



Are Young People Really Being Listened To?

Researched and written by a young carer, aged 13

Is the participation of young people simply something that is talked about, or is it actually happening?

There is currently much debate over whether or not young people's views are listened to and to what extent they should be allowed to participate in decision making processes. Legally, young people can buy cigarettes and alcohol and can leave education at 18, and they can make decisions about their own medical treatment at 16. Should we and how can we listen to and value the opinions of young people below the legal age of consent?

It is not a new debate and questions about it have been asked for decades.

"I want workers and services to provide information to me and offer helpful friendly service that I feel comfortable in talking to and that listens to me. I want workers that I feel I can trust and who will listen to me and not judge me or my family. I need workers to be there for me and to provide a service for me separate from my family so that I can speak freely and not worry that what I say will be repeated to my mum and increase her stress and worry."

By Doodles

(T.A.G. Report)

Maybe the lack of interest in children's participation is because their parents are not listening to young people's views. Some young people said their views were not even valued at home. 'I feel that I have been listened to least in situations with my family...' expressed one young person. Maybe this is because older family members with more life experience than us are listened to first.

"Parents and professionals can help to promote positive mental health in young people simply by communicating the limits of appropriate rules and boundaries and the risks of breaking them."

www.mentalhealthcare.org.uk

So what is the point?

So, why do young people feel it is so important that their views should be heard? Melissa, 14, explains: "Young people should have the opportunity to have their views heard because we too live in society and so we should have a say in what goes on in that society...young people also think differently from adults so they have to have their views heard."

How can we listen to young people?

Without speaking or telling someone how we feel, we can all communicate how we are feeling through our behaviour and body language. In fact, 54% of all communication is non-verbal, only 7% is verbal. *How* we say something can also communicate what we may be feeling – the tone of voice we use when we speak can relay how we may feel. Even though we may not actually be telling someone, 'I feel angry', 'I feel excited', – the anger and excitement can often be heard from the way we speak.

Children and young people may find it difficult to let others know how they may be feeling – they may not have the words or feel able to express themselves verbally.

Young people often can express their feelings and ideas by drawing on paper or writing it all down then rather face-to-face. Sometimes young people find it difficult

to reflect their thoughts and feelings. We are likely to express our unresolved emotions in thoughtless actions, or we may hide away- not saying anything. Unresolved emotions can be expressed in many ways, for example, you could say it in **poetry**, **music**, and **imagery**.

Young people can talk to workers in support services.

For example, young carers can talk to Willow Workers at:



Different young people all over use the service **CAMHS** (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service). Young people created a booklet-



Nicola Swales- Leeds CAMHS Participation Worker – took the booklet to CAMHS to show them young people's points of views of how they feel they should be listened to and be involved in how CAMHS workers support them.

Tips To Be A Good Worker!

Things not to do!

We should have a choice about what help we get and how we want to deal with the situation. You should respect this and involve us in decision-making about what support we need.

Most importantly get to know us. Learn what are likes are and our dislikes are. Talk to us about our thoughts and opinions let us get to know you before you deal with heavy issues.

They should not talk about us and our family behind our backs. They should let us know if they have to do this and ask if it okay.

They should not just talk to the adult or another worker and just ignore us. We see what is going on and are affected by it so include us.

(Part of the T.A.G. Report booklet.)