

CIRCUS SKILLS

A Training, Support
and Development Needs Survey
of Participation Workers

Kylie Kilgour



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Summary

This is an account of research into the training, support and development needs of Participation Workers. The research took place between June and September 2001. A survey was conducted across England and Wales. 186 people took part in the research. The results showed overwhelming support for the establishment of a Participation Workers Service which would provide specialist advice, support training and networking opportunities. Proposals for the structure and functions of this service are explored in this report.

About Carnegie Young People Initiative

The Carnegie Young People Initiative (CYPI) is a research project that aims to:

- promote young people's participation in public decision making
- encourage policy makers to listen to young people
- document best practice in young people's participation strategies throughout the UK.

It was set up in 1996 by the Carnegie UK Trust. The Trust was established in 1913 by the Scottish philanthropist Andrew Carnegie and gives grants in Ireland and Britain.

About the Author

Kylie Kilgour is the Young People's Involvement Coordinator at CYPI. She has been involved in a range of young people's participation projects since she was 11 years old through young people led theatre groups and training organisations. She then trained as a lawyer and worked in community legal centres in New South Wales, Australia, before emigrating to London. She has also been employed at the London homeless young people's charity, Centrepoin, as the Youth Consultation Worker.

Acknowledgements

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Kathleen Cronin (National Children's Bureau), Bess Herbert (Office of the Children's Rights Commissioner for London) and Esta Orchard (National Council of Voluntary Youth Services)

All of the workers who responded to the research by completing a questionnaire, telephoning or emailing their contribution.

Background to the research

CYPI has been researching and promoting young people's participation in public decision making since 1999. One of our aims is to encourage the adoption of minimum standards for young people's participation across the voluntary and statutory sectors.

As part of this, in 2000 we undertook a major study of young people's participation in public decision making across the UK, called the *Taking the Initiative* reports. We commissioned research in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland to create a comprehensive picture of participation work being done with young people. Through this research we found that many organisations in the voluntary and statutory sectors are highly committed to young people's participation in public decision making. There is now a lot of activity to encourage young people to get involved in public decision making in both the voluntary and statutory sectors. One of the issues arising out of this is how exactly this work is being delivered. In the *Taking the Initiative* research we asked respondents to identify how they were approaching this issue. Many responded that they had specialist workers employed to deliver this work, while others had altered job descriptions of current employees to give them responsibility for involving young people in public decision making.

We recognise that these workers have been given a difficult, demanding and very important responsibility. The way in which young people are approached, treated and worked with is key to the success of participation initiatives. Being treated with respect and being creative are routinely reported by young people as the most important ways of getting them involved.¹ Unless workers are highly skilled and resourced to do both these things, they will fail to engage very many young people in public decision making.²

Anecdotally these workers have voiced concerns about being isolated in their workplace, often because they are the only person with responsibility for participation work in their organisation. They have also reported difficulty in finding appropriate professional training and support systems. Our own experiences of involving young people at CYPI have reinforced the need for constantly developing and updating our participation skills. Informally, we have tried where possible to inform practitioners about each other's existence, and to encourage them to share practice and experience. In conjunction with this we also decided to undertake a more detailed piece of research about the training, development and support needs of Participation Workers in England with the aim of thinking through some of the options for ensuring that Participation Workers have the skills, resources and support necessary to ensure young people's participation in public decision making is successful.

This report is the result of that research. We have called it "Circus Skills" in recognition of the wide range of tasks workers juggle in making young people's participation in decision making relevant and useful to both young people and decision makers. The report is divided into 4 sections:

¹ S Fitzpatrick eal, Youth Involvement in urban regeneration: hard lessons, future directions, Policy and Politics, vol 28, no 4 493-509.

² S Neary, Making it real: Young people in democratic structures, LGIU, 2001, p4.

Definitions

This section looks at definitions of participation in public decision making. It also gives a definition of what a Participation Worker is.

Policy context

This section looks at the range of policies influencing the employment of Participation Workers.

The Research

This section of the report looks at the survey we conducted and the findings we have drawn. It includes case studies of job descriptions and networking opportunities.

Recommendations and Conclusion

This part of the report looks at the ways in which Participation Workers' training, support and development needs can be met.

Definitions

What is Participation in Public Decision-Making?

For the purposes of this report, participation means taking part. In this context it is interchangeable with involvement. While we recognise that there are different levels and types of involvement in public decision making, we do not assert that one type of participation is better than another. Participation strategies should be chosen depending upon the needs and priorities of the young people you are seeking to involve, and the agencies you are trying to influence. This can range from one-off consultation opportunities for young people to more extended or sustained programs of involving young people in public decision making at government level eg. through representation on government advisory councils.

Our research focuses on public or collective decision making. By this we mean decisions about public policy which concern the interests of young people as a group, including legislation and the allocation of resources. This can be on any scale. For example, it could be within an agency serving young people such as a school, youth club or children's home. Or it could be in a local community, such as a village, town or city. Or it could be through a government institution, such as the Scottish Parliament or Department for Education and Skills.

What is a Participation Worker

The research shows that there is no agreed job title for workers employed to facilitate young people's participation in public decision making. For the purposes of this report, we are using the generic term 'Participation Worker' to describe these posts. Our broad definition is:

'A Participation Worker is a paid employee responsible for ensuring young people are involved in public decision making. They may do this through a range of participation strategies, including, but not limited to, group work, forums, youth councils, consultation groups, committees, advocacy, media, and arts.'

POLICY CONTEXT

The Participation Sector

There is no simple answer to how this new breed of 'Participation Worker' has emerged. This section of the report looks at the main policy reasons behind the increasing numbers of workers being employed to deliver young people's participation projects. This plethora of policy objectives gives an indication of the complexity of many Participation Workers' responsibilities.

Community development

Since the 1970's community development work in the UK has concentrated on empowering local people, including young people, to participate in local issues. Many youth workers employed in both the voluntary and statutory sector have community development tasks included in more generic job descriptions. Often this involves facilitating young people's participation in a range of local consultations, policy development and neighbourhood issues. (Some respondents to the survey said they had been doing participation work for about this long!)

United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child

It is also important to recognise the impact of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which the UK signed in 1991. It has played a pivotal role, despite the fact that it has not been introduced as domestic law by the government. Since it was ratified by the UK government, a number of voluntary organisations have championed children's rights to participate – as encapsulated in Article 12 of UNCRC. They have argued that it is hypocritical for the UK to sign an international convention and not implement it domestically, whether through law, policy or practice. They chose to lead the way by developing projects that practically involved young people in their local communities. This created a new area of youth/community development work in the voluntary sector around involving young people in public decision making.

Child protection

A growing awareness of children's vulnerability to abuse by people who care for them, as exemplified by scandals about systemic child abuse in children's homes, have generated a lot of debate about child protection policy. It is now commonly accepted that good practice in child protection involves listening to young people. For example, the Children's Act 1989 and the Department of Health's Quality Protects legislation have created an obligation to involve young people in local authority care in decisions that affect their lives. Many local authority Social Services Departments have responded to this by creating Children's Rights Officers posts, who advocate individually and collectively for young people. In recent years CROs have been increasingly asked to bring together groups of young people to comment on local authorities' corporate parenting strategies, as well as to participate in wider public decision making processes.

Young people and democracy

There has been a growing number of programmes established to try to interest young people in democratic participation, particularly voting. Voting among 18-25 year olds has been steadily decreasing. At the 2001 election the youth vote was at an all time low of 39%, causing many politicians and government agencies to become concerned that this is a downward trend that will continue to get worse. The concern now is how to reverse this trend – youth participation is seen as one method for ‘reengaging’ young people with political issues. Many workers are employed in local authorities to implement ‘Young People and Democracy’ projects, including establishing Youth Councils and other styles of local youth forums.

Best value

Local authorities have also been employing specialist staff in response to the introduction of ‘Best Value’ legislation by central government. This requires local authority consultation with service users/clients – including young people.

Central government activity

The establishment of the Children and Young People Unit in the Department for Education and Skills has brought a new focus for government departments on consulting with and involving children and young people. Government has also been actively reforming youth services, particularly through the new Connexions program and changes to funding programmes for youth services. Connexions is expected to involve young people in its management, policy development and service delivery. Youth services will be expected to show a similar approach to secure government funding. These policy initiatives have also led to the employment of new workers, or to changing job descriptions to include youth participation.

Young people’s campaign groups

There have also been a number of young people’s groups who have campaigned for their right to be involved. A few examples include: Article 12 is a national group of 10-18 year olds who have campaigned since the early 1990s for their right to be involved in decisions which affect them. The Participation Education Group, based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne has trained young people about their rights to participate, as well as training adult decision makers about involving young people. The National Black Youth Forum is a group supported by Save the Children Fund to campaign specifically about the rights of black, Asian and ethnic minority young people to have a voice in public decision making. Many of these groups employ Adult Support Workers to assist them with their campaigning.

THE RESEARCH

Purpose of this research

One of the core concerns of CYPI is the need for minimum standards for best practice for young people's participation in public decision making. We want to create common standards across all sectors, including the professional skills of Participation Workers. As a starting point therefore, it was important to survey the field about their training, support and development needs to inform our thinking about standards and skills development.

To date, no one has tried to track how many people are employed to enable young people's participation. Anecdotal evidence has suggested a growing number as commitment and activity around young people's participation has expanded in both the voluntary and statutory sectors. This research has attempted to find as many of these people as we could.

We have also heard that workers feel isolated in their work, as they are often the only person within their organisation doing participation work. So we wanted to explore how to bring people together as one way of addressing this feeling of isolation.

The Local Government Information Unit has recently conducted research about how to improve young people's participation in local government.³ This research has suggested that the key to improving young people's involvement is to improve adults' skills for working with and communicating with young people.

The National Youth Agency and Local Government Authority have recommended the adoption by local authorities of voluntary standards for young people's participation in public decision making.⁴ Specialist staff and training have been included as key standards to be adopted, as detailed below:

- “ 5.3 Ensure active involvement skills and work are addressed in all relevant job descriptions
- 5.4 Secure appropriate specialist staff to support active involvement work with young people
- and
- 5.10 Clear and adequate adult support staff for building capacity among young people”

But so far there has been no agreement about exactly what this training should be. This research asked Participation Workers to identify what sort of training and skills they think is needed to do this type of work.

We also believe it is important for workers to be encouraged to continue to learn throughout their working life. We therefore asked Participation Workers to identify how they could be best supported in the development of their skills throughout their career.

Methodology

The data for this research was collected through a 20 question self completion questionnaire. A copy of the survey is available on request from CYPI.

We mailed out our survey through established lists of local authorities, contact lists we have built up during our project, contact lists held by other children's charities including the Office for the Children's Rights Commission for London, NCH Action for Children, Children's Society, Safe in the City, Health Development Agency, NSPCC, Barnado's. We also inserted the questionnaire in the National Youth Agency's 'Young People Now' publication. We advertised the research, inviting people to complete the survey, through other NYA publications, NCVYS Clipboard and a posting on our website.

³ S Neary, op.cit. ⁴ Hear by Right, 2001.

Over 2000 surveys were sent out in the hope of reaching as many potential respondents as possible. But as this research relied on self-reporting, we are sure there are some people who we missed. The survey was targeted at workers in England, however we also had some responses from Wales, and have included them. There were also a number of people who sent the survey in after the closing date and their questionnaires were not included in the statistical analysis. However we have tried to incorporate their comments and ideas where possible.

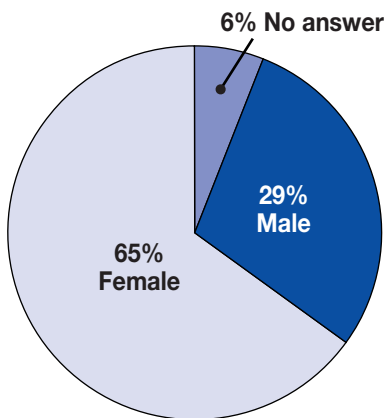
Research Data

There was a total of 186 surveys returned.

Gender

There were significantly more women than men employed as Participation Workers. 54 respondents (29%) were male, 120 (65%) were female. 12 people were anonymous, so their gender was not known.

Fig. 1. Gender

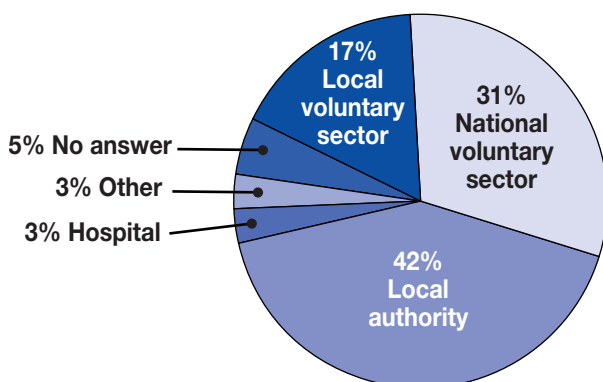


Type of organisation

Activity was concentrated in local authorities and national voluntary sector organisations:

- 79 (42%) surveys came from local authorities.
- 57 (31%) national voluntary sector organisations responded.
- 31 (17%) local voluntary organisations responded.
- 5 responses came from hospitals, being 3% of the group.

Fig. 2. Type of organisation



In some instances workers were employed in a partnership between a local authority and national voluntary organisation. This was most often the case for projects conducted by The Children’s Society or NCH Action for Children. These were categorised according to whom the respondent identified as the lead agency.

What is your job title?

There was a wide range of job titles given to these positions. The most common were Project Manager (6%), Project Coordinator (5%), Youth Development Officer (4%), Project Worker (4%), Children's Rights Officer (4%), Youth Participation Officer (3%), and Participation Development Worker (3%). This variety of job title reflects the many reasons why these posts have been created – some are specific to particular programmes or policy initiatives, while many others reflect the professional commitment of more generic youth workers to participation rights.

Fig. 3. What is your job title?

Project Manager	Youth Drugs Educator	Youth Issues Co-ordinator
Project Co-ordinator	District Youth Participation & Social Inclusion Worker	Corporate Youth Strategy Officer
Youth Development Officer	DYAG Co-ordinator (Drug Youth Advisory Group)	Community Liaison Worker For Youth
Project Worker	Head Of Childrens & Young Peoples Section	Training & Development Co-ordinator
Childrens Rights Officer	Environmental Policy Officer	Youth Participation & Focus Worker
Youth Participation Officer	Youth Affairs Officer	Childrens Rights Worker
Participation Development Worker	Crime & Disorder Policy Officer	Director of Programme & Development
Development Worker	Community Grants Administrator	Group Worker
Youth Service - Area Manager	Service Development Officer	Area Youth & Community Worker
Area Youth Worker	External Liaison Officer	Senior Officer For Young People
Children & Young Peoples Participation Worker	Housing Support Worker	Community Education Worker
Youth Worker	Communication Project Worker	Young Peoples Support Manager
Millennium Volunteers Co-ordinator	Regional Director	Young Peoples Representative
Researcher	Youth Empowerment Worker	Consultation Youth Worker
Advocacy Co-ordinator	Participation Development Co-ordinator	Training & Participation Officer
Children & Youth Development Officer	Independent Visitor Co-ordinator	Engaging Young People Democratic Renewal Co-ordinator
Young Persons Facilitator	Community Projects Officer	Youth Forum Project Co-ordinator
Youth Work Co-ordinator	Senior Development Officer	Rights & Representations Project For Looked After Children
Regional Development Worker	Policy & Research Officer	Young Peoples Consultation Officer
Community Development Officer	Deputy Head of Service	Youth Advocacy Worker
Deputy Manager	Education Co-ordinator	Young Peoples Support Officer
Youth Programme Co-ordinator	Playworker	Programme Officer
Sports & Youth Development Officer	Childrens Rights & Advocacy Officer	Detached Youth Worker
Youth Development Worker	Assistant Manager	Nurse, Manager, Paediatrics
Senior Youth Leader	Community Engagement Co-ordinator	Hospital Youth Worker
Senior Youth Participation Officer	Centre Manager	Staff Nurse
Childrens Rights & Advocacy Co-ordinator	Childrens Services Officer	Participation Consultant
Public Health Nurse For Young People	Millennium Volunteer Worker	Co-ordinator Youth Council
Young Peoples Officer	Youth Advice Worker	Youth Involvement Co-ordinator
Youth Development Co-ordinator	Head of Youth Affairs	Childrens Voice Project Officer
Senior Project Worker	Community Development Co-ordinator	Programme Manager
Community Development Worker	Co-ordinator of Learning	Development Manager
Youth Issues Officer	Children & Young Peoples Participation Co-ordinator	Quality Assurance Manager
Advocacy Project Manager	Young Peoples Health Co-ordinator	Youth Participation & Advocacy Worker
Health Promotion & Community Safety Co-ordinator	Youth Volunteering Facilitator	
Community Safety Project Officer		

Despite the wide range of job title, there were common themes in what people said about their work, as the following statements show:

'Youth participation is inconsistent and understanding of term 'participation' is very varied'

'I think all too often participation work is seen as separate from youth work, often perceived as political. Also I feel the job can be poorly defined making it difficult in terms of workload.'

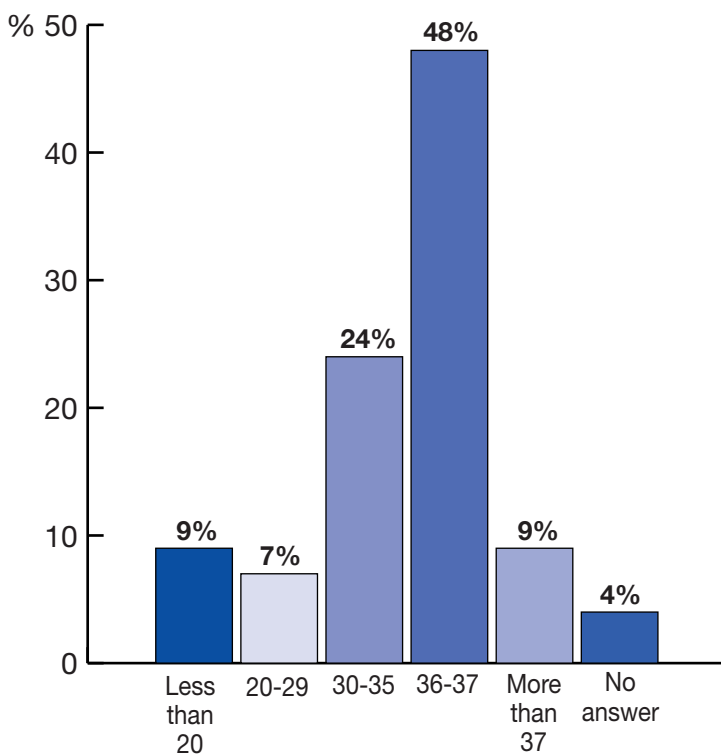
'I often feel isolated in my remit'

'I don't personally think it's necessary to be a youth worker to work well with young people and there are lots of theory laden debates about participation that I find quite tedious but a practical, well publicised and cheap course covering some of the boxes ticked on Q17 and a supportive network would be really helpful'

How many hours per week are you contracted to work?

The majority (48%) of workers were employed between 36-37 hours per week. 24% were employed between 30-35 hours, with 16% being employed for less than 30 hours per week.

Fig. 4. How many hours per week are you contracted to work?



Briefly describe the main duties in your job

Respondents were asked to describe their main duties. Many people attached copies of their job descriptions, but about as many left this section completely blank. The rest gave a brief summary of their tasks. We have selected 8 case studies to demonstrate the range of:

- job descriptions for Participation Workers
- organisations where Participation Workers are employed
- participation strategies being used by different organisations to engage young people

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION WORKER – BARNARDO'S – a national voluntary sector project

This is a project of Barnardo's North East Region. It is a full time post (37 hours per week). This is a new post and the worker has been employed for less than 3 months. The project targets children and young people who use Barnardo's services. As the project is just beginning they have no statistics about the number of young people being involved or their ages.

The main duties are:

- To work developmentally with those working in Barnardo's services, other agencies and the local community, with children and young people to enable them to work participatively
- To assist in developing strategies for children and young people's participation and incorporating these as an integral part of practice
- To work directly with children and young people to enable them to communicate their thoughts and feelings about their circumstances and changes they want to see happen
- To identify and develop a range of ways in which children and young people can contribute to the development of services to address their needs.

CHILDREN'S VOICE PROJECTS OFFICER – STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – a local authority project

This is a project of the Social Services Department of Staffordshire County Council. It is a full time post (35 hours per week). The worker has been employed for over 12 months. It targets looked after children and young people in the local authority's area. There are 15 young people involved in a young people's forum.

The main duties are:

- To ensure young people are informed and consulted about the content of statutory plans and major strategic initiatives that affect them.
- To keep abreast of best practice regarding consultation of young people and ensure this knowledge is applied locally as appropriate
- To work alone, or as part of a task group, to ascertain the views of particular groups of young people on particular issues
- To commission consultation exercises to ascertain the views of particular groups of young people on particular issues
- To produce information which will publicise and explain the services which the department offers to young people
- To collect, develop and disseminate practice tools for social workers to facilitate communication with children and young people

PARTICIPATION WORKER – RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION PROJECT – a local authority and national voluntary sector partnership

This post is part of a partnership project between Lewisham Council and The Children's Society. The post is funded full time (35 hours per week). The worker has been employed for over 12 months. It targets all looked after young people in Lewisham. The number of young people involved varies.

The main duties of the post are:

- Involving young people in producing a newsletter for looked after young people in Lewisham
- Enabling young people's views and ideas to contribute to service development
- Developing young people's skills
- Recording, evaluating and disseminating the work.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OFFICER – NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES – a local voluntary sector project

This is a project based in Wales in a local Council for Voluntary Services. The post is full time (35 hours per week). The worker has been in post for over 12 months. It targets all young people aged 16-20 in the Neath Port Talbot area. There are 19 young people in a core group, and a further 60 young people involved through consultations.

The main duties include:

- Developing a young people's resource centre in Port Talbot
- Developing an advocacy service for young people across the area
- Coordinating the 'Youth Providers Network' for Neath Port Talbot

YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND ADVOCACY WORKER – TORBAY UNITARY AUTHORITY/THE CONNEXIONS SERVICE – a local authority and central government partnership

This post is a joint project of Torbay Local Authority and the Department for Education and Skills (Connexions Service Unit). The worker is part of the local authority's Community Education Team. The post is funded full time (35 hours per week). It targets all 13-25 year olds in the catchment area of the local authority. The worker has been employed for 6-12 months. 15-20 young people have been involved so far.

The main responsibilities are:

- Supporting young people
- Encouraging young people to become involved in issues that affect their lives
- Coordinating a number of young people's forums, including the Torbay Youth Council, Connexions Young Person's Focus Group, UKYP Member for Torbay, School Councils
- Providing information about the Connexions Service

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WORKER – PENNYWELL AREA YOUTH PARTICIPATION PROJECT – a local voluntary sector project

This is a project of the Pennywell Neighbourhood Centre. It is funded through the Single Regeneration Budget. The post is full time (35 hours per week). The worker has been in post for over 12 months. It targets all young people aged 11-25 in the Pennywell area. 82 young people were involved in 2000/1.

Its principal responsibilities are:

To facilitate the development of a range of opportunities to engage young people in decision-making opportunities

To work with groups of young people to develop their personal skills

To involve and train young people in the use of research and facilitate the application of research processes to issues identified by young people

To establish forums of young people with whom agencies can consult, at the discretion of the young people

COMMUNICATION PROJECT WORKER – TELFORD AND WREKIN COUNCIL – a local authority project

This is a project of the local authority's Youth Service. It is a part-time (18.5 hours per week) post. The worker has been in post for over 12 months. The worker supports the Best Value team for the local authority. They target particular young people depending on the best value topics eg. young British Muslim men for a review of the Community Safety Strategy. Young people targeted are generally 12-19 years old. The number of young people involved varies throughout the work programme.

The principal activities of the post are:

To work with and support local government officers in establishing and developing an effective framework for involving and consulting with children and young people in decision making at local authority level.

To develop consultation with groups of children and young people and support their involvement in best value reviews

To develop a range of training to fully support children and young people in their understanding of how local government works, the best value review process and to develop skills in peer education to support their involvement in reviews engaging a range of peers.

PARTICIPATION OFFICER – NATIONAL YOUTH ADVOCACY SERVICE – a national voluntary sector project

This post is part of a team of workers at the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). The post is full time (35 hours per week). The worker has been employed for over 12 months. The project targets looked after young people aged 10-19. Between 5-15 young people are involved.

The main tasks of the job are:

To promote and develop the rights and interests of young people's participation within NYAS and contributing to the national debate concerning young people's participation

Designing and implementing training for young people that equips them with the skills needed to participate

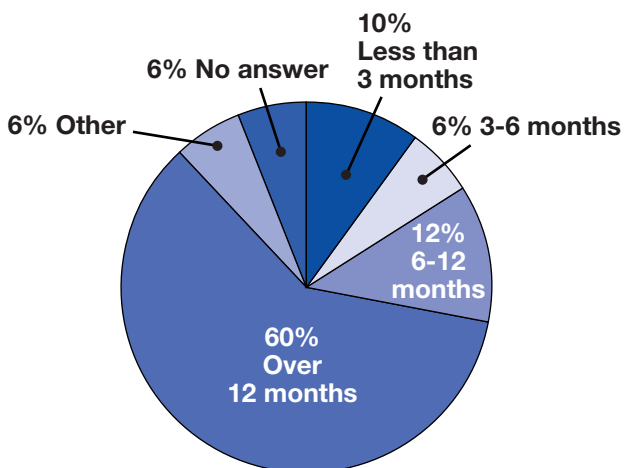
Coordinating feedback from young people about the service they receive from NYAS

Working with local authorities to develop and maintain young people's forums.

How long have you been doing this job?

The majority (60%) of respondents had been employed for 12 months or more. 12% had been employed for 6-12 months. 10% had been employed for less than 3 months. 6% had been employed for between 3-6 months. This broadly shows that while some people are established in the sector, many more are just beginning to work in this area.

Fig. 5. How long have you been doing this job?



What proportion of your time is allocated to supporting young people's participation?

There was a wide spread of the amount of time allocated to participation work as a part of each person's job responsibilities. Participation Workers may be employed full-time, part-time, or have this role as one of many other duties.

Only 18% responded that 100% of their time was allocated to involving young people in decision making. 17% said it was '50% and over', and 15% said it was '75% and over'.

This means that for 50% of the respondents, the majority of their time was allocated to involving young people in public decision making.

25% said it was 'less than 25%' of their time, and a further 20% said it was '25% and over'

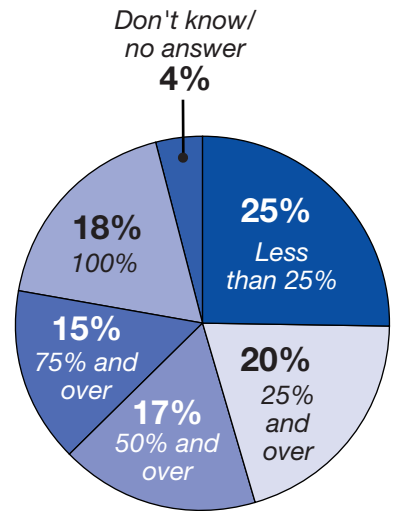


Fig. 6.
What proportion of your time is allocated to supporting young people's participation?

What kind of involvement do young people have?

Respondents were asked to choose from a range of answers detailing how young people are involved in public decision making. The top 5 ways young people are involved were:

- 83% are asked for ideas about changing existing policies/services
- 73% are asked to comment on proposed new policies/services
- 58% are involved in researching/evaluating services/policies
- 56% are involved in the planning of policies/services
- 38% are involved in direct service delivery
- 28% said they involved young people in the management of services.

Other answers included: through youth councils/forums (4%), recruitment/interviewing (4%), training professionals/students/volunteers (3%), participate in community projects, designing producing promotional material and decisions about medical care.

Fig. 7. What kind of involvement do young people have?

	TYPE OF ORGANISATION						
	TOTAL	Local voluntary sector	National voluntary sector	Local authority	Hospital	Other	No answer
They are involved in the planning of policies/services	56%	77%	56%	49%	20%	100%	33%
They are asked for ideas about changing existing policies/services	83%	87%	86%	84%	20%	100%	78%
They are asked to comment on proposed new policies/services	73%	81%	68%	75%	20%	80%	78%
They are involved in the management of services	28%	39%	40%	19%	20%	20%	11%
They are involved in direct service delivery	38%	55%	47%	32%	-%	20%	11%
They are involved in researching or evaluating services/policies	58%	65%	56%	59%	20%	60%	44%
They are involved through youth councils/forums	4%	-%	2%	8%	-%	-%	-%
They are involved with recruitment/interviewing	4%	3%	11%	1%	-%	-%	-%
They are involved with training/training the professionals, students, volunteers	3%	6%	4%	1%	-%	-%	-%
They are involved in/participate in community projects	2%	3%	-%	3%	-%	-%	11%
Generally involved in designing/producing promotional material eg leaflets, magazines, videos	3%	3%	9%	-%	-%	-%	-%
They are consulted on medical care options	2%	-%	-%	-%	80%	-%	-%
They are involved in an advisory/consultory capacity	2%	3%	5%	-%	-%	-%	-%
By directing/steering their own projects	1%	3%	-%	-%	-%	20%	-%
By working with/representing projects in schools	1%	-%	-%	3%	-%	-%	-%
Other	3%	-%	2%	5%	-%	-%	11%
Don't know/no answer	4%	-%	7%	3%	-%	-%	11%

Base: All respondents

How many young people are involved?

The majority of respondents either did not know, or gave estimates of the number of young people involved (96 responses, 52%). The responses which were specific about how many young people they worked with were generally around 20 young people (42 responses, 23%).

This lack of information about the numbers of young people who are being involved in public decision making is concerning as it makes the task of evaluating the impact of people’s work very difficult if there is no baseline quantitative data being collected. It also makes it difficult to know whether the work is reaching the large number (15 million) of young people in England. So far it would appear that only a very small percentage of young people are getting the opportunity to be involved in public decision making.

Fig. 8. How many young people are involved?

	TYPE OF ORGANISATION						
	TOTAL	Local voluntary sector	National voluntary sector	Local authority	Hospital	Other	No answer
Up to 20	23%	26%	19%	24%	20%	-%	33%
21-50	8%	-%	18%	4%	-%	20%	-%
51-100	7%	19%	5%	5%	-%	-%	-%
More than 100	5%	6%	2%	6%	-%	-%	11%
Don't know/ too many to count	52%	48%	49%	57%	20%	60%	44%
No answer	6%	-%	7%	4%	60%	20%	11%

Base: All respondents

How do young people get to know about the project?

The majority of workers relied on word of mouth to let young people know about their project (73 responses, 39%). This included both workers talking about the project with young people, and young people telling their friends. They also recruited through schools (56 responses, 30%), through leaflets/ mailshots/flyers/newsletters (45 responses, 24%), and through youth groups (41 responses, 22%).

Other techniques included:

General advertising, social workers, other agencies, youth workers, by referral, posters, Internet, attending conferences.

Fig. 9. How do young people get to know about the project?

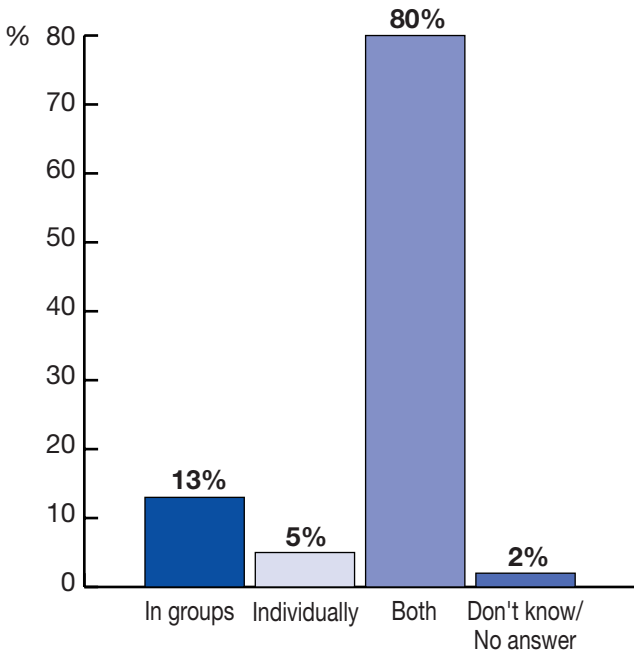
	TYPE OF ORGANISATION						
	TOTAL	Local voluntary sector	National voluntary sector	Local authority	Hospital	Other	No answer
Through word of mouth/ their peers, friends, networking	39%	58%	42%	30%	-%	60%	44%
Through schools/colleges	30%	39%	16%	41%	-%	-%	33%
Through leaflets/ mailshots/flyers/ newsletters	24%	16%	28%	23%	-%	40%	44%
Through youth groups/ clubs/ units/ councils	22%	16%	11%	35%	-%	20%	11%
Through advertising/publicity	20%	32%	16%	22%	-%	40%	-%
Through social services/ social workers	18%	10%	32%	13%	-%	20%	11%
Through agencies/other agencies	17%	29%	21%	10%	-%	20%	22%
Through youth workers/ youth professionals	13%	13%	9%	16%	20%	-%	11%
Through outreach workers/ detached workers	9%	10%	2%	14%	-%	-%	11%
By referral	8%	13%	16%	1%	-%	20%	-%
Through posters	8%	10%	7%	4%	-%	20%	33%
Through the internet/ website	8%	10%	2%	10%	-%	20%	11%
Through on-going/existing contact/direct contact	8%	3%	9%	8%	-%	40%	-%
Through attending conferences/events	7%	16%	5%	5%	-%	-%	11%
Through the press/ local press	5%	6%	-%	6%	-%	-%	22%
Through their parents	4%	3%	9%	1%	-%	-%	-%
Through promotional literature	3%	-%	4%	4%	-%	-%	11%
Through magazines	3%	3%	4%	3%	-%	-%	11%
Radio	2%	3%	-%	3%	-%	-%	11%
Through visits to childrens homes	1%	-%	4%	-%	-%	-%	-%
Through members scheme/ members organisation	1%	-%	4%	-%	-%	-%	-%
Other	10%	10%	12%	5%	40%	-%	22%
Don't know/ no answer	9%	3%	5%	10%	40%	20%	11%

Base: All respondents

How are young people involved?

The majority of young people were involved both in groups and individually (149 responses, 80%). This reflects the fact that many job descriptions required workers to do both group work and individual advocacy and support.

Fig. 10. How are young people involved?

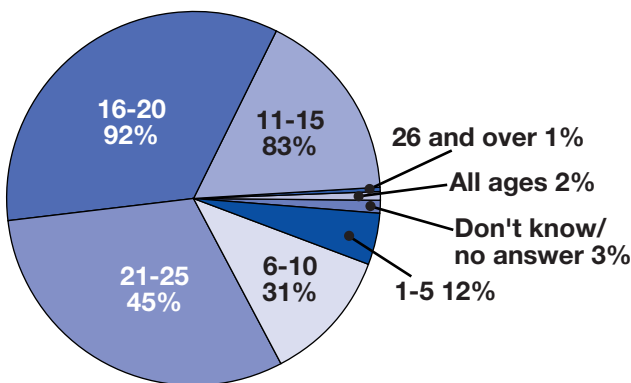


What is the age range of the young people involved?

Most projects were working with 16-20 year olds (172 responses, 92%)

- 83% were working with 11-15 year olds.
- 45% were working with 21-25 year olds
- 31% were working with 6-10 year olds.
- 12% were working with under 5s.

Fig. 11. What is the age range of the young people involved?



Is it aimed at all young people or at specific groups? (eg. disabled, looked after, ethnic minorities). Please specify which groups you target.

52% of respondents said their work was aimed at “all young people”, but with an emphasis on disadvantaged young people. 21% of projects specifically targeted young people in care. 12% targeted young people with disabilities. A similar number (11%) of projects targeted young people from ethnic minorities.

The concentration of work on young people in care is a combination of project work by national voluntary organisations such as NCH Action for Children, the Children’s Society and Barnados, many of whom have a history of having ‘looked after’ these children in the past. There are also many projects conducted by Children’s Rights Officers in local authorities’ Social Services departments, pursuant to the Department of Health’s Quality Protects Programme. Many local authority based workers involved young people in youth councils, or supported the process of electing young MPs to the UK Youth Parliament. There were also projects to do with environmental policy, neighbourhood regeneration and Local Agenda 21, young tenants, youth crime, drug education, asylum seekers and sports.

Fig. 12. Is it aimed at all young people or at specific groups?

	TYPE OF ORGANISATION						
	TOTAL	Local voluntary sector	National voluntary sector	Local authority	Hospital	Other	No answer
All young people	52%	55%	26%	72%	40%	40%	44%
Looked After Children	21%	13%	39%	16%	-%	-%	-%
Young people with disabilities/ disabled children	12%	10%	16%	11%	-%	-%	11%
Ethnic minorities	11%	13%	7%	15%	-%	-%	-%
Socially disadvantaged young people/ socially excluded	9%	10%	9%	8%	-%	20%	11%
Young people leaving care	17%	3%	16%	3%	-%	-%	11%
Young carers	4%	-%	7%	5%	-%	-%	-%
Young offenders	4%	13%	5%	1%	-%	-%	-%
Young homeless	4%	-%	9%	4%	-%	-%	-%
Children in need	3%	6%	5%	-%	-%	20%	-%
Young people with learning disabilities	3%	3%	2%	1%	-%	-%	22%
Young women	3%	-%	-%	6%	-%	-%	-%
Targeted by geographical area	3%	10%	4%	-%	-%	-%	-%
Young people with drug/ alcohol problems/issues	2%	6%	2%	1%	-%	-%	-%
Child protection/children at risk	2%	6%	2%	1%	-%	-%	-%
Young people with mental health problems	1%	6%	-%	-%	-%	-%	-%
Young mothers/ teenage pregnancy	1%	3%	-%	1%	-%	-%	-%
Young people seeking asylum/refugee children	1%	-%	2%	1%	-%	-%	-%
Young people at risk of exclusion/excluded from school/education	11%	-%	-%	1%	-%	-%	11%
Young people in lone parent families	1%	-%	2%	-%	-%	-%	-%
Unemployed young people	11%	-%	-%	-%	-%	-%	11%
Other	3%	-%	5%	3%	-%	-%	-%
Don't know/no answer	6%	3%	2%	5%	60%	20%	22%

Base: All respondents

What are your educational and/or professional qualifications?

There is no clear qualification path for Participation Workers. Predictably a significant number have qualifications in youth and/or community work. But for many, they have more general qualifications in a broad range of disciplines. The majority of workers we surveyed were educated to degree level and beyond. Many had also supplemented generalist degrees with specific postgraduate diplomas and training that related to their employment.

Below is a list of the wide variety and combinations of qualifications:

Below is a list of the wide variety and combinations of qualifications:	Qualified Teacher, Youth Worker, Post-18 Education	Residential Certificate in Care of Children and Young People, CQSW, Diploma in Social Work
PGCE	GNVQ Adv. Health and Social Care	BA Hons Humanities, Foundation Diploma in Youth Work
BA	BA Honours, MA in Anthropology, Community & Youth Work;	BA, MA, Diploma in Voluntary Sector Management; Diploma in Social Work
BA Honours	Foundation Certificate in Analytic Group Psychotherapy; Advanced Certificate in social work with young offenders	JNC 3 Youth Work
BEEd	BSc Honours Psychology, Teaching Qualification, Certificate in Part-time Youth Work	Bachelor of Education (Hons)
MA	BA Honours, MPhil Cultural Studies, Certificate in Part-time Youth & Community Work	BA Hons Economics, Diploma in Youth and Community Work
Dip S/W	Nursery Nursing, NVQ Assessors Award	MSc Applied Environmental Science
BA & Dip in Health Education	BA Honours Social Work	BA Hons History and Literature; Postgraduate diploma in health promotion; RGN RSCN (Children)
Postgraduate certificate in education of adults	DMS, 'O' & 'A' levels	BA Hons History, PGSE
Degree in Fine Art/MA in History of Art/Foundation Certificate in Youth and Community Work	Part-time qualification in youth work	BA History and English, MA African History
JNC Diploma/BA Honours Youth & Community Work	JNC locally qualified in youth work	BA Hons, MA, MSc, Diploma SW
Dip HE Informal & Community Education	MSc, BSc Honours	CQSW
JNC Level 1 Youth Work /Playwork Training/Access Course in Sociology/Hairdressing & Beauty Qualification	Diploma in Welfare Studies, Diploma in Social Work, BA Honours	PGCE/Masters in Change Management
BA Honours/MA Social Geography	BTEC HND Business & Persona	LLB Hons
PgDip/MA Youth & Community Work	Dip in Youth & Community Work, Advanced Diploma in Youth and Community Work, Diploma in Management	Qualified Solicitor
Dip Community & Youth Work	BSc Hons Sport Science, BA Hons Recreation Management	BA Hons Community Studies
BSc Psychology, PGCE	BSc Hons Geography/Sport Science, Diploma in Leisure Management	BA Hons Social Science; Postgraduate diploma Social Policy
MEd, Certificate Education Youth & Community Work	MA Environmental Law, BA Hons Environmental Management	BA Hons Government, MA European Politics & Economics
BA (Hons.) Psychology, MA Child Studies	BSc, PhD Biology, Diploma in Community & Youth Work	DipHE Applied Community Studies & Social Ethics
Diploma Counselling & Human Relations	BA, Youth and Community Certificate, NVQ Playwork Development	DMT/FCIPD
Degree, Diploma in Counselling & Supervision, Diploma in Management	BA Hons Business and Sport	BA Social Policy & Women's Studies; Certificate Social Services Management; Certificate Youth & Community Work
CQSW, Certificate in Child Protection	BSc Anthropology	Registered Nurse, Midwife, Health Visitor; Diploma in Family Planning
BPhil Community & Work	BSc Hons Psychology/PGCE (FE)	BA Recreation & Community Studies; RSA Diploma Voluntary & Community Groups; OU Diploma Module (Working with Young People)
MA Honours Degree, ITEC Diploma	BTEC National Diploma in Business & Finance, BA Hons Community and Youth Work	National Certificate in Social Care; Certificate in Counselling for the Development of Learning
BA Honours, NNEB, Postgraduate Diploma Youth & Community Work	NNEB	BA Hons Drama Therapy; NVQ3 Ramp Accredited Youth Work
BA, Diploma Teaching	Graduate CIPD, MSc Strategic and HR Management	BSc Psychology
Degree in Administration		BSc Environmental Science
Certificate of Qualification in Social Work		
Community Organisation Management		
Dip HE		
BA, City & Guilds Direct Trainers & Youth Trainers Awards		

Have you received any specific training for your job?

Just over half of the respondents (57%) said they had specific training for their work.

Local authority workers were more likely to say that they identified training needs and received training on an annual basis

Fig. 13. Have you received any specific training for your job?

	TYPE OF ORGANISATION						
	TOTAL	Local voluntary sector	National voluntary sector	Local authority	Hospital	Other	No answer
Yes	57%	55%	54%	58%	-%	80%	89%
No	42%	45%	42%	42%	100%	20%	11%
Don't know/no answer	1%	-%	4%	-%	-%	-%	-%

Base: All respondents

There was a wide range of the type of training people attended. This included:

- Child protection
- Managing staff
- Drugs Awareness
- First Aid
- Advocacy and lobbying skills
- training trainers
- children's rights and the law
- conference training
- community development
- group work with young people
- sex education
- participation skills
- participatory appraisal
- research methods
- anger management
- dealing with aggressive behaviour
- human rights
- health and safety
- IT/computer training
- counselling
- domestic violence
- risk assessment
- managing challenging behaviour

Some workers complained that training and conferences are often London based, making it difficult for regional, rural and remote services/workers to attend. Many workers also said that they found it difficult to find time to attend training.

Who delivers your training?

People accessed training from a range of sources including:

- Universities
- St Johns Ambulance
- Childrens Rights Officers Alliance
- Save the Children Fund
- Council for Voluntary Services
- Directory of Social Change

A majority of people (80 responses) had training provided in house. National voluntary sector workers were most likely to receive their training in-house (35 responses), but also relied on external providers. Local authority workers also accessed in house training (30 responses). 31 people also said they received training from the local authority or Social Services Department – 20 of these worked in local authorities, the others worked in local and national voluntary organisations.

Fig. 15. Who delivers your training?

	TYPE OF ORGANISATION						
	TOTAL	Local voluntary sector	National voluntary sector	Local authority	Hospital	Other	No answer
In-house/on the job, internally	30%	29%	19%	38%	-%	40%	44%
Externally sourced training	19%	23%	23%	15%	-%	40%	22%
The local authority/ social services	17%	10%	14%	25%	-%	-%	-%
Various providers/varies	14%	19%	7%	18%	-%	-%	22%
NCH	9%	3%	25%	-%	-%	-%	22%
University	5%	3%	4%	8%	-%	20%	-%
The Childrens Society	2%	-%	4%	-%	-%	-%	11%
St Johns Ambulance	2%	6%	2%	-%	-%	-%	-%
CROA	1%	-%	2%	1%	-%	-%	-%
SCF/Save The Childrens Fund	1%	-%	4%	-%	-%	-%	-%
CVS	1%	-%	2%	-%	-%	-%	11%
Connexions Team/Service	1%	3%	-%	-%	-%	20%	-%
NSPCC	1%	-%	4%	-%	-%	-%	-%
Other	8%	6%	7%	9%	-%	-%	11%
Don't know/no answer	26%	32%	26%	20%	100%	20%	11%

Base: All respondents

Several people responded that they provided training themselves to other workers in their organisation. These workers tended to be Project Managers with supervision and line management responsibilities for a staff team. It did not appear that they accessed any personal training at all.

How do you hear about training opportunities?

People relied on a number of methods to find out about training. The top 5 responses were:

- Word of mouth 31%
- Publications 15%
- Internal mail/circulars 11%
- General mail 10%
- Direct mail 10%

14% of the respondents did not answer this question.

Fig. 16. How do you hear about training opportunities?

	TYPE OF ORGANISATION						
	TOTAL	Local voluntary sector	National voluntary sector	Local authority	Hospital	Other	No answer
Word of mouth/networking,through work, colleagues, manager	31%	35%	30%	28%	-%	40%	56%
Through literature/journals/magazines/publications/brochures	15%	16%	14%	16%	-%	20%	11%
Internal mail/memos/circulars	11%	6%	12%	15%	-%	-%	-%
Through mail	11%	6%	9%	15%	-%	-%	11%
Through the post/letters/direct mail/ newsletters	10%	19%	7%	10%	-%	-%	-%
Through the internet/website/e- mail	10%	10%	11%	10%	-%	20%	-%
Through training/supervision/training officer	9%	6%	5%	11%	-%	-%	22%
Through leaflets/flyers	7%	3%	5%	11%	-%	-%	-%
Through the local authority/council/social services	6%	3%	-%	11%	-%	-%	22%
NCH	6%	3%	18%	-%	-%	-%	11%
CROA	6%	10%	7%	5%	-%	-%	-%
Do my own research	4%	3%	9%	1%	-%	-%	-%
Through bulletins	3%	3%	5%	3%	-%	-%	-%
Through training manuals/literature	3%	3%	-%	5%	-%	-%	-%
Through the youth service	3%	3%	4%	1%	-%	20%	-%
Through external ads/publicity	2%	-%	4%	-%	-%	-%	11%
Various sources	2%	3%	2%	1%	-%	-%	-%
CVS	1%	3%	2%	-%	-%	-%	-%
NSPCC	1%	-%	4%	-%	-%	-%	-%
NCB	1%	6%	-%	-%	-%	-%	-%
Through conferences	1%	-%	-%	3%	-%	-%	-%
Through the press/national press	1%	3%	-%	1%	-%	-%	-%
Do not hear about training opportunities	1%	3%	-%	1%	-%	-%	-%
TEC	1%	-%	-%	-%	-%	20%	-%
Other	6%	13%	5%	5%	-%	-%	-%
Don't know/ no answer	14%	19%	14%	8%	100%	20%	-%

Base: All respondents

Do you have a budget for training and professional development?

82% of respondents reported that they have training budgets, though there was great variety in amounts of money available for individuals, or awareness of how much was in this budget.

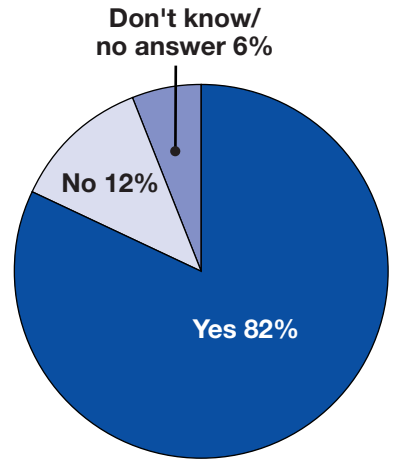


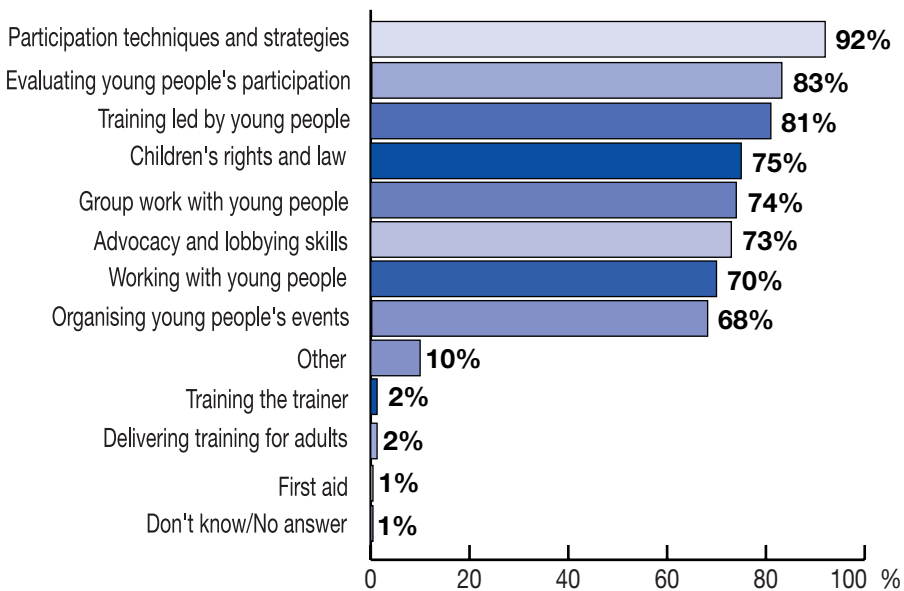
Fig. 17. Do you have a budget for training and professional development?

What training do you think would help a Participation Worker to do their job?

Respondents were asked to select as many topics as they liked from a range of options, as well as identifying any other issues they think would be useful to Participation Workers.

Their responses were as follows:

Fig. 18. What training do you think would help a Participation Worker to do their job?



Other responses included:

Training the trainer, first aid, delivering training for adults.

Some comments made about training included:

'Limited time to attend training'

'Training is very limited and would appreciate any info on relevant training'

Would you be interested in getting support through a Participation Workers' network/forum?

There was a high level of interest in a Participation Network. 90% of those surveyed said they would like support from a Participation Network.

4% said they would not like support, 6% were not sure or did not answer the question.

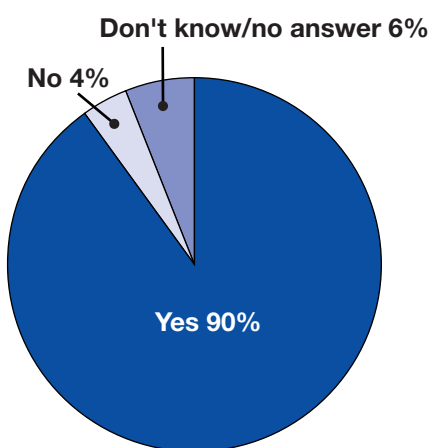
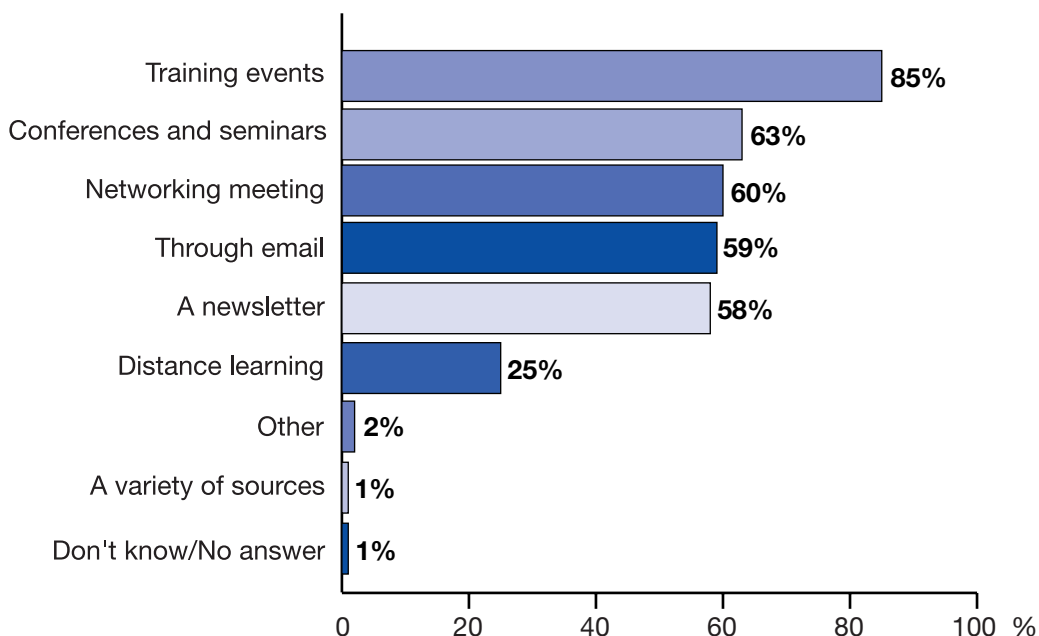


Fig. 19. *Would you be interested in getting support through a Participation Workers' network/forum?*

What form would you like this support to take?

Fig. 20. *If YES, what form would you like this support to take?*



Various workers welcoming the idea of a participation network made the following quotes from the questionnaires:

'The thought of training/meetings/seminars is really useful and I am willing to help if at all possible'

'I think it would be extremely useful to set up some form of contact between participation workers – an email newsletter etc'

'Thanks for undertaking a valuable piece of work'

'The more that we are supported the more we can support young people to participate at any level they wish'

'It is nice that PW are getting supported as well as young people'

Some people felt local-based networks were more useful than a national one:

'Networking needs to be localised and needs to have a common focus'

'Support for workers needs to be countrywide not just London based'

Workers were also concerned that any meetings should be useful to their day-to-day needs:

'Only if the aim was specific and the people involved have similar aims of work. Too much time is wasted on people moaning and wining (sic) about difficulties and issues. Needs to be positive real methods and ideas'

'It needs to be done – but done in a very focussed specific way'

'Whatever the development the focus needs to be on achieving tangible outcomes. Too many activities become self satisfying'

'Practice based and skills focussed – not just a talking shop.'

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research clearly shows that Participation Workers are enthusiastic about receiving training, support and development in their professional skill base. One way of doing this would be to create a network for Participation Workers that services these needs.

Networks have increasingly become a popular way of linking practitioners together in a semi-structured way. They have the benefit of being a flexible approach for working across organisations where there is no formal partnership. Workers can come together to share practice issues which may be experienced across organisations. Networks can also offer specific training and development opportunities tailored to the needs of network members.

As part of this research project we found that there are a number of models of Networks that may be appropriate to meet the needs of Participation Workers. We have outlined the main features of these networks in this part of the report.

Examples of networks

UK Community Participation Network

The Community Participation Network is an initiative of the New Economics Foundation. NEF promotes practical and creative approaches for a just and sustainable economy. Many of these approaches are about ways in which people can participate in decision making which affects their lives.

The Network was established in 1996 to bring together practitioners across the UK who specialise in community participation techniques in the context of neighbourhood renewal and regeneration. The aim of the Network is to widen the practice of community participation by enabling mutual support for practitioners and by sharing information about the range of community participation techniques and initiatives being developed across the UK and in some cases internationally. In 1998 they produced a publication called 'Participation Works! 21 techniques for community participation for the 21st century'.

There are about 160 members of the Network. There is no membership fee – people join a yahoo.com discussion group by submitting their details through a moderator at NEF. The Network is predominantly on-line, so there is little face-to-face contact between members.

Community Action Network (CAN)

Community Action Network is a 'mutual learning and support network for social entrepreneurs'⁶. It was established in April 1998 with 4 specific aims:

- To strengthen communities and attack deprivation
- To increase the number of social entrepreneurs, raise their profile and help improve the quality of their work
- To enable social entrepreneurs to use state of the art network communications to learn from and support each other
- To help social entrepreneurs develop partnerships in the public, private and third sectors.

It currently has over 500 members, with a target of 2000 members by the end of 2002.

⁶ 'Social entrepreneurs' are people who use the techniques of business to tackle social problems; their hallmark is the way they add value to neglected community resources. Community Action Network promotional materials, p9.

CAN has focused much of its efforts on providing an electronic network, through an Intranet which allows for email, electronic conferences and notice boards to enable the flow of information between CAN members. There are also opportunities for face-to-face meetings for new members of CAN, and individual advice through telephone contact.

There are a range of membership options and costs attached. Membership services include on-line help desk, Intranet access, registration of project details on the CAN website, free web space, and access to CAN events. CAN training, including induction events are provided. These events also have costs attached.

Participation Network Scotland

Children in Scotland established the Participation Network Scotland in 2000, with 3 years worth of funding from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust. Its purpose is to “help create a ‘culture of participation’ whereby the participation of children and young people in decision making becomes the norm”⁷. Initially it brought together 60 Participation Workers across Scotland to exchange good practice and information about local participation strategies. There are now 190 members. Members join by sending their information to Children in Scotland. There is no membership fee to join.

A worker based at Children in Scotland services the Network on a part-time basis. A directory of Participation Workers has been produced, which workers can use to find each other. The directory has been used by the Scottish Parliament to include more children and young people in national consultation events, eg. the inquiry on a Scottish Children’s Commissioner. They have also circulated the Scottish Executive/Save the Children Fund publication, *Reaction: A Consultation Toolkit* to all members of the network. A half yearly newsletter is also published and circulated to members which profiles projects, and shares information about training opportunities.

To date there has been one meeting of the Network, though future meetings are planned. There are also plans to provide training events for members. The Network is also currently establishing it’s own links to national decision making by consulting with children and young people on what they think are the key issues that need to be changed by the Scottish Parliament.

Children’s Rights Officers Alliance (CROA)

The Children’s Rights Officers Alliance was established in 1998. It is a network for children’s rights officers and advocates in England and Wales. Traditionally these workers are employed by local Social Services Departments to provide advocacy services to looked after children and young people. However with the growth in activity around young people’s participation, a wider variety of workers are now seeking the services of CROA. There are currently approximately 120 members of the network. There is a membership fee to join.

Networks are organised regionally – London/South East, Wales, Midlands, The North, South-West, Thames Valley. Membership of each regional network varies from between 8-25 people. There is a Regional Development Worker employed to assist in the development of these networks – co-ordinating meetings and responding to members needs. Meetings take place every 6 to 8 weeks.

They are in the process of establishing a website that will provide members with access to information about projects across England and Wales.

⁷ Children in Scotland, Report of the initial meeting of the Participation Network, 23/11/2000 p1.

YouthOrg UK – Youth Work on the Internet

YouthOrg UK [<http://www.youth.org.uk>] was launched in April 1998. It has over 500 youth organisations enrolled as members and another 2,000 subscribers to its monthly e-newsletter. The project aims to create a vibrant community of young people and youth workers through providing a meeting place on the Internet to get new ideas, find resources for learning and to make new friends⁸. As Peter White in Youth Work OK says:

“There is unmistakably a ‘self-help’ atmosphere to the site... there is no better place to start than YouthOrg UK”⁹

YouthOrg UK was founded by a youth worker in his spare time on his home PC. The idea came to him when he designed his first web site for his youth project. He found it incredibly difficult to find other youth projects that were on the Internet. As a solution he came up with the idea of YouthOrg UK – a cyberspace meeting place. The YouthOrg UK web site has been designed to enable its members to adopt and create web pages. With the help of its Members the web site produces a monthly email newsletter and has expanded to over 600 pages including design tips, a bulletin board to leave messages and a model Internet Safety Policy for youth projects. To support the growth of YouthOrg UK and to ensure its long term sustainability it became a project of UK Youth in November 1999. UK Youth is a registered charity with 7,000 member organisations.

Membership of YouthOrg UK is free. Projects who are on the Internet can enrol on the YouthOrg UK web site. All projects who enrol can have a web page designed free if they do not have their own web site already. Individuals can also subscribe to the free monthly electronic newsletter on the site.

Quality Protects Participation Network

The Quality Protects Participation Network is a group of approximately 20 Department of Health Workers responsible for delivering participation strategies under the Quality Protects Programme. This programme is aimed at delivering health and child protection services to young people in care.

Local Participation Workers networks in England and Wales

There are also some local networks for Participation Workers already operating. These include:

Youth Consultation Advisory Network (YouthCAN)

YouthCAN is an initiative of Cheltenham Borough Council. It provides a Borough-wide advice service for workers from a range of agencies who regularly consult with young people. It was established to share best practice between organisations undertaking consultation with young people. Members of the Network represent agencies such as Gloucestershire Constabulary, Young Gloucestershire, Gloucester City Council, Gloucestershire Youth and Community Service and Cheltenham Borough Council. It is an informal network, with no membership structure or fees. It has recently produced a document called ‘Ethical Guidelines for Consulting with Young People’.

There are also some local youth workers networks that look at issues around participation work as a subsection of its work. Examples of this include the Neath Port Talbot (Wales) based ‘Youth Providers Group’ which has a ‘Participation’ sub-group. The Youth Arts Network-Yorkshire (YAN-Y) is a local network for Youth Arts in the Yorkshire and Humber Region, which provides its members with information about participation strategies and practice as a part of its work.

⁸ www.youth.org.uk website, About Us page.

⁹ P. White, Youth Work OK, National Youth Agency, 1998.

What would a Participation Workers Network achieve?

A number of core principles for the establishment of a Participation Workers Network emerge from the research. They are:

- The aim of the Network should be to strengthen and mainstream young people's participation in public decision making
- The Network should work towards increasing the number of Participation Workers, raise their profile and help improve the quality of their work.
- The Network should be inclusive of any worker who wants to develop their participation skills, irrespective of formal qualifications or job description.
- The Network should encourage the development of partnerships between agencies.
- The Network should remain organic, non-hierarchical and have the capacity to grow, and to develop into regional and local networks.

Membership and training fees need to be considered. However, no organisation should be excluded from membership or training due to lack of funding.

The Network should build on services and structures that already exist.

Information and Practice Sharing

In order to increase people's knowledge of projects across England and Wales, as well as keep track of developments in the field it would be useful to create a central database of Participation Workers. It would be essential that members can access this. Individual members could be asked to nominate areas of interest and expertise where they'd be willing to share skills and information with other workers. It will be essential that it be constantly updated, as such databases can become out dated very quickly otherwise.

There was strong support for Internet support services. There should be an interactive site and email service where Participation Workers can swap information about projects, ideas about new approaches, and problem solve together. In designing such a site, it may be useful to have different levels of access to this service, so that members of the public can browse a site for basic information such as publications and contact details, while members can take part in more detailed and potentially sensitive information sharing. Consideration also needs to be given to whether it will be moderated by a paid staff member or through a system of peer moderators to keep the site active.

We should also recognise that many smaller organisations do not have access to Internet technology. There would need to be print-based versions of the information available too.

The research shows strong support for training events and content based network meetings. Quarterly network meetings/seminars should be held where practitioners can swap ideas and information about approaches to practice. The day should be structured to have experiential learning opportunities through presentations from workers, as well as guest speakers on particular topics eg. children's rights and the law, group work skills, evaluation etc.

Training and Development

In a recent consultation young people made the following recommendations about training for Participation Workers:

‘Specialist youth workers should follow separate training to work specifically in the area of participation’

‘A minimum standard of training for people who work with young people eg. using UNCRC’¹⁰

Currently there are currently several training programmes that would provide Participation Workers with at least some of the training they have identified in the survey as necessary for their work. The following list details these training programmes and the agencies that deliver them:

- Community Participation techniques – Centre for Participation, New Economics Foundation
- Supporting Young People, Talk2 Project (a joint project of the Trust for the Study of Adolescence and Youth Access)
- Children’s Rights/ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child/Human Rights Act, Save the Children
- Total Respect – young people’s rights in care, Children’s Rights Officers Alliance

Currently there are also many conference events currently being held about young people’s participation in decision making. The contents of some of these proceedings may also be useful in developing a training package. Examples from 2000-2001 include:

- Making Rights Stick: children’s rights in local government, *Save the Children Fund UK*
- The Emperor’s New Clothes: young people’s participation, *National Children’s Bureau*
- Children’s Voices: the pedagogy and practice of listening to young children within services, *Children in Scotland*
- Children’s Voices: taking account of the views of children and young people, *Children in Scotland*
- Taking the Initiative – Live!, *Carnegie Young People Initiative*
- Youth and Social Action: research, policy and practice, *Trust for the Study of Adolescence*

It should be noted that as these training and conference events are delivered by a range of organisations at various times and places in the year, the timing of programmes is currently uncoordinated.

One role for the Network should be to bring together these agencies to develop a co-ordinated training programme covering all of the training needs identified in the research. A broad programme could be developed that repeats a couple of times a year in local regions. The Participation Network could be responsible for organising and publicising this training programme.

Most people have a training budget, but there should also be provision made to subsidise those that need it.

¹⁰ Consultation by Sara Bryson for CYPI Taking the Initiative UK report, 2001.

Staffing

A Network Coordinator, Information and Membership Worker, and a Training Coordinator should staff the Network. A Part-time Administrator may also be necessary to assist with basic office systems tasks. Otherwise the posts should be self-administering eg. doing own word processing, posting own letters etc.

The Network Coordinator should be responsible for raising funds for the continuance of the Network. They should also be responsible for the overall management of the Network, as well as co-ordinating meetings. There should be quarterly Network meetings held at different places across England and Wales. This should be co-ordinated centrally, with different organisations approached to host the event in their region.

The Information and Membership Officer should be responsible for co-ordinating a Participation Workers Intranet, producing a quarterly newsletter, maintenance of a database, website development, and general enquiries about the Network.

The Training Co-ordinator should develop a training calendar for Participation Workers, by inviting established training providers to deliver core parts of the training programme, as well as developing specific training events for Participation Workers. The training calendar should incorporate the following topics, in order of priority:

- Participation strategies and techniques
- Evaluation of young people's participation
- Training by young people
- Children's rights and the law
- Group work with young people
- Advocacy and lobbying
- Working with young people
- Organising young people's events.

There should also be an annual review of training and development needs and a training programme developed to reflect these.

Location of the Network

It will be important to have a base for the Network. So far we have identified a number of options about the location of the Participation Network:

1. It could become a project of a small organisation.
2. It could become a part of a larger umbrella organisation, such as National Children's Bureau or NCVYS
3. It could be a stand-alone organisation

In the short term it could be better for the Network to be incorporated into the workings of an established organisation. This will save the Network from having to establish organisational infrastructure eg. premises, telephones, desks, computers, employment & management procedures. This would may make it easier to attract project funding from government or charities. It will also make it easier to be ready to provide services by the end of 2002.

Conclusion

There is now widespread commitment to the participation of young people in decision making across the voluntary and statutory sectors. The challenge now is to move beyond small scale and patchy attempts at initiating the practice of involving young people. This is the task facing Participation Workers across England and Wales.

Our research has shown what we thought was anecdotally true – there is a growing number of people employed to facilitate young people’s participation in public decision making. Our research found 186 of them, but we suspect there will be many more. There are currently 170 workers across England and Wales who are interested in the establishment of a Participation Network.

The growth in the number of specialist workers shows that organisations have recognised that this is an area where specialist skills are needed. But we are also concerned that this doesn’t sideline young people’s participation from where the real action is happening.

For example, there is lots of activity with looked after children and ‘disadvantaged’ children. These are the easy young people to find in many ways as they are used to contact with institutions, youth workers, social services etc. But there are 15 million young people in the UK and the real challenge is to mainstream participation activity so that all young people can access and experience it.

For this reason we need to make sure that Participation Workers are able to develop their skills and join together to work on innovative projects that can involve more young people in a way that is useful to both young people and to decision makers.

A Participation Workers Network is one way of tackling the training, support and development needs. Through a small staff team, as well as active involvement by members, it has the potential to be a vibrant source of information, best practice and innovation.

Useful Publications

Children's Rights Offices and Advocates, On the Rights Track: guidance for local authorities on developing children's rights and advocacy services, Local Government Association 1998

J Cohen & J Emanuel, Positive Participation: consulting and involving young people in health related work, Health Education Authority, 1998

J Coleman and J Schofield, Key Data on Adolescence 2001, Trust for the Study of Adolescence, 2001

D Cutler & R Frost, Taking The Initiative: promoting young people's participation in public decision making in the UK, Carnegie Young People Initiative, 2001

S Drew, Children and The Human Rights Act, Save the Children, 2000

S Fitzpatrick, A Hastings & K Kintrea, Youth Involvement in urban regeneration: hard lessons, future directions, Policy and Politics, vol28 no4 493-509

R Hodgkin & P Newell, Effective Government Structures for Children, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2001

D McNeish, From Rhetoric to Reality: participatory approaches to health promotion with young people, Health Education Authority, 1999

S Neary, Making It Real: young people in democratic structures, LGIU, 2001

New Economics Foundation, Participation Works! 21 techniques for community participation in the 21st century, 1998

NSW Commission for Children and Young People, TAKING PARTICIPATION seriously, 2001

J Pratt, P Gordon and D Plamping, Working whole systems: putting theory into practice in organisations, Kings Fund, 1999

S Ruxton, Implementing Children's Rights – what can the UK learn from international experience?, Save the Children, 1998

P Treseder, Empowering children and young people – training manual, Save the Children, 1998

H Wade, A Lawton & M Stevenson, Hear by Right – setting standards for the active involvement of young people in democracy, Local Government Association, 2001

C Willow, Hear!Hear! Promoting children and young people's participation in local government, Local Government Information Unit, 1997

Useful Organisations

Children and Young People Unit

Room 4E Caxton House
6-12 Tothill Street
London SW1H 6NF
ph: 0870 001 2345
fax: 020 7273 5657

www.cypu.gov.uk

Childrens Rights Officers Alliance (CROA)

Cambridge House
Cambridge Grove
London W6 0LE
ph: 020 8748 7413
fax: 020 8748 7421

Community Participation Network New Economics Foundation

6-8 Cole Street
London SE1 4YH
ph: 020 7089 2850
fax: 020 7407 6437

www.neweconomics.org

IPPR (Participation and Public Involvement Unit)

30-32 Southampton Street
London WC2E 7RA
ph: 020 7470 6100
fax: 020 7470 6111

www.ippr.org

Local Government Information Unit

22 Upper Woburn Place
London WC1H 0TB
ph: 020 7554 2800
fax: 020 7554 2801

www.lgiu.gov.uk

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)

2 Plough Yard
Shoreditch High Street
London EC2A 3LP
ph: 020 7422 8630

fax: 020 7422 8631

www.ncvys.org.uk

National Youth Agency (NYA)

17-23 Albion Street
Leicester LE1 6GD
ph: 0116 285 3700
fax: 0116 285 3777

www.nya.org.uk

Save the Children Fund (UK)

17 Grove Lane
London SE5 8RD
ph: 020 7703 5400
fax: 020 7708 2508

www.scfuk.org.uk

Trust for the Study of Adolescence

23 New Road
Brighton
East Sussex BN1 1WZ
ph: 0127 369 3311
fax: 0127 367 9907

www.tsa.com.uk

YouthOrg UK C/O UK Youth

Kirby House
20/24 Kirby Street
London EC1N 8TS
ph: 020 7242 4045
fax: 020 7242 4125

www.youth.org.uk



Carnegie Young People Initiative

The Mezzanine, Elizabeth House
39 York Road, London SE1 7NQ

ph: 020 7401 5460
fax: 020 7401 5461

email: carnegieypinitiative@rmplc.co.uk
website: www.carnegie-youth.org.uk

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