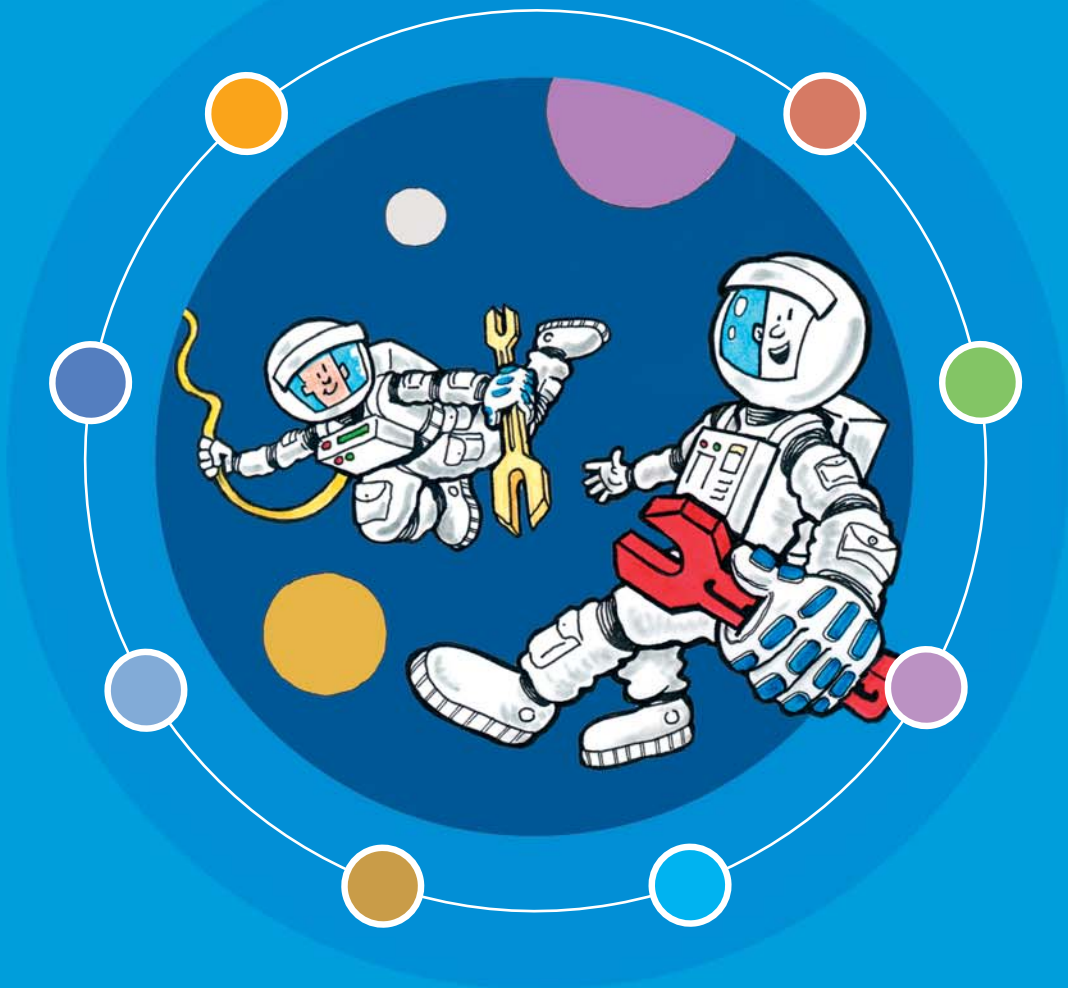


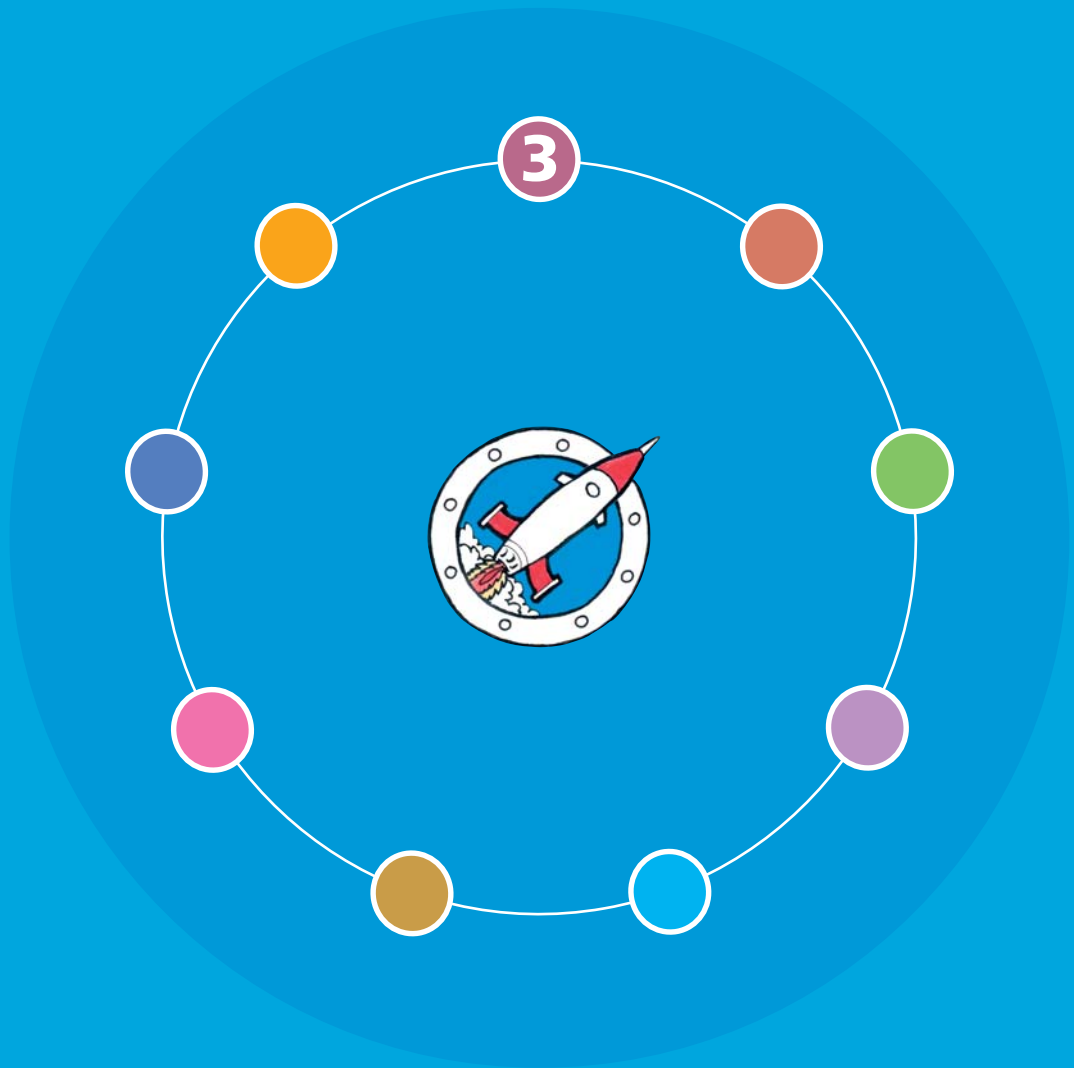


**GUIDES TO INCREASING PARTICIPATION  
OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**3**

**PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES**





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## ? What will this guide tell me?

This guide describes how to plan, devise, write and implement a participation strategy, where the aim is to increase the participation of children and young people in policy and decision-making. The guide looks at what a strategy is and outlines some of the developments taking place at a strategic level through the Participation Consortium at the national level in Wales. It then outlines the stages to devising a strategy and includes some examples from organisations in Wales.

## ? What is a strategy?

A strategy is an overarching document indicating what you aim to achieve and the steps needed to get there. It gives *vision and direction* (Mintzberg 1994).

Before devising a strategy you need to think about your aims and objectives. It is also important to be clear about the values underlying your organisation so that the actions coming from the strategy fit with these values.

To implement a strategy, you sometimes need more detailed policy guidance. You will also need to develop an action plan.

## ? Why write a strategy?

To achieve change of behaviour within an organisation it is important to have a clear idea of what change is needed and to have the support of those that have power. Devising, agreeing and implementing a strategy is a good way to do this.

In a strategy, you can summarise the evidence on which it is based; for example, providing the sources of research or other evidence to show that the direction proposed is the most effective one. This is necessary for you to get support for the strategy from all the people ('stakeholders') that need to agree to it (for example, managers who will officially 'sign it off') and those who will have to implement it (for example, managers, front line practitioners and other staff). A strategy can also explain concepts and draw on models that can help develop and improve local practice.



## ? Who should be involved?

All the key players within the organisation need to be consulted and involved, but at different times and to different degrees depending on their role.

For example, senior managers may need to be involved briefly in setting the direction and then to be updated on progress and then to sign off the draft. Budget holders may need to be involved to ensure their support in changing the culture of participation.

Children and young people should be involved in the process from the early stages; for example, by providing feedback on an outline of the vision and direction. A completed Participation Strategy can be shared with children and young people, partner organisations and other stakeholders to help to explain what you are doing to improve participation.

## ? What is the Children and Young People's Participation Consortium for Wales doing strategically at the national level?

The Participation Consortium, the Participation Unit and the Welsh Assembly Government Participation Project are working together strategically on building the capacity for children and young people's participation in Wales. There are several strategic elements to this work including:

- A common understanding of children and young people's participation is being developed through core principles and National Participation Standards. These standards have been endorsed by Funky Dragon at their 2005 AGM and adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government in November 2006 (See **Guide 8: Monitoring, Evaluation and Audit**). A sound-bite for children and young people's participation has been developed which is easily understood by all (See **Box 1**).

### Box 1: Sound-bite developed by young person in Wales

*Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing an action that might affect me.*

*Having a voice, having a choice.*

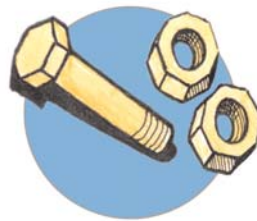


- The WAG Participation Project is taking action to establish children and young people's participation across all functions of government (See **Guide 1: Introduction to Participation**).
- The Participation Consortium has commissioned the mapping of participation training to be able to support training requests and capacity building through training delivery in participation across Wales. Consortium members are now working together on a joint Train the Trainers course on children and young people's participation.

The Participation Unit is developing a participation *impact assessment tool* to help organisations evaluate the impact of participation on their organisations, communities and on children and young people themselves (See **Guide 8: Monitoring, Evaluation and Audit**).

These elements can be drawn upon by organisations building their local strategies. They are tools that are being developed at a national level, but with application across Wales. Local strategies can draw upon this national work to support local developments.

## Nuts & Bolts: Devising a strategy



To devise a participation strategy you may choose to follow these stages:

### Stage 1: Participation – Definitions

See **Guide 1: Introduction to Participation** for national definitions, core principles and **Guide 2: Making the Case** for background sources. It is important to have a working definition of participation that you are asking people to sign up to and to be able to clearly describe the goal towards which your strategy is working.

### Stage 2: Mapping Participation

Mapping where your current participatory practice stands against a standard or baseline allows you to plan strategically. Mapping can be done at a number of different levels and using a range of methods; for example, through questionnaires, interviews, group work, workshops or visits. You need to find out the views of different people or 'stakeholders', for example children and young people and practitioners. You also need the views of the management team and others within the organisation, as well as external partners (See **Case Example 1**).



### Case Example 1: Mapping Participation

The Participation Consortium conducted a Wales-wide mapping participation exercise in 2004/05, sending out questionnaires to Assembly Divisions, Children and Young People's Partnership Frameworks, County Voluntary Councils, National Children and Young People's Organisations and Youth Forums. Some filled in the questionnaires independently and others were provided with one-to-one telephone interviews to assist the process. The content of the questionnaires was then adapted to an activity-based workshop format and delivered in half-day sessions to groups of children and young people across Wales to map their perspectives. Both adult and young people mapping exercises have been written up in report form to guide the work of the Consortium. (See Participation Consortium, Save the Children and Welsh Assembly Government 2006).

### Stage 3: Models and Levels of Participation

There are several models of participation that can be helpful to look at. For example, Hart's ladder (1992) or Treseder's circular model (1997) (See **Guide 1: Introduction to Participation**). These models can help you to describe and assess where you are and where you want to go. Look at different participation models and consider which is more appropriate for your organisation and consider why that is. It is important to recognise the diversity of participation practice across Wales and to acknowledge that different organisations are at different stages and will have different aims and objectives. Each will need a strategy to suit their current circumstances.

The Participation Consortium, the Participation Unit and the Welsh Assembly Government Participation Project have developed National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation for Wales. These have been developed in conjunction with children and young people to provide a benchmark against which to measure progress (See **Box 2 and Standards Document**). These National Standards were voted in by Funky Dragon, the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales, at their 2005 AGM and adopted and launched by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2006/2007.



### Box 2: National Children and Young People's Participation Standards

The Participation Consortium has developed seven National Standards for children and young people's participation in Wales.

- Information
- It's your choice
- No discrimination
- Respect
- You get something out of it
- Feedback.
- Improving how we work

Having a Voice – Having a Choice, Participation Consortium, 2005.

There are also a number of other quality assurance systems for participation being developed and implemented locally in Wales (See **Case Example 2**).



### Case Example 2: Quality Assurance Schemes

A number of quality assurance mechanisms for participation have been developed and are being used locally in Wales. Tros Gynnal in Merthyr has developed a scheme based on a set of 'promises' linked to meeting participation standards. In Neath Port Talbot, there is a Young Inspectors project where questionnaires are sent to service providers on participation and children and young people are consulted on their experiences of participation in these services. 'Clywed', which means 'hear' in Welsh, works across Gwynedd and has a core group of young people aged 15-21 who have been trained to interview and assess agencies on how children and young people friendly they are. (Kath O' Kane, 2006)



## National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation Document

### Having a Voice – Having a Choice

### Do we meet your standards?\*

\*'We' means anyone asking children and young people to participate. 'You' have a right to expect these standards.  
"Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice"



#### INFORMATION



**This means:**

- Information that is easy to understand for everyone
- Adults working with you who know what is going on and are up front and clear.

**We will:**

- Ensure everyone has enough information to get properly involved
- Let you know what difference you being involved will make
- Inform you about who is going to listen and make changes.

#### IT'S YOUR CHOICE

**This means:**

- You choose if you want to get involved or not
- You choose to work on things that are important to you
- You choose what you do and how you do it.

**We will:**

- Give you enough information and time to decide if this is something you want to do.



#### NO DISCRIMINATION



**This means:**

- Children and young people are all different but you all have the same right to have a say about the things that matter to you.
- We want everyone to feel welcome and be able to get involved if they want to be.

**We will:**

- challenge any discrimination
- get in touch with children and young people in lots of different situations
- get you involved in things you want to do.

#### RESPECT

**This means:**

- Everyone has a chance to have a say, your opinions are important and we will respect them.

**We will:**

- listen to your ideas, views and experiences
- take you seriously and treat you fairly
- work with you to do something about the things you tell us are important
- work with you to help change things for the better.



#### YOU GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT



**This means:**

- We want you to enjoy and benefit from taking part
- We know that you have other things to do in your lives as well!
- Making sure that participating is a positive not a negative experience.

**We will:**

- work in safe, fun, and enjoyable ways
- make the most of what you know
- do positive things that build your confidence
- meet in friendly places that are easy for all young people to use
- value and respect what you have to offer.

#### FEEDBACK

**This means:**

- It's really important that you know what difference you have made and how your ideas have been used.

**We will:**

- keep you up to date with what is happening
- give feedback as soon as possible and in ways that are easy to understand for everyone.



#### IMPROVING HOW WE WORK



**This means:**

- We want to learn and get better at the way we work with you.

**We will:**

- look at the way we work with you and how to improve it

- ask you what has gone well and what needs to change
- make sure your views make a difference to the way we make plans and decisions.



These are the agreed children and young people's participation standards for Wales





## Stage 4: Where do you want to be? Aims and Goals

Look at where you want to be in terms of different time frames; set short, medium and long-term aims. What can you reasonably do within a year? What may take two years or longer? What specific goals do you want to achieve?

What are the key objectives for your organisation to implement participation and to move forward? There are a number of activities that can be used to establish *why* you want to change, what needs to change and to consider *how* you are going to do this. One example of an activity you could use is a S.W.O.T (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis. You could look at this, as a group to assess what your current strengths are in implementing participation, current weaknesses, what opportunities there are to help you move forward and what threats there may be to hinder your progress. The key is to break the main aim down into a series of smaller realistic objectives – what are the ‘critical points’ for change to happen?

See Case Example 3

Save the Children has developed a *Spider Tool* for working with children or young people led organisations and groups enabling them to self-assess and action plan for the future. The Spider Tool is made up of fifteen ‘spokes’ which are the ‘key quality elements’ (KQEs) the children and young people use to evaluate their organisation or group. KQEs include how much the children and young people feel they participate in different elements of the organisation. Views are marked as points on the spokes and a web is drawn up between the spokes to represent where they are and where they want to be in a year’s time.



### Case Example 3: Initiatives across Wales

The Children and Young People’s Framework for Partnership in Wrexham ran a multi-agency day in May 2006 on reviewing participation and moving their Strategy forward – ‘their voice in your hands’.

In Swansea, partners are being encouraged to work together via a new publication called ‘Together’ raising the profile of participation work.

Conwy Framework for Partnership has had training on Devising and Implementing a Participation Strategy and is getting children and young people on board as part of a Good Practice Event.

Gwynedd has a draft strategy, which includes a model of how all agencies are going to work together to develop participation at different levels.



### Stage 5: Challenges and how to meet them

Consider what will get in the way of achieving the general aims or specific goals or targets set out in your strategy. What will cause a diversion, barrier, block? Consider what is in place to support you. The Participation Consortium, Unit and Project are all national initiatives, which aim to support the participation agenda across Wales. A Participation Practitioners' Network for Wales has been set up, hosted by Children in Wales for the Participation Consortium. The Network aims to disseminate information on participation and share good practice. Resources are also available from a number of sources (See **Guide 9: Resources and Support**).

In the Participation Consortium's Mapping Participation exercise (**Save the Children, Participation Consortium and Welsh Assembly Government 2006**) organisations showed evidence of being at different stages in terms of developing participation. The study identified some of the barriers staff and organisations face at different stages. Using information from the study may help to identify the barriers that *your* organisation needs to overcome.

### Stage 6: Draft the strategy

Include the overall aims, as well as specific goals, along with the rationale and reasons for what you want to do. Provide the national and local evidence, use models you have found appropriate and helpful. Include the views of children and young people and other stakeholders to support your planned strategy. Build on what you are already doing well.

Share the draft with others. If appropriate, also draft more detailed policy guidance for staff.

### Stage 7: Getting it agreed

Obtain the support of the organisation. Acknowledge that this may take some time and effort. Provide presentations, offer to attend staff or team meetings to talk about the strategy and your vision. If relevant staff have been kept well informed and given the opportunity to raise any queries early on in the process. Clearly, achieving colleagues support and managers agreement will be easier if the final draft is not the first time it is seen and discussed.



## Stage 8: Action Planning

The key to achieving change is the Action Plan associated with a strategy. It needs to lay out priorities and include an agreed and realistic timescale. Actions need to be tied to specific individuals or groups of individuals and they need to be given realistic deadlines to be achieved. The action plan should include realistic targets that can be achieved within specified time scales. All targets should be SMART i.e.

Specific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime bound.

**For example:** to work with a group of up to 6 young people to develop a leaflet about how to contribute to meetings, within the next three months.

- a group of up to 6 young people - **Specific**
- develop a leaflet - **Measurable**
- how to contribute to meetings - **Achievable**
- within the next three months - **Realistic**
- within the next three months **Time** bound.

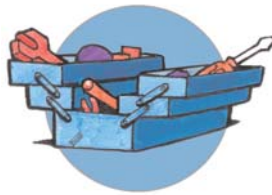
The action plan should be reviewed at agreed times and revised in response to progress or other changes, for example after six months.

The action plan should be written so that it is easy to monitor progress and this should be done regularly. This will provide an opportunity to reflect and review on progress achieved.

The Action Plan is designed mainly for those within the organisation; although when it is reviewed, any progress can be shared more widely; for example, with local partners, such as voluntary organisations or Youth Forums, as well as with children and young people.

## Stage 9: Reviewing the strategy

The overall Strategy should also have an agreed review date although with a longer time scale than the Action Plan, which should be frequently updated. A review of the whole strategy is an opportunity to celebrate progress as well as making a realistic assessment of what has been achieved and what the future direction should be.



## RESOURCES

For signposts to general resources on Participation see **Guide 9: Resources and Support**.

Crowley, A. 2004, *Children and Young People's Participation: Working Towards a Definition*. Save the Children

Hart, Roger A. 1992, *Children's Participation – From Tokenism to Citizenship*. UNICEF International Child Development Centre

Mintzberg, H. 1994, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*

O'Kane, K. 2006, *Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Children and Young People's Participation* (unpublished, held at Participation Unit)

Smail, P. 2006, *Mapping Participation and Mapping Participation: Welsh Assembly Government Divisions*. Save the Children, Participation Consortium and Welsh Assembly Government

Treseder, P. 1997, *Empowering Children and Young People Training Manual: Promoting Involvement in Decision-making*.

### Organisations and Websites

Children and Young People's Participation Consortium for Wales, based at Save the Children (Wales)

[www.savethechildren.org.uk](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk)

Welsh Assembly Government Participation Project, Youth and Adult Learning Opportunities Division

[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

Participation Unit, based at Save the Children (Wales), 2nd Floor, Phoenix House, 8 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ

[participationunit@savethechildren.org.uk](mailto:participationunit@savethechildren.org.uk)

Help Yourself

[www.helpyourselves.org.uk](http://www.helpyourselves.org.uk)

Participation Works

[www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk)

Wales Council of Voluntary Action

[www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk)