



# Hear by Right and the Third Sector: how to measure and improve children and young people's participation

This is a briefing to show how to build participation throughout services and organisations using the *Hear by Right* standards framework. *Hear by Right* helps to map current participation of children and young people and to develop a strategic plan for improvement.

*"Services are too often designed by adults, rather than the young people who use them. Too often, they do not engage wider communities. So in every area, we should again be clear-headed about the role for collective involvement in shaping and contributing to services."*

Ed Miliband, Minister for the Third Sector, Speech to Unison and Compass, January 18 2007.

## What is participation?

Participation Works uses the following definition of participation:

*"Participation is a process where someone influences decisions about their lives and this leads to change."*

Treseder, *Empowering Children and Young People*, Children's Rights Office/Save the Children, 1997.

## What's the point of children and young people's participation?

- "Children and young people have a right to have a say on all issues that affect them and for these views to be taken seriously." (UNCRC Article 12)
- Services are better because they are shaped by the people who use them.
- Money is saved by changing services that are not required or do not run well.
- Children and young people get a better deal because services are more responsive and effective.
- Participative practice is increasingly a

requirement of major commissioning, funding and assessing bodies in a competitive market.

- Participation is part of a shared language and requirement of partners in Children's Trust arrangements.
- Skills and confidence of both staff and children and young people are developed.
- Children and young people can become more engaged in wider community issues/ initiatives after participating in service-based activity.

## Participation Works and *Hear by Right*

Participation Works is a consortium made up of six agencies who are experts in children and young people's participation. They have collectively developed a comprehensive service of activities and resources on participation which includes workshops, training and consultancy sessions and practitioner networks, designed to support organisations and practitioners who work with children and young people up to the age of 25.

The National Youth Agency's (NYA) key contribution is to develop the popular *Hear by Right* participation standards framework as the Participation Works Self-Assessment Tool for Third Sector organisations. This briefing describes the processes of using *Hear by Right* to assess the levels of participation in an organisation and create a strategic plan for improvement. You can call on the range of other activities, resources and training offered by the Participation Works partners to help you implement your plan for improvement.



## How does the Hear by Right standards framework work?

Every aspect of a participation strategy will be covered by some angle of *Hear by Right*. It is based on the McKinsey Seven S model of organisational analysis and change. Each area shown in this diagram is a **standard** in *Hear by Right*. The seven standards are **strategies**, **structures**, **systems**, **staff**, **skills** and **knowledge**, **style of leadership**, and **shared values**. Each standard has, in turn, seven indicators. These are used to measure and assess the detail of an organisation's current level of participation.



Shared Values focuses on an organisation's culture and is at the heart of the process. But all the seven standards are important and need to be assessed in turn, as they connect to and depend on each other. Involving children and young people in management committees is a 'structure', but how does it relate to the 'strategy'? A member of staff may declare an interest in the organisation embracing children and young people's participation, but who really shares the values to make it an organisation-wide success? Who has the skills to make it work well? Are your safeguarding systems up to scratch?

The *Hear by Right* Self-Assessment Tool lists all the standards and indicators. Next to each indicator, there is a space to record your evidence of current practice that relates to that indicator; this is your participation map. There is then a direct link to the corresponding planning page on the tool to list suggestions for improvement; this is your plan. Once prioritised and assessed for budget and other possible barriers these can quickly become a draft participation strategy for your organisation. The Self-Assessment Tool contains an example of how the first indicator might be

completed. This is produced in shadow text so that it can be replaced with content relevant to your organisation.

The levels of participation practice in *Hear by Right* are described as **Emerging**, **Established** and **Advanced**. The level you're at depends in part upon evidence of current practice that relates to each indicator. **We strongly recommend that you start by focusing on the Emerging level indicators, which are displayed in bold-type in the Self-Assessment Tool.** You may well find that you already have some evidence for the other indicators, and your ultimate aim should be to complete the entire tool, but aim first for Emerging. More information about how to assess your level of participation can be found at the end of this briefing paper.

### Should children and young people participate in the process?

Definitely – this is at the heart of *Hear by Right*. The Self-Assessment Tool helps children, young people and adults to plan for change together. Specifically, children and young people who use your service could be involved in:

- evaluating and/or adding to the adults' evidence of current practice on the map;
- suggesting areas for improvement to go in the strategic participation plan;
- helping to set the priorities for the strategy; and
- delivering some of the actions and solutions.

The *Hear by Right Building Standards* resources offer tried and tested ways in which to engage children and young people in the *Hear by Right* process and the language of standards and indicators. It also introduces tools that children and young people can use, on their own or with support, to focus on participation in the services they use and to think about how they could work better. The process is always more dynamic and effective when children and young people are involved from an early stage. The *Building Standards* resources can be a useful way to introduce *Hear by Right* to staff as well. You can find the *Building Standards* resources on the CD that accompanies the *Hear by Right* book, or online at [www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright).

### Using *Hear by Right* in the Third Sector

*Hear by Right* is a participation standards framework that can work for a Third Sector



organisation as well as it can for a local authority or any other partner in a Children's Trust. The principles are the same for building participation, even if the language is sometimes slightly different.

- The standards may say 'organisation' instead of 'project' or 'service' for example.
- We talk about 'partners', which in Third Sector terms may mean Local Authorities, Children's Trusts, Connexions partnerships or other Third Sector organisations who complement existing work.
- 'Staff' could mean any staff, including

volunteers, who work in your organisation.

- 'Elected members' or 'trustees' could mean management committee or board members of your organisation.
- 'Key managers' and 'leaders', the essential champions of participation, could mean the Chief Executive, Managing Director or Project Leader.

We chose to leave the language intact in the *Hear by Right* participation standards framework because it can helpfully serve as a common language and benchmark for all organisations that work with children and young people.



## Three approaches to developing a Hear by Right map and plan

(Developed jointly by Rainer and The National Youth Agency)

### Approach A – Staff group take the lead

In this approach, staff begin the mapping and planning process. This will usually be because children and young people are not, at this point, able to take a more active role. Practical considerations about time and resources in the service may also suggest that having staff take the lead now is better than waiting until children and young people are able to take a more active role. If you choose this approach:

1. Agree a staff member who will be responsible to lead this task.
2. Develop timescales for the development of the *Hear by Right* map and plan.
3. Decide who else should be involved and how much time to give to the task.
4. Agree on two sessions (suggested length 2.5 hours each) in order to develop your map and plan.
5. At the first session, map the active involvement of children and young people as you currently feel it exists in your service. You may want to address indicators at the Emerging level only to begin with. Remember that this is a large-scale map; you do not need to fill in every last detail. The gaps and blanks will tell you as much as the completed sections.
6. Circulate the draft map in order to gain views from others. Ask for views about planning priorities for action.
7. In the second session, use the map as a basis to develop your plan. The first box helps you agree priorities. Make the task more manageable by giving a high priority to one indicator in each standard. Begin to action plan who is going to do what and by when, what the barriers may be and how best to overcome them.
8. You have now completed your draft strategy for the active involvement of children and young people, and can use the table at the end of this briefing paper to identify your current level of participation. You may want to consult further with children and young people, other staff and managers in order to draw out some key issues.
9. Build in a method for reviewing your progress. Ideally, the review process would tie in with existing internal process in your service. Information drawn from the review can be used to form the basis of your next map.

NB – This approach will be the most suitable method for Third Sector organisations with a less direct link to children and young people.

### Approach B – Staff and children and young people work together

This approach follows the same process as Approach A, but in this case a group of staff and children and young people lead the mapping and planning process together. Aim to involve a diverse group of children and young people in the process, perhaps mixing those with some experience of participation with those new to the concept. To be effective, the combined group should total no more than 25 people.

Some preparatory work will be required with both staff and children and young people to ensure that:

- Staff are prepared to support children and young people to participate.
- Children and young people are enabled to participate effectively.
- All involved are certain about the aim of the exercise.
- The process is clear.

You may need to allow for longer sessions to draw out discussion between children and young people and staff. Agree some ground rules at the beginning of the process to ensure everyone feels respected and gets heard.

This approach can be especially effective as it allows for staff and children and young people to hear about each other's experiences of the service. There may be different views about how the service is meeting each indicator, but this process can begin an important dialogue and help reach agreement on key priorities in the plan for change.

### **Approach C – Children and young people take the lead with support from staff**

Services with an existing participation programme may have some children and young people who will be confident and experienced enough to take a lead role in the development of the service's *Hear by Right* map and plan.

Children and young people can take the lead either through a group process (similar to those described above) or via a service event where they are invited. Where a small group process is used, the group will need to be supported to plan the discussion sessions in which the map and plan will be developed. Ideally, mechanisms to consult other children and young people should be built in to this process to ensure the map and plan reflects the views of those beyond the small group.

A process that includes children and young people fully is likely to include these elements:

- staff take the time to fully explain *Hear by Right* and its purpose and benefits to children and young people prior to their signing up to be involved;
- children and young people are supported to explore their thoughts about influencing the services they use;
- senior staff take part in the process later on;
- there are honest conversations between all involved;
- staff are accountable to children and young people regarding the implementation of agreed action plans; and
- a review/feedback process is agreed that includes staff reporting back to children and young people on work undertaken. The review process must enable children and young people to evaluate the changes as they see and experience them.

A service-based event can bring together a range of children and young people to explore and agree their shared priorities for influencing service delivery, as well as celebrate achievements and help raise the profile of participation generally.





## Next Steps – What’s Changed and What’s Changing

*“If the people who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of change do not know that it is happening – then it probably is not happening...”* Lord Herman Ouseley, former Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Change really must be your goal for the finishing line of any participation journey. The NYA recognises two separate but related types that participation leads to:

- change within an organisation; and
- tangible change in the lives of children and young people, as framed by the Every Child Matters five outcomes.

It is crucial that children and young people are aware of and endorse these changes too.

*Hear by Right* records evidence of **what’s changing for organisations**, how the structures, systems, strategies, etc are getting better for enabling children and young people’s participation. The **What’s Changed tool** records evidence of what’s changed for children and young people, how they know that they are safer, healthier, enjoying and achieving more, making a positive contribution and achieving better economic wellbeing (in line with the Every

Child Matters framework) as a direct result of their involvement. These two ‘changing’ places are connected; one often leads to the other. But it is essential that children and young people agree, endorse and finally own these changes to make them the real happy ending to the participation journey. Anything less may well be the short-cut to tokenism.

Writing and collecting stories of what’s changing for your organisation is the second stage of identifying your participation activity in relation to the three levels of *Hear by Right*, Emerging, Established or Advanced (see below for further information). The evidence will be in your *Hear by Right* participation map and plan, but the story of change is often worth telling and celebrating in more detail.

Collecting What’s Changed examples shows evidence of meeting the Every Child Matters outcomes as a result of the participation of children and young people. This is the third and final part of the overall *Hear by Right* assessment. The crucial part of this is the children and young people’s own words saying how their lives are now better because of their participation. There are many examples on the What’s Changed tool web pages ([www.nya.org.uk/whatschanged](http://www.nya.org.uk/whatschanged)) including the one below. For support collecting and collating your What’s Changed and what’s changing examples contact: [www.participation@nya.org.uk](mailto:www.participation@nya.org.uk)



### Mesnes Park Youth In Action, Wigan

Evidence of listening	Evidence of action	Evidence of change
Young people told their detached youth work team that they had issues with the safety and facilities in the local park. A couple of young women had been attacked walking through the park in the previous months.	Young people formed an action group, supported by the workers, and created surveys and questionnaires to gather the opinions of other park users and young people. They also attended township forum meetings to highlight the issue.	A skate ramp has been set up in the park as well as temporary lighting pending further regeneration. A young person involved commented, ‘there are fewer problems in the park now so it’s great to know our work has made an impact.’

## Showing evidence of an 'adequate' level of participation

Three levels of participation are described in the Hear by Right standards – Emerging, Established and Advanced. Participation Works believes that an organisation can show an 'adequate' level of children and young people's participation by using the Hear by Right standards. This means completing the Emerging Level of the Hear by Right standards with additional proof of the outcomes of participation effectively to underpin the self-assessment principle of Hear by Right and to avoid tokenism. You need to show evidence that participation has led to change both in the organisation and in children and young people's lives.

The evidence for this will come in three parts, with all three endorsed by children and young people:

	A) Hear by Right scores	B) What's Changing in the organisation – stories of internal change	C) What's Changed for children and young people – what's better in their lives
Emerging Level	Minimum of 2 scored for all Emerging indicators. Agreed by children and young people	2 stories of participation, building on evidence in the Hear by Right map	2 What's Changed examples framed in the Every Child Matters five outcomes

Emerging level in Hear by Right focuses on the essential internal ways for an organisation to deliver meaningful participation. The Hear by Right Self-Assessment Tool has a self-assessed scoring system. For the participation to be 'adequate', adults and children and young people should together agree that there is a minimum of '2' (meaning 'In place, but needs improving') for all indicators at Emerging Level. We believe that you are best-placed to judge what score is appropriate for your organisation in your circumstances, but 'self-assessed' also demands that children and young people endorse or add to adult-based evidence.

The self-assessment process is repeated for Established and Advanced Levels. At each level, organisations need to agree a minimum score of '2' for all indicators, with 2 further stories of change in the organisation and 2 further examples of What's Changed in children and young people's lives.

### More help

- Please send a copy of your completed map and plan to [participation@nya.org.uk](mailto:participation@nya.org.uk), so that good practice examples of more organisations can be viewed on the The National Youth Agency's Hear by Right shared learning web pages.
- You can access them via [www.participationworks.org.uk/nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.participationworks.org.uk/nya.org.uk/hearbyright).
- There are case studies here of how others have used Hear by Right, free downloads of supporting tools and materials and also top ten tips on how this Self-Assessment Tool converts words into action.
- For more advice, training and support on using Hear by Right contact Jake Manning or Harry Wade on 0116 242 7405

Further information on other participation issues contact Participation Works Enquiry Line on 0845 603 6725, email [enquiries@participationworks.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@participationworks.org.uk) or visit [www.participationworks.org.uk](http://www.participationworks.org.uk).

### Key Resources

Badham, B., and Wade, H. (2005), *Hear by Right: Standards for the active involvement of children and young people*, The NYA/Local Government Association [www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright](http://www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright)

Badham, B. (2004), *Act by Right: skills for the active involvement of children and young people in making change happen*, The NYA

UN. (1989), United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child

Every Child Matters: Change for Children (2004) [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

