

A Wee Bit Here and There?

Children and Young People's
Participation in Policy Making



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Children and Young People Influencing Policy in Scotland

Our partnership:

The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) at the University of Edinburgh, Barnardo's and Children in Scotland

Our aim:

To explore and develop better ways of involving children and young people in influencing policy that affects them and ensuring their voices are heard.

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Our team

Jacqui Dunbar and Selwyn McCausland of Barnardo's Scotland

Kay Tisdall and Susan Elsley of the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships, the University of Edinburgh

Sara Collier, Marion Macleod and Jonathan Sher of Children in Scotland

Our starting point

- Drawing on our knowledge and experience, participation should be:

Meaningful

Sustainable

Effective

UN General Comment

- 13...The concept of participation emphasizes that including children should not only be a **momentary act**, but the starting point for an **intense exchange** between children and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all relevant contexts of children's lives.

Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm>

Health warning!

- Our initiative focused on supporting organisational practice around participation in policy making
- It did not explore the diversity of situations where participation takes place
- It aims to build on learning from other work that we have done rather than initiate new activity
- We are still completing analysis.

What we did: April 2011 to now

- Initial discussion and invited seminar to explore children and young people's participation in policy making
- Invited members of Scotland's Children's Sector Forum to participate in intensive Pathways programme run by Barnardo's
- 5 organisations participated in Pathways Programme: NGOs, local government and health
- Participation in Scotland's Children's Sector Forum events
- Evaluation, dissemination and knowledge exchange

Pathways Programme

- An audit of existing practice
- 2 core workshops on influencing public policy and children's rights/participation
- Underpinned by UNCRC and rights based approach
- Models drawn on: Pathways to Participation (Shier, 2001) and Social Core Institute for Excellence's Participation Practice Guide (Wright et al)
- 2 additional bespoke sessions
- Work with children and young people in organisations where appropriate
- Continual process of research, review and evaluation

What participants said about the Pathways programme

- 'It gave us the chance to consolidate existing skills whilst accessing new tools and models of youth participation'. Jan Savage, National Deaf Children's Society Scotland
- 'Being involved...definitely got us kick-started in thinking about how to involve children...'
Lesley Sherwood, Forth Valley NHS
- 'The Pathways programme has refreshed our thinking and given us the impetus to ask questions about everything we do', Bill Miller, Stirling Council

Our initial observations

- What supports organisations in their work facilitating the participation of children and young people in policy making

Our initial observations

- Organisational culture and structure and internal energy: central to supporting participation
- Support, mentoring and opportunities: essential for organisations to move forward
- Ability to respond to changing context: fast moving policy environments, economic context
- Starting where it matters for children and young people: not always privileging national over local policy

So...

- Process of renewal: remind ourselves and introduce those who are new
- Adapt policy processes to ensure participation
- Not forget the 'old lessons': culture and structures in organisations and adult attitudes still highly influential
- How we can support each other: share learning, share support, share opportunities
- Rights based approaches core to participation
- Bespoke approaches to supporting organisations may be required
- AND, finally, deepen the relationship between theorising and practice and share this widely.

More...

- Susan.elsley@ed.ac.uk
- CRFR Briefing (1) Children's and young people's participation in policy making: making it meaningful, effective and sustainable
- <http://www.crfr.ac.uk/reports/Participation%20briefing.pdf>
- CRFR Briefing (2) will be out later in 2012
- Children in Scotland supplement: Copies here or can send you PDF

References

Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, General Comment no. 12 (2009).:The right of a child to be heard
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm>

Shier, H. (2001), Pathways to participation: openings, opportunities and obligations. *Children & Society*, 15: 107–117.

Wright,P et al, The participation of children in developing social care: Participation Practice Guide 06, Social Care Institute for Excellence,.
<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide11/files/guide11.pdf>