

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**



**Bath and North East Somerset,
Swindon and Wiltshire**
Integrated Care Board

Participation Strategy:

Children and Young People

2020 - 2024

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1. Introduction

This is a Participation Strategy intended for everyone in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) who works with children and young people aged 0-19 years of age (up to 25 if they have a disability or are included in the Looked After Cohort including Care Leavers)

This includes those staff who work directly with children and young people or who commission or manage staff, services and organisations whose work either supports or impacts on the lives of children and young people.

In B&NES this includes staff working in:

People and Communities
Place
Resources

This strategy intends to:

Set out the B&NES vision for participation
Clarify what participation involves.
Share models of current good practice
Outline an Action Plan for Participation

2. Vision and Values

Since 2000 B&NES has been signed up to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 12 states that:

'children and young people have a right to be involved in all decisions that affect their lives'

Our vision for all children, young people and their families in B&NES is to ensure that they will all have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives and to help shape some of those decisions.

Our strategic priorities for children and young people are set out in the B&NES Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) [Children and Young People's Plan](#)

The overall vision in our plan is that:

We want all Children and Young People to enjoy childhood and be well prepared for adult life.

The outcomes in our CYPP 2021-2024 are:

- Children and Young People are Safe
- Children and Young People are Healthy
- Children and Young People have Fair Life Chances
- Children and Young People are Engaged Citizens within their own community

We will continue to focus on these priorities by working together with children, young people and their families.

COVID 19 had a huge impact on our services and how they are delivered
Reflecting on this there will be greater emphasis in our new CYPP 2024 with a focus on the challenges faced particularly around:
Poverty (including food, digital and socio economic school poverty CPAG work)
Children and Young People's Mental health
Narrowing the Gap (Inequalities

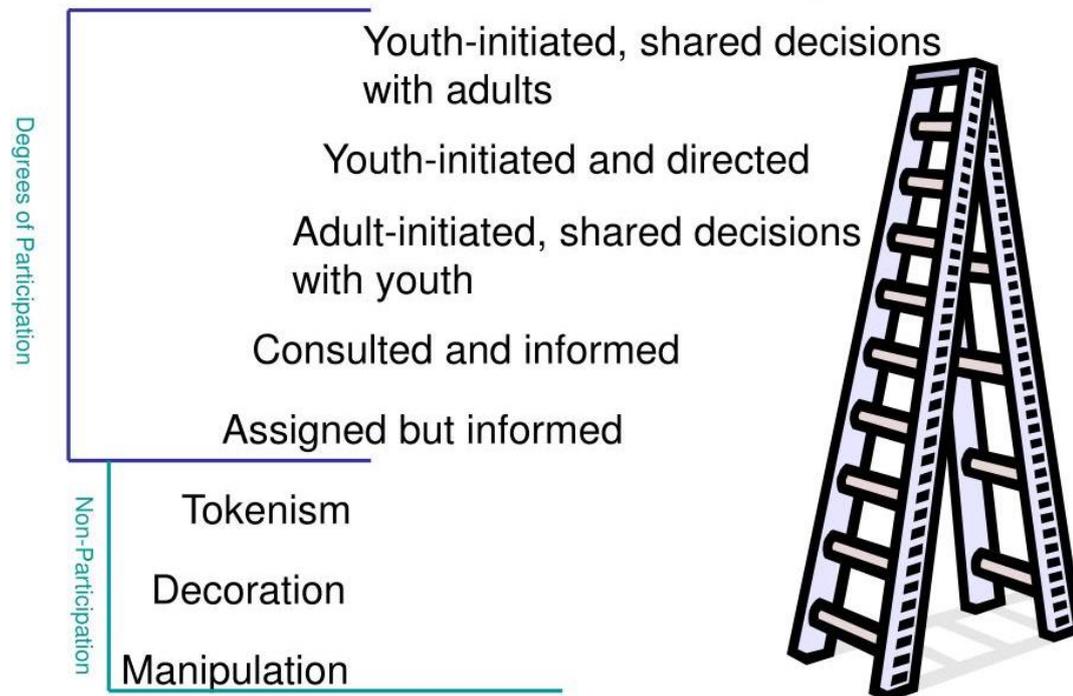
Accompanying the CYPP is an Implementation Plan or 'Action Plan'. This outlines how the priorities are being delivered and a progress report on this is given on a yearly basis to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

3. Definition of Participation

Participation - is the process by which service users influence decision making and bring about change. It is about making sure the voice of service users is heard when decisions are being made that affect their lives. It is also a process rather than a 'one off' event and has varying degrees of involvement. If undertaken successfully, it will lead to active engagement and a positive two way process.

In B&NES, we are committed to the active participation of children, young people and their families wherever possible. However, we recognise that children, young people and their families may want to engage at different levels with services that affect them. Some may wish to be *informed*, some may wish to be *consulted* while others may wish to be actively *involved* in both decision making and service delivery.

Ladder of Youth Participation



Roger Hart professor and children's right academic produced the Ladder of Participation for UNICEF in 1992.

*The ladder describes eight ascending levels of decision-making agency, control, and power that can be given to children and youth by adults. ... It is important that all young people have the opportunity to learn to **participate** in decisions which directly affect their lives.*

Our aim in B&NES is to ensure:

- Children & young people represent their peers and express the young people's view on an adult initiated issue.
- Adults take the views into account and give feedback about decision and actions.
- Children & young people share responsibility for decision making with adults.
- The views of children, young people and adults are given equal weight (part of the recruitment process or commissioning services)

4. Benefits of Participation

It is our ambition in B&NES to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them and their families. Participation brings many benefits and has been shown to improve outcomes.

Participation is particularly important for the children and young people who are receiving services from B&NES. Only they have the insight into their own needs. They have the right to influence their care, the services they receive and to be given the opportunities to do so.

Children and young people who are less able to have a voice have a right to an independent advocate to support them.

Staff within Childrens Services who are making decisions that will have an impact on the lives of children and young people, should have the skills, time and resources to enable them to ensure that the 'Voice of the Child' is clearly heard and is evidenced in the work they do.

Off the Record run short Participation training sessions for staff twice a year. Contact Sarah_McCluskey@bathnes.gov.uk for details.

Benefits for children and young include:

Increasing their self-worth, self-esteem and confidence

Being able to take control of their lives and influence the decisions being made about their lives.

Developing skills such as negotiation, problem solving, raising awareness of their needs and the needs of others.

Making positive contributions and long-term changes.

Benefits for adults include:

Gaining an insight from children and young people so that their needs can be met.

Changing our perceptions about ourselves as adults.

Shared decisions making.

Benefits for B&NES include:

Services becoming more responsive to the needs of all children and young people

Gaining fresh perspectives and new ideas about how services can be delivered.

Being more effective in delivering the right services.

Benefits for the community include:

Seeing children and young people as active and engaged citizens.

Where children and young people are heard they can influence what happens within their communities.

Participation in B&NES

There are a range of ways which B&NES currently involves children and young people in delivery of services they include:

- Being part of the recruitment process
- Commissioning
- Service design and review
- Monitoring and evaluation

(Although the focus of the strategy is on children and young people we also recognise that in many instances the involvement of parents and carers is also appropriate to ensure improvements to services)

5. Participation in B&NES

Participation in B&NES is a Commissioned Service. Off the Record will run our Participation Service from 2021-2026. They work with the following groups:

In Care Councils

Youth Forum , working with the wider Youth Networks across B&NES

In addition, wider participation includes:

Service Users groups of other commissioned services.

Advocacy

Young people have the opportunity to give feedback or comment on their IRO reviews and CP plans

6. Governance Arrangements

All staff should when working with children and young people ensure that the principles in this strategy are adhered to.

Corporate Strategy

Communication and Engagement Strategy

The Community Engagement Charter builds upon one of the council's core policy objectives to give people a bigger say and sets out the standards for how it will engage with its community. It was developed alongside a number of community representatives building on good practice and learning from past experiences. The Charter's commitments are to:-

- discuss a proposal when it is at a formative stage
- provide sufficient information to allow intelligent consideration
- ensure there is adequate time for a considered response
- conscientiously take responses into account
- provide feedback on our decisions

For more information about the Charter's commitments visit the website here

<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/bnes-council-corporate-strategy-2020-2024/community-engagement-charter>