

Mapping Children and Young People's Participation in England

Carolyn Oldfield, The National Youth Agency
Clare Fowler, British Youth Council

**Research Report
No 584**

*Mapping Children and Young People's
Participation in England*

*Carolyn Oldfield, The National Youth Agency
Clare Fowler, British Youth Council*

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education and Skills.

© National Youth Agency 2004
ISBN 1 84478 326 X

Acknowledgements

We have received advice and support from many people during the course of this research. In particular we would like to thank members of the research advisory group for their help and guidance. The group comprised Robert Bell (DfES/Carnegie Young People Initiative), David Cutler (Carnegie Young People Initiative), Maggie Jones (Joseph Rowntree Foundation), Perpetua Kirby (PK Research Consultancy) and Ruth Sinclair (National Children's Bureau). Anne Morris of Loughborough University was not only a member of the advisory group, but provided technical advice throughout the project.

Various staff from the Department for Education and Skills supported this research. Our thanks go to Wanda Brown, Rachael Davies, Barbara Herts, Natasha Monk, Cathy Thompson and, in particular, to Chris Cuthbert for his enthusiastic and sensitive oversight of the project.

We would also like to thank colleagues at The National Youth Agency (NYA) and British Youth Council (BYC) for their support. In particular, thanks to Jon Boagey, head of information services at The NYA, Loughborough University student Emily Castle who did most of the preparatory work while on placement at The NYA, and Kathleen Cronin and Jules Mason at BYC.

Finally, our thanks to all those who piloted and completed the questionnaires.

The organisations involved

The National Youth Agency

The National Youth Agency supports those involved in young people's personal and social development and works to enable all young people to fulfil their potential as individuals and citizens within a socially just society. It achieves this by:

- Informing, advising and helping those who work with young people in a variety of settings;
- Influencing and shaping youth policy and improving youth services nationally and locally; and
- Promoting young people's participation, influence and place in society.

The British Youth Council

The British Youth Council is the national youth council for young people under 26 in the UK. It brings together young people to agree on issues of common concern and encourage them to bring about change through collective action. It aims to:

- Provide a voice for young people;
- Promote equality for young people;
- Help young people be more involved in decisions that affect their lives; and
- Advance young people's participation in society and civic life.

Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	9
Chapter 1: participation activity	
• Involvement of children and young people in decision-making	14
• Level of involvement over the past four years	16
• Written participation policies or strategies	18
• Levels of decision-making	19
• Issues about which children and young people make decisions	20
• Approaches to participation	22
• Key findings	29
Chapter 2: assessing the impact of participation	
• Children and young people's perceived level of influence	31
• Monitoring and evaluation	33
• Approaches and tasks considered to be most effective	34
• Approaches and tasks considered to be least effective	37
• Polarised views	40
• Key findings	42
Chapter 3: reaching children and young people	
• Ages of children and young people involved in decision-making	44
• Other characteristics of children and young people	45
• Involving 'hard to reach' children and young people	46
• Key findings	48
Chapter 4: support for participation	
• Resources allocated to support participation	49
• Senior level responsibility for participation	50
• Training and support for adults	51
• Training and support for children and young people	51
• Incentives and recognition for children and young people	53
• Key findings	56
Chapter 5: attitudes and perceptions	
• Responses to attitudinal statements	57
• Responses by type of organisation	59
• Responses by type of respondent	60
• Awareness of impact of participation on organisation	61
• Key findings	63
Chapter 6: encouraging participation	
• Support mechanisms and perceived levels of influence	64
• Attitudes and perceived levels of influence	65
• Action which organisations and government could take	66
• Additional comments	70
• Key findings	72
Conclusions	73
References	77
Annex A	
• Research methodology	78
• Responses rates	80
• Questionnaire and guidance notes	81

MAPPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN ENGLAND

Executive Summary

The National Youth Agency (NYA) and the British Youth Council (BYC) surveyed statutory and voluntary sector organisations in England between November 2003 and January 2004, in order to establish a systematic picture of the levels and ways in which they involve children and young people up to 19 in public decision-making. 'Public decision-making' was defined as children and young people's involvement in decisions about policies and services which may affect them but which are not specific to them as individuals.

The key aims of the survey were to:

- Measure the levels and forms of participation being used by different types of organisations in England
- Identify the types of children and young people involved (and not involved) in participation work
- Establish the different factors supporting participation and the barriers (such as resources, infrastructure, attitudes) faced by organisations; and
- Help the Department for Education and Skills identify priority areas for targeting its Participation Fund efficiently

Responses were received from a total of 849 statutory sector respondents (including national and regional bodies, local authorities, organisations in the criminal justice and health sectors, and selected statutory-funded programmes and agencies), and from 160 voluntary organisations specifically working with children and young people. The majority of respondents held senior posts in their organisations.

The survey sought information on a diverse range of topics, from quantitative information about levels and types of participation activity to exploration of respondents' attitudes towards participation. The key findings are summarised below.

Participation activity

- A high level of participation activity was reported, with around four out of five statutory and voluntary sector organisations (79 and 81 per cent respectively) reporting that they currently involved children and young people in decision-making.
- Within local government organisations, respondents from youth services and first-tier local authorities (which reported on the overall activity of their authority) recorded high levels of participation work (97% and 95% respectively), while district councils reported the lowest level of involvement (79%).
- There is evidence of considerable growth in the level of participation work over the past four years. Almost nine out of ten statutory sector and three-quarters of voluntary sector respondents (89% and 74% respectively) in organisations involved in participation work said that the amount of work they did to involve children and young people in decision-making had increased over the past four years.
- Children and young people were most likely to be involved in decision-making at the level of generating ideas about existing and new policies or services, both reported by approximately four-fifths of respondents. They were less likely to be involved in service delivery and monitoring and evaluation.
- Children and young people were most frequently involved in decisions which can be seen to have an obvious impact on them, such as leisure and recreation, health, community safety, education and youth services. They were less likely to be involved

in making decisions about broader services or issues, such as regeneration, transport or housing.

- When asked about approaches which involved children and young people alongside adults, respondents from both statutory and voluntary sectors reported that public meetings, consultation documents and question and answer sessions were most commonly used. Statutory sector respondents also reported frequent use of service user forums, while voluntary organisations were likely to involve children and young people in decision-making bodies and committees.
- In both sectors, the most popular approaches specifically targeting children and young people were researching their needs and views, informal discussion and youth councils or forums.
- The tasks that children and young people undertake most frequently to inform decision-making in statutory and voluntary organisations are representing their peers and attending meetings. They are less likely to be involved in more strategic level tasks, such as developing frameworks for assessing services, budget setting or assessing suppliers. However, two-fifths of organisations in both sectors involve children and young people in staff selection.
- Among statutory sector respondents, those from Connexions Services, local government and Children's Fund projects consistently reported a higher rate of involvement of children and young people in decision-making, a broader range of levels of involvement, and the use of a variety of approaches to participation.

Assessing the impact of participation

- The majority of respondents from both the statutory and voluntary sectors (71% and 62% respectively) thought that children and young people had some influence in particular areas on decisions made by their organisation. Only one in ten (11%) of statutory sector respondents believed that children and young people had a 'great deal' of influence on their organisation, compared to nearly three in ten (27%) of voluntary sector respondents.
- Within the statutory sector, two-fifths of Connexions services (40%), and just under a quarter of Children's Fund partnerships (23%) considered that children and young people had a great deal of influence on the decisions made by their organisations. Respondents from criminal justice, health and national and regional government organisations were most likely to say that children and young people have very little influence.
- Respondents from national voluntary organisations were slightly more likely than those in regional and local organisations to believe that children and young people have a great deal of influence (30% and 25% respectively). However, they were also more likely to believe that they had very little influence (13% and 1%), suggesting some divergence of practice across these organisations.
- The use of monitoring and formal evaluation procedures appears to be limited in both statutory and voluntary organisations. Approximately half of respondents from both sectors said that their organisation monitored participation, while fewer than two-fifths said that their organisation carried out formal evaluation.
- Respondents were asked which single approach or task used by their organisation was, in their opinion, the most and the least effective. Both statutory and voluntary sector respondents identified youth councils and forums as being effective (20% and 15% respectively). Among those tasks which were commonly undertaken by children and young people, their involvement in staff recruitment and in training their peers were thought to be effective.

- There appears to be a mismatch between some of the approaches and tasks that are most frequently used to involve children and young people in decision-making and those that are believed to be most effective. In particular, involving children and young people in attending meetings was reported to be both common and ineffective. However, this may be attributable to the way in which this has been carried out in these organisations, rather than to a 'fault' with the method per se.
- In some instances, respondents held polarised views about the effectiveness of particular approaches or tasks, with the same approaches or tasks being identified as the most effective by some respondents, and the least effective by others. This is the case for youth councils, involving children and young people in staff selection and training, and representing other children and young people. These different assessments appear either to be the result of respondents having different priorities, or an indication that potentially effective approaches were being undermined by poor implementation, lack of resources or cultural barriers.
- Responses from both the statutory and voluntary sectors stressed that all approaches and tasks could be effective, if undertaken properly – that is, having definite aims and outcomes, clarity about the basis on which children and young people are involved, and ensuring that children and young people have the skills and support they need.

Reaching younger children and specific groups

- The survey sought to identify differences in levels of participation relating to age and among specific groups of children and young people. Young people aged between 14 and 19 were most likely to be involved in decision-making in both statutory and voluntary sectors, with four-fifths or more organisations involving young people of this age. There were relatively low levels of involvement of children under eight in decision-making.
- Respondents reported some success in involving 'hard to reach' groups of children and young people. Around half of statutory and voluntary organisations involved children and young people not in education, employment or training in decision-making. Half of statutory sector respondents involved children and young people in or formerly in care, and nearly half involved young offenders. Around three in ten statutory and two in ten voluntary organisations involved young refugees and asylum seekers in decision-making.
- Despite this, two thirds of statutory sector and half of voluntary sector organisations said they found it difficult to reach specific groups of children and young people, including black and minority ethnic young people, those not in education, employment or training, 'disaffected' young people and those living in rural areas. Approximately half of these organisations had identified ways to reach these groups. Among the solutions identified were outreach work; building partnerships with youth services, Connexions services, race equality councils and local community groups; and targeted project work.

Support for participation

- The survey sought information on the extent to which organisations provided specific resources to support participation, such as staff time, premises and contributions towards transport costs. It also sought to find out whether specific support mechanisms for participation were in place, including organisational commitment at a senior level, training and support for adults involved in participation work, training and support for children and young people, and incentives and recognition for children and young people involved in decision-making.
- Respondents in both sectors reported considerable investment of resources to

support children and young people's participation. Approximately three-quarters of statutory and voluntary organisations provided some dedicated staff time to support participation, and over half of respondents from both sectors said that their organisation met the costs of training or events, made premises available, and met transport or other expenses for children and young people involved in decision-making.

- Nearly seven in ten statutory organisations and six in ten voluntary organisations had identified an individual at senior level to be responsible for participation.
- Only three-fifths of organisations offered training and support to adults involved in participation work. Despite their key role in decision-making, fewer than one in five local councillors or members of governing bodies or boards appear to be offered any form of training or support in relation to children and young people's participation.
- Around three quarters of statutory and voluntary organisations provided training and support for children and young people involved in participation work, and a similar proportion offer incentives and recognition for their involvement. Virtually all youth services provided both of these elements.

Attitudes and perceptions

- Respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement with two sets of statements asking about their personal views and their perceptions of their organisation's approach to participation. Their responses showed enthusiasm and support for the participation agenda. Virtually all (96%) of statutory sector respondents and nine in ten of voluntary sector respondents agreed (strongly or slightly) that children and young people have a right to be involved in public decision-making. Around three-quarters of respondents from both sectors agreed that there are no decisions which children and young people cannot be involved in, provided they are properly supported.
- However, respondents – particularly in the statutory sector – revealed more doubts about their organisations' ability to put participation into practice. While over half of respondents from statutory organisations with experience of participation work agreed strongly that senior managers valued the right of children and young people to be involved in decision-making, only one-third believed that they understood the practical implications of involving children and young people. Fewer than half (48%) also agreed strongly that participation was integral to their organisations' work, or that services had improved as a result of involving children and young people (42%), compared to 58 and 48 per cent of voluntary sector respondents.
- The role of evidence about the impact of participation is a central issue. While around four-fifths of both statutory and voluntary sector respondents agreed that their services had improved as a result of involving children and young people in decision-making, 15 per cent of statutory sector and 13 per cent of voluntary sector respondents from organisations with experience of participation were unable to say whether services had or had not improved.
- Despite the data reported earlier suggesting low levels of involvement of young children in decision-making, only around two in ten respondents from both sectors agreed (strongly or slightly) with the statement 'it is too difficult to involve children under eight'.

Promoting participation

- The survey found that those statutory organisations in which children and young people were believed to exercise a great deal of influence on decision-making were consistently more likely to report the existence of a range of support mechanisms

than those in which children and young people were believed to have very little influence.

- These mechanisms were identified as written policies or strategies; monitoring or formal evaluation; dedicated participation staff; a budget controlled by children and young people; identification of a senior responsible individual; training and support for children and young people; and incentives and/or recognition for children and young people involved in decision-making. With the exception of budgets controlled by young people and written policies or strategies, these mechanisms existed in over four-fifths of organisations in which children and young people were believed to have a great deal of influence, compared to half or fewer of organisations in which children and young people were believed to have very little influence.
- Organisations in which children and young people were believed to have very little influence were particularly unlikely to have written policies or budgets controlled by children and young people (11% and 6%, compared to 72% and 31% of organisations where children and young people were perceived to have a great deal of influence).
- The survey also revealed an association between respondents' responses to the set of attitudinal statements, particularly those relating to their organisations' approach, and the level of influence they perceived children and young people to have on their organisations' decisions. Those who thought that children and young people had a high level of influence gave far more positive assessments of their organisations' approach to participation than those who believed that children and young people exercised very little influence. Over four-fifths of the former group, for instance, agreed strongly that participation was integral to their organisation compared to one-fifth of the latter group, and similar disparities were evident in relation to other statements.
- The survey asked respondents to select from a list of nine options the three actions that they thought organisations and government could take to promote effective participation by children and young people. Respondents in both the statutory and voluntary sectors identified senior management commitment as the most important action that organisations could take to promote participation (71% and 60% respectively). This was considerably more than the next most popular option, specific staff supporting participation, which was selected by approximately two-fifths of respondents from both statutory and voluntary sectors.
- When asked to identify what action government might take, long-term funding to promote participation proved the most popular option, chosen by over three-quarters of both statutory and voluntary sector respondents. The next most popular option was action to promote attitudinal change among adults, chosen by approximately two-fifths of all respondents.
- While there was not strong support for the establishment of a national centre for youth participation, there was support for what might be considered as its core functions, such as promoting attitudinal change, embedding practice, supporting collaborative work, and increasing capacity among children and young people and adults.

Conclusions

- There is evidence of growth in the level of participation work over the past four years in both statutory and voluntary sectors. However there are considerable variations between different types of statutory sector organisation. While a considerable amount of participation work appears to be undertaken in some statutory sector organisations, particularly Connexions Services, Children's Fund partnerships and local government, it appears to be more limited in organisations working in the fields

of health and criminal justice, and in central and regional government.

- Participation levels and impact are reported to be greatest in those organisations with an explicit remit to work with children and young people. Voluntary sector respondents, with their specific focus on children and young people, were most likely to believe that children and young people had a great deal of influence on their organisation. Within the statutory sector, participation activity and impact is highest among Connexions services and Children's Fund partnerships. Youth services were more likely than other local government organisations to report high levels of participation activity, to believe that children and young people exercised a great deal of influence, and to have a range of mechanisms to support participation work.
- Responses to the set of attitudinal statements reveal positive personal views concerning participation, even among respondents whose organisations have only limited experience of involving children and young people in decision-making. There is therefore scope to capitalise on these positive attitudes, while at the same time drawing on wider policy frameworks, and on the experiences of regions where participation is more established, to help sectors which currently report low levels of involvement of children and young people in decision-making to expand and develop their participation work.
- Strong messages emerged from both the voluntary and statutory sectors about the need for participation work to be adequately resourced on a long-term basis and for children and young people to be supported in order to avoid tokenism.
- Even in organisations which are taking participation seriously, some key activities – such as monitoring and evaluation, training for adult decision-makers, and ensuring that children and young people receive feedback on the results of their involvement – are being neglected. While the high levels of commitment to participation revealed by the survey are welcome, they need to be matched by equally high levels of action.

INTRODUCTION

Background and policy context

This report describes research intended to establish a systematic picture of the levels and ways in which statutory and voluntary organisations across England involve children and young people up to 19 in public decision-making. The Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU) commissioned The National Youth Agency and The British Youth Council, in partnership with Loughborough University, to undertake this research in May 2003.¹

'Public decision-making' was defined as children and young people's involvement in decisions about policies and services which may affect them but are not specific to them as individuals. For the purposes of this report, the terms involvement in decision-making and participation are used interchangeably. Results from the research will be used to inform expenditure of a Participation Fund intended to support innovative approaches to participation by children and young people. It will focus on capacity building and developing participation infrastructure.

The key aims of the survey were to:

- Measure the levels and forms of participation being used by different types of organisations in England;
- Identify the types of children and young people involved (and not involved) in participation work;
- Establish the different factors supporting participation and the barriers (such as resources, infrastructure, attitudes) faced by organisations; and
- Help identify priority areas for targeting the Fund efficiently.

This research forms part of a wider approach by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to gather evidence concerning the extent and impact of participation by children and young people. The Carnegie Young People Initiative was commissioned to conduct an initial desk based review into the evidence regarding organisational participation infrastructure in the statutory and voluntary sectors in England.² The DfES had previously commissioned research into participatory practice with children and young people. Its findings were published as a report including detailed case studies of 29 organisations which have embedded participation within their work, and a handbook intended to help organisations of all kinds translate commitment to participation into practical action.³

In broader terms, a range of legislation and policies underpins children and young people's involvement in decision-making. In particular, the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child states that children and young people under 18 have a right to express their views on all matters that affect them.

The government's Green Paper *Every Child Matters*⁴ set out significant changes in structures and services for children and young people. It stressed the government's commitment to ensuring that services meet the needs of children and families, and to involving children and young people in planning, delivering and evaluating policies and services relevant to them. Based on the Green Paper, The Children Bill, currently going through parliament, sets out key legislative requirements for implementing this vision, including creating the post of a Children's Commissioner for England.

¹ The Unit has since been dissolved, and responsibility for this piece of work was taken on by a new Children, Young People and Families Directorate in the Department for Education and Skills.

² Cutler, D. and Taylor, A (2004), *Expanding and Sustaining Involvement: a snapshot of participation infrastructure for young people living in England*. DfES. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/Expandingandsustaining.pdf>

³ Kirby, P et al. (2003), *Building a Culture of Participation: involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation, research report and handbook*. DfES. <http://www.cypu.gov.uk/corporate/publications.cfm>

⁴ DfES (2003), *Every Child Matters*. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters/pdfs/EveryChildMatters.pdf>

Other policy frameworks include Learning to Listen, published by the CYPU in 2001,⁵ which sets out the core principles and values underpinning children and young people's participation in the planning, delivery and evaluation of government policies and services. In response to this, 11 government departments have produced action plans on the involvement of children and young people in their department's policy development and delivery.

At local level, Hear by Right standards have been developed by the Local Government Association and The National Youth Agency.⁶ Based on self-assessment, Hear by Right offers a framework for organisations across the voluntary and statutory sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people. It uses a 'seven s' model to identify the elements needed to underpin participation by children and young people: shared values; strategy; structures; systems; staff, elected members or trustees; skills and knowledge; and style of leadership.

This research is intended to help build the current evidence base by providing some indication of the extent to which these policy and strategic frameworks are matched by practice.

Carrying out the research

A self-completion questionnaire, together with guidance notes, was distributed in November 2003 to a wide range of organisations operating at national, regional and local level in the statutory and voluntary sectors in England. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary on the part of the organisations approached. The fieldwork was completed by the beginning of February 2004.

Findings are based on the views of adults working for the different organisations approached, so there may have been some tendencies to paint a more positive picture than might be found by visiting the projects first hand and talking to the children and young people themselves – or indeed, staff at different levels of the organisation. Nonetheless, this survey does make a substantial contribution to the evidence base.

The rest of this introduction provides further information about the range of organisations that took part in the survey.

Statutory sector recipients

Statutory sector bodies targeted included central government departments, non-departmental public bodies, regional agencies, and national and regional organisations working specifically with children and young people. At local government level, the questionnaire was sent to the chief executives of 386 local authorities in England (who were asked to provide a 'corporate' response on behalf of their authority) and, in addition, to local education authorities, social services departments and youth services in the 149 first-tier local authorities (who were asked to provide responses based specifically on their departments). A small sample of parish councils was also identified. The questionnaire was also sent to different types of organisations in the criminal justice⁷ and health sectors⁸, and to selected statutory-funded programmes and agencies.

Chief executives in most of these organisations were given advance notice of the questionnaire, and invited to nominate the most appropriate individual to complete it. Respondents were asked to indicate their role within their organisation. Over eight in ten of those who provided this information identified themselves as senior officers or staff members (82%), eight per cent worked directly with children and young people, seven per cent were

⁵ Children and Young People's Unit (2001), *Learning to Listen: core principles for the involvement of children and young people*. <http://www.cypu.gov.uk/youth/publications/uploads/ACFA56.pdf>

⁶ Wade, H. and Badham, B (2003), *Hear by Right: standards for the active involvement of children and young people*. The National Youth Agency.

⁷ Questionnaires were sent to all police forces, and a sample of community safety/crime reduction partnerships and youth offending teams.

⁸ Questionnaires were sent to all strategic health authorities and health action zones and a sample of hospital trusts, primary care trusts, drug action teams and teenage pregnancy units.

specialist participation workers, and three per cent identified themselves as board or elected members.

Statutory sector responses have been grouped into broad organisation types as below. A more detailed breakdown of the sample profile and response rate by different types of organisation is contained in Annex A.

Statutory sector: response rate by type of organisation

	Number of questionnaires distributed	Total number returned	Percentage returned
Central/regional government	90	40	44
Local government	903	456	50
Crime - total	200	49	25
Health - total	350	119	34
Children's Fund	149	86	58
Sure Start	148	50	34
Connexions	47	26	55
Learning and Skills Councils	47	23	49
Total	1934	849	44

Responses from local authorities account for over half of all responses, and it has therefore been possible to analyse them in more detail at some points of this report (see below). The health and criminal justice sectors account for a further 20 per cent. The four specific programmes and agencies (Children's Fund, Sure Start, Connexions and Learning and Skills Councils) formed slightly more than 20 per cent of responses and, since they target specific age groups, are analysed separately.⁹

There was considerable variation in the level of responses between and within local authorities. Youth services and social services departments were most likely to respond, and local education authorities (which had been asked to base their responses on experience in the formal education sector) the least. However, responses were received from the chief executive or at least one department for all but three first-tier local authorities. Where a response covered more than one local authority department, it was classed as a corporate response for the purposes of analysis.

Statutory sector: local government responses¹⁰

	Number of questionnaires distributed	Total number returned	Percentage returned
1 st -tier local authorities corporate responses	149	63	42
Education	149	39	26
Social Services	149	88	59
Youth Services	149	115	77
District Councils	237	122	51
Total	833	427	51

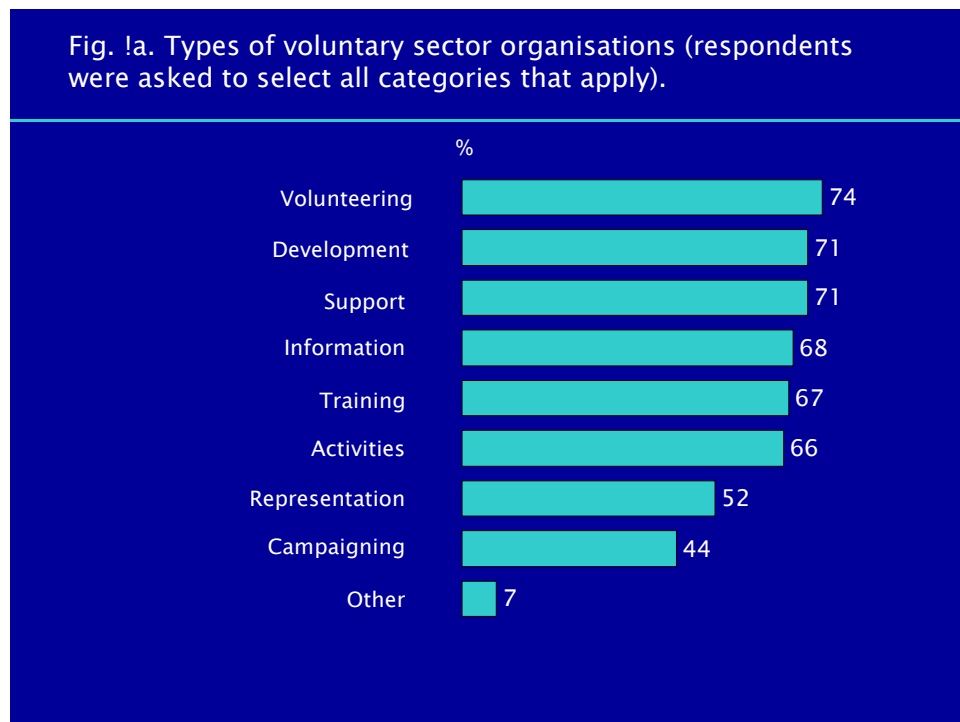
⁹ Sure Start works with children up to four and their families. The Children's Fund operates through first-tier local authorities to support disadvantaged children and young people aged five to 13. Connexions offers guidance and support to young people aged 13 to 19, while learning and skills councils are responsible for education and training for people over 16. Although many of these programmes are delivered through voluntary agencies, for the purpose of this survey they have been considered to lie within the statutory sector.

¹⁰ Responses were also received from 18 parish councils and 11 local authority departments other than those specified above, for example leisure or arts and libraries departments. Due to the small sample size, these have not been included in the local government breakdown, but are included in the total figures given for local government respondents.

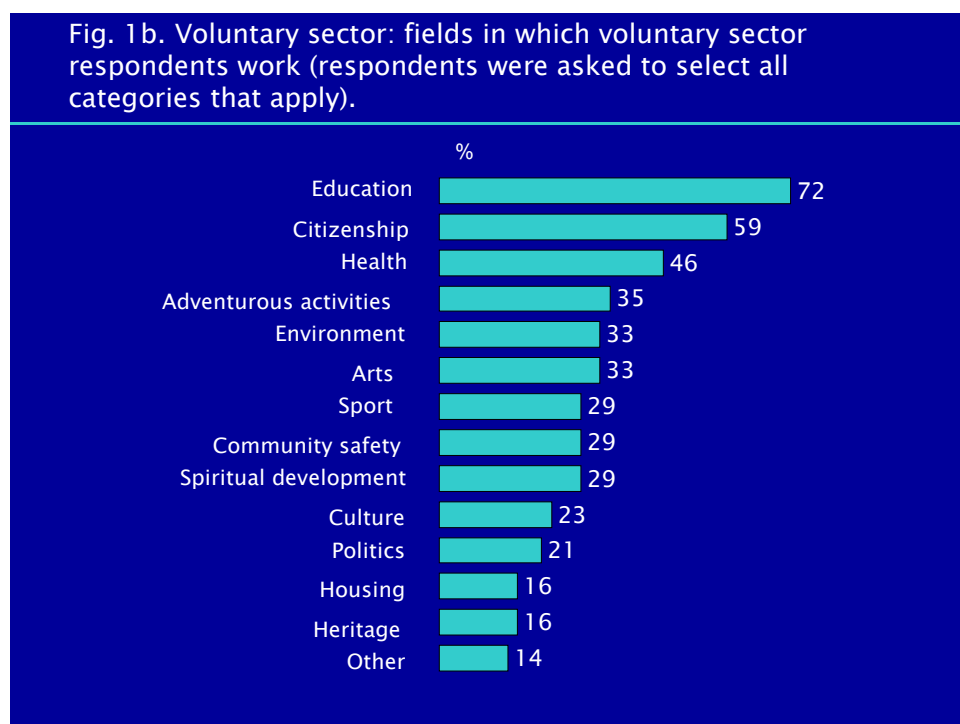
Voluntary sector recipients

Within the voluntary sector, the survey was targeted at voluntary organisations working with children and young people, based on the British Youth Council's extensive database of organisations. The questionnaire was sent to the chief executive and key contacts in 250 national, 100 regional and 400 local voluntary organisations in England. A total of 160 voluntary sector organisations responded to the questionnaire, a response rate of 21 per cent. The response rate for national voluntary sector organisations was 30 per cent - 74 organisations, compared to 17 per cent - 86 organisations - from regional and local voluntary organisations.

Figure 1a shows that the voluntary sector organisations which participated in the survey provided a broad range of functions, although representation and campaigning were less common than direct work with children and young people.



As Figure 1b shows, voluntary organisations taking part in the survey were most commonly involved in the fields of education and citizenship.



Responses by regions

The spread of responses from statutory sector organisations is broadly consistent with the size of regions, based on the numbers of first-tier local authorities within each region, with the exception of London, which is under-represented on this measure. Responses from the West and East Midlands account for slightly more of the total than might be expected. Details of response rates by region for statutory organisations may be found in Annex A. However, the number of returns from voluntary organisations working at regional and local, rather than national, level was insufficient to provide a basis for analysis by region.

This report

A diverse range of topics was covered in this survey, from the levels and types of participation work being carried out through to exploration of the types of actions organisations might take in order to make participation more effective. This report explores each of these topics in turn. Wherever possible, the extent to which particular sub-groups within the sample differ in their behaviours and perceptions has been examined. It should be noted that the sample size of the survey limits some of the analyses possible. Base sizes for specific sub-groups are shown throughout and readers are advised to treat with particular caution figures based on sub-samples made up of small numbers of respondents.

CHAPTER 1: PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY

Organisations of all kinds are increasingly required to involve service users – including children and young people – in developing strategies and services. In particular, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides children and young people under 18 with a comprehensive set of rights, is a key driver for change. As a result, the number of publications offering guidance on involving children and young people in public decision-making is growing, and particular initiatives and organisations have been identified as examples of good practice. Yet we still have little quantitative information on how far [organisations are actually involving children and young people in decision-making and what approaches they use. This research project seeks to begin to fill at least some of these gaps.](#)

This chapter provides basic quantitative information on the extent of children and young people's participation at national, local and regional levels. It shows how the amount of participation work has changed over the past four years, identifies the areas of decision-making which children and young people are said to be able to influence, and indicates the types of approaches and activities they are involved in. It also shows which kinds of organisation are most and least likely to involve children and young people in decision-making.

Involvement of children and young people in decision-making

Tables 1a and 1d show that a clear majority of both statutory and voluntary organisations claimed to involve children and young people in decision-making, with around four out of five statutory and voluntary sector respondents saying that their organisation was currently involving children and young people in decision-making.

Almost four out of five (79%) respondents from statutory sector organisations said that they were currently working with children and young people (CYP) to involve them in decision-making. A further one in ten (11%) had involved children and young people in the past, and just under one in 20 (4%) planned to do so in the future. Connexions Services, local government and Children's Fund projects were most likely to say that they currently involved children and young people. The high levels of participation within Connexions and Children's Fund projects is likely, in part, to reflect the explicit expectation that these programmes should involve service users in decision making. Organisations working at national and regional levels and in the criminal justice and health sectors reported the lowest levels of current participation work.

Respondents from Sure Start projects, which work with children under four, also reported a low level of participation, and revealed divergent views as to whether it was appropriate to involve children of this age in decision-making. Three out of ten respondents said that they involved parents and carers, rather than children, in decision-making, while four respondents felt that the questionnaire was not applicable to them because of the age of the children. In addition, four Sure Start respondents who said they were undertaking participation work were referring to their involvement of young parents, rather than children. Six respondents expressed willingness to involve young children in decision-making but uncertainty as to how to go about it.

Respondents who said that their organisation had no plans to undertake participation work were asked to give their reasons for this. A total of 32 statutory sector respondents provided reasons, of which the most common were that the organisation worked with children under four (seven responses); participation work - or work with young people generally - was the responsibility of another body (six responses); and that the organisation did not undertake direct work with children and young people (five responses).

Table 1a. Statutory sector: organisations involving children and young people up to 19 in decision-making about policies, strategies or services¹¹

Levels of involvement	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Skills Councils	Learning & Skills Councils
Currently involving CYP	79	63	88	61	62	83	60	96	70	
Involved in the past	11	18	8	16	21	14	10	0	9	
No but plan to	4	10	2	10	11	1	10	0	9	
No & have no plans	4	5	2	10	4	2	16	0	13	
Don't know	1	5	1	2	2	0	4	4	0	
Total (N=)	849	40	456	49	119	86	50	26	23	

When statutory sector responses are analysed by region, it can be seen that organisations in the North East report the highest level of current participation work (95%), followed by the North West and the East of England (86% and 83% respectively). Organisations in the East Midlands report the lowest level of current activity (69%), but the highest level of past activity (23%).

Table 1b. Statutory sector: involving children and young people in decision-making, by region

Levels of involvement	Total %	East of England	East Midlands	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
Currently involving CYP	79	83	69	81	95	86	76	80	72	77
Involved in the past	11	7	23	11	0	9	14	10	15	10
No but plan to	4	3	4	3	5	3	5	3	6	6
No & have no plans	4	6	4	3	0	3	3	5	6	4
Don't know	1	1	0	2	0	0	3	1	1	3
Total (N=)	827	69	71	118	62	112	116	96	104	79

As table 1c shows, all first-tier authorities responding are either currently involving children and young people in decision making or have done so in the past through at least one department or service. Despite not having specific responsibilities for children and young people's services, nearly all (95%) of the district councils that responded are either currently involving children or young people or have done so in the past.

¹¹ All percentages have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole figure, and as a result the totals may not add up exactly to 100 per cent. It should also be noted that some of the base sizes used for sub-group analysis are quite small (e.g. LSCs and Connexions partnerships) and should therefore be treated with caution.

Table 1c. Local government: involvement of children and young people

Levels of involvement	Total %	1 st Tier Corporate Response	LEA	Social Services	Youth Services	District Councils
Currently involving CYP	90	95	92	94	97	79
Involved in the past	7	3	3	5	3	16
No but plan to	2	2	3	1	0	3
No & have no plans	0	0	0	0	0	2
Don't know	0	0	3	0	0	1
Total (N=)	427	63	39	88	115	122

Over four in five voluntary sector respondents (81%) said that their organisation currently involved children and young people in decision making. Four per cent have undertaken participation work in the past, and a further six per cent of respondents plan to involve children and young people in decision-making.

Table 1d. Voluntary sector: involvement of children and young people in decision-making

Levels of involvement	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Currently involving CYP	81	78	83
Involved in the past	4	4	5
No but plan to	6	8	3
No & have no plans	6	7	6
Don't know	3	3	3
Total (N=)	160	74	86

Level of involvement over the past four years

The research sought to gain information about current or recent participation activity involving children and young people. Only those organisations that currently carry out participation work, or have done so in the past completed the detailed body of the questions. This left a base of 767 statutory sector organisations (90% of total respondents) and 136 voluntary organisations (85%).

Of those continuing with the questionnaire, almost nine out of ten statutory sector respondents (89%), and three-quarters of voluntary sector respondents (74%) said that the amount of work they had done to involve children and young people in decision-making had increased over the past four years.

Table 2a shows that Connexions services, Children's Fund partnerships and local government were most likely to report an increase in activity (100%, 92% and 92% respectively). It should be noted, however, that Connexions and Children's Fund are both relatively new initiatives which started within this period. Respondents from Sure Start

projects (77%), national and regional government and learning and skills councils (both 78%) were least likely to report an increase.

Table 2a. Statutory sector: changes in participation activity over the past four years

Participation activity	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Increased	89	78	92	82	83	92	77	100	78
Decreased	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Stayed the same	8	9	6	16	12	6	14	0	22
Don't know	2	9	1	3	4	2	9	0	0
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

Base: statutory organisations currently involving or having involved CYP in the past

Among local government respondents, no first-tier chief executive or education department reported a decrease in participation work. One per cent of social services, youth service and district council respondents said that the work had decreased, with one youth service response attributing this to the withdrawal of funding. District councils were least likely to report an increase in participation work (87%).

Table 2b. Local government respondents: activity over past four years

Participation activity	Total %	1 st Tier Corporate Response	LEA	Social Services	Youth Services	District Councils
Increased	93	98	95	95	95	87
Decreased	1	0	0	1	1	1
Stayed the same	5	2	5	3	4	8
Don't know	1	0	0	0	0	4
Total (N=)	416	62	37	87	115	115

Base: local government organisations currently involving or having involved CYP in the past

One of the aims of the survey was to make some comparisons between the information provided by local government respondents and the findings of a survey into local authorities' involvement of children and young people in decision-making carried out by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the Local Government Association (LGA) in 2001. While an exact comparison is not possible, due to differences in methods used and likelihood that different authorities contributed to each survey, it is possible to gain some indication of trends by comparing responses to the 2001 survey with those provided here by first-tier local authority and district council respondents.¹²

¹² The Institute for Public Policy Research undertook research into young people's involvement in decision making with the Local Government Association for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2001. The questionnaire went to chief executives of local authorities in England and Wales, and sought information about young people aged 10 to 24. IPPR/LGA (2001), *Involving Young people in Decision-Making: a survey of local authorities*. Research briefing 10, August 2001. http://www.ippr.org/research/files/team22/project46/yp_survey.pdf

Table 2c suggests that participation activity may have increased since the 2001 survey, particularly among district councils, although their level of participation work remains lower than average for local government in the 2004 survey, as in 2001.

Table 2c. Local government. Participation activity in 2004 compared to 2001

Participation activity %	2004 survey – corporate responses	2001 survey - all respondents	2004 - district councils	2001- district councils
Currently involving CYP in decision-making	84	77	79	66
Involved CYP in decision-making in the past	11	9	16	13
Amount of participation work has increased over past four years	91	88	87	82
Total (=N)	185	226	122	137

Within the voluntary sector, regional and local organisations were more likely than national organisations to report an increase in participation work (83% and 64% respectively). Three in ten national voluntary organisations said that their level of activity had remained the same over the past four years.

Table 2d. Voluntary sector. Activity over past four years

Participation activity %	Total	National	Regional & Local
Increased	74	64	83
Decreased	4	5	3
Stayed the same	19	30	11
Don't know	3	2	4
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Written participation policies or strategies

As Tables 3a and 3b show, over two-fifths of both statutory and voluntary sector organisations (44% and 41% respectively) had a written policy or strategy on involving children and young people in decision making. A further quarter of statutory organisations and 16 per cent of voluntary organisations were developing policies.

Within the statutory sector, specialist programmes such as Connexions or Children's Fund projects were most likely to have written policies (92 and 55 per cent respectively). Seven in ten respondents from national and regional government and local government (69% and 73% respectively) said that their organisation either had or was developing policies and strategies. However, over two-fifths of Sure Start projects (46%), learning and skills councils (44%), health organisations (43%), and criminal justice organisations (42%), neither have, nor are developing policies.

Table 3a. Statutory sector: existence of written policies or strategies

Written policies or strategies	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Yes	44	44	44	18	26	55	31	92	28
No	28	28	22	42	43	8	46	0	44
Being developed	25	25	29	24	21	34	20	8	28
Don't know	3	3	5	16	9	2	3	0	0
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

Within the voluntary sector, just over one third (36%) neither had nor were developing written policies or strategies.

Table 3b. Voluntary sector: existence of written policies or strategies

Written policies or strategies	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Yes	41	41	41
No	36	34	37
Being developed	16	18	15
Don't know	7	7	7
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Levels of decision-making

Respondents were asked to indicate the different levels or stages at which they involved children and young people in decision-making. As tables 4a and 4b demonstrate, both statutory and voluntary organisations were most likely to involve children and young people in decisions about existing and new services, with around four-fifths involving them at these levels.

Statutory sector respondents – with the notable exception of Connexions services and Children's Fund projects - reported relatively low levels of children and young people's involvement in monitoring and evaluating services or policies (55%), in identifying policies and services they were concerned about (59%), and in decisions made about themselves as individuals (58%). National and regional organisations, and organisations within the criminal justice sector were less likely than average to involve children and young people at all levels. Local government organisations reported a higher than average rate of involvement at all levels except monitoring and evaluation, while Children's Fund projects were more likely than average to involve children and young people at all levels except decisions made about them as individuals. The relatively high level of involvement of children and young people in

monitoring and evaluation in Connexions services and Children's Fund projects may reflect the way that this level of participation was built into these programmes from an early stage.

Table 4a. Statutory sector: levels at which children and young people involved in decision-making

Levels of involvement	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Asked for ideas about existing services	81	66	86	47	79	82	66	100	67
Asked for ideas about new services	79	63	82	55	72	89	71	100	61
Identifying policies or services they are concerned about	59	44	68	34	35	66	37	80	28
Decisions made about them as individuals	58	31	62	50	63	53	46	92	11
Monitoring and evaluation	55	47	53	29	45	83	60	84	56
Delivery of services	40	22	44	16	27	55	37	68	0
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

Voluntary sector respondents reported similar patterns as those statutory sector respondents, except that their organisations were more likely to involve children and young people in service delivery (57% compared to 40% statutory sector respondents).

Table 4b. Voluntary sector: levels at which children and young people involved in decision-making

Levels of involvement	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Asked for ideas about existing services	82	84	81
Asked for ideas about new services	81	80	81
Decisions made about them as individuals	63	62	64
Delivery of services	57	56	57
Monitoring and evaluation	57	59	55
Identifying policies or services they are concerned about	53	54	52
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Issues about which children and young people make decisions

Respondents were asked to identify the issues about which they involved children and young people in making decisions. Tables 5a and 5b show that both statutory and voluntary organisations appear to focus on involving children and young people in decisions which can be seen to have an obvious impact on them, such as leisure, health, community safety, youth services and education. They are less likely to be involved in making decisions about broader

services or issues, such as regeneration, transport or housing – although approximately one-third of local government organisations did involve them in these issues. However, statutory sector organisations working with young people in rural areas appear to be more likely than those in urban areas to involve them in decisions about transport (39% compared to 28%).

As would be expected, within the statutory sector, local authority bodies with a generic remit tended to involve children and young people in decisions covering a broad range of issues. While it is difficult to compare across organisations because of their different remits, it seems that some organisations within the criminal justice and health sectors do involve children and young people in decision-making in areas outside their main focus of interest. Not surprisingly, learning and skills council have a clear focus on education and careers issues (through Connexions). The relatively high percentage of respondents reporting that children and young people were involved in decisions about ‘other’ issues mainly refers to their involvement in developing the services and programmes they use, particularly through the specialist programmes such as Children’s Fund and Connexions. Ten respondents reported involving children and young people in democratic processes, including the issue of the voting age. Some individual responses indicated the potential for involving children and young people in a wide range of issues – examples included licensing laws, anti-racism and equalities, employment bylaws, tourism, regional government and health service modernisation.

Table 5a. Statutory sector: issues about which children and young people are involved in decision-making

Issues	Total %	Regional & National Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Leisure	58	34	71	47	16	75	46	32	0
Health	56	22	54	13	99	66	63	20	0
Community safety	55	22	66	89	18	70	29	28	0
Youth Services	53	28	67	42	29	49	20	28	17
Education	49	41	53	16	27	69	60	28	94
Connexions	39	13	52	8	23	7	14	100	56
Social Services	37	22	49	8	17	34	17	20	0
Environment	35	22	46	18	13	37	31	16	0
Regeneration	27	19	34	5	8	23	37	20	17
Transport	27	19	38	3	10	18	11	24	6
Housing	24	16	32	3	14	14	11	20	0
Other	16	31	14	3	15	30	29	8	2
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

Within the voluntary sector, regional and local organisations were more likely than national organisations to involve children and young people in decisions about leisure (63% and 30% respectively), youth services (65% and 54%), community safety (40% and 23%) and transport (21% and 10% respectively). National organisations were more likely than regional and local organisations to involve children and young people in decisions about education (52% and 33% respectively) and social services (21% and 12%). In common with statutory sector responses, the high proportion of ‘other’ responses tends to refer to children and young people’s participation within the organisations they use.

Table 5b. Voluntary sector: issues about which children and young people are involved in decision-making

Issues	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Youth Services	60	54	65
Leisure	48	30	63
Education	42	52	33
Health	35	36	35
Community safety	32	23	40
Connexions	26	23	28
Environment	21	18	23
Housing	16	13	19
Transport	16	10	21
Social Services	16	21	12
Regeneration	14	11	16
Other	13	16	11
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Approaches to participation

Respondents were asked to identify, from a detailed listing, the types of approaches they used to involve children and young people. They were asked to distinguish between approaches open to the general population they served – including children and young people – and those designed specifically for children and young people. They were also asked to identify the specific tasks and activities that children and young people undertook to inform decision-making.

Approaches involving children and young people alongside adults

Public meetings, consultation documents and question and answer sessions were among the four most popular approaches to involving children and young people alongside adults in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. In addition, over half of statutory sector respondents reported using service user groups, while nearly six in ten voluntary sector respondents said that their organisation involved children and young people on decision-making bodies and committees.

Within the statutory sector, table 6a shows that public meetings, consultation documents and service user forums were most commonly identified, all used by over half of all statutory sector respondents. Just under half of respondents said they used question and answer (Q & A) sessions and complaints or suggestion schemes, while 44 per cent said they involved children and young people as members of main decision making bodies or committees. They were least likely to use referendums (5%) and citizens' juries or panels (20%).

Local government organisations reported a higher than average use of all methods, while programmes specifically focusing on children and young people (with the exception of Connexions) tended to make less use of most or all of these methods. National and regional government reported a lower than average use of all of these methods except decision-making bodies and websites – suggesting that they use parallel approaches of engaging (probably) small numbers of children and young people in formal structures, while attempting to reach a broader constituency through the use of information technology.

Table 6a. Statutory sector: approaches involving children and young people alongside adults

Approaches	Total %	Regional & Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Public meetings and events	74	53	81	76	57	71	57	84	50
Consultation documents	66	38	77	47	40	66	34	96	39
Service user forums	52	16	59	26	49	49	46	72	22
Q and A sessions	49	31	54	55	36	47	31	60	22
Complaints or suggestion schemes	48	13	53	34	49	35	40	92	17
Involving CYP on decision-making bodies & committees	44	44	47	13	34	48	40	96	6
Opinion polls & surveys	37	16	41	47	34	22	31	64	39
Websites	34	38	38	18	26	27	6	72	22
Citizens' panels/juries	20	9	25	34	15	12	0	20	11
Referendums	5	3	7	0	2	1	0	12	6
Other	6	0	5	5	5	8	4	0	0
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

When the most popular approaches are analysed by local government type, first tier corporate respondents are most likely to report the use of all these approaches. Social services are most likely to use complaints and suggestion schemes and service user forums. Education and social services departments are least likely to involve children and young people as members of committees and other main decision making bodies, while youth services are most likely to do so. District councils are most likely to use 'open to all' approaches such as public meetings and consultation documents, and least likely to involve children and young people in committees.

Table 6b. Local government: most popular approaches involving children and young people alongside adults

Approaches	Total %	1 st Tier Corporate Response	LEA	Social Services	Youth Services	District Councils
Public meetings and events	82	92	73	72	86	83
Consultation documents	79	82	73	84	78	77
Service user forums	61	68	65	71	69	40
Complaints or suggestion schemes	54	61	30	85	46	42
Q and A sessions	55	61	59	41	68	48
Involving CYP on committees	49	60	46	38	75	26
Total (N=)	416	62	37	87	115	115

Within the voluntary sector, table 6c shows that nearly six in ten involve children and young people in committees or hold public meetings (59% and 57% respectively). Half make use of Q and A sessions and consultation documents (50% and 49% respectively). As with local authority youth services, the high level of involvement of children and young people in

committees is likely to reflect the extent to which they are involved in helping manage their own organisations.

Table 6c. Voluntary sector: approaches involving children and young people alongside adults

Approaches	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Involving CYP on decision-making bodies & committees	59	59	59
Public meetings and events	57	56	59
Q and A sessions	50	46	53
Consultation documents	49	52	47
Complaints or suggestion schemes	42	48	37
Service user forums	36	34	37
Websites	32	41	25
Opinion polls/surveys	21	20	23
Citizen's panels/juries	10	7	13
Referendums	4	3	4
Other	2	2	3
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Approaches targeting children and young people specifically

Both statutory and voluntary sector respondents reported that the most popular approaches specifically targeting children and young people were researching their views and needs, informal discussion and youth councils or forums. Young citizens' juries and panels were the least frequently used approaches among both statutory and voluntary organisations.

Around seven in ten statutory sector respondents (69%) and six in ten voluntary sector respondents (60%) said that their organisation carried out research into children and young people's views and needs. Approximately six in ten respondents from both statutory and voluntary sectors used informal discussion (61% and 58% respectively). Youth councils and forums were used by six in ten statutory sector organisations, and 45 per cent of voluntary organisations. Public events for children and young people, arts-based projects, consultation documents designed for children and young people and focus groups were also all used by more than half of statutory sector and one third of voluntary sector respondents.

Table 7a shows that among statutory sector organisations, Connexions Partnerships, Children's Fund projects and local government organisations were most likely to research children and young people's needs. Connexions Services and local government organisations were most likely to involve children and young people through youth councils or forums. Criminal justice organisations reported low use of many methods, particularly service user groups, but high use of 'other project work', perhaps suggesting forms of involvement not captured by the predetermined categories used in this survey.

Table 7a. Statutory sector: approaches specifically designed for children and young people

Approaches	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Research into CYP's views & needs	69	56	74	53	58	81	31	92	67
Youth councils & forums	61	22	76	50	40	46	14	88	33
Informal discussion	61	44	67	47	45	76	31	88	6
Public meetings and events	59	34	68	58	36	67	17	92	33
Arts-based projects	57	28	63	39	38	76	37	68	17
Consultation documents	53	28	60	42	28	71	11	84	11
Focus groups	52	50	54	29	48	57	17	84	50
Polls & surveys of CYP	44	19	52	29	31	45	9	92	17
Other project work	43	9	48	50	30	47	34	48	6
Service user groups	35	13	42	3	26	43	11	64	6
Websites for CYP	30	31	35	18	20	27	0	64	17
CYP's advisory or reference groups	29	19	32	8	20	40	3	84	6
Visioning exercises	27	13	32	24	12	28	14	40	11
E-mail & text-messaging	21	19	25	8	12	13	3	64	11
Young citizens' panels & juries	16	9	19	18	13	11	0	24	11
Other	6	3	6	5	5	11	9	0	6
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

The popularity of youth councils and forums in local government is confirmed by closer analysis, which shows that 94 per cent of youth services, 89 per cent of first-tier local authorities and 77 per cent of district councils support youth councils and forums. The high rate among youth services suggests that they are frequently charged with supporting their local authority's youth council. Youth services are also the most likely to use arts-based approaches to participation.

Table 7b. Local government: most popular approaches targeting children and young people

Approaches	Total %	1 st Tier Corporate Response	LEA	Social Services	Youth Services	District Councils
Youth councils & forums	77	89	78	48	94	77
Research into CYP's views & needs	76	89	73	76	81	64
Public meetings and events	68	81	68	57	78	60
Informal discussion	66	81	59	69	77	48
Arts-based projects	65	66	62	54	80	58
Consultation documents	62	74	62	74	64	43
Focus groups	56	74	49	48	71	39
Total (N=)	416	62	37	87	115	115

As table 7c shows, regional and local voluntary organisations were more likely than national organisations to make use of youth councils (49% and 39% respectively) and arts-based projects (44% and 31%). National organisations were more likely than regional and local organisations to make use of websites (36% and 16% respectively) and focus groups (52% and 39%).

Table 7c. Voluntary sector: approaches specifically designed for children and young people

Approaches	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Research into CYP's views & needs	60	62	57
Informal discussion	58	59	57
Youth councils & forums	45	39	49
Focus groups	45	52	39
Public meetings and events	43	43	44
Arts-based projects	38	31	44
Consultation documents	37	33	40
Email & text-messaging	30	34	27
Websites for CYP	25	36	16
Polls and surveys of CYP	24	28	20
Other project work	24	26	23
Visioning exercises	21	25	19
CYP's advisory or reference groups	21	28	16
Service user groups	16	18	15
Young citizens' panels & juries	13	10	16
Other	3	0	5
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Specific tasks and activities undertaken by children and young people

The questionnaire asked about the specific tasks and activities which children and young people carry out to inform public decision-making. Representing their peers and attending meetings are the tasks children and young people undertake most frequently in both statutory and voluntary sectors. Across both sectors, young people are less likely to be involved in more strategic level tasks, such as developing frameworks for assessing services, budget setting or assessing suppliers. However, four out of ten organisations in both statutory and voluntary sectors involve children and young people in staff selection.

Table 8a shows that, within the statutory sector, children and young people were most likely to be involved in representing their peers (73%), attending meetings (62%), researching the needs of other children and young people (48%), staff recruitment and organising events (both 46%). Over one-third of organisations involved children and young people in developing policies and strategies, training children and young people (including peer education and mentoring), and in campaigning for change.

Table 8a. Statutory sector: tasks and activities undertaken by children and young people to inform public decision-making – most commonly used

Tasks and activities	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Representing CYP	73	69	79	55	58	78	40	92	50
Attending meetings	62	44	73	50	40	46	43	96	28
Research into CYP's needs	48	25	53	42	36	48	20	88	50
Recruiting staff	46	19	51	18	20	78	26	100	0
Organising events	46	22	58	13	16	43	26	92	0
Developing policies, strategies or plans	41	47	44	18	34	41	17	92	22
Training other CYP	40	22	46	24	31	49	11	60	11
Promoting services to other CYP	36	22	51	13	31	39	20	88	17
Campaigning for change	33	19	46	11	16	18	6	40	0
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

Many of the activities asked about were used by fewer than one third of statutory sector respondents. In general, young people were less likely to be involved in more strategic level tasks, such as developing frameworks for assessing services, budget setting or assessing suppliers. Connexions services and local government reported a higher than average use of most activities, while learning and skills councils reported the use of relatively few approaches.

Table 8b. Statutory sector: tasks and activities undertaken by children and young people to inform public decision-making – least commonly used

Tasks and activities	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Working with wider community to improve relationships	32	6	38	34	13	31	31	44	0
Developing youth charters	31	6	39	11	14	19	6	100	17
Mapping existing provision	28	19	29	18	20	33	29	44	22
Training staff	23	19	31	3	15	11	6	48	0
Assessing grant applications	20	9	22	3	5	46	3	48	0
Assessing services	20	13	20	5	19	25	11	84	0
Helping secure money and resources	19	9	26	11	8	14	9	12	0
Developing complaints procedures	15	3	18	3	6	7	9	68	0
Training elected/board members	15	3	21	3	6	5	6	28	0
Developing frameworks for assessing services	10	3	10	5	11	13	6	36	0
Assessing contractors & suppliers	9	6	7	3	5	20	3	32	11
Setting budgets	5	3	5	3	3	10	9	12	0
Other	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

As table 8c shows, youth services made greater than average use of all approaches than other local government respondents. Both youth services and social services reported a particularly high level of involvement of children and young people in staff selection (78% and 74% respectively). District councils reported a low level of use of all methods, particularly involving children and young people in staff recruitment and training their peers.

Table 8c. Local government: tasks and activities most commonly undertaken by children and young people to inform public decision-making

Tasks and activities	Total %	1 st Tier Corporate Response	LEA	Social Services	Youth Services	District Councils
Representing CYP	80	87	78	78	91	66
Attending meetings	74	82	70	72	91	56
Organising events	59	77	46	53	83	35
Research into CYP's needs	54	73	65	41	63	42
Recruiting staff	53	61	49	74	78	8
Promoting services to other CYP	52	60	46	44	70	37
Training CYP	47	61	62	48	63	16
Developing policies, strategies or plans	44	65	49	43	49	28
Total (N=)	416	62	37	87	115	115

Two-thirds of voluntary sector respondents (65%) said that children and young people represented the views of their peers, while over half said that children and young people attended meetings and organised events (57% and 52% respectively). Nearly half of respondents (47%) reported that children and young people were involved in peer training. National organisations were more likely than regional and local organisations to involve children and young people in training their peers (59% and 37% respectively), developing policies (48% and 28%), promoting services to other children and young people (43% and 32%) and training board or elected members (20% and 8% respectively). Local and regional organisations were more likely than national organisations to report involving children and young people in attending meetings (60% and 52% respectively), recruiting staff (45% and 33%) and assessing grant applications (20% and 10% respectively).

Table 8d. Voluntary organisations: tasks and activities undertaken by children and young people to inform public decision-making

Tasks and activities	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Representing CYP	65	69	63
Attending meetings	57	52	60
Organising events	52	56	49
Training other CYP	47	59	37
Research into CYP's needs	41	39	43
Recruiting staff	40	33	45
Developing policies, strategies or plans	37	48	28
Promoting services to other CYP	37	43	32
Working with wider community	32	28	35
Campaigning for change	28	33	24
Helping secure money and resources	23	26	20
Developing youth charters	20	20	20
Mapping existing provision	19	18	20
Training staff	19	20	19
Setting budgets	15	16	13
Assessing grant applications	15	10	20
Training board members	13	20	8
Developing complaints procedures	11	13	9
Assessing services	11	10	12
Developing frameworks for assessing services	7	8	5
Assessing contractors & suppliers	4	5	4
Other	5	5	3
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Participation activity: key findings

- Approximately four out of five respondents from both the statutory sector (79%) and the voluntary sector (81%) said that their organisation was currently involving children and young people in decision-making.
- Nearly nine out of ten statutory sector respondents (89%) and three-quarters of voluntary sector respondents (74%) said that the amount of participation work undertaken by their organisation had increased over the past four years. However, levels of participation activity had remained static in three in ten national voluntary organisations.
- Within local government organisations, respondents from youth services and first-tier local authorities (providing a response for the authority as a whole), reported high levels of participation work (97% and 95% respectively), while district councils reported the lowest level of involvement (79%).
- Statutory sector organisations in the North East reported the highest level of current participation work (95%), followed by the North West and the East of England (86% and 83% respectively). Organisations in the East Midlands reported the lowest level of current activity (69%), but the highest level of past activity (23%).
- Comparison of local government responses to this survey, and a survey undertaken by the Institute for Public Policy Research and the Local Government Association provides an indication that participation work might have increased since 2001, with 84% of respondents to this survey saying that they currently involve children and young people in decision-making, compared to 77% in the 2001 survey. However, some caution should be exercised in drawing direct comparisons between the two surveys.
- Over two-fifths of statutory and voluntary sector organisations (44% and 41% respectively) have a written policy or strategy on involving children and young people in decision-making. A further quarter of statutory organisations and 16 per cent of voluntary organisations are developing written policies.
- In both statutory and voluntary sectors, children and young people are most likely to be involved at the level of generating ideas about existing and new policies or services. They are less likely to be involved in service delivery and monitoring and evaluation.
- Children and young people were most frequently involved in decisions that can be seen to have an obvious impact on them, such as leisure and recreation, health, community safety, education and youth services. They were less likely to be involved in making decisions about broader services or issues, such as regeneration, transport or housing.
- Public meetings, consultation documents and question and answer sessions were commonly used approaches to involving children and young people alongside adults in both sectors. Statutory sector respondents also reported frequent use of service user forums, while voluntary sector respondents were more likely to involve children and young people in decision-making bodies. In both the voluntary and statutory sectors, the most popular approaches specifically targeting children and young people were researching their needs, informal discussion and youth councils or forums.
- In both statutory and voluntary sectors, the tasks that children and young people undertake most frequently to inform decision-making are representing their peers and attending meetings. They are less likely to be involved in more strategic level tasks,

such as developing frameworks for assessing services, budget setting or assessing suppliers. However, approximately two-fifths of organisations in both sectors (46% and 40% respectively) involve children and young people in staff selection.

- Among statutory sector respondents, those from Connexions services, local government and Children's Fund projects consistently reported a higher rate of involvement of children and young people in decision-making, a broader range of levels of involvement, and the use of a variety of approaches to participation.

CHAPTER 2: ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION

The previous chapter looked at the extent to which organisations involve children and young people in decision-making, and the various approaches they adopt. This chapter seeks to explore the impact of their participation – what happens as a result of their involvement. It reports on respondents' overall assessments of the level of influence exerted by children and young people on decisions made by their organisations. It looks at the extent to which organisations have systems in place to evaluate the effects of participation. Finally, it highlights the approaches and tasks that have been found to be most and least effective in promoting children and young people's involvement in decision-making levels, and the reasons they are, or are not, considered to be effective.

It should, however, be noted that this is all based on the perceptions of adults responding on behalf of their organisations. Although not the remit of this study, there is an important future piece of work to be done to provide a robust assessment of impact of participation from the perspective of children and young people themselves.

Children and young people's perceived level of influence

Respondents were asked to assess how much influence children and young people had on decisions made by their organisation. Perceptions of the level of influence exercised by young people varied widely. As tables 9a and 9e show, seven in ten statutory sector respondents (71%) and six in ten voluntary sector respondents (62%) thought that children and young people had some influence in particular areas within their organisation. Only one in ten statutory sector respondents (11%) believed that children and young people had a great deal of influence, whereas nearly three in ten voluntary sector respondents (27%) thought they had a great deal of influence.

Just two statutory sector respondents (from a national/regional government organisation and a health organisation) said that children and young people had no influence at all, and 13 per cent thought that they had very little influence. Respondents from criminal justice (39%), health (20%) and national and regional government organisations (19%) were most likely to say that children and young people had very little influence, while Sure Start projects and learning and skills councils were least able to assess the level of influence (17% and 11% respectively).

Table 9a. Statutory sector: level of influence children and young people are believed to have on organisations' decisions

Level of influence	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
A great deal of influence	11	6	9	3	7	23	14	40	11
Some influence in particular areas	71	66	76	53	67	69	63	60	67
Very little influence	13	19	11	39	20	7	6	0	11
None at all	1	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Don't know	4	6	3	5	5	1	17	0	11
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

Table 9b indicates that assessment of levels of influence varied considerably across regions. In particular, respondents from the North East (which reported the highest rate of participation activity of the nine regions) and Yorkshire and the Humber (both 17%) were more likely than average to report that children and young people had a great deal of influence within their organisation.

Table 9b. Statutory sector. Perceived level of influence by region

Level of influence	Total %	East of England	East Midlands	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorkshire and the Humber
A great deal of influence	11	8	8	14	17	10	9	11	10	17
Some influence in particular areas	72	73	72	72	69	78	74	67	67	68
Very little influence	14	18	12	11	7	8	13	20	16	9
None at all	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Don't know	4	2	8	3	7	3	4	2	5	6
Total (N=)	753	62	65	109	59	106	105	87	91	69

Further analysis of returns from local government respondents reveals that those providing a response for their authority as a whole, and those from youth services, are most likely to believe that children and young people have a great deal of influence on decisions made by their organisations (16% and 14% respectively). Only two per cent of district council respondents believed that children and young people had a great deal of influence on decisions, while over a quarter (27%) said that they had very little influence.

Table 9c. Local government: perceived level of influence

Level of influence	Total %	1 st Tier Corporate Response	LEA	Social Services	Youth Services	District Councils
A great deal of influence	9	16	5	8	14	2
Some influence in particular areas	77	73	84	86	82	67
Very little influence	11	6	8	5	3	27
None at all	0	0	0	0	0	0
Don't know	3	5	3	1	1	4
Total (N=)	416	62	37	87	115	115

When local government responses to this survey are compared with the responses to the IPPR/Local Government Association's 2001 survey, there appears to be some increase in the level of influence children and young people are believed to exercise. While there is no change in the proportion of respondents in both surveys – just over two-thirds - who believe that children and young people have influence in some areas, respondents to the 2004 survey were more likely to say that children and young people have a great deal of influence, and less likely to say that they had either very little or no influence.

Table 9d. Local government. Perceived level of influence on decisions in 2004 and 2001 surveys

Level of influence	%	2004 survey – corporate responses	2001 survey - all respondents	2004 - district councils	2001- district councils
A great deal of influence		7	1	2	2
Some influence in particular areas		69	68	67	64
Very little influence		20	26	27	30
None at all		0	4	0	4
Don't know		5	1	4	1
Total (N=)		177	226	115	137

As table 9e shows, three-fifths of voluntary sector respondents (62%) said that children and young people had some influence in particular areas on decisions made by their organisation,

while nearly three in ten (27%) believed that children and young people had a great deal of influence. Although respondents from national voluntary organisations were slightly more likely than their regional and local counterparts to believe that children and young people had a great deal of influence (30% and 25% respectively), they were also more likely to believe that they had very little influence (13% compared to 1%), suggesting some divergence in practice across these organisations.

Table 9e. Voluntary sector: perceived level of influence

Level of influence	Total	National	Regional & Local
	%		
A great deal of influence	27	30	25
Some influence in particular areas	62	57	65
Very little influence	7	13	1
None at all	0	0	0
Don't know	4	0	8
Total (N=)	136	71	75

Monitoring and evaluation

Respondents were asked whether they assessed children and young people's participation and its impact. Tables 10a and 10b show that the use of monitoring and formal evaluation procedures appears to be limited in both statutory and voluntary sector organisations. Approximately half of respondents from both sectors said their organisation monitored participation, while just over a third of statutory and voluntary sector organisations carried out formal evaluation (38% and 34% respectively). Seven in ten statutory sector and eight in ten voluntary sector respondents (69% and 79% respectively) said that they assessed participation through internal reflection on practice and/or self-evaluation. National and regional government organisations were least likely to undertake formal or evaluation of any kind (25%), followed by health organisations, Sure Start project and learning and skills councils (all 11%).

Within the statutory sector, monitoring and evaluation was more common in Children's Fund programmes, Connexions and local government. The use of internal reflection on practice was least frequent in learning and skills councils (39 per cent) and most prevalent in Children's Fund projects (82 per cent) and local government (74 per cent).

Table 10a. Statutory sector: assessing children and young people's participation

Monitoring and evaluation	Total	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
	%								
Internal reflection	69	53	74	55	59	82	63	64	39
Monitoring	51	34	53	37	33	71	46	88	44
Formal evaluation	38	19	37	32	26	66	49	56	17
Don't know	8	6	7	21	15	2	6	8	22
None of the above	8	25	7	8	11	2	11	0	11
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

As table 10b shows, national voluntary sector respondents were more likely than their regional and local counterparts to make use of internal reflection on practice and formal evaluation.

Table 10b. Voluntary sector: assessing children and young people's participation

Monitoring and evaluation	Total	National	Regional & Local
	%		
Internal reflection	79	85	73
Monitoring	50	51	49
Formal evaluation	34	38	31
Don't know	5	5	5
None of the above	5	5	5
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Approaches and tasks considered to be most effective

Respondents were asked to say which single approach or task used by their organisation was in their view, a) the most effective and b) the least effective.¹³ There was a broad consensus about the approaches and tasks which were considered most effective in engaging young people. However, there appears to be a degree of mismatch between some approaches and tasks that are most frequently used, and those that are believed to be effective.

Approaches involving children and young people alongside adults

It seems that very few statutory sector respondents believed that approaches in which children and young people are involved alongside adults are particularly effective.¹⁴ Five per cent of respondents whose organisations involved children and young people on committees and other decision-making structures identified this as being effective, but all other approaches involving children and young people alongside adults were identified as most effective by one per cent or less of those who had used them. Among voluntary sector respondents, eight per cent considered the involvement of children and young people in decision-making structures to be effective, while four per cent selected public meetings.

Approaches specifically targeting children and young people

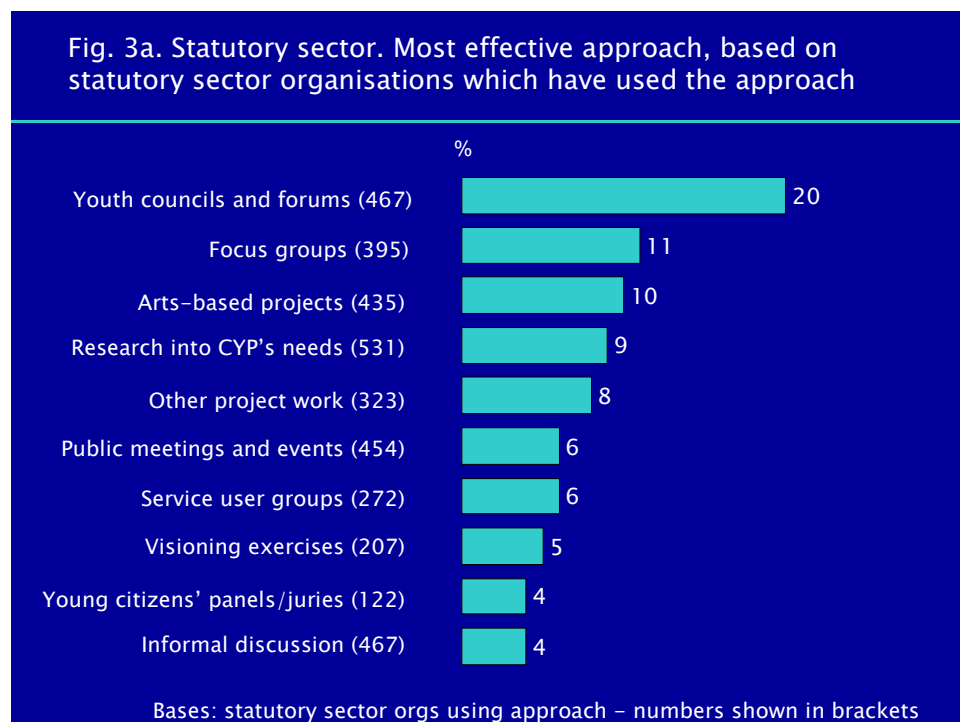
Approaches specifically targeting children and young people were more likely to be identified as being effective, with most approaches being highlighted as effective by at least some of those who had used them. Overall, figures 3a and 3b show that respondents from both the statutory and voluntary sectors considered the involvement of children and young people in youth councils and forums (20% and 15% respectively) to be effective. They were thought to provide children and young people with direct links to decision-makers, to allow children and young people to feel involved and valued, and to be an effective method of receiving direct feedback.

Statutory sector respondents also identified focus groups (11%), art-based projects (10%), research into children and young people's views and needs (9%) and other project work (8%) as the most effective approaches. While only a few Sure Start projects gave details of effective

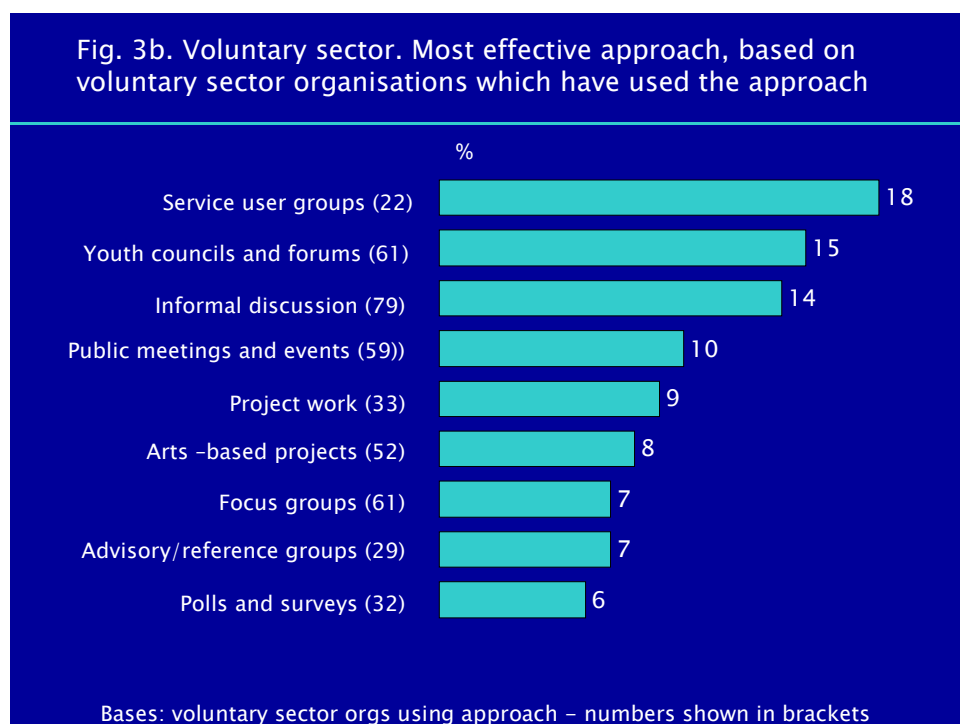
¹³ It should be noted that respondents had previously been asked to select all approaches and tasks used. By asking for the *single* most/least effective, the questionnaire aimed to discriminate between methods and provide a *relative* rather than an *absolute* measure of effectiveness.

¹⁴ There were relatively low item response rates for these questions indicating that some respondents found this difficult to answer. It was also not always clear whether respondents were referring to activities which specifically targeted children and young people, or those intended for all age groups. Some respondents identified more than one type of approach or task; in this case, only their first answer was included in the analysis.

approaches for children aged four and under, those that did tended to identify arts or play as the main mechanisms for involving them in decision-making. Some respondents stressed the difficulty of involving children and young people across broad geographical areas.



Of the approaches commonly used by voluntary sector organisations, respondents were most likely to identify informal discussion (14%), public meetings and events (10%), arts based projects (8%) and focus groups (7%) as most effective.¹⁵



¹⁵ Although service user groups were identified as the most effective approach, this was based on only 22 voluntary sector organisations which had experience of using the method.

Tasks and activities undertaken by children and young people

Most tasks or activities undertaken by children and young people were identified as effective by at least some statutory and voluntary sector respondents. In general, respondents seem to be most likely to describe initiatives as effective when they have a specific focus, and clear outcomes.

In the statutory sector, respondents were most likely to identify the involvement of children and young people in staff recruitment as effective (13%), followed by their involvement in assessing services - e.g. through mystery shopping (10%), training their peers, and developing frameworks for assessing services (both 9%). Many social services responses described ways in which involving looked-after children and young people in decision-making had improved services, ranging from practical aspects such as pocket-money and 'sleepover' policies, to their involvement in staff training and service assessment.



Figure 4b shows that, of the approaches most commonly used by voluntary sector organisations, respondents were most likely to consider children and young people's involvement in training other young people (11%) and representing their peers and recruiting staff (both 7%) as being effective. Other activities, such as assessing grant applications, assessing services and training staff were also identified as effective, but responses were based on low numbers of organisations.

Fig. 4b. Voluntary sector. Most effective tasks, based on voluntary sector organisations which have involved CYP in these tasks



The discussion of the approaches and tasks which were most commonly used to engage children and young people in decision-making in Chapter 1 found that their involvement in more strategic level activities was relatively infrequent, with the exception of staff recruitment. However, it is notable that a number of these activities, such as service assessment, policy development, securing resources and assessing grant applications, appear in the 'top ten' most effective approaches identified by both statutory and voluntary sector respondents.

Approaches and tasks considered to be least effective

When asked to identify the least effective approach used by their organisation, some respondents were reluctant to single out any particular approach or task as ineffective. This tended to be for two reasons: the belief that the effective involvement of children and young people in decision-making relied on the use of a variety of approaches; or because participation work was not sufficiently developed within their organisation to allow them to make this kind of judgement.

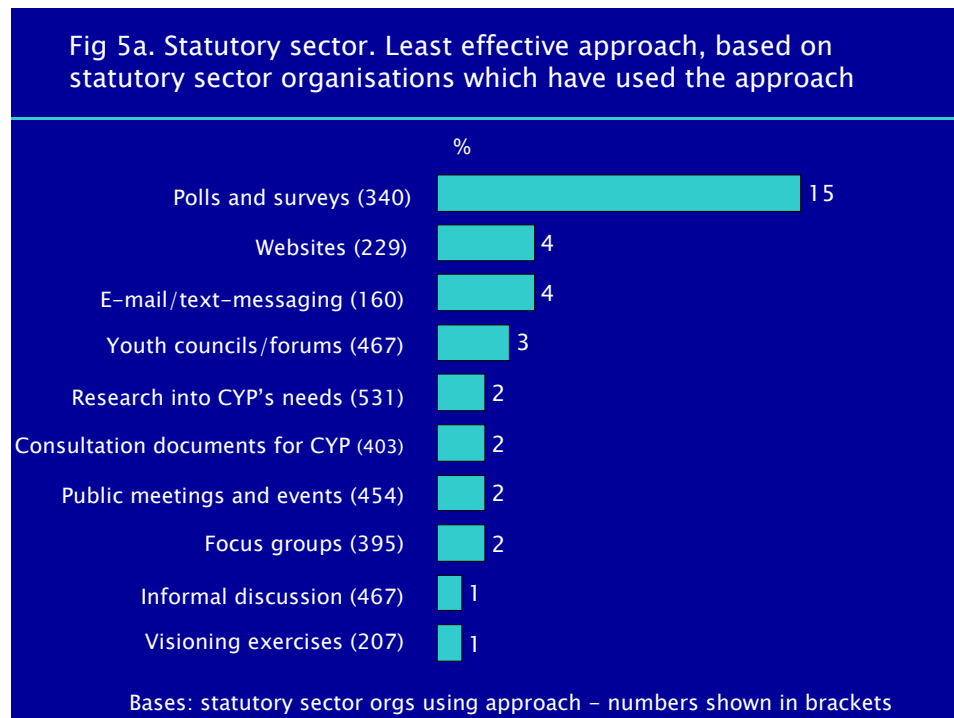
Approaches involving children and young people alongside adults

However, when asked which single approach used by their organisation to involve children and young people alongside adults they considered to be least effective, respondents from both statutory and voluntary sectors identified involvement in main decision-making bodies (10% and 4% respectively) and consultation documents (8% and 3%). Decision-making bodies were seen to pose too many barriers to young people's participation. Reasons cited included children and young people's lack of power, and their all too frequent experiences of having their opinions dismissed by adults. Respondents also identified inadequate preparation of children and young people, and the lack of appropriate structures and support as reasons why their involvement in committees was ineffective. Statutory sector respondents also identified children and young people's involvement in public meetings (both 8%), and citizens' juries (3%) as ineffective. All other approaches were chosen by one per cent or fewer of respondents.

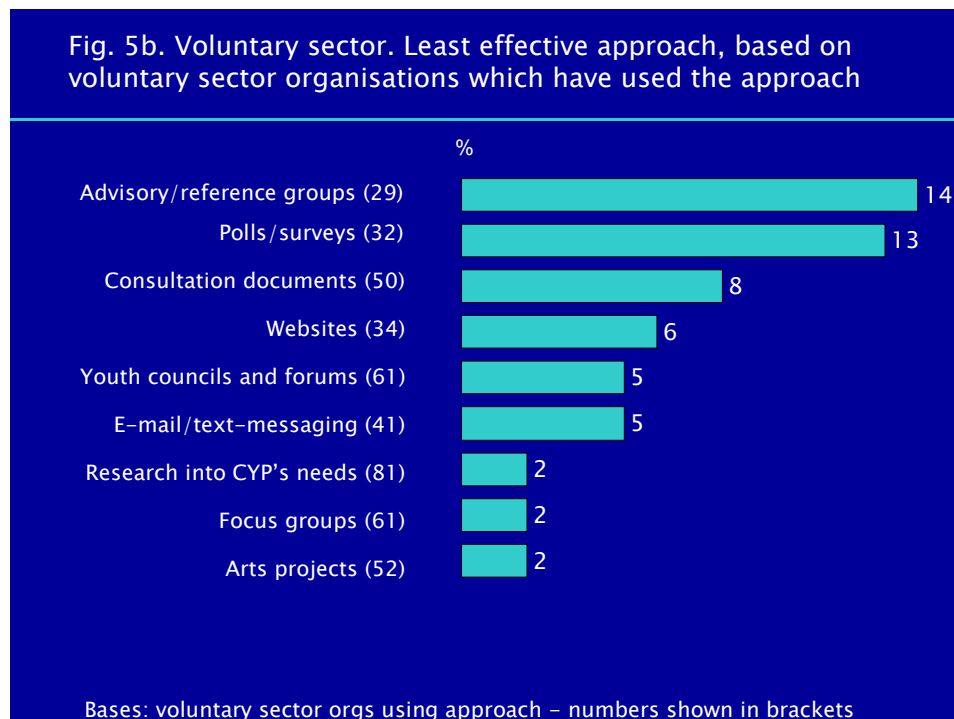
Approaches targeting children and young people

Figures 5a and 5b indicate which approaches targeting children and young people were considered to be least effective. Statutory sector respondents were most likely to identify polls

and surveys (15%), websites and e-mail and text-messaging (both 4%), and youth councils and forums (3%) as ineffective. All other approaches were chosen by two per cent or fewer of respondents.

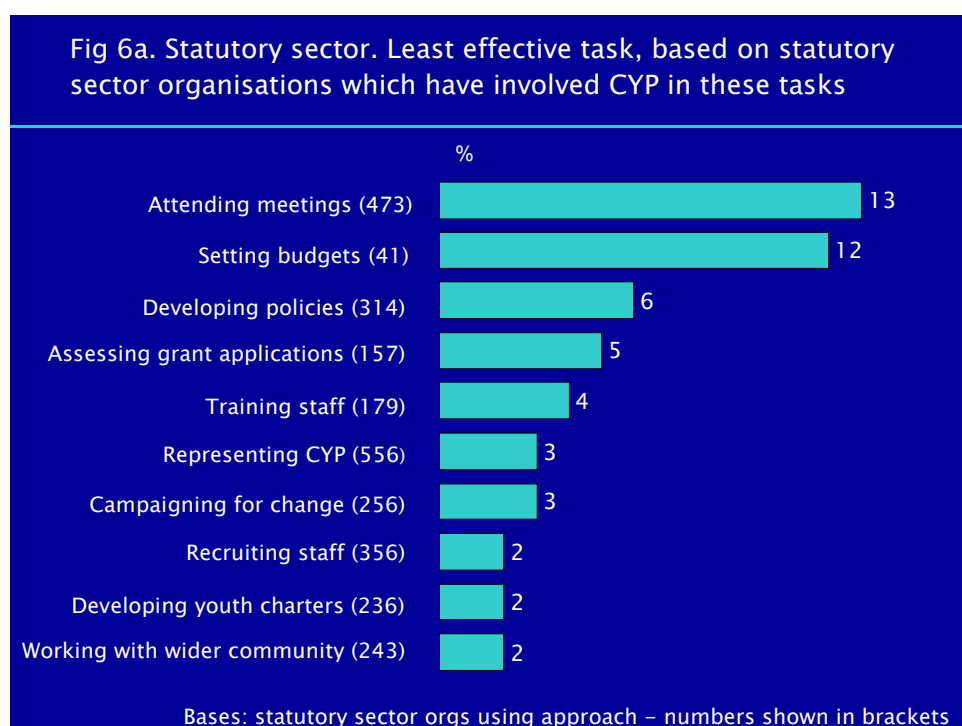


Voluntary sector respondents were most likely to believe that advisory or reference groups (14%) and polls and surveys (13%) and consultation documents (8%) were ineffective.



Tasks and activities undertaken by children and young people

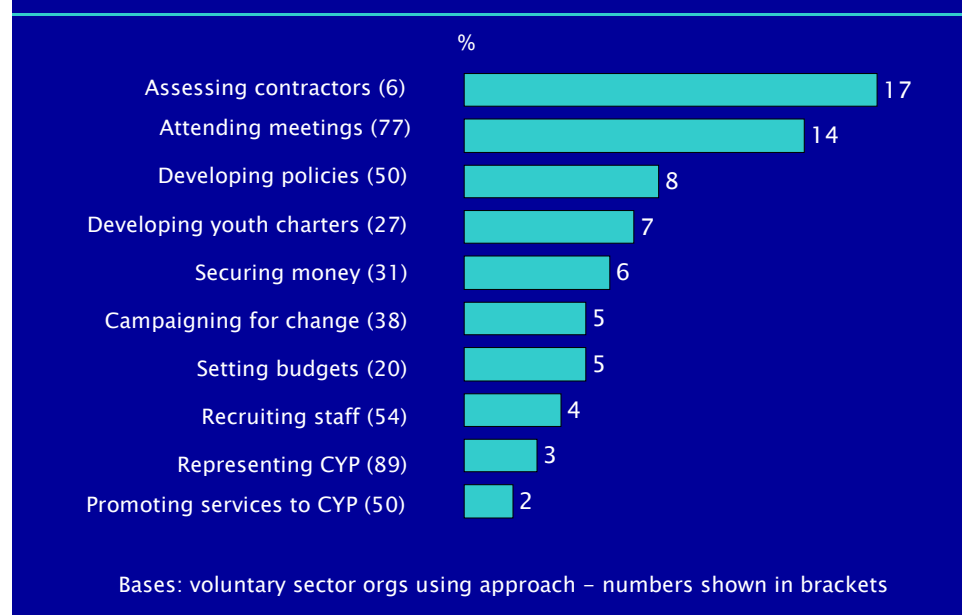
One specific activity, children and young people attending meetings, stands out as being both commonly used and ineffective. Over one in ten statutory and voluntary sector respondents (13% and 14%) identified this as an ineffective activity.¹⁶ Collectively, they described meetings as being inaccessible to children and young people because of language, procedures, timing, lack of preparation and support for children and young people involved, and adults' behaviour. In particular, they were seen to be ineffective when they involved children and young people with no clear purpose or desired outcomes. The involvement of children and young people in policy development – undertaken by approximately 40 per cent of both statutory and voluntary organisations – was also identified as ineffective by six per cent of statutory and eight per cent of voluntary sector respondents. Again, where reasons were given they tended to highlight the need for changes to culture and processes to engage children and young people more effectively.



Overall, as figure 6b shows, voluntary sector respondents tended to make similar judgements (although ranked differently) as to which tasks and activities were least effective.

¹⁶ Although 17% of voluntary sector respondents said that assessing contractors was ineffective, this was based on only six respondents who reported involving children and young people in this task.

Fig. 6b. Voluntary sector. Least effective task, based on voluntary sector organisations which have involved CYP in these tasks



Polarised views

It is noticeable that some approaches and tasks are identified as both most effective and least effective. While 20 per cent of statutory sector respondents said that youth councils and forums were most effective, three per cent said that they were least effective. Respondents who considered youth councils to be effective tended to stress that they had a clear role in local decision-making processes, were respected by local decision-makers, and consequently were able to achieve tangible results. In contrast, those who believed that they were not effective tended to raise concerns that they were not perceived to be representative and did not appeal to a wide range of young people. This was also consistent with voluntary sector findings; while 15 per cent of respondents selected youth councils as the most effective approach, five per cent found them to be least effective for similar reasons.

Similarly, five per cent of statutory sector and eight per cent of voluntary sector respondents identified the involvement of children and young people in committees and boards as effective, since they gave them a role at the centre of organisations. However, those who identified them as ineffective (10% of statutory and 4% of voluntary sector respondents) tended to describe the culture of committees as unappealing to children and young people and preventing them from exercising any real power.

Organisational culture was also the main reason why tasks such as recruiting staff, training adults and assessing applications were described as ineffective by some respondents. While 13 per cent of statutory sector respondents said that involving children and young people in staff recruitment was most effective, since it both resulted in the selection of high quality staff and developed young people's skills and confidence, two per cent had found it ineffective. However, the reasons they gave suggest that the problems lie with inadequate training and support of the children and young people involved, and unhelpful adult attitudes to their involvement, rather than the task itself. These issues could therefore be addressed by action to change organisational culture and increase the capacity of adults to involve children and young people in decision-making.

The use of information technology also divided respondents, with the use of websites and e-mail and text messaging being perceived effective and ineffective by similar percentages of statutory sector respondents who had used them (4% each). Those describing websites as

effective tended to stress children and young people's role in developing them, while problems of resources and sustainability seem to be the main reasons they were considered to be ineffective, particularly among voluntary sector respondents. Two respondents commented on the use of websites in rural areas – while one stated that they enabled them to reach rural children and young people, the other believed that children and young people in rural areas were unable to access IT.

A number of respondents from both the voluntary and statutory sectors stressed that all approaches and tasks could be effective, if undertaken properly – i.e. having definite aims and outcomes, clarity about the basis on which children and young people are involved and the commitment needed, and ensuring that children and young people have the skills and support they need. Some respondents also stressed the importance of using approaches that offered short-term results.

Assessing the impact of participation: key findings

- Approximately seven in ten of statutory sector respondents (71%) and six in ten voluntary sector respondents (62%) believed that children and young people have some influence in particular areas of decisions made by their organisation. Only one in ten statutory sector respondents (11%), compared to a quarter of voluntary sector respondents (27%) believed that children and young people had a great deal of influence.
- Respondents from Connexions Services (40%), Children's Fund partnerships (23%) and Sure Start (14%) were most likely to say that children and young people exercised a great deal of influence upon the decisions made by their organisation. The inclusion of Sure Start within this list suggests that although overall these projects reported relatively low levels of participation activity, it is taken seriously in those projects that do engage children in decision-making.
- Respondents from criminal justice, health and national and regional government organisations were most likely to say that children and young people had very little influence.
- A comparison of local government responses to this survey with responses to the 2001 Local Government Association's survey suggests that there may have been some improvement in the level of influence children and young people are perceived to exercise. While a similar proportion in both surveys – just over two-thirds - believed that children and young people had influence in some areas, respondents to the 2004 survey were more likely to say that children and young people had a great deal of influence (7% compared to 1%), and less likely to say that they had either very little or no influence (20% and 0% compared to 26% and 4% respectively).
- Respondents from national voluntary sector organisations were slightly more likely than regional or local organisations to describe children and young people as having a great deal of influence in their organisations (30% and 25% respectively), but were also more likely to believe that children and young people had very little influence (13% and 1% respectively), suggesting some divergence of practice among national voluntary organisations.
- The use of monitoring and formal evaluation procedures relating to participation appears to be limited in both statutory and voluntary organisations. Approximately half of statutory and voluntary sector respondents (51% and 50% respectively) said that their organisation monitored participation, while less than two in five of voluntary and statutory sector organisations carried out formal evaluation (38 and 34 per cent respectively). There was a high reliance on self-evaluation and reflection on practice in both statutory and voluntary sectors (69% and 79% respectively).
- Respondents were asked to identify the single approach or task, out of all those that their organisation has used, that they considered to be most and least effective respectively. Overall, both statutory and voluntary sector respondents reported that the involvement of children and young people in youth councils and forums was most effective (20% and 15% respectively). Of the specific tasks, involving children and young people in staff recruitment (undertaken by approximately four in ten statutory and voluntary sector organisations) was identified as the most effective task by 13 per cent of statutory sector respondents, but by only seven per cent of voluntary sector respondents.
- Other approaches targeting children and young people which statutory sector respondents identified as effective were focus groups (11%), arts-based projects (10%), and research into children and young people's needs (9%) and other project work (8%). Voluntary sector respondents identified service user groups (18%), informal discussion (14%) and public meetings and events (10%).

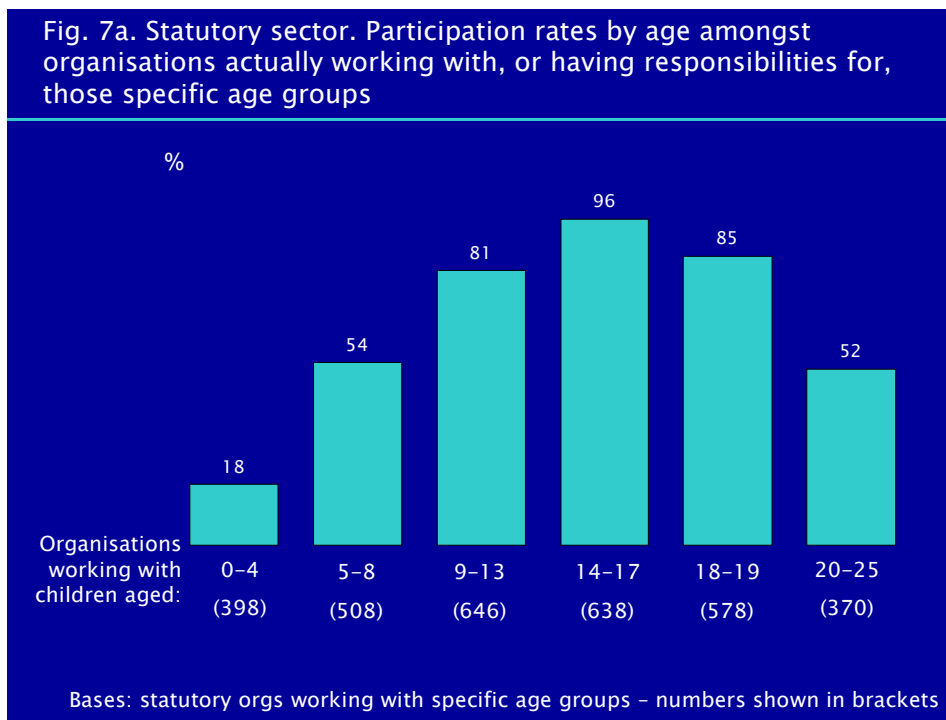
- As identified in the previous chapter, the involvement of children and young people in more strategic level activities was relatively infrequent, with the exception of their involvement in staff recruitment. However, both statutory and voluntary sector respondents identified some of these activities, including developing frameworks for assessing services, developing policies, securing resources and assessing grant applications, as the most effective approaches to involving children and young people in decision-making.
- There appears to be a mismatch between some of the approaches and tasks that were most frequently used to involve children and young people in decision-making and those that were believed to be most effective. In particular, involving children and young people in attending meetings was reported to be both common and ineffective – though this may be attributable to the way in which this has been carried out in these organisations, rather than to a ‘fault’ with the method per se.
- In some instances, respondents held polarised views about the effectiveness of particular approaches and tasks, with the same approaches or tasks being identified as the most effective by some respondents, and the least effective by others. This is the case for youth councils, involving children and young people in staff selection and training, and representing other children and young people. These different judgements appear either to be based on respondents’ different priorities, or to suggest that potentially effective approaches were being undermined by poor implementation, lack of resources or cultural barriers.
- The spread of responses suggests that most approaches and tasks can be effective, if undertaken properly – i.e. having definite aims and outcomes, clarity about the basis on which children and young people are involved and the commitment involved, and ensuring that children and young people have the skills and support they need.

CHAPTER 3: REACHING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This chapter provides information on the characteristics of children and young people involved in decision-making. It shows the extent to which organisations engage children and young people of different ages in decision-making, and also provides information about the gender, ethnicity, disability and location of children and young people involved in decision-making. Some groups of children and young people, such as those in care and young offenders, are often considered 'hard to reach', and this chapter outlines how far organisations appear to be succeeding in involving them. It also reports on the extent to which organisations acknowledged difficulties in involving specific groups of children and young people, and the approaches they have used to address this.

Ages of children and young people involved in decision-making

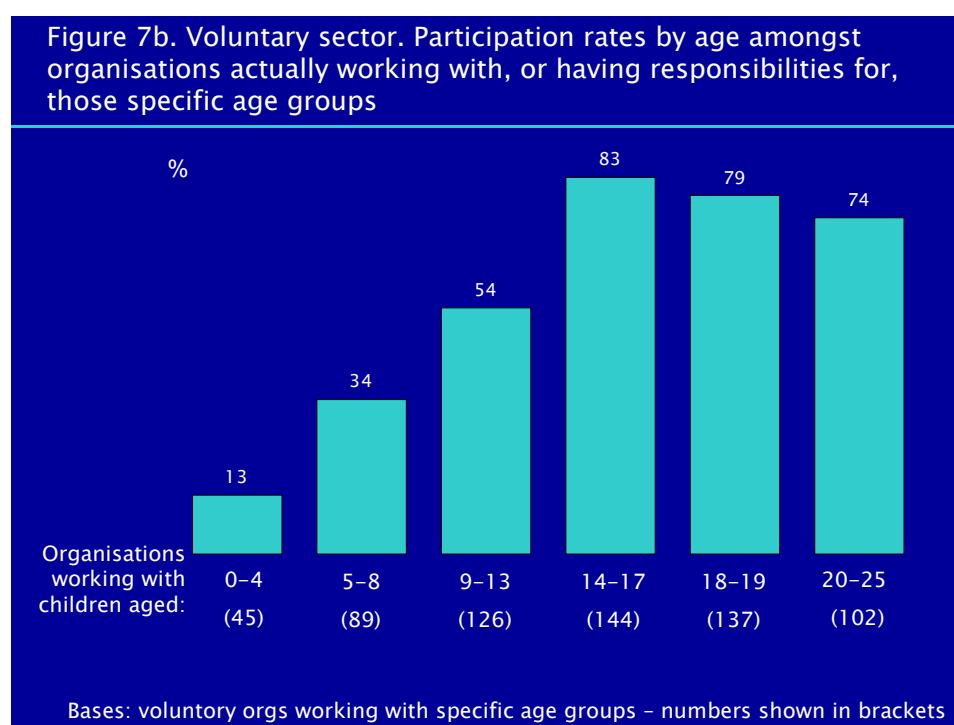
Respondents were asked to identify the age ranges of children and young people they had involved in decision-making in the past twelve months. These data were analysed on the basis of the information they provided about the ages of the children and young people that their organisation worked with or had responsibility for, to see whether children and young people are more likely to be involved in participation at particular ages. Figures 7a and 7b show that children and young people aged 14 to 19 were most likely to be involved in decision-making in both statutory and voluntary sectors.



Nearly all (96%) of statutory organisations who identified 14-17 year-olds as one of the groups they worked with, or had responsibility for, said that they involved young people of this age in decision-making. The equivalent figure for organisations working with young people aged 18 and 19 was also high (85%). There were relatively low levels of involvement of children under eight in decision-making. Fewer than one-fifth (18%) of organisations working with under 4s said that they involved children of this age in decision-making. Just over half (54%) said that they involved children aged five to eight. However, it appears that relatively few organisations identify this low rate of involvement of young children as a problem; when asked about groups they find hard to involve in decision making, only around five per cent specified younger children – variously defined, but generally under 10.

Four out of five statutory sector respondents from organisations working with 9-13 year-olds said that their organisation involved children of this age in decision-making. However, this figure may be boosted by responses from Connexions and youth services, whose target age range of 13-19 may mean that some organisations stating that they work with the 9-13 age group will, in fact, only work with 13-year-olds.

Voluntary organisations were also most likely to involve young people aged 14 to 17 in decision-making, followed by those aged 18 to 19. (83% and 79% respectively among organisations stating that they work with these age groups). They also reported low levels of involvement of children under eight in decision-making.



Other characteristics of children and young people involved in decision-making

There was an almost equal balance between male and female involvement, at 95 per cent for both in statutory sector organisations and 85 per cent male and 88 per cent female for voluntary organisations.¹⁷ Table 11 shows that approximately six in ten of statutory and voluntary sector respondents said that their organisation involved children and young people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.

Statutory organisations reported much greater involvement of children and young people from urban than rural areas (84 and 53 per cent respectively). However only five per cent of respondents specifically identified problems in reaching children and young people in rural areas.¹⁸ Although voluntary organisations were also more likely to involve children and young people from urban areas in decision-making, the disparity was slightly less pronounced, at 79 and 58 per cent respectively for urban and rural young people.

Respondents were asked whether they involved specific groups of children and young people in decision-making. More than half of statutory sector organisations and just under half of

¹⁷ Many respondents, particularly in the voluntary sector, did not provide full information about the characteristics of children and young people they involved in decision-making, so the involvement of some specific groups is likely to be under-reported.

¹⁸ This is likely to be affected by the sampling methods used, since a number of programmes (such as Sure Start) are area based and more likely to operate in urban areas.

voluntary organisations involved children and young people with disabilities in decision-making. Other significant groups involved in decision-making included young people currently or formerly in care (most commonly involved through social services), young people not in education, employment or training, and young offenders.

Table 11. Organisations involving specific groups of children and young people in decision-making

Characteristics of children and young people	Statutory sector	Voluntary sector
	%	%
White	96	84
Black or Black British	63	60
Asian or Asian British	66	56
Mixed heritage	63	50
Learning disability	59	47
Physical/sensory disability	56	38
Non-disabled	68	59
Lesbian, gay or bisexual	30	24
Currently/formerly in care	52	32
Refugees and asylum-seekers	34	21
Young travellers	26	12
CYP not in education, employment or training	51	47
Young offenders	45	24
Total (N=)	767	136

Involving ‘hard to reach’ children and young people in decision-making

Respondents were asked whether they find it hard to reach specific groups of children and young people. Tables 12a and 12b show that two-thirds of statutory sector respondents (68%) and half of voluntary sector respondents (51%) said that they did. The groups most frequently cited as being difficult to reach included black and minority ethnic children and young people, young people described as ‘disaffected’ or ‘disengaged’ (i.e. not in contact with services in general), those not in education, training or employment, and young travellers. It is interesting that some types of organisation with lower overall levels of involvement (such as central and regional government and learning and skills councils) claimed not to experience problems reaching particular groups, while those with higher overall levels of involvement (such as local government and Connexions) said that they did. It is possible that some organisations with low overall levels of involvement may not be attempting to reach a wide range of children and young people, whereas those with higher levels of participation may be making more efforts to be inclusive.

Overall, just under half of statutory respondents (49%) who said they found it difficult to reach specific groups said they had identified effective ways to address this. Health organisations were most likely to find it hard to reach specific groups, and least likely to have found ways to address this. In most cases, the approaches identified involved working with partners to improve access to targeted groups of children and young people. Respondents identified a range of partners, including youth services, Connexions Services, race equality councils, and local community groups. Other approaches included outreach work, employing specialist staff, and project work targeting the relevant groups.

Table 12a. Statutory sector: involving hard to reach groups of children and young people

Find it hard to reach specific groups of CYP	Total %	Government	National & Regional	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
YES	68	47	70	61	72	69	60	72	61	
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18	
If yes, have you found effective ways to address this?										
YES	49	60	50	48	39	46	52	39	82	
Total (N=)	522	15	306	23	71	57	21	18	11	

Half of voluntary sector respondents (51%) said that they found it hard to reach specific groups of children and young people, including those from BME groups, those who were homeless, on low incomes or living in rural areas, and young women. Just over half (54%) said they had identified ways to address this. In common with the statutory sector respondents, this was mainly through working with other community groups and developing partnerships with other agencies such as youth offending teams and race equality councils.

Table 12b. Voluntary sector: involving hard to reach groups of children and young people

Find it hard to reach specific groups of CYP	Total %	National	Regional & Local
YES	51	56	47
Total (N=)	136	61	75
If yes, have you found effective ways to address this?			
YES	54	56	51
Total (N=)	66	34	35

Reaching children and young people: key findings

- Participation levels are highest among young people aged 14 to 17 and 18 to 19 in both statutory and voluntary sector organisations. There were relatively low levels of involvement of children under age eight in decision-making.
- Respondents reported some success in involving 'hard to reach' groups of children and young people. Around half of statutory and voluntary organisations (51% and 47% respectively) involve children and young people not in education, employment or training in decision-making. Half of statutory sector respondents (52%) reported involving children and young people in or formerly in care, and over four in ten (45%) involved young offenders. Around three in ten statutory and two in ten voluntary organisations reported involving young refugees and asylum seekers in decision-making (34% and 21% respectively).
- Despite this, around two thirds of statutory sector (68%) and just over half of voluntary sector organisations (51%) said they found it difficult to reach specific groups of children and young people, including black and minority ethnic young people, those not in education, employment or training, 'disaffected' young people and those living in isolated rural areas.
- Around half of the organisations that found it difficult to reach particular groups had identified ways to address this (49% of statutory and 54% of voluntary organisations). Among the solutions identified were building partnerships with youth services, Connexions services, race equality councils and local community groups, outreach work, and targeted projects.

CHAPTER 4: SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATION

Previous discussion and research into the involvement of children and young people in decision-making has highlighted the need for a range of systems and support structures to be in place for participation to be effective.¹⁹ These include organisational commitment at a senior level, dedicated resources including staff time, and training and capacity building for both young people and adults. This chapter examines how far these systems and types of support are in place in statutory and voluntary sector organisations, and which types of organisation are more likely to provide support for participation.

Resources allocated to support participation

The research sought to identify the extent to which organisations allocated specific resources, such as staffing, premises and training and transport costs, to support children and young people's participation. Tables 13a and 13b show that approximately three-quarters of both statutory and voluntary organisations (74% and 76% respectively) provided some dedicated staff time, ranging from several full-time workers to a small number of hours per week or month. Approximately six in ten statutory and voluntary organisations (60% and 57% respectively) cover the costs of training and events, while over half of respondents in both sectors said their organisation made premises available to children and young people and met transport and other costs of children and young people involved in decision-making.

The least frequently provided form of support, of those asked about, was a budget controlled by young people involved in participation work. However, three in ten voluntary organisations said that children and young people had such a budget, compared to fewer than two in ten in the statutory sector.

Within the statutory sector, provision of specialist staff time was most common in Connexions Services (96%), Children's Fund projects (89%) and local government and Sure Start organisations (both 80%). Health organisations (35%) and learning and skills councils (50%) were least likely to have staff with a specific brief to support participation. Less than a fifth of organisations (17%) provided children and young people with their own budget for participation activities – this was most common in Connexions Services (28%) and local government (23%).

Table 13a. Statutory sector: resources, if any, for supporting participation

Resources	Total %	Regional & National Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Dedicated staff time	74	75	80	61	35	89	80	96	50
Training/event costs	60	53	65	16	36	77	54	92	33
Use of premises	58	50	66	39	31	59	66	84	6
Transport /other expenses for CYP	56	41	62	34	32	71	54	96	11
Dedicated admin time	34	28	40	21	15	40	14	56	11
Budget controlled by CYP	17	9	23	8	4	12	3	28	6
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

¹⁹ Cutler and Taylor (2004); Wade and Badham (2003).

Within the voluntary sector, national organisations were more likely than regional and local organisations to meet transport and other expenses (64% and 45% respectively), while regional and local organisations were more likely than national organisations to provide a budget controlled by children and young people (36% and 23% respectively).

Table 13b. Voluntary sector: resources, if any, for supporting participation

Resources	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Dedicated staff time	76	80	73
Training/event costs	57	64	51
Transport /other expenses for CYP	54	64	45
Use of premises	51	48	55
Dedicated admin time	38	41	35
Budget controlled by young people	30	23	36
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Senior level responsibility for participation

In line with the recommendations of *Hear by Right*, respondents were asked whether their organisation had identified a senior individual or individuals to take responsibility for children and young people's participation. Nearly seven in ten statutory sector respondents and six in ten voluntary sector respondents reported that their organisation had done so.

Within the statutory sector, all Connexions Services sampled reported that they had identified a senior responsible individual, followed four-fifths of Children's Fund projects (82%) and nearly three-quarters of local government respondents (74%). A third of criminal justice organisations (34%) and around two fifths of health organisations and learning and skills councils (both 44%) had identified a senior responsible individual.

Table 14a. Statutory sector: identification of an individual(s) at senior level with responsibility for involving children and young people

Nominated senior individual	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Yes	68	63	74	34	44	82	51	100	44
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

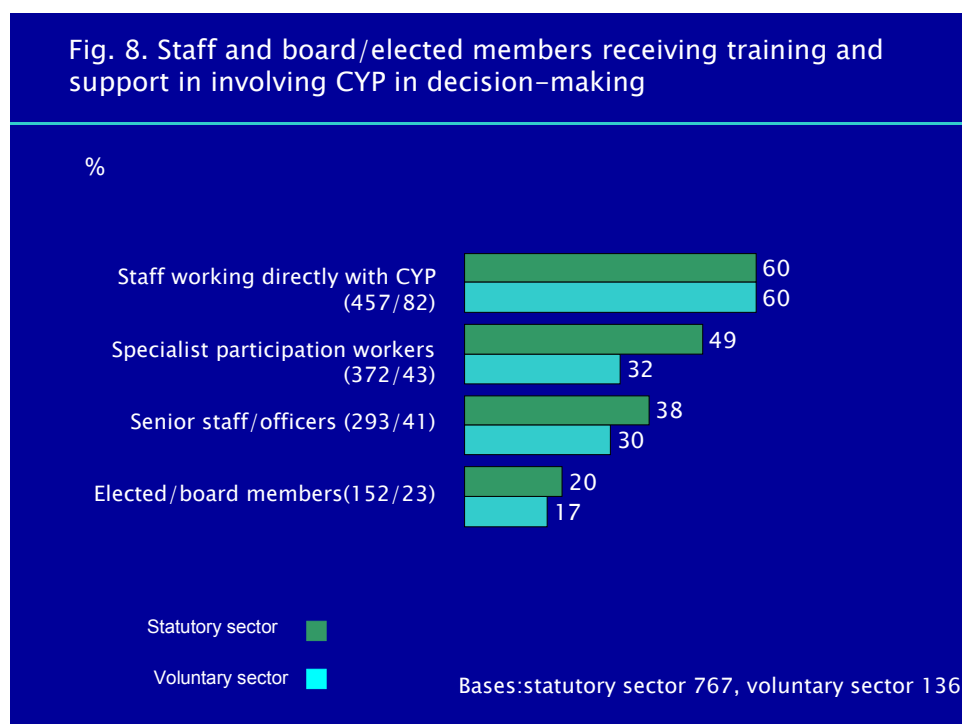
Nearly six in ten voluntary organisations (58%) had identified a senior individual responsible for participation, with national organisations being more likely to have done so than their regional or local counterparts.

Table 14b. Voluntary sector: identification of an individual(s) at senior level with responsibility for involving children and young people

Nominated senior individual	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Yes	58	62	55
Total (N=)	136	61	75

Training and support for adults working with children and young people

Respondents were asked whether adults received training and support in relation to children and young people's participation. Two-fifths of statutory and voluntary sector organisations do not provide any training and support for adults. The chart below shows the provision of training and support to adults performing different roles. Respondents in both voluntary and statutory sectors reported that staff working directly with young people were most likely to receive training and support (60% in both sectors) while board or elected members were least likely to receive any participation training (20% in the statutory sector and 17% in the voluntary sector). The relatively low level of training offered to specialist participation workers in both sectors may reflect expectations that they already possess the relevant skills.



Training and support for children and young people

Tables 15a and 15c show that approximately seven in ten statutory organisations (72%) and nearly eight in ten voluntary organisations (77%) provided training and support for young people involved in participation activity. This most commonly took the form of providing information, for instance explaining procedures and structures, and training on democratic procedures and/or skills training. Both statutory and voluntary sector organisations were least likely to provide children and young people with access to staff training, or to match them with adult mentors.

Among statutory sector organisations, Connexions Services, Children's Fund Projects and local government were most likely to offer training and support (92%, 89% and 79% respectively). The most common forms were information provision, such as explanations of procedures and structures (81%), training in democratic procedures and/or skills training (59%), and training for specific roles such as recruitment or inspection (55%). Organisations were least likely to provide children and young people with access to staff training (17%) and to match them with adult mentors or buddies (30%).

Table 15a. Statutory sector: training and support for children and young people involved in participation activity

Provide training and/or support for CYP	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
YES	72	50	79	45	51	89	46	92	39
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18
If yes, what form does this take?									
Information provision	81	63	84	76	74	81	69	83	71
Democratic procedures & skills training	59	31	69	29	36	54	25	65	14
Training for specific roles	55	38	57	18	30	73	50	87	0
Youth work & pastoral support	50	31	57	53	44	36	19	48	14
Peer mentoring	39	19	41	41	40	27	44	39	57
Adult mentoring	30	25	30	35	20	23	38	57	43
Access to staff training	17	19	18	18	4	12	19	35	0
Other	5	6	5	0	2	5	13	9	0
Total (N=)	550	16	347	17	50	74	16	23	7

Among local government organisations, youth services are the most likely to offer training and support for participation work, with 98 per cent reporting that they did so. Not surprisingly, they were the most likely to say that they provided youth work or pastoral support (86%). Over three-quarters of youth services (79%), and three-fifths of social services and first-tier local authorities reported that their organisation trained children and young people to take on specific roles such as inspection. Only just over half of district councils offer training and support, which was most likely to consist of information provision or training in democratic procedures or skills training (86% and 59% respectively).

Table 15b. Local government: training and support for children and young people

Provide training and/or support for CYP	Total %	Corporate Response	1 st Tier	LEA	Social Services	Youth Services	District Councils
YES	82	92	82	87	98	55	
Total (N=)	416	62	37	87	115	115	
If yes, what form does this take?							
Information provision	68	82	81	78	85	86	
Democratic procedures & skills training	56	67	81	43	88	59	
Training for specific roles	47	60	38	61	79	21	
Youth work & pastoral support	47	72	44	18	86	46	
Peer mentoring	34	44	59	34	51	21	
adult mentoring	24	35	25	32	32	19	
Access to staff training	15	21	6	14	30	5	
Other	4	2	0	8	5	5	
Total (N=)	341	57	32	77	112	63	

Over nine in ten (92%) first tier corporate and over half (55%) of district council respondents said that their organisation provided training or support for children and young people involved in decision-making. This compares to a figures of 43 per cent providing training for young people in the IPPR/Local Government Association's 2001 survey.

Nearly eight in ten voluntary organisations (77%) provided training and support, and of these nearly three-quarters (73%) said that this took the form of information provision. Around six in ten provided training on democratic procedures and/or skills training (61%) and youth work or pastoral support (58%). National organisations were more likely than regional or local organisations to provide training for specific roles (57% and 46%) and to provide adult mentors for young people (33% and 25%).

Table 15c. Voluntary sector: training and support for children and young people

	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Provide training and/or support for CYP			
YES	77	80	75
Total (N=)	136	61	75
If yes, what form does this take?			
Information provision	73	76	71
Democratic procedures & skills training	61	57	64
Youth work & pastoral support	58	59	57
Training for specific roles	51	57	46
Peer mentoring	48	47	48
Adult mentoring	29	33	25
Access to staff training	27	22	30
Other	1	0	2
Total (N=)	105	49	56

Incentives and recognition for children and young people

As tables 16a and 16c show, over three-quarters of statutory and voluntary organisations offer incentives and recognition to children and young people involved in participation activities (78% and 76% respectively). In over half of these organisations, this took the form of references and/or letters of thanks, certificates, vouchers, expenses and group events such as meals out or bowling. The least common approach for both sectors was the employment of young people to promote participation – reported by fewer than one-fifth of statutory and voluntary sector respondents. However, around three in ten organisations (37% of statutory and 32% of voluntary sector organisations) provided payment to children and young people involved in specific events or activities. Just under two-thirds of statutory sector respondents (63%) reported that their organisation provided expenses for children and young people involved in participation activity, compared to 55 per cent of voluntary sector organisations.

Table 16a. Statutory sector: incentives and/or recognition to children and young people involved in participation activities

Provide incentives and/or recognition for CYP	Total %	Government Regional & National	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
YES	78	59	82	66	61	90	57	100	67
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18
If yes, what form does this take?									
References/letters	69	74	74	60	45	75	55	68	33
Certificates	65	47	69	64	43	75	55	76	33
Vouchers/other financial rewards	64	42	61	56	63	75	75	88	83
Expenses	63	53	66	44	68	59	40	84	50
Group events	63	21	71	32	37	73	55	72	17
Ceremonies	44	26	54	32	23	32	25	48	33
Payment for activities	37	32	42	32	23	27	10	56	33
Accreditation	37	11	45	20	25	13	30	80	33
Employing CYP	18	11	22	12	8	8	15	36	0
Other	8	11	4	4	3	8	10	8	0
Total (N=)	596	19	360	25	60	75	20	25	12

Among local government organisations, virtually all youth service and social services respondents said that their organisation offered incentives and recognition (both 97%). However, youth service respondents reported greater use of all forms of incentive or recognition than social services with the exception of direct payment for activities (42% and 59% respectively). Youth services were most likely (85%) to offer accreditation for participation activities. District councils were least likely to provide any form of incentives or recognition (57%), and were particularly unlikely to pay or employ children and young people for their involvement in decision-making.

Table 16b. Local government: incentives and recognition

Provide incentives and/or recognition for CYP	Total %	1 st Tier Corporate Response	LEA	Social Services	Youth Services	District Councils
YES	84	92	74	97	97	57
Total (N=)	416	62	37	87	115	115
If yes, what form does this take?						
References/letters	63	44	20	64	90	43
Group events	60	44	15	61	92	36
Certificates	58	43	22	53	88	37
Expenses	56	46	11	66	84	26
Vouchers/other financial rewards	52	43	16	66	69	23
Ceremonies	45	37	17	50	64	21
Accreditation	38	30	11	21	85	10
Payment for activities	35	31	7	59	42	8
Employing CYP	18	14	5	23	29	4
Other	4	4	2	1	4	5
Total (N=)	349	57	29	86	112	65

Within the voluntary sector, national organisations were overall slightly more likely than regional and local organisations to offer some form of incentives or recognition. However, while national organisations were more likely than regional and local organisations to meet expenses (63% and 49% respectively), they were less likely to provide references (56% and 65%), certificates (48% and 64%) and accreditation (29% and 38%) or to host ceremonies (29% and 40% respectively).

Table 16c. Voluntary sector: incentives and recognition

	Total	National	Regional & Local
Provide incentives and/or recognition for CYP	%		
YES	76	79	73
Total (N=)	136	61	75
If yes, what form does this take?			
References/letters	61	56	65
Certificates	58	48	64
Expenses	55	63	49
Group events	51	52	51
Vouchers/other financial rewards	37	38	36
Accreditation	34	29	38
Ceremonies	35	29	40
Payment for activities	31	31	31
Employing CYP	19	19	20
Other	5	4	5
Total (N=)	103	48	55

Support for participation: key findings

- Respondents from both the statutory and voluntary sectors reported considerable investment of resources – such as staff time, use of premises and training and transport costs - to support children and young people's participation.
- Around three-quarters of statutory and voluntary organisations (74% and 76% respectively) provided dedicated staff time to support children and young people's participation in decision-making. Nearly seven in ten statutory organisations and six in ten voluntary organisations (68% and 58% respectively) had identified an individual at senior level to be responsible for participation.
- Within the statutory sector, Connexions Services, Children's Fund partnerships and local government organisations were most likely to allocate dedicated staff time to support participation, and to have identified a senior individual responsible for participation. Only just over a third of the health organisations sampled provided dedicated staff time.
- Despite their key role in decision-making, fewer than one in five local councillors or members of governing bodies or boards appear to be offered any form of training or support in relation to children and young people's participation.
- Over seven in ten statutory and voluntary sector organisations (72% and 77% respectively) provided training and support to children and young people involved in participation activity. Training was most likely to take the form of information provision, training on democratic procedures and training for specific roles.
- Almost four out of five statutory and voluntary sector organisations (78% and 76% respectively) offered incentives and/or recognition to children and young people involved in participation activities. This was most likely to take the form of references or letters of thanks, certificates, vouchers or other financial rewards, payment of expenses and group events.
- National voluntary organisations were overall more likely than regional and local voluntary organisations to offer incentives and recognition. However, regional and local organisations were more likely to provide references, certificates and accreditation or to host ceremonies, while national organisations were more likely to pay expenses (63% and 49% respectively).
- Among local government, youth services were most likely to offer training and support and incentives and recognition for children and young people (98% and 97% respectively), while district councils were least likely to do so (55% and 57%).

CHAPTER 5: ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

In order to increase understanding of how the culture of participation by children and young people is embedded in organisations, respondents were asked a set of questions about their own personal views and about their perceptions of their organisation's approach. These attitudinal questions were asked of all respondents, whether or not they currently carry out participation work.²⁰

Responses to attitudinal statements

The personal views of respondents in both statutory and voluntary sector organisations demonstrate enthusiasm and commitment to participation. Virtually all statutory sector respondents (96%), and nine in ten voluntary sector respondents agreed (strongly or slightly) that children and young people have a right to be involved in public decision-making. Nearly nine in ten respondents in both sectors believed that their senior managers valued children and young people's right to be involved, although rather fewer believed that they understood the practical implications of involving them in decision-making. Around eight in ten respondents from both sectors also believed that their services had improved as a result of children and young people's participation. However, more than one in ten respondents from statutory and voluntary sector organisations with experience of participation work were unable to say whether their services had improved or not.

Responses from the statutory sector indicate strong support for the right of children and young people to be involved in public decision-making, with only two per cent of respondents disagreeing. Over three-quarters of respondents (78%) also agreed that there were no decisions which children and young people could not be involved in, providing they were properly supported. Although, as discussed earlier, respondents reported only limited involvement of younger children in decision-making, fewer than a fifth of respondents (19%) agreed with a statement that it was too difficult to involve children under eight.

Nearly nine in ten respondents (87%) from statutory sector organisations with experience of participation work agreed that senior managers in their organisation valued children and young people's right to be involved in decision-making. However they were less confident that managers understood the practical implications of this, with just under three-quarters (73%) of respondents agreeing that they did. One in ten respondents did not know whether their organisation kept children and young people informed about the results of their involvement, and 15 per cent did not know whether their organisation's services had improved as a result of children and young people's participation.

²⁰ However, analysis of the set of statements based on respondents' perception of their organisation excludes those from organisations with no experience of participation, in order not to distort the results.

Table 17a. Statutory sector: agreement with attitudinal statements

Statements	%	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know/no response
Your personal views						
CYP have a right to involvement in public decision making		85	11	1	1	2
CYP should only be involved where there is clear evidence about the benefits of their involvement		27	18	24	26	6
It is too difficult to involve children under eight		5	14	25	47	9
There are no decisions CYP cannot be involved in, provided they have appropriate support		51	27	11	6	5
Base: 849 (all respondents)						
Your organisation's approach						
Senior managers in my organisation value the right of CYP to be involved in decision-making		56	31	5	2	6
Senior managers understand the practical implications of involving CYP in decision making		34	39	15	6	6
We would like to involve CYP more but we don't have the resources		31	38	15	10	7
CYP's participation is integral to the work of my organisation		48	27	12	7	5
Our services have improved as a result of CYP's participation		42	37	5	2	15
My organisation always ensures that CYP know about the results of their involvement		31	41	14	4	10

Base: 767 (organisations involved in participation work currently or in the past)

As Table 17b shows, nine in ten (90%) voluntary sector respondents agreed (strongly or slightly) that children and young people have the right to be involved in public decision-making. Just over a fifth of respondents (22%) agreed that it was too difficult to involve children under 8 in decision-making. More than eight in ten respondents (83%) agree that their services have improved as a result of children and young people's participation. However, over one in ten respondents (13%) were unable to say whether their services had improved as a result of children and young people's involvement, and, in common with statutory sector respondents, a relatively high proportion (12%) did not know whether children and young people were kept informed about the results of their involvement.

Table 17b. Voluntary sector: views on attitudinal statements

Statements	%	Agree strongly	Agree slightly	Disagree slightly	Disagree strongly	Don't know/no response
Your personal views						
CYP have a right to involvement in public decision making		80	10	3	2	6
CYP should only be involved where there is clear evidence about the benefits of their involvement		34	18	21	20	7
It is too difficult to involve children under eight		7	15	31	33	14
There are no decisions CYP cannot be involved in, provided they have appropriate support		48	26	11	4	11
Base: 160 (all respondents)						
Your organisation's approach						
Senior managers in my organisation value the right of CYP to be involved in decision-making		65	23	2	2	7
Senior managers understand the practical implications of involving CYP in decision making		54	27	5	5	9
We would like to involve CYP more but we don't have the resources		31	34	15	9	11
CYP's participation is integral to the work of my organisation		58	22	7	4	8
Our services have improved as a result of CYP's participation		45	38	4	1	13
My organisation always ensures that CYP know about the results of their involvement		46	29	11	2	12
Base: 136 (organisations involved in participation work currently or in the past)						

Responses by type of organisation

Table 18 shows that further analysis of the views of statutory sector respondents – based on those who said they agreed strongly with particular statements, in order to elicit the most firmly held views - revealed considerable variations between different types of organisation.

The first and second statements were intended to distinguish between a rights-based approach to involvement and a more instrumental approach. While a majority of all respondents agreed strongly that children and young people had a right to involvement, over three in ten of all respondents, with the exception of Sure Start, national and regional government and local government, agreed strongly that children and young people should only be involved when the benefits were clear. Learning and skills councils and, perhaps surprisingly, Connexions staff, were particularly likely to say that they agreed strongly with this second statement (48 and 42 per cent respectively)²¹ Connexions and Children's Fund respondents were particularly likely to believe that participation was integral to their organisation, that services had improved as a result, and that children and young people knew what had happened as a result of their involvement. Children's Fund respondents were the most likely to disagree strongly that it was too difficult to involve children under eight, followed by Sure Start respondents (71% and 56% respectively).

Respondents from national and regional government and criminal justice organisations were least likely to believe that senior managers valued children and young people's right to be involved in decision-making (30 and 29 per cent respectively). All respondents were more likely to believe that senior managers valued participation than they were to believe that senior managers understood its practical implications.

²¹ It is, however, clear from their answers that some respondents did not consider the two statements to be mutually exclusive and said they agreed strongly with both.

Table 18. Statutory sector: respondents agreeing strongly with statements by type of organisation

Strong agreement with statements	Total %	Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Your personal views									
CYP have a right to involvement in public decision making	85	73	89	73	80	88	84	92	65
CYP should only be involved where there is clear evidence about the benefits of their involvement	27	23	24	31	31	31	14	42	48
It is too difficult to involve children under eight (disagree strongly)	47	28	43	33	50	71	56	42	22
There are no decisions which CYP cannot be involved in, provided they are properly supported	51	35	52	41	49	65	48	50	22
Total (=N)	849	40	456	49	119	86	50	26	23
Base: all respondents									
Your organisation's approach									
Senior managers in my organisation value the right of CYP to be involved in decision-making	56	16	58	34	41	67	71	96	50
Senior managers understand the practical implications of involving CYP in decision making	34	13	34	21	26	48	49	60	33
We would like to involve CYP more but we don't have the resources	31	16	34	32	37	22	9	16	44
CYP's participation is integral to the work of my organisation	48	16	47	5	29	83	57	96	33
Our services have improved as a result of CYP's participation	42	19	44	18	32	63	40	72	17
My organisation always ensures that CYP know about the results of their involvement	31	19	27	26	25	66	26	44	11
Total (N=)	767	32	437	38	99	83	35	25	18

Base: organisations involved in participation work currently or in the past

Responses by type of respondent

The levels of agreement with the statements also differed according to the reported role of those who completed the questionnaire. Table 19 shows that within the statutory sector, participation workers were more likely to agree strongly that children and young people had a right to be involved in decision-making, and to believe that children and young people could be involved in all decisions with appropriate support. They were most positive about managers' commitment to participation, although only slightly more likely than other respondents to believe that managers understood its practical implications. They were also the most likely to believe that participation was integral to their organisation and had improved its services.

Table 19. Statutory sector: strong agreement to attitudinal statements by type of respondent

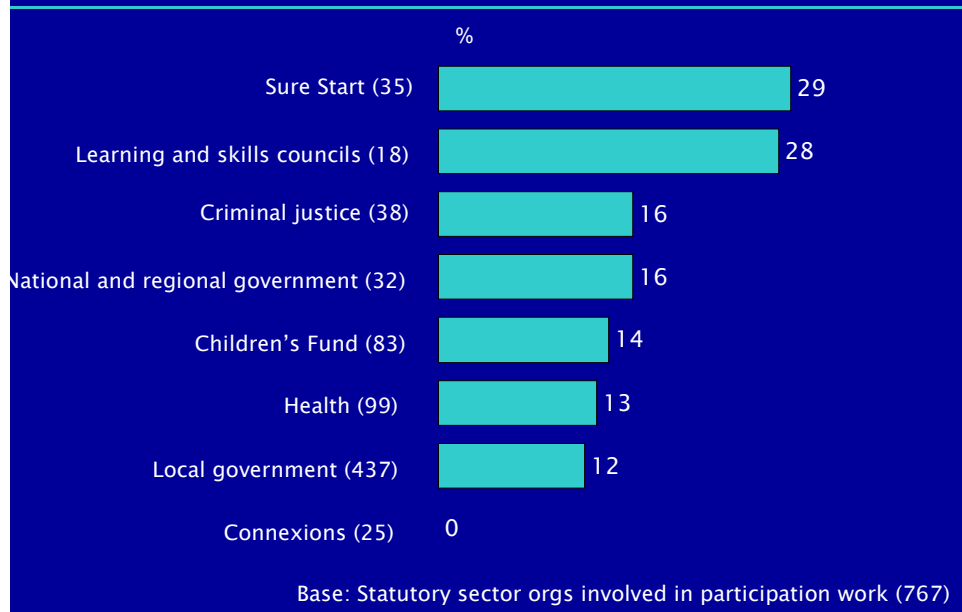
Strong agreement with statements	Specialist participation workers	Staff working directly with CYP	Senior officers/staff members
Your personal views			
CYP have a right to involvement in public decision making	92	82	86
CYP should only be involved where there is clear evidence about the benefits of their involvement	32	28	27
It is too difficult to involve children under eight (disagree strongly)	64	43	47
There are no decisions which CYP cannot be involved in, provided they are properly supported	70	53	51
Your organisation's approach			
Senior managers in my organisation value the right of CYP to be involved in decision-making	72	53	57
Senior managers understand practical implications of involving CYP in decision-making	41	36	35
We would like to involve CYP more but we don't have the resources	28	36	31
Participation is integral to the work of my organisation	70	42	49
Our services have improved as a result of CYP's participation	59	40	42
My organisation always ensures that CYP know about the results of their involvement	43	36	29
Total (N=) 632	46	55	531

Base: respondents from organisations with experience of participation work saying they fell into one of the above three categories

Awareness of the impact of participation on organisation

More than one in ten statutory and voluntary sector respondents (15% and 13% respectively) from organisations with experience of participation work were unable to say whether their services had improved or not as a result of children and young people's participation. As figure 9 shows, fairly substantial minorities of respondents who were unable to assess the impact of participation were found in all types of statutory sector organisation except Connexions Services. These ranged from nearly three in ten respondents in Sure Start projects and learning and skills councils (29% and 28% respectively) to just over one in ten respondents from local government and health services (12% and 13% respectively).

Fig. 9. Statutory sector organisations: respondents which did not know if services had improved as a result of participation



Attitudes and perceptions: key findings

- The personal views of the respondents showed enthusiasm and support for the participation agenda. Virtually all (96%) statutory sector respondents and nine in ten (90%) voluntary sector respondents agreed that children and young people have a right to involvement in public decision-making. Around three-quarters of statutory and voluntary sector respondents (78% and 74% respectively) agreed that there are no decisions which children and young people cannot be involved in, provided they are properly supported. Three-quarters of statutory sector respondents and eight in ten voluntary sector respondents believed that participation was integral to the work of their organisation.
- All respondents were more likely to believe that senior managers valued participation than they were to believe that managers understood its practical implications. This disparity was more pronounced in the statutory sector, where over half of respondents (56%) agreed strongly that senior managers valued children and young people's right to participate, but only one-third (34%) agreed strongly that they understood its implications.
- Respondents' views also differed according to their roles. Specialist participation workers were more likely than other kinds of respondent to believe in the right of children and young people to participate in all decisions, to believe that children and young people could, with appropriate support, be involved in all decisions, and to reject the notion that it was too difficult to involve children under eight in decision-making.
- The role of evidence about the impact of participation is a central issue. Fifteen per cent of respondents from statutory organisations with experience of participation work, and 13 per cent of voluntary sector respondents were unable to say whether their services had improved as a result of children and young people's participation.
- Despite the low level of involvement of young children reported earlier, only one in five statutory and voluntary sector respondents agreed (strongly or slightly) with the statement 'it is too difficult to involve children under eight' (19% and 22% respectively). Respondents from organisations specifically working with young children were the most likely to dissent. Seven in ten (71%) of respondents from Children's Fund organisations, which work with five to 13-year-olds, and nearly three-fifths (56%) from Sure Start projects, which work with children under four and their parents, strongly disagreed with this statement.

CHAPTER 6: ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

Previous discussion of participation by children and young people has identified a number of elements as critical to effective practice. One of the key measures from this survey - children and young people's perceived level of influence over the organisation's decision making – was examined in order to establish whether or not there was a relationship between this and the presence or absence of various different support mechanisms. Respondents' assessments of children and young people's perceived level of influence were also compared to their responses to the attitudinal statements to identify any associations between these two elements.

Finally, the survey asked respondents to select, from a list of nine options, the three actions which they thought organisations and government could take to promote effective participation by children and young people. This chapter reports on their choices, and summarises their more general messages about their own experiences of and views on participation.

Support mechanisms and perceived levels of influence

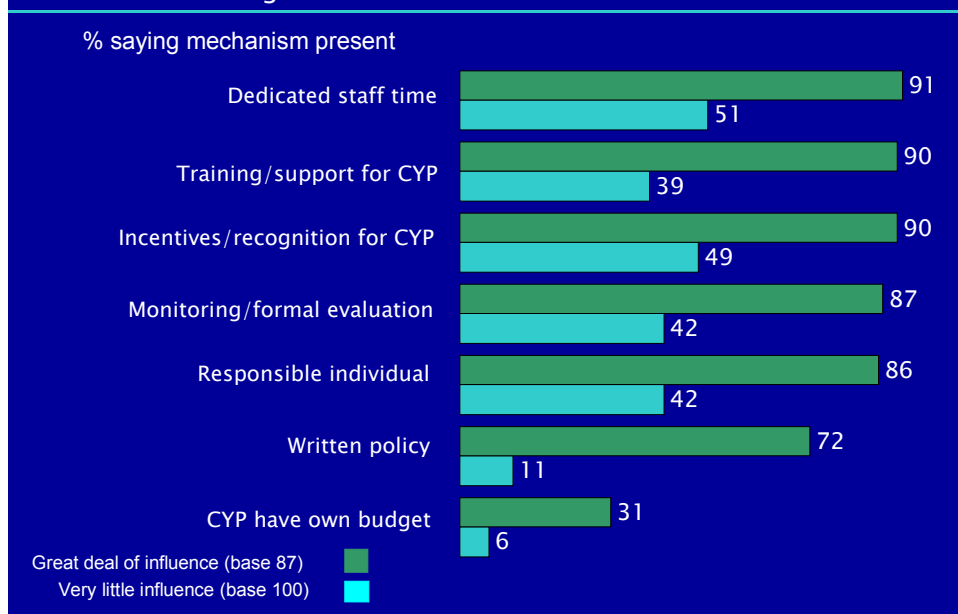
A number of key support mechanisms for participation have previously been identified as:

- written policies or strategies;
- monitoring or formal evaluation;
- dedicated participation staff;
- a budget controlled by children and young people;
- identification of a senior responsible individual;
- training and support for children and young people; and
- incentives and recognition for children and young people involved in decision-making.

The analysis sought to identify whether there was an association between the presence of these support mechanisms and respondents' assessments of the level of influence children and young people had within their organisations. As can be seen from Figure 10, those statutory organisations in which children and young people were believed to have a great deal of influence were consistently more likely than those in which children and young people were perceived to have very little influence to have each of the support mechanisms identified above in place.²² With the exception of budgets controlled by young people and written policies or strategies, these mechanisms existed in over four-fifths of organisations in which children and young people were believed to have a great deal of influence, compared to half or fewer of organisations in which children and young people were believed to have very little influence. While rather fewer organisations in which children and young people were believed to have a great deal of influence reported the existence of written policies or budgets controlled by children and young people (72% and 31% respectively), these also were the mechanisms least likely to be in place in organisations where children and young people were seen to have very little influence (11% and 6% respectively).

²² Only nine voluntary sector respondents said that children and young people had very little influence on their organisation, so it was not possible to undertake a similar analysis for the voluntary sector.

Fig 10. Statutory sector. The presence of different support mechanisms by children and young people's perceived levels of influence on organisation



Attitudes and perceived levels of influence

Analysis of statutory sector responses to the attitudinal statements (see Chapter 5) by their assessment of children and young people's level of influence also reveals a clear pattern. Respondents who believe that young people have a great deal of influence in their organisations were more likely to agree strongly that children and young people have a right to participate, can make decisions in all areas, and that senior managers both valued the right of children and young people to participate, and understood the practicalities involved. They were also most likely to agree strongly that participation was integral to their organisation and that its services had improved, and disagree strongly that it was too difficult to involve children under eight.²³

The responses of those statutory sector respondents who believe that children and young people have very little influence in their organisations are very different. While three-quarters of them still agreed strongly that children and young people have the right to be involved in decision-making, they were less likely to agree that children and young people can be involved in all decisions (43%), and to believe that children under eight can be involved in decision-making (38%).

Among respondents who believe that children and young people have very little influence in their organisations' decisions, only a quarter believe that senior managers value children and young people's right to participate (26%), compared to four-fifths (83%) of those who say they have a great deal of influence. Just over one in ten of the former group agreed that senior managers understand the practical implications of participation, compared to nearly two-thirds of those who say children and young people have a great deal of influence. Respondents who believed that children and young people had very little influence were much less likely to agree that participation was integral to the work of their organisation (17% and 83%), and more likely to agree that they lack the resources to involve children and young people in decision-making (34% and 18%). Perhaps surprisingly, one in ten (11%) respondents who

²³ As noted above, the low base for voluntary sector respondents meant that it was not possible to carry out this analysis.

believed children and young people have very little influence still agreed that their services had improved as a result of children and young people's participation.

Table 20a. Statutory sector. Attitudinal statements by perceived level of influence of CYP on decision-making

Agree strongly with statements %	Total	Great deal of influence	Very little influence
Your personal views			
CYP have right to involvement in public decision-making	85	97	76
CYP should only be involved where there is clear evidence about the benefits of their involvement	27	30	21
It is too difficult to involve children under eight (disagree strongly)	47	62	38
There are no decisions which CYP cannot be involved in, provided they are properly supported	51	67	43
Your organisation's approach			
Senior managers in my organisation value the right of CYP to be involved in decision-making	53	83	26
Senior managers understand the practical implications of involving CYP in decision-making	33	62	13
We would like to involve CYP more but we don't have the resources	29	18	34
CYP's participation is integral to the work of my organisation	46	83	17
Our services have improved as a result of CYP's participation	38	77	11
My organisation always ensures that CYP know about the results of their involvement	29	56	13
Total (N=)	767	87	100

Action which organisations and government could take

The research asked respondents to select, from a list of nine options, the three actions which they thought organisations and government could take to promote effective participation by children and young people. In asking respondents to identify their top three actions, it generated relative measures aimed at distinguishing priorities rather than providing an 'absolute' measure of support, and it is therefore possible that some of the figures might under-estimate the true values.

Action by organisations

Tables 21a and 21b show that both statutory and voluntary sector respondents identified senior management commitment as by far the most important action which organisations could take to promote participation (71% and 60% respectively). This was considerably more popular than the next most popular option, specific staff supporting participation (43% for both sectors).

The third most popular option among statutory sector participants, partnership work with other organisations, received particular support from learning and skills councils, criminal justice and health organisations and central and regional government – all of which reported low levels of participation overall. Children's Fund, Sure Start and Connexions respondents were least likely to identify partnership work, perhaps because they have already achieved more partnership work. Connexions, Children's Fund and local government respondents were more likely than others to identify the need for specific staff, but also to support the promotion of participatory approaches among all staff working with children and young people.

Table 21a. Statutory sector: approaches organisations could take to improve children and young people's effective participation in decision-making

Possible action by organisations	Total %	Government National & Regional	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Senior management commitment to CYP's participation	71	63	74	61	68	66	60	77	78
Specific staff supporting participation	43	25	47	39	39	44	38	54	35
Partnership work with other organisations	39	55	35	59	56	21	24	31	78
Training/capacity-building for CYP	36	25	38	24	35	40	26	50	43
Written policies on CYP's participation	32	15	32	33	39	33	28	27	26
Supporting participatory approaches by all staff working with CYP	30	18	31	24	24	38	26	38	17
Better recognition of the benefits of CYP's participation	28	38	25	41	29	28	30	35	30
Training/capacity-building for adults	17	28	16	8	17	24	18	19	9
Incentives for staff to promote CYP's participation	7	10	5	4	8	3	14	12	9
Total (N=)	849	40	456	49	119	86	50	26	23

Voluntary sector respondents were slightly more likely than those from the statutory sector to select training and capacity-building for children and young people (43% and 36% respectively), and better recognition of the benefits of participation (36% and 28% respectively).

Respondents from regional and local voluntary organisations were more likely than national organisations to support partnership work (45% and 27% respectively), specific staff supporting participation (45% and 34%) and training/capacity building for children and young people (48% and 36% respectively). Respondents from national organisations attached greater importance to written policies (39% compared to 29% for regional and local organisations) and senior management commitment (65% and 56% respectively).

Table 21b. Voluntary sector: approaches organisations could take to improve children and young people’s effective participation in decision-making

Possible action by organisations	Total	National	Regional & Local
	%		
Senior management commitment to CYP’s participation	60	65	56
Training/capacity-building for CYP	43	36	48
Specific staff supporting participation	40	34	45
Partnership work with other organisations	37	27	45
Better recognition of the benefits of CYP’s participation	36	34	38
Written policies on CYP’s participation	34	39	29
Supporting participatory approaches by all staff working with CYP	26	24	27
Training/capacity-building for adults	24	28	20
Incentives for staff to promote CYP’s participation	6	1	9
Total (N=)	160	74	86

Action by government

In addition, respondents were asked to identify which three approaches the government might take to improve children and young people’s effective participation in decision making. Not surprisingly, tables 22a and 22b show that long-term funding to promote participation proved the most popular option, chosen by over three-quarters of both statutory and voluntary sector respondents (78% for both). Some four in ten respondents from both sectors identified action to promote attitudinal change among adults as the next most important option (41% of statutory sector and 39% of voluntary sector respondents). However, despite their recognition of the need for attitudinal change among adults, respondents from both statutory and voluntary sectors believed that training and capacity building for adults was less important than training and capacity building for children and young people.

Statutory sector respondents were more likely than voluntary sector respondents to support incorporating requirements to consult children and young people in all funding streams (40% compared to 24%). It is notable that respondents from Children’s Fund projects, which incorporate such requirements, demonstrate strong support for this measure. While the least popular option among both statutory and voluntary sector respondents was the creation of a national centre for youth participation (12% and 14% respectively), it should be borne in mind that any such centre might provide the infrastructure for some of the functions identified separately, such as promoting attitudinal change, training and capacity-building, and the development of systems for involving children and young people.

A quarter of statutory sector respondents identified the need to develop systems for involving children and young people safely. Health and Sure Start organisations were most likely to choose this option, suggesting that their relatively low rates of participation may be linked to uncertainty as to how to proceed in this area. Respondents from Sure Start organisations were least likely to choose long-term funding, the overall most popular option, again suggesting that for those working with younger children, it is not simply a matter of money.

Table 22a. Statutory sector: approaches that government might take to promote children and young people's effective participation in decision making

Possible action by government	Total %	National & Regional Government	Local Government	Criminal Justice	Health	Children's Fund	Sure Start	Connexions	Learning & Skills Councils
Long-term funding to promote participation	78	68	81	73	77	77	58	85	70
Action to promote attitudinal change among adults	41	38	44	27	25	50	52	31	43
Incorporating requirements to consult CYP in all funding streams	40	40	40	31	37	50	42	42	30
Training/capacity-building for CYP	30	28	30	29	35	23	20	46	35
Targeted funding for specific initiatives	25	30	26	29	28	15	22	12	39
Help in developing systems for involving CYP safely	24	23	20	29	43	16	38	15	22
Regional participation officers to support local action	22	35	20	31	26	26	12	31	9
Training/capacity-building for adults	21	25	21	24	13	23	18	31	22
National centre promoting and supporting youth participation	12	18	11	12	14	5	12	19	13
Total (N=)	849	40	456	49	119	86	50	26	23

Among voluntary sector respondents, there were few differences between the national and regional/local organisations. However, regional and local organisations placed greater emphasis on the need to promote attitudinal change among adults (44% and 32% respectively) and regional participation officers to support local action (21% compared to 12%).

Table 22b. Voluntary sector: action that government might take to promote children and young people's effective participation in decision-making

Possible action by government	Total %	National	Regional & Local
Long-term funding to promote participation	78	74	80
Action to promote attitudinal change among adults	39	32	44
Training/capacity-building for CYP	39	38	41
Targeted funding for specific initiatives	37	41	34
Training/capacity-building for adults	31	34	28
Incorporating requirements to consult CYP in all funding streams	24	24	24
Help in developing systems for involving CYP safely	24	24	23
Regional participation officers to support local action	17	12	21
National centre promoting and supporting youth participation	14	16	13
Total (N=)	160	74	86

Additional comments

Respondents were invited to make additional comments about what organisations or government could do to promote participation, and on their experience of, or attitudes towards, participation. Overall, strong messages emerged from both the voluntary and statutory sectors about the need for participation work to be adequately resourced and children and young people supported in order to avoid tokenism. Respondents also stressed the need for adults to change both their attitudes and their practice if children and young people are to be genuinely and effectively involved in decision-making.

Action that organisations could take

Additional responses - many of which expanded on responses to the two previous questions - can be grouped under seven main headings. They stressed that organisations should:

- Allocate adequate resources based on the understanding that participation is resource-intensive.
- Secure real commitment to participation across all levels of organisation, including elected or board members, senior and middle management, and practitioners.
- Identify an organisation 'champion' for participation.
- Train all staff in participative ways of working.
- Assess participation within organisation and staff performance management processes, including the application of participation standards.
- Develop clear mechanisms and systems for children and young people's involvement.
- Provide incentives, including employment, public recognition and awards for children and young people involved in participation.

Action that government could take

These additional responses can be grouped under nine main headings, pointing to the need for government to:

- Require organisations to involve children and young people in decision-making, with assessment against specific performance indicators.
- Create a higher public profile for participation and its benefits.
- Develop mechanisms for promoting and sharing good practice and avoiding duplication, with specific suggestions including databases, partnership work and tool-kits.
- Lead by example by involving children and young people.
- Improve existing participation mechanisms such as UK Youth Parliament.
- Allow sufficient flexibility for participation to be locally determined and driven by children and young people, not adults.
- Be clear about the difference between participation and consultation.
- Have child-friendly information on policies affecting children and young people, and realistic timescales for consultation.
- Develop national training/qualifications on participation appropriate to staff working at different levels and in different sectors.

A small number of statutory sector respondents (four) believed that this was not an area in which government action was appropriate.

Other views on and experiences of participation

Many respondents highlighted their positive experiences of involving children and young people, even though some acknowledged that further development was needed. However, a minority cited specific examples where young people had been consulted and their views had been ignored or over-ruled by decision-makers, with their consequent disillusionment.

Respondents also emphasised that their development of this work depended on (mainstream) resources being available, with some stating that it had been hampered by financial insecurity. Respondents also commented that negative media and public images of young people pose a general obstacle to their involvement. The main points made were:

- Organisations and individuals must recognise that participation means a transformation of adult attitudes and practice. It may meet resistance from adults – it is important to acknowledge and prepare for this.
- Organisations with no or limited skills or experience in working with children and young people need to work collaboratively with those organisations which are skilled in this area.
- There was concern that some children and young people may be ‘over-consulted’. Participation approaches need to ensure that large numbers of children and young people (from a range of backgrounds) are in a position to engage in decision-making.
- All organisations and services should encourage and support participation, rather than seeing it as the remit of children and young people’s services only.
- Organisations need to ensure that children and young people realise what they can achieve through participation, within a reasonable timeframe, and that they receive feedback on what their involvement has meant.
- Those seeking to involve children and young people in decision-making should recognise the reality of children and young people’s lives and the other pressures on their time – be realistic about their levels and focus of involvement.
- Participation should be linked to the educational process, including the citizenship curriculum.
- Developing participation should be seen as long-term work, there is no ‘quick fix’.

Encouraging participation: key findings

- The survey found that those statutory organisations in which children and young people were believed to exercise a great deal of influence on decision-making were consistently more likely to report the existence of a range of support mechanisms than those in which children and young people were believed to have very little influence.
- These mechanisms were identified as written policies or strategies; monitoring or formal evaluation; dedicated participation staff; a budget controlled by children and young people; identification of a senior responsible individual; training and support for children and young people; and incentives and/or recognition for children and young people involved in decision-making. With the exception of budgets controlled by young people and written policies or strategies, these mechanisms existed in over four-fifths of organisations in which children and young people were believed to have a great deal of influence, compared to half or fewer of organisations in which children and young people were believed to have very little influence.
- Organisations in which children and young people were believed to have very little influence were particularly unlikely to have written policies or budgets controlled by children and young people (11% and 6%, compared to 72% and 31% of organisations where children and young people were perceived to have a great deal of influence).
- There was also an association between respondents' assessments of the level of influence children and young people had in their organisation, and their responses to the attitudinal statements. Statutory sector respondents who believed that children and young people had very little influence showed much less confidence in their senior managers' commitment to participation than those who believed children and young people had a great deal of influence (26% and 83%) and in these managers understanding of the practicalities of participation (13% and 62%). They were much less likely to describe participation as integral to the work of their organisation (17% and 83% respectively) and more likely to agree that they lacked the resources to involve children and young people in decision-making (34% and 18% respectively).
- Statutory sector and voluntary sector respondents were prompted with a list of nine approaches to improving effective participation and asked to identify the three most important approaches that an organisation might take. Senior management commitment was considered by far the most important mechanism, chosen by seven in ten statutory and six in ten voluntary sector respondents, followed by having specific staff to support participation, selected by approximately four in ten respondents in both sectors.
- When asked what government should be doing to promote participation, over three-quarters of statutory and voluntary sector respondents identified the provision of long-term funding as the most important factor, followed by action to promote attitudinal change, selected by approximately two-fifths of statutory and voluntary sector participants.
- While there was not strong support for the establishment of a national centre for youth participation, there was support for what might be considered as its core functions – promoting attitudinal change, embedding practice, supporting collaborative work, and increasing capacity among children and young people and adults.

CONCLUSIONS

Levels of participation

There is evidence of growth in the level of participation work over the past four years, with nine out of ten statutory sector organisations and three-quarters of voluntary organisations reporting an increase during this period. Comparison with the IPPR/LGA survey also suggests that participation activity and impact may have increased within local government. However, there are considerable variations between different types of statutory sector organisation. While a considerable amount of participation work appears to be undertaken in some types of statutory sector organisations, particularly Children's Fund partnerships, Connexions Services and local government, there is some evidence that it is more limited in organisations working in the fields of health and criminal justice, and in central and regional government.

As might be expected, participation levels and impact are reported to be greatest in those organisations with an explicit remit to work with children and young people. Within the statutory sector, participation activity and impact is highest among Connexions services and Children's Fund partnerships. Among local government, youth services reported higher levels of activity and impact than social services or education departments. Respondents from voluntary sector organisations, with their specific focus on children and young people, were more likely than statutory sector respondents to believe that children and young people had a great deal of influence within their organisation.

Extending participation

Responses to the set of attitudinal statements reveal positive personal views concerning participation, even among respondents whose organisations have only limited experience of involving children and young people in decision-making. There is therefore scope to capitalise on these positive attitudes, while at the same time drawing on wider policy frameworks to help sectors that currently report low levels of involvement of children and young people in decision-making to expand and develop their participation work.

One in ten respondents from the health and criminal justice sector, national and regional government, and Sure Start projects said that their organisation planned to develop participation work. Health organisations, in particular, will face new expectations to involve service users through the National Service Framework for children and young people, and the development of the Patient Advisory and Liaison Service (PALS), while most major national government departments have committed themselves to involving children and young people in decision-making.

There is also scope to draw upon the experience of regions where participation work appears to be more established. Respondents from the North East, for instance, reported both the highest levels of participation activity and (together with those from Yorkshire and the Humber), were most likely to believe that children and young people had a great deal of influence on their organisations' decisions.

Explicit requirements concerning participation

When asked what government could do to promote participation, statutory sector respondents chose 'incorporating requirements to consult children and young people in all funding streams' as their third most popular option. It should, however, be noted that the relatively limited use of monitoring and formal evaluation suggests that many organisations do not currently have mechanisms in place which would enable them to assess their progress against such requirements.

The possible impact of any such requirements may be indicated by the fact that respondents from Connexions services, Children's Fund and local government were consistently most likely to report higher levels of participation activity. Connexions and Children's Fund

respondents were also most likely to believe that children and young people had a great deal of influence on the decisions made by their organisation. Both these programmes have explicit requirements to involve children and young people in decision-making. It should, however, be borne in mind that organisations which are required to involve children and young people may be reluctant to report on any failings in this area.

While there is no equivalent obligation on local authorities, legislation such as the Local Government Act 2000 does require them to consult local communities. Among local government responses, youth services – whose role in involving young people in decision-making and giving them a voice locally has been highlighted in recent official or semi-official publications - were more likely than other departments to report high levels of participation activity, to believe that children and young people exercised a great deal of influence, and to have a range of mechanisms to support this work.²⁴

Resourcing participation

Strong messages emerged from both the voluntary and statutory sectors about the need for participation work to be adequately resourced on a long-term basis and for children and young people to be supported in order to avoid tokenism.

Need for systems and structures to promote participation

The research confirms findings from other research and discussions about the importance of organisations developing systems and structures to support participation. Organisations in which children and young people were perceived to have the most influence were likely to have a range of systems and support mechanisms in place, particularly:

- dedicated staff to support participation;
- training and support and incentives and recognition for children and young people involved in decision-making;
- monitoring and evaluation processes;
- an identified senior individual with responsibility for participation work; and
- written policies or strategies on participation.

Areas of decision-making

Children and young people appear to be involved predominantly in those areas which have a clear or immediate impact on their lives, such as leisure services, youth services, community safety, education and health. Relatively few organisations provide opportunities for young people to be involved in broader issues such as transport, housing or the environment. Yet other research has highlighted the importance of services such as transport to young people, particularly those living in rural areas, while discussion of young people's non-engagement in formal political processes has highlighted their interest and activism in a broad range of environmental and community issues.²⁵

Capacity-building among adults

When asked about action to promote participation, respondents in both statutory and voluntary sectors attached greater priority to training and capacity-building for children and young people, than to training and capacity-building for adults. Yet responses elsewhere in the survey, particularly when respondents were invited to make additional comments on their experience of participation work, indicate that at least some respondents are acutely aware of the need to challenge and change adult attitudes, assumptions and ways of working in order

²⁴ See, for instance, Local Government Association (2002), *Guidance on Community Cohesion*; DfES (2001), *Transforming Youth Work: developing youth work for young people*.

²⁵ See, for instance, Storey, P and Brannen, J (2000), *Young People and Transport in rural areas*. Youth Work Press; Eden, K and Roker, D (2002), ...'*Doing Something*': *young people as social actors*. National Youth Agency.

to create a climate which offers any chance for children and young people to have real impact on public decision-making.

The survey indicated that many adults involved in participation work do not receive any specific training or support. In particular, it reveals the lack of attention paid to training and capacity-building amongst one key group of decision-makers – local councillors and members of governing bodies and boards.

Respondents placed a higher priority on the employment of specific staff supporting participation than they did on supporting participatory approaches among all staff. Again, however, many comments elsewhere in the survey stressed the need for participation work to be acknowledged as the responsibility of all organisations and individuals, rather than being seen as a specialism. Respondents from Connexions and the Children's Fund were more likely than others to support the need for participatory approaches by all staff, suggesting that experience of organisations with higher levels of participation may indicate that both approaches are needed.

Developing effective approaches

The findings from this survey support the recommendations of *Building a Culture of Participation*²⁶ that a variety of activities are needed to include all children and young people in ways that suit their needs and different situations. While the survey was primarily quantitative, and able to gain only a limited amount of information on what approaches are most effective and why, respondents identified a wide range of approaches to participation as being effective. The approaches they identified as being most effective, for instance, included both formal structures, such as youth councils and forums and the involvement of children and young people in main decision-making bodies, and informal approaches such as project work and informal discussion.

The spread of approaches identified by respondents suggests that while there may be a core of approaches which are more likely to be effective, the vast majority of potential approaches should not be dismissed. Some respondents argued that all approaches and tasks could work well as part of a varied portfolio, provided they were well managed and suited to their purpose. Similarly, approaches that were found to be effective in some settings may fail in others if they are inadequately supported - whether in terms of financial and human resources, or adult attitudes. Particularly in the statutory sector, many respondents highlighted positive experiences of involving children and young people in recruiting staff, while others described instances when such initiatives had foundered because of unhelpful and inflexible adult attitudes.

Both statutory and voluntary sectors reported only limited involvement of children and young people in more strategic activities such as policy development, devising frameworks for assessing services, grant applications and staff training, all areas where they are likely to be involved in taking decisions alongside adults. However, when asked to identify the approaches and tasks which have been most effective, these types of activity are found in the 'top ten' of both statutory and voluntary sector respondents. It may be that some organisations believe that children and young people are either not interested in, or competent to, undertake this level of activity. However, others appear to lack the confidence to involve children and young people in strategic decisions, even though they believe they can make a valuable contribution at this level.

National participation centre

While responses to the question about government action did not indicate strong support for the establishment of a national centre for youth participation, there was support for what might be considered its core functions – encouraging attitudinal change, embedding and sharing

²⁶ Kirby et al (2003).

good practice, promoting collaborative work and increasing capacity among children and young people and adults.

Measuring impact

The research suggests (in line with *Building a Culture of Participation* and the IPPR/LGA survey),²⁷ that organisations are failing to monitor and evaluate the impact of children and young people's participation. Formal evaluation is used in fewer than 40 per cent of statutory and voluntary organisations, with the latter relying particularly heavily on self-evaluation and reflection on practice. While important, this is vulnerable to various pressures, including lack of time and an unsupportive organisational culture. The lack of measurement of impact is also revealed by the relatively high number of respondents in organisations involved in participation work which were unable to say whether their services had improved as a result of children and young people's participation.

Involving younger children

The survey confirmed findings of earlier research that levels of participation among younger children is limited. Responses from Sure Start projects revealed conflicting views as to whether it was possible or appropriate to involve children of this age in decisions, with some respondents seeking only to engage parents in decision-making.

Despite this, respondents, particularly those working in organisations working specifically with younger children, revealed positive attitudes towards the involvement of children under eight in decision-making. Some respondents also expressed willingness to find ways of involving children in decisions, but did not know how to go about it. This indicates the importance of sharing existing practice and of developing innovative approaches to promote the engagement of the youngest age groups.

Taking participation seriously

While it is clear that some organisations and sectors demonstrate considerable commitment to involving children and young people in decision-making, some sectors, notably health and criminal justice, lag behind. Moreover, even in organisations which are taking the issue seriously, some key activities, such as monitoring and evaluation, training for adult decision-makers, and ensuring that children and young people receive feedback on the results of their involvement – are being neglected. While the high levels of commitment to participation revealed by the survey are welcome, they need to be matched by equally high levels of action.

²⁷ Kirby et al (2003); IPPR/LGA (2001).

References

Cutler, D and Taylor, A (2004), *Expanding and Sustaining Involvement: a snapshot of participation infrastructure for young people living in England*. Department for Education and Skills.

Children and Young People's Unit (2001), *Learning to Listen: core principles for the involvement of children and young people*.

Department for Education and Skills (2001), *Transforming Youth Work: developing youth work for young people*.

Department for Education and Skills (2003), *Every Child Matters. Presented to Parliament by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury by Command of Her Majesty September 2003*

Eden, K and Roker, D (2002), *... 'Doing Something': young people as social actors*. National Youth Agency.

Kirby, P et al. (2003), *Building a Culture of Participation: involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation, research report and handbook*. Department for Education and Skills.

Institute of Public Policy Research and Local Government Association (2001), *Involving Young People in Decision-making: a survey of local authorities*.

Local Government Association (2002), *Guidance on Community Cohesion*.

Storey, P and Brannen, J (2000), *Young People and Transport in Rural areas*. Youth Work Press.

Wade, H and Badham, B (2003), *Hear by Right: standards for the active involvement of children and young people*. The National Youth Agency. First published 2001.

ANNEX A

Research methodology

Identifying the recipients

The survey sought to provide as full a description as possible of the levels and forms of participation across statutory and voluntary sectors. Key contacts in a wide range of statutory funded sectors were therefore identified at national, regional and local level through directories such as the Municipal Yearbook and by trawling government and other websites. Voluntary sector organisations working with children and young people were identified through the networks of the British Youth Council, National Children's Bureau, and the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services and the National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations.

A mixture of census and sampling approaches was adopted. Within the statutory sector, targeted recipients included all central government departments, a sample of 45 executive non-departmental government bodies, and a range of regional and sub-regional bodies such as Government Offices for the Regions, regional assemblies and development agencies, police services, strategic health authorities, Connexions Partnerships and strategic health authorities (all on a census basis). At local level, the questionnaire was sent to all local authorities and, in order to identify differences in participation work between specific local authority departments, was also sent to social services, education and youth services within first-tier local authorities.

In order to identify recipients at local level, sampling was undertaken on a regional basis in order to provide a representative sample of approximately one-third of first-tier local authorities. Within these geographical areas, a range of local delivery programmes was identified, including Sure Start, Children's Fund and organisations working within the health and criminal justice sectors. However it was subsequently decided to survey all Children's Fund programmes because of their level of interest in the survey.

The survey targeted 250 national voluntary organisations, including national networks of autonomous organisations, national bodies with regional/local delivery arms, federations and national organisations that license local franchises. One hundred regional voluntary organisations were identified, largely through councils for voluntary youth services, including regional networks, regional bodies with local delivery arms and countywide organisations.

Some 400 local voluntary organisations, located in the geographical areas described above, were identified, including 150 local organisations aligned to boroughs and districts, 150 organisations acting as local delivery arms of regional and national bodies, and 100 community groups.

Preparing the ground

The survey took the form of a self-completion questionnaire, accompanied by guidance notes intended to clarify the definitions and language used within the questionnaire. There were minor differences in the introductory sections of the questionnaires sent to statutory and voluntary organisations, but the substantive questions were identical.

The questionnaire was piloted during summer 2003 with some 25 statutory and voluntary organisations. A research advisory group also provided advice and guidance. Following a review of the overall aims of the research by the DfES and The NYA and BYC, the questionnaire was substantially amended in autumn 2003, and piloted again with a small number of organisations.

'Warm-up' e-mails and letters were sent to most of the targeted recipients in October and early November, in order to alert them to expect the questionnaire during late November, to ask them to nominate a colleague to complete the questionnaire if appropriate, and to offer them the opportunity of receiving the questionnaire electronically.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork took place between November 2003 and February 2004. Respondents whose e-mail addresses were known were sent a reminder, and if required, additional copies of the questionnaire. Approximately half the statutory sector respondents (but few voluntary sector respondents) opted to complete the questionnaire electronically. Freepost envelopes were included with questionnaire sent by post, in order to maximise response rates.

Administration and analysis

The National Youth Agency was responsible for administration and analysis of the questionnaire sent to statutory sector organisations, while the British Youth Council was responsible for those sent to the voluntary sector organisations. Overall administration and analysis was coordinated by The National Youth Agency.

Statutory sector responses

Responses by organisation type

Statutory sector organisations	Number sent	Response rate
Central and regional government	90	40 (44%)
Central Government Departments	12	6 (50%)
NDPBs	45	18 (40%)
Government Office of the Regions	8	7 (88%)
Regional Development Agencies	8	3 (38%)
Regional Assemblies	9	3 (33%)
Quality Protects regional teams	8	3 (38%)
Local government	903	456 (50%)
First tier Local Authorities (corporate)	149	63 (42%)
LEAs	149	39 (26%)
Children's Social Services	149	88 (59%)
Youth Services	149	115 (77%)
District Councils	237	122 (51%)
Parish Councils	59	18 (31%)
Local authorities other	(unsolicited)	11
Sure Start	148	50(32%)
Children's Fund	149	86 (58%)
Connexions	47	26 (55%)
Learning and Skills Councils	47	23 (49%)
Criminal justice based services	200	49 (25%)
Police Services	39	19 (49%)
Community Safety	114	16 (14%)
Youth Offending Teams	47	14 (30%)
Health based services	350	119 (34%)
Primary Care Trusts	102	52 (51%)
Strategic Health Authorities	29	5 (17%)
Health Action Zones	34	3 (9%)
Hospital Trusts	87	30 (34%)
Drug Action Teams	49	18 (37%)
Teenage Pregnancy Units	48	10 (21%)
Other	(unsolicited)	1
TOTAL	1934	849 (44%)

Responses by region

	Number returned from each region	Percentage of total responses (excluding national organisations)
East of England	69	8
East Midlands	71	9
London	118	14
North East	62	7
North West	112	14
South East	116	14
South West	96	12
West Midlands	104	13
Yorkshire and the Humber	79	10
Total	827	

Mapping Children and Young People's Participation in England: Questionnaire Guidance Note

This questionnaire aims to provide the Department for Education and Skills with a picture of the level and ways in which children and young people are involved in public-decision making in the statutory and voluntary sectors in England.²⁸ This guidance note is intended to clarify some of the definitions and language used in the questionnaire, in order to help you complete it as fully and as accurately as possible. We recognise that some organisations may carry out limited or no participation work at the moment, but we are still interested in learning about your views and experiences.

Decision-making/participation. The terms 'involving CYP in decision-making' and 'participation' have been used interchangeably in the questionnaire.

Public decision-making. The questionnaire focuses on CYP's involvement in public rather than personal decision-making. By this we mean CYP (individually or as a group) being involved in decisions about policies and services which may affect them and the life of the community in which they live, but which do not only apply to them as individuals. For example, we would define asking young people in care for their views on potential foster carers as an example of personal decision-making. But if this discussion results in a service provider changing the ways in which they routinely involve CYP in such decisions, we would define this as an example of public decision-making.

Q4: first-tier local authorities. This means the 149 English authorities with responsibility for education and social services – i.e. London, metropolitan, county council or unitary authorities.

Age range. For the purposes of the survey, 'children and young people' (CYP) means those aged up to 19. We have however asked for some additional information on the involvement of young people up to the age of 25 for purposes of comparison in questions 5 and 18.

Q7: Involving CYP in decision-making. We are aware that some organisations may not work with young people directly. This question covers both direct and indirect involvement of CYP in decision-making. This indirect involvement would include your organisation supporting or commissioning other organisations to involve CYP in expressing views or making decisions about the policies and services for which your organisation is responsible. If your organisation does not involve CYP in direct or indirect decision-making, we would still like to know about your perceptions about participation and what might promote it.

Effective practice. In some questions (Qs 14, 15, 20, 28 and 29) we ask about 'effective' practice. While this may be defined differently in different contexts, we see the key elements as including:

- CYP should understand why they are being involved and what they can influence;
- Organisations view participation as a long-term commitment and process;
- CYP are provided with any help and support they need to communicate their views and ideas;
- Specific efforts are made to engage more marginalised CYP; and
- Both organisations and CYP can identify what has happened as a result of involving CYP. This may relate to lack of change – e.g. something that CYP value being retained – as well as change.

Q28/29: capacity-building. We use this phrase to mean the process of developing the abilities of organisations or individuals.

We hope these notes are helpful. If you have any further queries, please contact Carolyn Oldfield on 0116 285 3790 or e-mail carolyno@nya.org.uk

²⁸ There were minor differences in the questionnaires sent to statutory and voluntary organisations, relating to information about their organisation. However, the main body of the questionnaire was the same for both sectors.

MAPPING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN ENGLAND

We want to find out about the levels and ways in which children and young people (CYP) up to 19 are involved in public decision-making in the statutory sector in England. By 'public decision-making', we mean CYP's involvement in decisions about policies and services which may affect them, but which are not specific to them as individuals. We are seeking a considerable amount of information, but we have tried to make it as simple as possible - most questions only require you to tick the relevant options. We would be grateful if you could complete it as fully and accurately as possible – we estimate it should take less than half an hour. The information you provide will remain confidential – no individual respondents will be identified in any reports or material resulting from the survey.

If you need any help with the questionnaire or would prefer to complete it electronically in Excel format, please call Carolyn Oldfield on 0116 285 3790 or e-mail: carolyno@nya.org.uk

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATION

1. Name of organisation

.....

2. Type of organisation

- Central government department
- NDPB/government agency

If Yes to either of the above please go to question 5

- Government Office for the regions
- Regional assembly
- Regional development agency
- Learning and Skills Council
- Local authority – chief executive's dept
- Local authority – education
- Local authority – youth service
- Local authority – social services
- Local authority – district council
- Local authority – other
- Parish council
- Connexions partnership
- Sure Start
- Children's Fund
- Health – strategic health authority
- Health – Health Action Zone
- Health – primary care trust
- Health – hospital trust
- Health – drug action team
- Health – teenage pregnancy unit
- Crime – police
- Crime – youth offending team
- Crime – community safety/crime and disorder partnership
- Other – please specify

.....

3. Region

If you cover more than one region, please tick all that apply.

- East of England
- East Midlands
- London
- North East
- North West
- South East
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and The Humber

4. Which first tier local authority/authorities do you cover? (for sub-regional organisations)

.....

5. Please indicate the age ranges of the children and young people (CYP) that your organisation works with/ develops policies and services for

Please tick all that apply

- 0 – 4
- 5 – 8
- 9 – 13
- 14 – 17
- 18 – 19
- 20 +
- We do not have a specific focus on CYP
- Don't know

6. Approximately how many paid staff work for your organisation?

Please give full-time equivalent

- Fewer than 10
- 10 to 29
- 30 to 49
- 50 or more
- Don't know

PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY

7. **Does your organisation ever work with CYP up to 19 to involve them in decision-making about policies, strategies or services that you deliver or for which you are responsible?**

- Yes, we are currently involving CYP in decision-making
- Yes, we have involved CYP in the past
- No, but we are planning to
- No, and we have no plans to do so
- Don't know

If 'No, and we have no plans to do so' or 'Don't know', please give your reasons for this below, AND THEN GO DIRECTLY TO Q27

.....

.....

.....

8. **Over the past four years, has the amount of work you have done to involve CYP in decision-making increased, decreased or stayed the same?**

- Increased
- Decreased
- Stayed the same
- Don't know

9. **Does your organisation have a written policy or strategy about involving CYP in decision-making?**

- Yes
- No
- Being developed
- Don't know

10. **Which issues are CYP involved in making decisions about through your organisation?**

Please tick all that apply

- Community safety/crime
- Connexions
- Education
- Environmental issues
- Health issues
- Housing
- Leisure/recreation
- Regeneration
- Social services
- Transport
- Youth services
- Other – please specify

.....

11. **At what level(s) do you involve CYP in decision-making?**

Please tick all that apply

- CYP are involved in identifying the policies or services they are concerned about
- CYP are asked for their ideas for developing new policies or services
- CYP are asked about their ideas for changing or developing existing policies or services
- CYP are involved in monitoring or evaluating services and policies
- CYP are involved in the delivery of services
- CYP are involved in decisions that are made about them as individuals
- Don't know

12. **Which of the following approaches does your organisation use to involve CYP in decision-making?**

Please include all methods that are currently being used or have been used in the past 12 months.

Please tick all that apply

Approaches where CYP have an opportunity to be involved alongside adults

- Consultation documents
- Public meetings and events
- Complaints/suggestion schemes
- Interactive websites
- Citizens' panels/juries
- Involving CYP as members of main decision-making bodies or committees
- Referendums
- Service user forums
- Opinion polls/ omnibus surveys
- Question and answer sessions
- Other – please specify

.....

Approaches specifically designed for CYP

- Consultation documents designed for CYP
- Research into CYP's views and needs
- Interactive websites specifically for CYP
- E-mail/text-messaging
- Polls/surveys of CYP
- Public meetings and events for CYP
- Young citizens juries/panels
- Youth councils/forums
- CYP's advisory or reference groups, including parallel structures such as youth boards
- Ongoing informal discussion with CYP
- Focus groups
- Arts-based projects, e.g. video-making
- Other project work, e.g. on specific estates
- CYP's service user groups
- Visioning exercises, e.g. a range of techniques that allow CYP to imagine what improvements they would like to see happen to create a better future
- Other – please specify

.....

Don't know

13. **What specific tasks do CYP undertake for or through your organisation to inform public decision-making?**

Please tick all that apply

- Researching the needs of CYP
- Representing the views of CYP
- Mapping existing provision
- Developing policies, strategies, objectives or plans
- Campaigning for change in policy and provision
- Setting budgets
- Helping secure money and resources
- Assessing grant applications
- Assessing contractors and suppliers
- Developing frameworks for assessing services, e.g. kitemarking
- Assessing services, e.g. mystery shopping
- Developing youth charters
- Developing complaints procedures
- Promoting services to other CYP
- Training other CYP (including peer education or mentoring)
- Recruiting and selecting staff
- Training staff
- Training elected/board members
- Organising events
- Attending meetings
- Working with wider community to improve relationships
- Other – please specify

.....
 Don't know

14. **Which ONE of the approaches and tasks identified in questions 12 & 13 has, in your opinion, been the most effective? Please explain why and what it achieved.**

.....

15. **Which ONE of the approaches and tasks identified in questions 12 & 13 has, in your opinion, been the least effective? Please explain why.**

.....

16. **Do you assess CYP's participation and its impact in the following ways:**

Please tick all that apply

- Monitoring
- Internal reflection on practice/ self evaluation
- Formal evaluation
- Don't know

17. **On balance, how much influence do you think CYP have on decisions made by your organisation?**

- A great deal of influence
- Some influence in particular areas
- Very little influence
- None at all
- Don't know

REACHING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

18. **Thinking about all of the methods of participation that are currently being used or have been used in the past 12 months, which groups of CYP does your organisation involve in decision-making?**

Please use one tick against each of the groups of CYP you involve at all and two ticks against those groups which are most heavily involved.

Age

- 0 – 4
- 5 – 8
- 9 – 13
- 14 – 17
- 18 – 19
- 20 – 25

Gender

- Male
- Female

Ethnicity

- White
- Black or Black British
- Asian or Asian British
- Mixed Heritage
- Other

Please specify:

(Dis)Ability

- Learning Difficulty
- Physical / Sensory Disability
- Non Disabled

Location

- Rural Areas
- Urban Areas
-

Other

- Lesbian Gay and Bisexual
- Currently/Formerly in Care
- Young Refugees and Asylum Seekers
- Young Travellers
- CYP not in Education, Employment or Training
- Young Offenders
- Other groups of CYP – please specify

.....
 Don't know

19. Do you find it hard to reach specific groups of CYP?

- Yes
- No

If no, please go to Q21

If yes, which groups?

.....

.....

.....

20. Have you identified effective ways to address this?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give details

.....

.....

.....

SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPATION

21. Which of the following types of resources, if any, does your organisation allocate specifically to support CYP's participation?

Please tick all that apply and if possible give details of the annual budget or any resources in kind

- Dedicated staff time
- Dedicated admin time
- Use of premises/office space
- Training and events costs
- Transport and other expenses for CYP
- Other (please specify)

No resources specifically allocated to CYP

22. Are CYP involved in participation work allocated a specific budget that they control?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please give annual amount

£

23. Has your organisation identified a specific individual(s) at senior level who is responsible for CYP's participation?

- Yes
- No

If yes, is this:

Please tick all that apply

- Board/elected members (including appointees)
- Senior officer/staff member(s)

24. Do these individuals and others receive training and/or support related to CYP's participation?

Please tick the response that applies to the different types of staff

	Yes	No	Don't Know	No such Staff
Board/elected members (inc. appointees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff working directly with CYP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist participation Workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. Do CYP involved in participation activities receive training and support?

- Yes
- No

If yes, does this take the form of:

Please tick all that apply

- Information provision (e.g. explanation of procedures and structures)
- Training on democratic procedures and/or skills training
- Pairing /mentoring by adults (including staff, elected/ board members)
- Peer mentoring
- Youth work/ pastoral support
- Training for specific roles, e.g. recruitment or inspection
- Access to staff training
- Other – please specify

26. Do you offer incentives and/or recognition to CYP involved in participation activities?

- Yes
- No

If yes, is this through
Please tick all that apply

- Employing CYP to promote participation
 - Payment for involvement in specific projects/activities
 - Expenses
 - Vouchers or other financial rewards
 - Group events (meals, bowling etc.)
 - Accreditation
 - Certificates
 - Ceremonies
 - References/letters of thanks
 - Other – please specify
-
- None of these

ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS

27. How much do you agree/disagree with each of the following statements about public decision-making

Please tick the appropriate response.

Your own personal views

CYP have a right to be involved in public decision-making

	Agree Strongly	Agree Slightly	Disagree Slightly	Disagree Strongly	Don't know
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

CYP should only be involved in decision-making where there is clear evidence about the benefits of their involvement

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

It is too difficult to involve children under eight in decision-making

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

There are no decisions which CYP cannot be involved in, providing they are properly supported

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Your organisation's approach

Please tick the appropriate response.

Senior managers in my organisation value the right of CYP to be involved in decision-making.

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Senior managers understand the practical implications of involving CYP in decision-making

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

We would like to involve CYP more but we don't have the resources

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

CYP's participation is integral to the work of my organisation

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Our services have improved as a result of CYP's participation

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

My organisation always ensures that CYP know about the results of their Involvement

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

PROMOTING PARTICIPATION

28. Below is a list of nine approaches which organisations could take to improve CYP's effective participation in decision-making.

Please tick the **THREE** approaches which you think are most important

- Written policies on CYP's participation
- Senior management commitment to CYP's participation
- Partnership work with other organizations
- Specific staff supporting participation
- Supporting participatory approaches by all staff working with CYP
- Training/ capacity-building for CYP
- Training/ capacity-building for adults
- Better recognition of the benefits of CYP's participation
- Incentives for staff to promote CYP's participation

Please specify any approaches not mentioned above which you think organisations should adopt to improve CYP's participation.

.....

.....

.....

.....

29 Below is a list of nine approaches which the Government might take to improve CYP's effective participation in decision-making.

Please tick the **THREE** approaches which you think are most important

- Long-term funding for participation work
- Action to promote attitudinal change among adults
- Targeted funding to support specific initiatives
- Help in developing systems for involving CYP safely
- Incorporating requirements to consult CYP in all funding streams
- National centre promoting and supporting youth participation
- Regional participation officers to support local action
- Training/capacity-building for CYP
- Training/capacity-building for adults

Please specify any approaches not mentioned above which you think the Government should adopt to improve CYP's participation.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

DfES Publications
P.O. Box 5050
Sherwood Park
Annesley
Nottingham
NG15 0DJ

Tel: 0845 60 222 60
Fax: 0845 60 333 60
Minicom: 0845 60 555 60
Online: www.dfespublications.gov.uk

© National Youth Agency 2004

Produced by the Department for Education and Skills

ISBN 1 84478 326 X
Ref No: RR584

www.dfes.go.uk/research