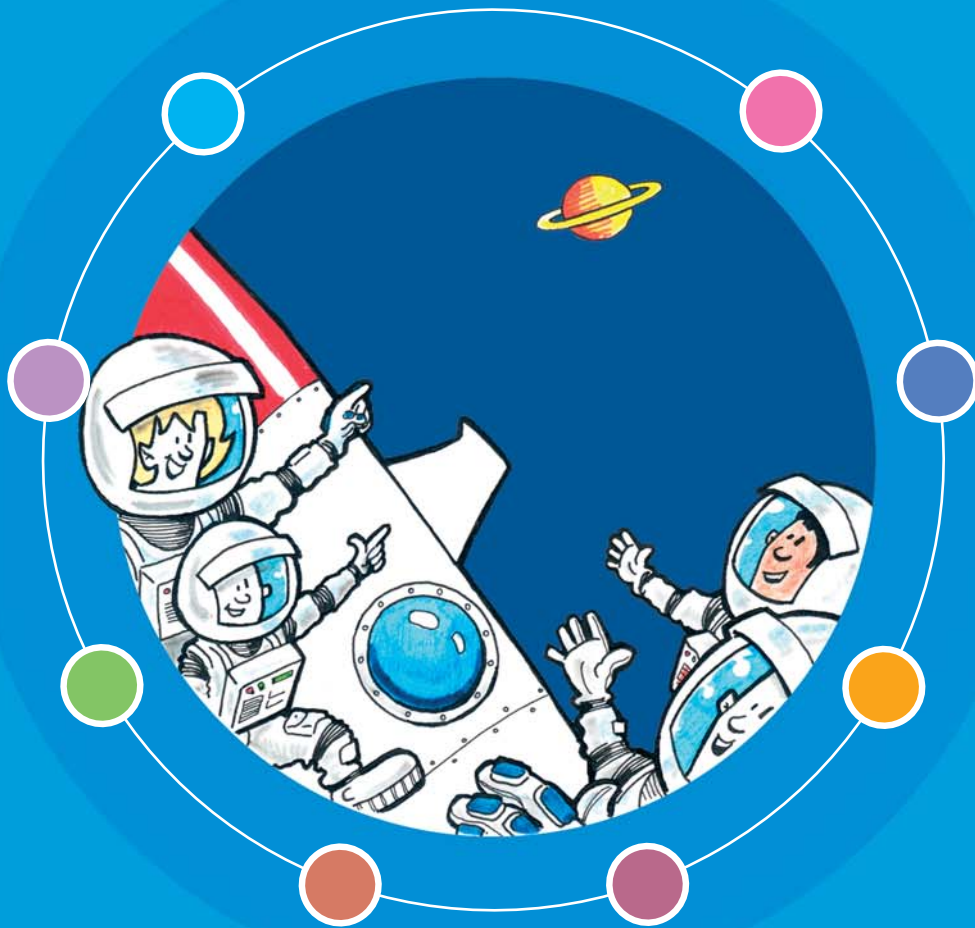
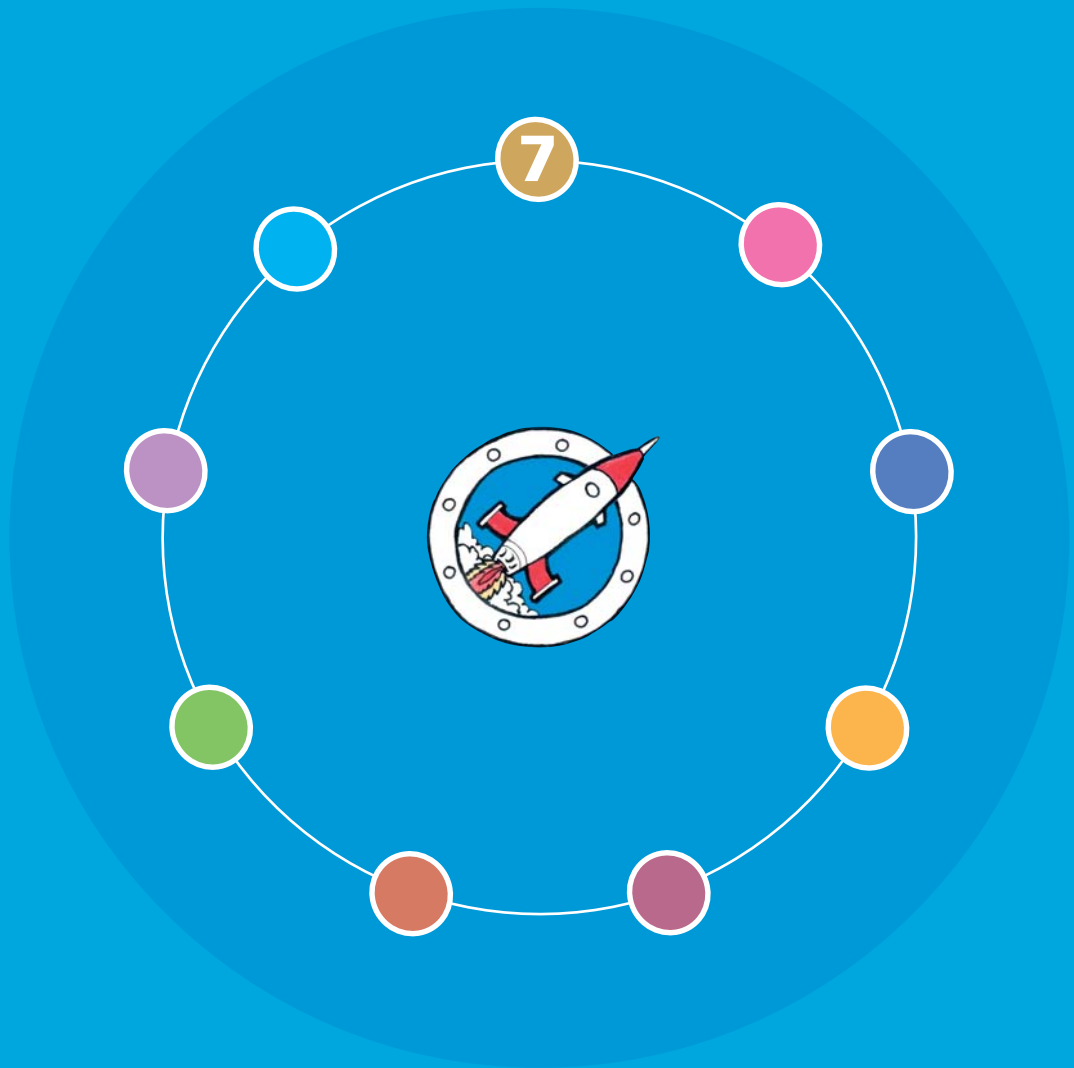


**GUIDES TO INCREASING PARTICIPATION
OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

7

ENSURING INCLUSION





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? What will this guide tell me?

This guide considers how to ensure inclusion of all. It considers why some groups of children and young people are identified as 'hard to reach' and what can be done to improve social inclusion. It identifies some groups and the characteristics of some children who are likely to be difficult to engage in mainstream services and activities. It suggests a process to improve access to and engagement with them. It also considers safe access, informed consent and consultation fatigue. It provides some case examples on improving representation and ensuring that participative practice is inclusive.

Why are some children and young people considered 'hard to reach'?

? There is no one agreed definition of who are the 'hard to reach'. This guide identifies some of the children and young people who are likely to be under represented, difficult to identify or who are less willing to take part in participation work or activities. The reasons for this are many and varied and include: practical difficulties (e.g. language and communication difficulties), their vulnerability (e.g. looked after children, young carers), cultural reasons (e.g. black and ethnic minority groups), geographical reasons (e.g. those living in rural/remote areas).

However, we must also consider that 'hard to reach' is a reflection on the skills, resources and understanding of adults and organisations and our ability to 'reach' these children and young people rather than an issue of these groups being, in themselves, difficult to engage.

Ensuring inclusion implies that any discrimination should be challenged and that diversity in those being consulted will strengthen the process and make any consultation or other participation activity more robust.

The approach outlined in the guide emphasises that the solution may require changes in the way organisations work as well as encouragement of children and young people to engage with what is offered.

Some of the groups *most frequently identified* as 'hard to reach' are:

- Disabled children and young people
- Children and young people from black and ethnic minority groups
- Looked after children (especially those placed out of area) and young people
- Young carers
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and young people
- Children of Asylum seekers and refugees.



There are many other groups who can be *difficult to identify* and *difficult to engage* in participation work:

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual children and young people
- Children and young people not in education, employment or training
- Welsh speakers not in education: 16 to 25 yrs
- Children of migrant workers
- Children and young people involved in the youth justice system
- Children and young people from the most deprived communities (e.g. Community First areas)

There are also particular subgroups of children who, *although reasonably easy to identify* are *more difficult to engage* in participation work. For example:

- Children and young people with language or communication difficulties
- Children and young people with learning difficulties (mild, moderate or severe)
- Children identified as children in need
- Young people on an alternative curriculum

Some subgroups with particular experiences are identifiable by social services, Police or specialist agencies, though not necessarily by others. For example:

- Children involved in the child protection system
- Children and young people who have witnessed domestic violence and
- Children and young people who are victims of crime

Finally, there are groups of children with whom we may want to *discuss difficult* or *sensitive issues*. For example:

- Children and young people who have experienced adoption
- Children and young people who have experienced divorce or separation
- Children and young people who have experienced bereavement
- Children and Young people who have/are experiencing mental distress
- Children and Young people with substance misuse problems
- Children and Young people who have self-harmed

These children or young people are likely to require special arrangements and a high degree of sensitivity, to work with them in a safe and effective manner.



With these groups, as with many of those listed above, if staff lack experience, it is usually cost effective to find a skilled partner organisation.

In any group work, it is important to be aware of those who are unwilling to speak out. Adjusting the group size and good facilitation can help, although it is important to recognise that some members may prefer to communicate one to one or through other mediums, rather than in groups.

Some workers indicate that they find it more difficult to work with children of primary age or preschool than with older children. This issue is not considered here, instead see **Guide 6: Working with the Under 11s**.

How to ensure inclusion

From the wide range of groups described above it is clear that there can be no single 'one size fits all' solution to reaching out to these children and young people to increase their level of participation in policy and decision making.

In some cases it is a characteristic of the subgroup that they are 'disengaged' with formal organisations. In other cases fear of discrimination makes young people less willing to engage with the mainstream services, from which participants are often drawn from - such as schools, youth groups and colleges.

This guide considers how to reduce the gap between worker and the child or young person or group, the actions that can be taken to reduce barriers, to increase trust and to increase motivation. The main strategy that workers use is to obtain the support and assistance of intermediaries or partner such as specialist organisations or they approach and contact children and young people through specialist workers. A number of alternative strategies are possible; see **Table 1** for some suggestions.

In addition, as mentioned above, organisations can consider if they can alter their own processes to increase involvement by the target group in their normal provision and hence increase involvement through other pre-existing systems (e.g. as part of the widening participation agenda). For example, youth organisations reaching a wider age or geographical group, or increasing access for those with disabilities or for those who are outside the mainstream school system. Organisations need to ask children and young people what their additional support needs are for getting involved and what would make them want to get involved if they are choosing not to currently.

Reducing any staff 'skills gap' and developing staff through training, experience and learning from colleagues and those in relevant specialist organisations will widen the groups that an organisation can 'reach'. Although, it is worth noting that, as with any communication skill, some staff will be more comfortable than others working children and young people.



Table 1: Alternative strategies to reduce the gap between the hard to reach and the worker

Work with a partner/intermediary individual or organisation (e.g. specialist group; key individual)
Form an alliance with individuals/organisations
Ensure work addresses key issues for the hard to reach
Go to 'outreach' location place e.g. where hard to reach individuals 'hang out' and are 'comfortable'
Adapt methods of work to address specific barriers
Provide information to the group - hard to reach group becomes better informed
Adapt methods of work to be more acceptable to group
Offer incentives for engagement
Show respect and offer sustained commitment
Maintain commitment by proving timely feedback
Be seen to challenge discrimination and actively promote equality of opportunity

Nuts & Bolts: Process

Identifying the group and planning a strategy to improve inclusion



The first step of the process of ensuring inclusion is to identify the characteristics of the children and/or young people that we want to involve. The next step is to develop a plan, which needs to address any specific difficulties of access to or shortfalls in the representation in the group. Finally, to address the specific barriers to involvement of this group children and young people. For examples of this approach see **Case Examples 1 and 2**.



Case Example 1: To consult a sample of children aged 11 to 14 across a borough about transport facilities

Approach a range of youth organisations and organisations that provide services to children with physical disabilities. Increase the representation of children with mobility difficulties in the sample by having a higher percentage of these children than those without such difficulties. This controlled 'weighting' of the sample will allow for a better understanding of the transport issues for this group.



Case Example 2: To develop a booklet for Year 7 children to address fears about bullying

It would be helpful to include the views of those who had experienced bullying. To do this directly could be difficult and would be a sensitive issue.

Option 1: work with a small group of children with a wide range of academic ability and levels of self-esteem. Develop the confidence of the group by meeting on several occasions to undertake relatively simple and un-threatening tasks, before progressing to deal with bullying specifically.

Option 2: work with a larger group looking at broader issues around the transition from primary to secondary school. Then identify and select volunteers to work in more detail on the issue of bullying in a secure, supported and comfortable environment.

Working with an intermediary or partner organisation who routinely works with the target group, both builds staff skills and maximises the use of pre-existing knowledge amongst specialist workers. For example, ensuring a questionnaire uses appropriate language. Working with a local partner(s) can ensure that there is support for children or young people if sensitive issues are being dealt with.

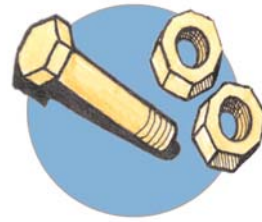
The intermediary or partner organisation can also provide a cost effective channel for feedback to the children and young people.

The need to contact a group that are under represented can also provide a positive opportunity for an organisation to reach out to widen its membership and to be more diverse.



Nuts & Bolts: Safe access and informed consent

When working with any children or young people it is important to fully consider the key issues of safe access and informed consent.



Arranging safe access to work with those who are hard to reach is likely to take more time than arranging safe access to other groups of children and young people. It may involve approaches to specialist organisations that work with the particular children or young people. The workers may be sceptical or suspicious of external people's motives and feel protective of the children and young people they work with. It is important to be clear about the aims of the project, what is planned and what information will be provided to those who are involved and for their parents and/or carers. It is also important to consider the safety of the workers involved and provide guidelines for safe lone or street working.

In addition offering something positive to the organisation may help to improve trust and reduce any concerns or difficulties. This could be an offer of practical items (e.g. a booklet), recognition (e.g. certificate for those who participate or a write up on a website), or training (e.g. rights training for workers). Alternatively, it could be an event or trip for those involved or a larger group of children. (For other ideas see forthcoming **Guide 10: Rewards, Accreditation and Remuneration**).

Informed consent should be obtained from all participants. As a minimum, if working with those under 16 years, even if working through a school, parents should be informed about what is to take place. Obtaining children and young people's consent in writing is good practice. As laid out in the National Standards for Children and Young People's Participation (see **Guide 8: Monitoring, Evaluation and Audit**) all participation should be voluntary and all participation must be given the opportunity to refuse to participate, either from all or parts of the activity(ies) that they are not comfortable with. Arranging this may be more difficult, if working within a school setting.



Case Example 3: Edinburgh Youth Inclusion Project

The original plan of the project was to contact young black men through established youth organisations. It was found that there were not many black young people involved and there was an element of 'consultation fatigue'. Therefore, instead workers made direct contact with black young people where they spent time 'on the street'. This was more effective (For further details see **Resources**).



Case Example 4: Cardiff Black Youth Network

The Cardiff Black Youth Network (CBYN) developed from a national project to develop a Black Youth Charter. Work was carried out over three years in cities across the UK. Contact was made with all general and specialist youth provision in the surrounding area to find interested young people. A group of young people from a range of ethnic backgrounds was brought together. Over time cultural events were held in Cardiff and in other cities and residential events were held, bringing together members from different groups. Each event had a theme and included a celebration of different cultures using arts, poetry, food and music. Positive images of black and Asian leaders or cultural icons were displayed on a 'Wall of Achievement' to which young people could contribute pictures or quotations. When different groups met together representatives from the local and visiting groups worked together taking responsibility for making the event run smoothly. For further details of CBYN see **Resources**.



Nuts & Bolts: Building trust



To carry out effective participation work with any group there needs to be a level of trust. For those children and young people who are more difficult to engage in the process this can take some time. One of the most effective ways is to work closely with those adults who already have a good relationship with the children and young people. They should be seen as partners rather than 'barriers'. There are limitations to this approach if the workers are present at all times. Their presence or absence during focus group sessions or individual interviews for example, should be part of the negotiations for access to individuals and/or a group.

Good practice in providing information on the process and explaining the detail of the work and its limitations or boundaries is all part of the process of building trust and mutual respect.

Case Example 5: Designer babies consultation



The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority asked Children in Wales to assist hard to reach young people to take part in a consultation on 'designer babies' and the future of genetic research. The workers spent time getting a good understanding of genetics and explaining this to the young people and developing their confidence to enable them to fully participate in the main consultation exercise.



Nuts & Bolts: Consultation fatigue



There is a risk of consultation fatigue with any group of children or young people that are repeatedly asked to comment on or provide views on different topics. But it is of particular concern when trying to engage with the hard to reach. As there is an increased risk of over using a particular group, as it is more difficult to identify and engage other children or young people within the target group.

If the children and young people are ones that you are working with within your organisation ensure that some new children are involved each time to balance increasing experience and providing opportunities to more children.

To avoid this difficulty, if you are approaching other organisations, ensure that the children or young people nominated by the organisation(s) you contact, are different each time or at least a third are different. Don't ask the same organisation too often. If possible, try to plan six or twelve months ahead and work with a number of different organisations.



Case Example 6: Social Action Approach

The Centre for Social Action developed a Good Practice Guide based on work with young people on three housing estates.

They emphasise the advantages of capturing the energy and enthusiasm of young people. Working with young people in *their* spaces at *their* time provides benefits to both the workers and the young people.

Adults need to be 'partners and facilitators'. Meeting young people and talking and listening to them 'on their own ground'

The five stage process includes:

1. What are the issues, concerns, problems (young people) face?
2. Why... Why do they exist?
3. How... How can you change them?
4. Action... Let's do it.
5. Reflection... Review the action by beginning the process again.

Centre for Social Action, De Montford University (2000).

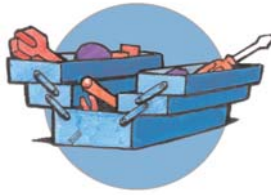


Checklist: Ensuring inclusion



Have you...

- Identified your target groups?
- Planned a realistic timetable?
- Arranged safe access? If necessary, through specialist organisations?
- Arranged to obtain informed consent?
- Obtained a suitably representative group? If no, have you taken steps to address shortcomings?
- Considered issues of diversity? (E.g. age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, urban/rural, sexual orientation etc.)
- Have all issues raised by this been addressed?
- Obtained any necessary specialist advice from those familiar with the specific group?
- Taken steps to avoid consultation fatigue?
- Planned for dealing with any sensitive issues that may be raised? (E.g. Access to ongoing support).
- Made arrangements for feedback to the individuals/groups/organisations?
- Planned appropriate monitoring and evaluation of the work?



RESOURCES

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

Action Research Toolkit, Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Project (EYSIP)

Reaching out to BME Young People, EYSIP www.youthinclusion.org

Working with Young Victims of Crime, EYSIP www.youthinclusion.org

Cardiff Youth Black Network (CYBN)/Black Voluntary Sector Network
www.switch-cymru.org.uk/html/BVSN/cbyn.htm

Centre for Social Action, 2000, *Youth Action: A Good Practice Guide to Working with Young People on their Home Ground*, De Montford University. www.dmu.ac.uk

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