co-delivery of training
Statewide/systems	Policy and legislation	Large scale events – forums
	Review and evaluation	Advisory or reference groups
	Research – subjects, co-researchers, peer led	Collaborative stakeholder groups
		Committee places

The National Youth Agency (NYA) (2005a) provides a useful description of a range of approaches and identifies the strengths and limitations of each approach. These are set out below. As noted by the NYA (2005a), 'The approaches all depend on the extent of ownership and relevance, their representative nature and the quality of partnership between the children and young people and adults concerned. They are not mutually exclusive; though one may be a building block for another... they all require careful thought, commitment and resources'.

Consultations

These are one-off or short term pieces of work that focus on a particular issue or proposal. Consultations can happen through meetings, e-mail or via the web.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted and focussed • Time limited • Cost effective • Immediate relevance • Results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusive or unrepresentative • Lack of follow up • Lack of ownership • No momentum • Seen as a quick fix

Practice initiatives

These are tasks, joint initiatives or partnerships to undertake an agreed piece of work.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct impact • Working with adults as equals • Payment, vocational relevance • Use of knowledge and skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patronised or dismissed by adults • Adults take over the results • Not rewarded properly • Opportunity to the few

Websites for children and young people

These provide computer based access to information about specific projects and plans, resources and funding, programs and organisations. They can also be used to pose questions and issues for debate and discussion, giving a means for direct, immediate feedback.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential numbers involved • Multi-purpose • Building on existing resources • Fun and engaging • Children and young people involved in web design • Used through different sources (home, school, agencies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs dedicated and skilled input • Specific and adequate budget • Extensive publicity to make it known • Exclusive • Needs commitment to use information and give feedback • Adults views gained unintentionally

Large scale events

These provide larger forums for greater numbers and a wider range of children and young people. They may be used to shape ideas, priorities and direction, or to elect representatives to be on smaller advisory or committee structures.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More inclusive • Shared identity and purpose • Fun and energy • Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and planning • Time and money • Raises the stakes, higher risk • Needs good follow up

Advisory or reference groups

These involve a group of children and young people who advise and inform those planning, delivering or reviewing a piece of work, or who manage a team or lead an organisation.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing development • Ownership • Representative • Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming and drawn out • Rubber stamp • Irregular meetings • No authority

Network of groups

These involve a network of strategically linked groups of children and young people meeting regularly with a support worker. Operating from their own territory and on their own terms, the children and young people are helped to give their views on policies and services to raise their own issues and these are taken forward by the support worker.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link and support hard-to-reach groups • Regular, consistent involvement • Safe, familiar environment • Ongoing for reviewing change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy on staff support time • No direct authority • Must keep short chain of communication

Parallel structures

These involve setting up a youth body to run alongside the adult-led decision making processes to provide advice, or act as a sounding board.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected membership and mandate • Confidence and authority • Influencing organisational policy • Reserved places on committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What real authority or power • Divisive • Poor range of representation • Fractures from adult organisation

Committee places

These involve the election or selection of children and young people to be part of committees. There may be specific places reserved for them.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct access to governance • Long term influence • Knowledge and expertise • Continuous input • Overcoming misunderstandings • Required change in attitudes, representing significant cultural shift for an organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not treated as equals • Tokenism • Used to represent views of all children and young people, rather than in own right • Demanding of skills and commitment • Pressure to be seen to be successful • Lose touch with peers • Significant resources, staff support

The remainder of this section provides examples of initiatives or resources for engaging and involving children and young people that have been identified in the literature. The examples are organised under the areas of decision making and illustrate the different strategies or methods used to engage children and young people.

Operations and management

Service review

The involvement of children and young people in service reviews and evaluations is critical to ensuring that services provided are accessible, are appropriate to their needs and improve their circumstances and lives.

The *Be. Heard* project is a CREATE initiative in Queensland funded by the Department of Child Safety that obtains feedback from children and young people aged five to 18 years about the quality of service provided by Child Safety Service Centres (CREATE, 2005a).

Children and young people are interviewed, either individually or in focus groups. Survey tools and methods of interviewing have been developed for different age groups and interviews are conducted by CREATE staff, project workers and Young Consultants. Areas covered include care background, participation in case planning, participation in education support planning, satisfaction with Department of Child Safety services and transition from care.

Detailed reports of what children and young people said are prepared and provided to the child safety service centre involved. Reports are also provided to children and young people who request them. A description of the consultation process used to engage and involve children and young people in the initiative and the broader methodology are included in the reports. The initiative includes discussion sessions with staff of service centres to discuss the findings and identify policy and practice implications.

It is understood that the reports are also used at the systems level within the department to review practice and performance.

Staff recruitment

The practice of involving children and young people in staff selection processes is increasing (Wright, 2006). Methods used to involve children and young people in the final selection process include:

- young people sitting alongside adults on the interview panel
- a parallel young persons' interview panel
- specific tasks where young people and candidates involved in particular activities such as role-play scenarios.

Kiraly (2001) explored the process of involving young people in staff selection through a series of small trials as opportunities presented themselves in various workplaces. Kiraly describes a process of five selection rounds, each of which in turn built on the former, and established some of the necessary preconditions to successful collaboration between staff and young people in the process of staff selection. Kiraly concluded 'The project bears out the British experience that the involvement of young people in staff selection is a positive process which adds unique additional information to the staff selection decision'.

Some of the success factors identified include:

- interest and commitment to put time and careful planning into the process
- use of a small group format appears to give young people confidence through peer support and, thus maximise their performance as interviewers
- well planned training of young people providing information about staff selection and due process
- establish the process in advance (in this project young people had input and the decision was made by senior program staff)
- advise young people of the decision and the reasons for the decision
- development of the interview schedule by young people (minimal assistance required)
- group discussion between young people and staff at the end of the interviews with a view to collective where possible (also provides information on how to improve the process).

Service planning and development

Service and local area planning and review

Super Participation Learning Action Team (SPLAT) is an initiative of the Mackay and Whitsunday area of the Department of Child Safety's Central Zone. SPLAT is a local initiative designed to promote the participation of children and young people, '(it) operates to connect children and young people in care, create opportunities for participation in and influencing government policy, seeks to find creative ways to allow the voices of young people to be heard in the community and empowers young people through training and personal development' (Daly et al, 2004).

The initiative grew out of a partnership between CREATE and the region to assist the region to establish connections with children and young people and to invite them to participate in reform of the service delivery system. Importantly, the initial steps involved the delivery of *Facilitating Participation* (a CREATE initiative featured earlier in this paper) and Young Consultant's Training (a CREATE strategy for training young people in care or ex-care as consultants). CREATE continued to support the region to establish a strong foundation (Daly et al, 2004).

SPLAT is comprised of children and young people in care and ex-care, direct carers, staff of non-government agencies, and staff of the Department of Child Safety and the Department of Communities.

Within the overall framework a number of initiatives have been developed to support and maintain the involvement of children and young people including training young consultants, developing a website to connect children and young people, and developing and distributing information about the rights of children and young people. Children and young people have contributed to a range of initiatives and projects including carer and staff training, issues based working parties, practice audits, service trial teams, workshops, policy consultations and research.

Commissioning services

The British Government (DfES, 2006) promotes the participation of children and young people - and other service users – in the planning and commissioning of services to meet their needs. It states, 'If children's trusts are to be effective then children and young people should enjoy active participation at an increasing number of points'. In Somerset (Dialog, 2005),

- services applying for funds were required to show how children and young people are involved in the design, monitoring, evaluating and delivering of services
- panels of children aged five to 13 were established to review funding submissions.

In terms of the children's scrutiny of the submissions, the report notes a fair number of submissions fell at this point as they were unable to communicate their ideas in a child-friendly manner.

At a more micro level, the Fostering Network and The Who Cares Trust, examined how young people in care are, or could be, involved in the commissioning process for foster care service provision. Young people aged 15 to 21 were consulted as part of this project. The findings (Fry and Robson, 2003) were:

- Only a few of the young people had been actively involved in the recruitment and training of individual foster families. The concept of involvement in the commissioning process was for them, both sophisticated and complicated.
- Young people felt that the actual commissioning process should be undertaken by adults, but that they should have the chance to be involved in informing what sort of services they felt young people needed from foster families.
- Young people felt that they were the best source of information for prospective foster carers in terms of their role and responsibilities.
- Young people indicated that foster carers played a central role in promoting good outcomes in health, education and preparation for adult life.
- Young people reported that they should be involved in the review of foster carers.
- Young people felt it was important to recruit foster carers from diverse backgrounds, in order to meet the needs of such a diverse care population.

Fay and Robson (2003) concluded, 'Overall, this consultation exercise provides a rich source of information, and illustrates the ability of young people to provide sophisticated insight into the foster fostering service that would be extremely valuable in the informing the commissioning process'.

Service development

Barnardos UK *Voice Initiative* (2002) was a two year pilot project undertaken in two of its regions. It involved the employment of young people who had experience of being cared for by a local authority, to encourage participation in Barnardo's and to build links and facilitate communication with the children and young people who use Barnardo's services.

The top ten findings were:

- The *Voice Initiative* gave employment experience and learning and development opportunities to seven care-experienced young people.
- The will and support to further develop participation was present at the top level in the pilot regions.
- Participation has been enhanced within the two pilot regions and the broader organisation.
- Employing care-experienced young people has added value to the organisation.
- Young people's reference groups have been established in both regions.
- The organisation has gained from the initiative at the strategic level through the development of job descriptions and induction protocols, mentoring contracts, information for young workers.
- Young people's panels are now contributing to the appointment of senior staff in both pilot regions and at head office.
- Voice workers have given support to projects and individual young people.
- Voice workers have provided positive role models of achievement and routes into work for current service users.
- The Voice team's input to training and regional induction has increased awareness of participation amongst new staff.

Service development – participation champions

The need to promote or champion participation is a major theme in the literature. The *National Evaluation of the Children's Fund* (2004) refers to the role of participation champions as instrumental in promoting participation. In some partnerships a partnership officer role was established.

Wright (2006) identifies a number of research studies that have found the successful implementation of participation plans is facilitated by the identification or appointment of a member of staff dedicated to the development of participation (Robson et al, 2003; Oldfield and Fowler, 2004). It was reported that dedicated positions were needed to drive and support participation. Wright (2006) suggests that these roles need to be grounded in a participative structure with young people supported to contribute to the terms of reference and, in the case of a designated member of staff, to the recruitment process.

In recognition of this trend, the UK Carnegie Institute undertook a survey of the training, support and development needs of Participation Workers (Kilgour, 2002). Participation Workers identified their training needs as:

- participation techniques and strategies
- evaluating young people's participation
- training led by young people
- children's rights and law
- group work with young people
- organising young people's events.

A number of the projects included in this review involved the use of dedicated workers. The Barnardos *Voice Initiative* involved the employment of young people previously in care.

Evaluation of services

The *Evaluation Cookbook*, developed by the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund (NECF, 2005) presents a range of participatory evaluation exercises for those working with children and young people.

'The Cookbook is divided into three main sections:

- Starters – These are short exercises which can be used to generate initial evaluation ideas and issues as well as setting a framework for actually evaluating individual sessions with participants.
- Main Courses – These are more substantial exercises. These aim to provide children and young people with opportunities to creatively explore the issues in their lives and generate evaluation information.
- Puddings – These are again shorter exercises to 'round off' and evaluate sessions with participants.

The final section adds a series of exercises suggesting creative ways for presenting data – both with participants and to a wider audience.'

Further, NFER (2005) states, 'We have not included suggestions on which age groups the exercises are most suitable for as all have been used with children, young people and adults'.

Involvement in inspections

Voices and choices is an innovative project developed by a consortium of statutory and voluntary agencies in the UK to involve care-experienced young people and the voluntary sector in the 'Listening and Responding' component of inspections of local authority children's services.

Two young inspectors aged between 18 and 25 and one voluntary agency representative formed a Listening and Responding team. The team met with children and young people and significant adults to discover how they were listened to and their views and opinions taken account of. Teams were involved in nineteen inspections of local authority children's services (Hibbert, 2002).

A summary report of a review the initiative (Hibbert, 2002) identifies the main messages:

- Involving care-experienced young people in... inspections gave added value in terms of both the quality and quantity of the information acquired. Having a distinctly labelled section of the inspection indicated to children and young people that the (Social Service Inspectorate – SSI) valued their views and opinions.
- Employing care-experienced young people as inspectors provided a valuable role model for other looked-after children and young people.
- The initiative gave young care leavers an opportunity to link to and network with others to share learning and develop peer support systems.
- The experience of the Listening and Responding teams was varied. Where the lead SS1 inspectors had experience or skills in participation and involvement, the environment was supportive and comfortable for young inspectors. There is a need to ensure that all lead inspectors have an understanding of and share common principles about participation and involving children and young people.
- A culture of equality, where young inspectors felt part of the process, enhanced the inspections. Where young inspectors felt unequal, for example, where they were given separate accommodation, the feeling of 'not being part of the team' led to a lack of confidence.

Further information about the methodology and training, preparation, fieldwork, practical arrangements and the overall model is provided in the summary report.

Policy and legislation development and review

Governance structures

The Queensland Office of Youth Affairs (2002) has produced a handbook to resource the effective involvement of young people on governance structures including boards, committees and advisory groups. The handbook addresses how to involve young people on boards and committees, the recruitment of young people, induction and skills development, and evaluation and review. Further information on involving young people in boards or management committees can be found in *South Australia's Youth Participation Handbook for Organisations* (Office for Youth, 2003).

The Western Australian Office for Children and Youth (the Office) established a Children's Advisory Group (CAG) 2004 (Vicary et al, 2005). The group is comprised of ten primary school children aged nine to 12 who are involved in all aspects of the Office's operation. Vicary et al (2005) states, '...the Office strongly advocates that the children have the opportunity and right to develop their own internal and external rules (for example, consensus, respect, confidentiality), develop their vision and mission statements, articulate their training requirements, express their preference for the types of activities the group becomes involved with, indicate the degree of support required by the group, invite people they would like to attend their meetings, and develop strategies to ensure that their concerns and ideas are received by the relevant authorities and acted upon'. An evaluation of the CAG was undertaken at the end of its first year. Reported outcomes included:

- CAG members felt that they had achieved and learnt a significant amount during their 12 months term.
- Parents and teachers overwhelmingly reported changes to the CAG members in terms of maturity, confidence, skill acquisition, self esteem, and community and social awareness.
- Participants' evaluation responses were also favourable in relation to the transparency, representativeness, independence, cost effectiveness and timeliness of the CAG program.
- The CAG strongly influenced the Office's practices in children's participation, directly informing the adults' facilitation styles and methods used in meetings and consultations.
- The CAG advice was instrumental in the development and dissemination of state-wide policy.

In concluding, Vicary et al (2005) recommend, '...that organisations wishing to pursue the establishment of their own Children's Advisory Group should carefully consider whether their organisational culture can support this level of participation, and whether a sufficient amount of staff time can be committed to facilitating the process and building ongoing relationships with the children involved'.

The article includes some detail on CAG participant selection, staff selection, developing and maintaining a CAG and child friendly minutes.

Legislation review

The Western Australian Department of Community Development (DCD) commissioned CREATE Foundation (2002) to examine young people's experiences of coming into care, being in care and leaving care. The outcomes were to inform the development of new legislation for the protection and care of children and young people. A total of 27 young people aged 11 to 19 participated in the consultation. Of the 27 young people, 18 were females and nine were males. Key features of the methodology included:

- Linking with DCD and three non-government agencies (two were Indigenous agencies) to access the young people.
- An Indigenous facilitator was sourced and co-facilitated alongside CREATE facilitators.
- Focus groups were the main method used to consult. Two young people who could not attend a focus group were interviewed via phone.

Policy development

The 'Ask Us' consultation led by the Children's Society (UK) used a multi-media approach to involve over 200 children and young people with a disability, aged between four and 24 years in identifying their wishes and feelings, and influencing policy development (Stone, 2001). Six projects were involved using a mix of processes including:

- young people as researchers working on specific topics
- young people asking other young people for their views
- creative workshops with drama, animation, art and music
- song writing and using recording studios
- puppetry
- video diaries
- discussions led by young people
- leisure activities and visits.

Audio tapes, videos and digital cameras were used to record the young people's work before transferring it onto a CD-ROM.

As part of the development of the *ACT Children's Plan*, a project for consulting with children from birth to eight years was established (MacNaughton, 2004). Sixteen children's services and a total of 137 children participated in the project. Significant features of the project were:

- An action learning project facilitated by the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood (CEIEC) that was designed to build the capacity of early childhood staff to consult with children birth to eight on the ACT Children's Plan.
- The multi-media strategies used to invite children to express their ideas and feelings in response to key questions.

The action learning project's methodology and content focussed on:

- 'ethical engagement with children, including gaining informed consent from parents and children
- best practices principles for listening to children, including the place of observation and photographic documentation for non-verbal children
- using different cues to hear the voices of children of different ages and verbal abilities
- using multi method techniques appropriate to the verbal capacities of the children to help them express their views and ideas through text and images
- documenting children's voices as a basis for data collection'

The ideas and feelings expressed by the children were recorded through '...paintings, drawings, a CDROM, poems, audio-tapes and text'. Adults also gathered data from children through field notes of discussions with and observations of children, photographs and audio-recordings'.

Systemic reform

A significant example of involving children and young people in developing proposals for the reform of the care system is the *Blueprint Project*, set up by Voice for the Child in Care (VCC) with support from National Children's Bureau (NCB). The project and its outcomes are documented in a number of reports including:

- *Start with the child, Stay with the child: A Blueprint for a Child-centred Approach to Children and Young People in Public Care* (VCC, 2005)
- *Young people... as partners in the Blueprint project. What did we do?* (VCC, 2004)

The project tried to model how they thought participation would happen in a child-centred care system VCC (2004, 2005): 'First discussions with young people † come up with suggestions for making things better † share those discussions and ideas with other young people † young people and adults work together on the ideas † back to young people to see if the ideas will work † young people and adults together taking the ideas and solutions out into the world'.

VCC (2004, 2005) describe the development and implementation of a major participation project to find out the views of children and young people about what child-centred care would look like:

- young people's days were held across the country using drama and other exercises (including events for children aged six to 10)
- over 20 young people were trained as Blueprint reporters and interviewed other young people in their area
- a separate group of staff and young people from 'black and minority ethnic backgrounds' met regularly and organised two day events for young people to look at the particular concerns of this group
- the views of children and young people in special settings (secure units and therapeutic communities) were sought
- young people with disabilities contributed their ideas at special events and meetings were held with asylum seekers and with gay and lesbian young people
- a residential conference involving 30 young people and 40 adults from national and local agencies was held to work together as a team and develop their ideas.

Young people and adults publicly launched the outcomes of the project at the House of Lords (UK Parliament).

The report on the engagement and involvement of young people provides an account of what worked and what was difficult (VCC, 2004).

Face to Face

Face to Face (F2F) is an Australian example of the engagement of children and young people in systemic reform, in partnership with others. Convened by CREATE Foundation, F2F is a national partnership forum of consumers, governments, carers and service providers, involved in the out-of-home care sector. It was initiated in 1997 as a way for the child and family welfare sector of Australia to work together, explore the best way of doing things and to identify strategies to improve outcomes for children and young people in care.

The CREATE Foundation's report on the outcomes of F2F 4 (2005) states that 'Face to Face is not a conference, but a dynamic, working forum which facilitates a process of engagement, exchange and learning in a collaborative environment. It gives participants a real experience of working together to

achieve a result.' The focus of F2F 4 was supporting positive leaving care and transition experiences. Almost 200 participants including 32 children and young people from across Australia attended the forum in Brisbane, 2005. Other stakeholders included government and non-government workers, carers and researchers.

In 2003, the Tasmanian Face to Face Committee produced *'I'm not a jigsaw puzzle'* documenting the stories of 11 young people and their experiences of being in care. A short film on the project was also developed by CREATE Foundation. The report and short film were later launched at the 2004 ACWA conference in New South Wales by the young people involved.

Section eight: Supporting and resourcing carers and staff to engage and involve children and young people

Children, young people, carers and staff need to be resourced and supported to enable their (children and young people's) involvement in decision making both at an individual and group level. However, there are very few materials developed for this purpose in general and even less that is applied to child protection.

Competencies required

Based on the views of young people and practitioners, Wright and Haydon (2002 in Wright et al, 2006) identified the following competencies that may be required by adults and children and young people to ensure effective participation. These competencies are relevant to children and young people's participation at both an individual and group level.

Competencies required by adults	Competencies required by children and young people
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What participation means and why is it important • Potential impact of participation on children and young people and the organisation • Opportunity to explore attitudes towards participation and working in partnership with children and young people • Knowledge about different methods that can be used to involve children and young people • Communication techniques that enable the involvement of all children and young people • Responsiveness • Sensitivity to and awareness of the individual needs of children and young people • Opportunity to develop imaginative and creative techniques • Knowledge about how to work with children and young people safely and establish appropriate boundaries for their involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What participation means and why is it important • Potential impact of participation on children and young people and the organisation • Opportunity to explore attitudes towards participation and working in partnership with adults • Knowledge about different methods that can be used to involve children and young people • Opportunity to explore how they would like to be able to participate and what they would like to see changed • Team building activities that enable the development of such skills as listening, being responsive to others, taking responsibility for specific roles, debating, communicating • Opportunity to develop confidence in expressing their own views • Skills in presenting own views and views of other children and young people • Skills and experience in relation to specific participation activities

Participation: creating opportunities for children and young people to contribute to decision making is part of a continuing education resource for foster carers developed by the Association of Child Welfare Agencies (ACWA) in NSW. *Real Kids Real Carers* is comprised of six educational booklets on topics of importance to foster carers. The participation session seeks to assist foster carers to:

- understand the concept of participation
- explain the importance of participation for children and young people
- describe strategies to promote the participation of children and young people in out- of-home care.

Facilitating participation

Facilitating Participation: Learning Through Action is a participatory training program developed to enhance the participation of children and young people in the out-of-home care sector (CREATE, 2002). CREATE (2002) states, 'The program aims to assist adults involved in direct service provision to develop an understanding of, and the skills needed to effectively facilitate, the participation of children and young people in the decisions that affect ...their lives'. The program is:

- action learning based
- geared to the range of stakeholders involved in caring for and working with children and young people in care
- run for three days and delivered over a four week period with two work place projects completed over this time.

Feedback from participants indicates that the immediate benefits as intended by the program are achieved (CREATE, 2000). The intended immediate benefits are:

- awareness, skills and information that participants believe will help them create a better quality of life for themselves and children and young people in care.
- significant relationship development with other people in the care community that participants feel will continue to play a positive role in their lives and work.
- the opportunity to participate with others in creating solutions in areas that impact on their lives and on the lives of other children and young people.

Two Way Street is a training video on communication for professionals who encounter children and young people who do not use speech or language through their work (Stone, 2001). Triangle (a UK Disability service) and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to children produced the video with a consultative group of nine disabled young people. 'The video shows children and young people (aged three to 19 years old) communicating in different ways, such as through behaviour, sign, symbols, body language, eye pointing, facial expression, gesture, play, use of art, objects of reference, speech, vocalisation and physical movement.' The young people were involved, '...in the initial development of ideas; in deciding how to approach other children to take part, and in preparation work in the different settings in which filming took place. Most members of the consultative group chose to take part in the video, in editing, designing and launching the pack'. In addition, 'One of the two project workers was a disabled young woman who represented the consultative group, and brought to the video her knowledge of disability rights, media, and direct experience of many of the issues the video aimed to address'.

Planning for participation

The New Zealand Ministry of Social Development (undated) has developed a tool kit on participation *Planning for Participation – A Guide for Care and Protection Providers*. The toolkit for child protection service providers is about how to incorporate the views of children, young people and their families in decision making about policies and programs within care and protection services. It sets out the steps of a planning process and includes a range of supporting materials and templates.

Other resources and tool kits that that could be further explored are listed in Appendix One.

Section nine: Evaluating participation

There is a widespread belief that whilst a commitment to the participation of children and young people in individual and public decisions is now evidenced in policy, insufficient attention is being given to the nature of children's and young people's participation in practice and what impact it is having on them and organisations (Cashmore, 2002, Kirby and Bryson, 2002, Cutler, 2003, Kirby et al, 2003, Cavet and Sloper, 2004). More attention is required to assessing performance and central to this is asking children and young people whether they are satisfied with their participation and what impact it has had on them. As Wade (2001, in Wright et al, 2006) suggests, 'The participation of children and young people in the issues that affect them is only as good as the changes to their benefit which result'.

In Queensland, both the previously mentioned Be.Heard project (CREATE, 2006) and the Commission for Children and Young People and the Child Guardian's survey (CCYPCG, 2006) explore the views of children and young people in care about their participation in a range of individual contexts. The CCYPCG report indicates that whilst most Queensland children and young people in care who were surveyed felt listened to, most of them also felt that they did not have much of a say or did not have a say at all about what happens to them, whilst many felt that decisions were not explained to them.

In terms of planning and review, only 28.9 per cent of young people surveyed indicated that they had an Education Support Plan, only 23.6 per cent indicated that they had a Case Plan, and only 17.9 per cent indicated that they had a Leaving Care Plan. A higher proportion of children and young people in care who participated in the Be.Heard project (from five Child Safety Service Centres) reporting that they had a case plan than that reported in the CCYPCG report. However, the proportion of those who reported having a case plan was still low, with the highest being 60 percent and the lowest being 24 per cent. Higher proportions of children and young people reported having an Education Support Plan, with the highest being 68 per cent and the lowest being 28 per cent (CREATE, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). It should also be noted that the sample sizes and their representativeness varied considerably across the five sites.

At a national level, CREATE Report Cards on Health (2006d) and Education (2004) also explore the views of children and young people in care about their participation in individual case planning and review as that relates to their health and education. In these studies, the proportion of children and young people reporting that they had a case plan and/or an education plan was also low.

In terms of children and young people's participation in public decision making, Kirby and Bryson (2002) found that they are still having little impact. Further, Kirby et al (2003) found that few organisations could provide formal evidence of the relationship between participation and the assumed benefits of participation (although they could demonstrate this anecdotally).

The effective evaluation of participation requires that clear outcomes be defined for the initiative or project. 'The process of developing outcomes should include what an organisation hopes to see change for its service, its service users (that is, children and young people) and wider key stakeholders (for example, the local community) (Wright et al, 2006).' Further, Wright et al (2006) highlight the importance of involving children and young people in the review process, 'Young people's involvement in the

process of reviewing participation is important in ascertaining what has changed from their point of view and informing them about change that has been effected. By involving them in the review process, an organisation is able to demonstrate the importance of participation in all elements of its service development and delivery'.

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People developed Participation – Checking the Scoreboard (2003d) to assist groups and organisations involved with children and young people to review how effectively children and young people are being included in their work, activities and decision making processes.

It is intended to:

- obtain feedback from staff and children and young people about how well existing initiatives are working
- identify opportunities for improving participation
- raise awareness of participation and assisting staff make their work more relevant to children and young people.

It involves:

- checking how children and young people are involved now
- reflecting on what is working or where participation activities could be improved or expanded
- acting to introduce new ideas or bring about change if needed.

It includes a facilitators' guide and suggested questions for younger children, older children and young people and staff.

This resource was designed by a number of organisations and specialists in the field of children and young people's participation. Also, it was independently evaluated and piloted by children and young people before its release.

The exercises presented in the *Evaluation Cookbook* (NECF, 2005), referred to previously in this section, and are also useful for evaluating participation.

What's Changed is a tool developed by the National Youth Agency (2005a) to assist organisations to consider what has changed as a result of children and young people's participation. The tool involves collecting and documenting evidence of listening, planning and change. Evidence is collected from the organisation or project (adult), the children and young people who participated in the process, and others who may be able to comment on what changes has occurred as a result of participation.

Standards

The establishment and monitoring of standards is a primary means of evaluating performance. Cutler (2003) examines the contribution that organisational standards can make to young people's participation in public decision making. He concludes that, '...standards are an important tool in ensuring that organisations focus resources and use effective practice to involve young people'.

Queensland has developed minimum service standards for child protection services (Department of Child Safety, 2005), which include matters relevant to the participation of children and young people. In terms of the non-government sector, the service standards are part of a broader quality assurance framework and will be the basis for licensing out-of-home care services (under the *Child Protection Act 1999*). This development means that the performance of non-government services will be assessed in relation to how they engage children and young people in decision making about their lives and in improving service delivery.

For organisations interested in further developing their participation policy and practice frameworks, *Hear by Right* (Badham and Wade, 2005) is a comprehensive set of standards for the active involvement of children and young people. 'The Hear by Right standards framework is designed to help secure sustained and beneficial participation of children and young people and to encourage continual improvement in an organisation's or partnership's activities'. There are seven standards: shared values, strategies, structures, systems, staff, skills and knowledge, and style of leadership. *Shared values* are at the core of the framework. The standards require self-assessment at three levels of performance, described as emerging, established and advanced. For each of the seven standards there is a commentary about the standard, questions to ask, sources of evidence and indicators for each level of performance. There are seven indicators for each of the seven standards, with each level of performance building on the previous one.

The *Mapping and Planning* (NYA, 2005c) tool is also available to assist an organisation map current performance against the standards and to develop an active involvement strategy based on clear evidence, self-assessment and agreed priorities.

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Appendix one: Websites and toolkits

Websites

NSW Commission for Children and Young People

Taking participation seriously – a range of resources to promote and support the participation of children and young people.

<http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/>

Carnegie Trust – Young People Initiative – UK

Aims to increase the influence that children and young people have over decisions that affect them.

<http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/cypi/home>

Children’s and Young People’s Participation Network – UK

The Children’s and Young People’s Participation Learning Network seeks to stimulate thinking, policy and practice concerning the participation of children and young people.

<http://www.uwe.ac.uk/solar/ChildParticipationNetwork/Home.htm>

Every Child Matters – UK

UK Government website – Every Child Matters – promoting the well being of children.

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/>

National Youth Agency – Hear By Right - UK

Hear by Right offers standards for participation and related resource materials for statutory and voluntary organisations.

<http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright/>

Participation Works – UK

An online gateway to improve the way practitioners, organisations, policy maker and young people access and share information about involving children and young people in decision making.

<http://www.participationworks.org.uk>

Children’s Research Centre

Seeks to empower children and young people to become researchers.

<http://childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk/>

1 Stop – Youth Participation Shop – Canada

Range of resources supporting young participation strategy.

<http://www.mcs.bc.ca/yps/home.htm>

Tool kits

NSW Commission for Children and Young People

Meeting Together – Deciding Together: resources for involving children and young people in case planning (2003). Available for download.

<http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/>

Ministry of Social Development – NZ

Planning for Participation (Undated). – A toolkit for incorporating the views of children, young people and families into the development of care and protection services. Available for download.

<http://www.msd.govt.nz/work-areas/children-and-young-people/providers-toolkit/index.html>

Involving Children: A guide to engaging children in decision making (policy and service development) (2003). Available for download.

<http://www.msd.govt.nz/publications/children-and-young-people.html>

Keepin' it real (2003): A resource for involving young people. Available for download.

<http://www.myd.govt.nz/uploads/docs/0.7.6.3%20keepinitreal.pdf>

Aotearoa Youth Voices Toolkit (undated) – a series of action guides to help young people get their voices heard. Available for download.

<http://www.myd.govt.nz/Publications/youthvoices/aotearoayouthvoicestoolkit/aotearoayouthvoicestoolkit.aspx>

Barnardos – UK

Say it your own way: children's participation in assessment – a printed guide and CD ROM of practical resources to give children a voice in assessment processes (2006). Must be purchased.

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/resources/research_and_publications/research_and_publications_participation.htm

Taking Part ToolKit: Promoting the real participation of children and young people – a range of reports, resources and tools (2002). Must be purchased.

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/taking_part_toolkit_-_promoting_the_real_participation_of_children_and_young_people_-_summary.pdf

Children's Rights Alliance for England

Ready Steady Change (2005) – a comprehensive set of training and tools to increase children's and young people's participation in decision-making. Consists of two training handbooks one to increase the skills knowledge and confidence of children and young people (aged 17 and under) and the other to increase the skills knowledge and confidence of those working with children and young people. Must be purchased.

<http://www.crae.org.uk/>

National Youth Council of Ireland

Hearing Young Voices (2003) – guidelines for consulting with children and young people in relation to developing public policy and services. Available for download.

<http://www.nyci.ie/index.php>

Save the Children

So you want to consult children (2003) – how to get started, organize a consultation and provide feedback. Available for download.

http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/about_us/partic.html

Children's Rights Officers and Advocates

Total respect 2 (Children's Rights Officers and Advocates/Department of Health, 2000) a training resource for introducing listening, hearing and participation into an organisation. It is designed to be delivered by young people and adults to a mix of front-line workers and managers. A train the trainer resource is also available that prepares young people and adults for co-training. Must be purchased.

Training Young People for Active Participation (Children's Rights Officers and Advocates), a training resource designed to give young people the confidence and skills to be active co-workers in service development and delivery. Must be purchased.

<http://www.croa.org.uk/publications>

Researched and prepared by Paul Testro

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