

# 'Taking Part Toolkit: promoting the real participation of children and young people' - Summary

**Author:** *Polly Wright and Deena Haydon*

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## **Background**

The NW Children's Taskforce is a Department of Health initiative, which brings together representatives from both voluntary and statutory sectors (including health, education, social welfare and youth services). The Taskforce aimed to develop a participation resource combining the wealth of material produced in the past and providing a set of 'Participation Standards' relevant to all agencies working with children and young people.

## **Objectives of the research**

In February 2002, the NW Children's Taskforce commissioned Barnardo's to produce the 'Taking Part Toolkit; promoting the 'real' participation of children and young people'. Barnardo's Research and Development received a budget of £15,000 with which to implement the first stage of the project (February – June) and a further £4000 for stage two – piloting and production of the 'Toolkit' (July – October).

## Methodology

The project involved:


1. an extensive review of policy and literature about participation
2. a mapping exercise identifying local authority youth forums/councils in each of the 22 NW local authorities, with a more in-depth mapping of participation initiatives in Cumbria, Knowlsey and Manchester as examples of a large authority, a metropolitan borough, and a city
3. focus groups with 29 young people involved in a number of different participation initiatives to clarify their views about participation
4. production of a Report, Resource Pack, Participation Standards and Audit Tool.

As well as involving young people in consultation about participation, Barnardo's employed 2 young people - Chris Mellor and Christina Morgan - to work on the project. A particularly valuable experience (both for them and for the project) was their involvement in the consultation with other young people. They provided suggestions about how questions could be asked, designed young people-friendly fliers and leaflets and helped facilitate the focus groups. As a result, the final 'Toolkit' is a clear reflection of what young people think about participation.

The 'Toolkit' consists of 4 separate documents:

- The main report has been presented in as practical a format as possible - bringing together a literature and policy review with the views of young people and illustrative case studies. Throughout the report, practitioners are signposted to useful resources.
- The second document is a resource pack including references, resources, websites and details of youth forums/councils/participation initiatives throughout the NW.
- The third document – the Participation Standards - identifies the processes and structures necessary for effective collective participation of children and young people. The Standards refer to 4 areas that need to be considered when developing participatory practice: establishing a commitment to participation; planning and developing participation; ways of working; skills, knowledge and experience (for adults and young people). The Standards acknowledge that organisations may be at different levels of participation in different areas of their work and therefore guide agencies through what they could be doing at emerging, established or advanced levels. The emphasis is not on the level reached by the organisation, but rather what they can do to further develop and promote participation within their practice.
- The final document – the Participation Audit Tool - provides a resource for practitioners and young people to review how they are addressing the Standards; prompting them to evidence each statement rather than just 'tick a box'. The Audit Tool was piloted with both young people and adults prior to publication, to ensure that it is as accessible as possible.

The 'Toolkit' is presented in a bright, plastic document box – making it appealing for both practitioners and young people. All 4 documents are colour coded; indicating which resources,



text, references and case studies are relevant to specific groups of young people (disabled, gay and lesbian, homeless, younger children, teenage parents, ethnic minorities).

### **Contact for further information**

Please contact Telephone No: 020 8498 7844

### **Full report available from**

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