

Monmouthshire County Councils' Youth Engagement and Participation Strategy 2019 -2022



Version 1
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Foreword

‘Local authorities have a duty to promote and facilitate participation by children and young people in decisions that might affect them. The legal basis for this duty is Section 12 of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010.’ The guidance goes on to say ‘In order to meet the requirements of the legislation Local Authorities are expected to work with relevant partners to... establish a County Youth Forum as a representative body of young people to act as a channel for young people’s views across their local authority and represent those views to local and national decision-making bodies... For County Youth Forums to operate effectively, they will need to be adequately supported by Local Authorities who should consider what support is required to do this.

The aim of this strategy is to outline how Monmouthshire Youth Service plans to work with and for young people to ensure their engagement and participation in the design, development and influence of services. The strategy clarifies our vision, mission, aim, values and priorities and how these link in to national standards, legislation, policy and guidance. The aim is to put young people at the heart of a meaningful process of engagement, where they are listened to, respected and valued as individuals and groups and members of communities, and able to make a difference.

What is Participation?

Youth participation actively involves young people in decision-making processes on issues that affect them. Young people make invaluable contributions to communities and are empowered themselves when they participate.

Our Vision

Monmouthshire Youth Service is committed to embedding a culture of Youth Participation throughout our service. We aspire to deliver a service which enable young people to participative in a fully inclusive environment, that is well-adverse in the seven principles of the participation standards. **(See page 6)**

Our Mission

Develop and maintain participation opportunities for young people in all services across Monmouthshire through effective lines of communication, delivery and feedback.

Our Aim

To involve all young people in the participation process, ensuring their opportunities to make informed decisions and carry out youth led work.

Our Values

- Young people are at the heart of what we do
- Young people are informed decisions on matters that affect them
- Young people are listened to and given the opportunity to speak
- Young people are involved at all stages of a decision making process from ideas to delivery of projects
- Youth led reviews of services
- Young people are celebrated for their successes
- Young people are provided with an equal amount of feedback

What are our priorities?

- To become a service that has embedded a culture of Youth Participation, positively engages and listens to the Young People, and provides opportunities to enable them to exercise their rights
- To enable young people to voice issues which are important to them through recognised forums on a local, regional and national level and affect decision-making
- To ensure we truly respect, protect, value and support the young people of Monmouthshire.
- To have a greater awareness of young people's needs and use them in practice to shape the services that we provide
- To raise awareness and promote meaningful participation with young people
- To promote Children's Rights via UNCRC and continue to use this document to underpin all of our work across the service
- Ensure young people are aware of the ways that they can give comments, suggestions and make complaints about the services they use
- Ensure that we allow for young people's voices to be heard from a variety of platforms including forums, provisions and also via our social media networks
- To ensure that we provide effective, timely and relevant feedback to young people about the outcome of any work we involve them with, especially consultations

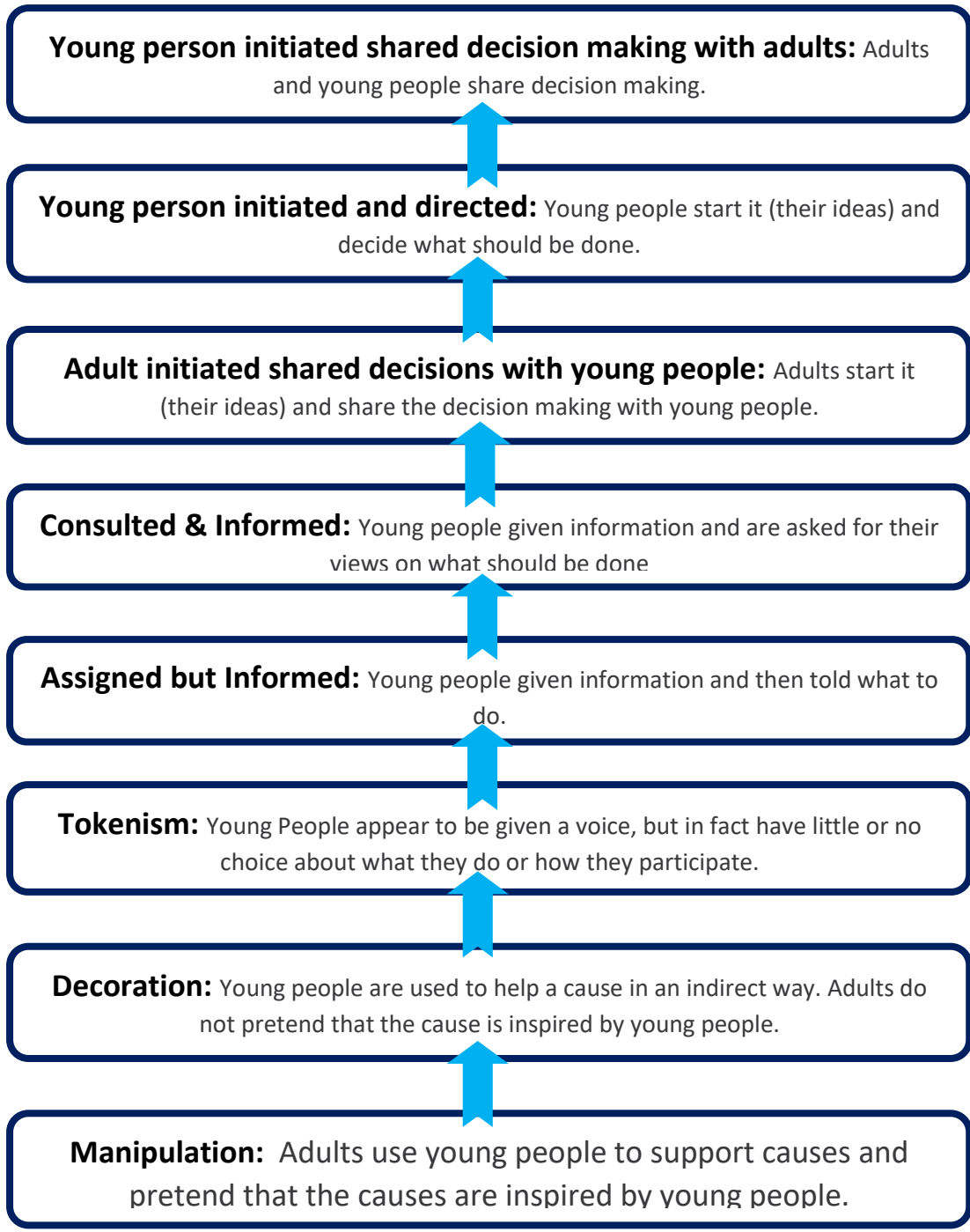
The 7 Children and Young People's National Participation Standards for Wales.

<p>INFORMATION</p> <p>You have the right to information that is easy to understand and allows you to make an informed decision</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Provide information that is good quality, clear and accessible Inform you about who's going to listen and let you know what difference your involvement could make</p>
<p>IT'S YOUR CHOICE</p> <p>You have the right to choose to be involved and work on things that are important to you.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Give you enough support and time to choose if you want to get involved</p>
<p>NO DISCRIMINATION</p> <p>Children and young people are all-different and have the right to be treated fairly.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Challenge discrimination Provide a range of opportunities and support to meet the needs of children and young people</p>
<p>RESPECT</p> <p>You have the right to have a say. Your opinions are important and will be respected</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Listen to your views, experiences and ideas and take you seriously Work with you on things you say are important Value what you have to offer</p>
<p>YOU GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT</p> <p>You have the right to learn and be the best you can be You will have opportunities to work with others and make a difference We want you to be involved in positive experiences</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Work with you in safe, fun and enjoyable ways Make the most of what you know and do things that build your confidence and skills</p>
<p>FEEDBACK</p> <p>You have the right to know what differences you have made and how your ideas have been listened to</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Always ensure you have feedback in an agree time Tell you how your ideas have been used and why Tell you what happens next</p>
<p>WORKING BETTER FOR YOU</p> <p>Those who make decisions that affect children and young people should put children's rights at the centre of everything they do</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Work with you and learn how we can do things better Ensure your views make a difference to the way we make plans and decisions.</p>

The ladder of participation is an idea developed by Roger Hart (1992) that identifies eight levels of children and young people's participation. At the bottom of the ladder Participation is not effective, but at the top of the ladder young people are *truly* empowered through meaningful and consistent engagement. Our aim is where possible true participation!

True participation →

Not participation



What Legislation, Policies & Guidance underpin Participation?

The **UNCRC** is also the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world.

The UNCRC ensures that Children and Young People have the right to have their voices heard.

Youth Participation the *superlative* clause is Article 12, which states that young people:

“[You] have the right to say what you think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect you and to have your opinions taken into account.”

This means that young people should have opportunities to have their voices heard and listened to by adults, and have a say on decisions that affect them.

Youth Work in Wales: Principles and Purposes

This document outlines the values and principles that youth services across Wales should be working within. It dictates the 5 pillars of Youth Work. One of those pillars is that youth services should be Participative as outlined below:

Encouraging and supporting young people to become partners in, and share responsibility for, the opportunities, learning processes and decision-making structures which affect their own and other people's lives and environments.

Future Generations Act

This guidance came into force on 1st April 2016 and places emphasis on the need of public bodies to collaboratively plan and take steps to realise children and young people's rights. In summary it includes that local authorities:

- Are expected to make sure that as many young people as possible are aware of their rights as set out in the UNCRC.
- Local authorities adopt the National Participation Standards for Children and Young People's Participation as set out in this document.
- County Youth Forums should be as inclusive as possible.
- Ensure information and materials aimed at children and young people are clear and easy to understand, are up-to-date, relevant and accessible in terms of language

What are the Benefits of Participation?

For Young People the benefits of Participation are:

- You have a role within the Youth Service – we listen to your opinions and take your views seriously
- You feel respected and included
- You have your say on changes that are planned and you get to hold decision-makers to account
- You have opportunities to improve your skills and knowledge
- You have increased confidence, self-esteem and aspirations
- You feel empowered and that you are an active part of your community
- You have a sense of pride in your own achievements
- You increase your awareness of democratic processes, including understanding different points of view, the need for compromise, and a sense of responsibility in group decisions

For Monmouthshire County Council

- We streamline services that meets the needs of the young people we work with
- We ensure that our money is spent in a better and more efficient way
- We improve attendance, attainment and the behaviour of young people.
- We improve the quality of life for young people by recognising, understanding and responding to their needs as young people
- We witness young people reaching their potential
- Better safeguarding
- We enhance our credibility, reputation and relevance to children and young people through our work
- We provide a better quality service with more inclusive decision-making

For the community of Monmouthshire

- We nurture better relationships between the older and younger community members
- Children and young people are better able to contribute to the development of their communities
- Reductions in anti-social behaviour, crime levels and the fear of perceived crime
- A better understanding of the needs of children and young people in the community
- Communities and families benefit from children and young people's knowledge and ideas

How are we going to do this?

- Present this document to the Partnership Team, developing a participation-working group who will have a focus on driving this document and increasing levels of participation across Monmouthshire.
- Host engagement sessions to increase knowledge of participation, empowering young people to get join E2C and share good practice; Monmouthshire Secondary Schools Youth Councils, Welsh Language Schools in the region, Children's Services (LAC/Children with disabilities), Young Careers, Youth Enterprise and EOTAS
- Improve mechanisms to communicate with young people via social media, reaching out to a wider audience of young people
- Host Monmouthshire's first 'Make Your Mark Young Peoples' s Feedback' event in July 2019
- Develop 6 week 'Participation' training packs to deliver to services that wish to imbed Youth Participation within their teams.

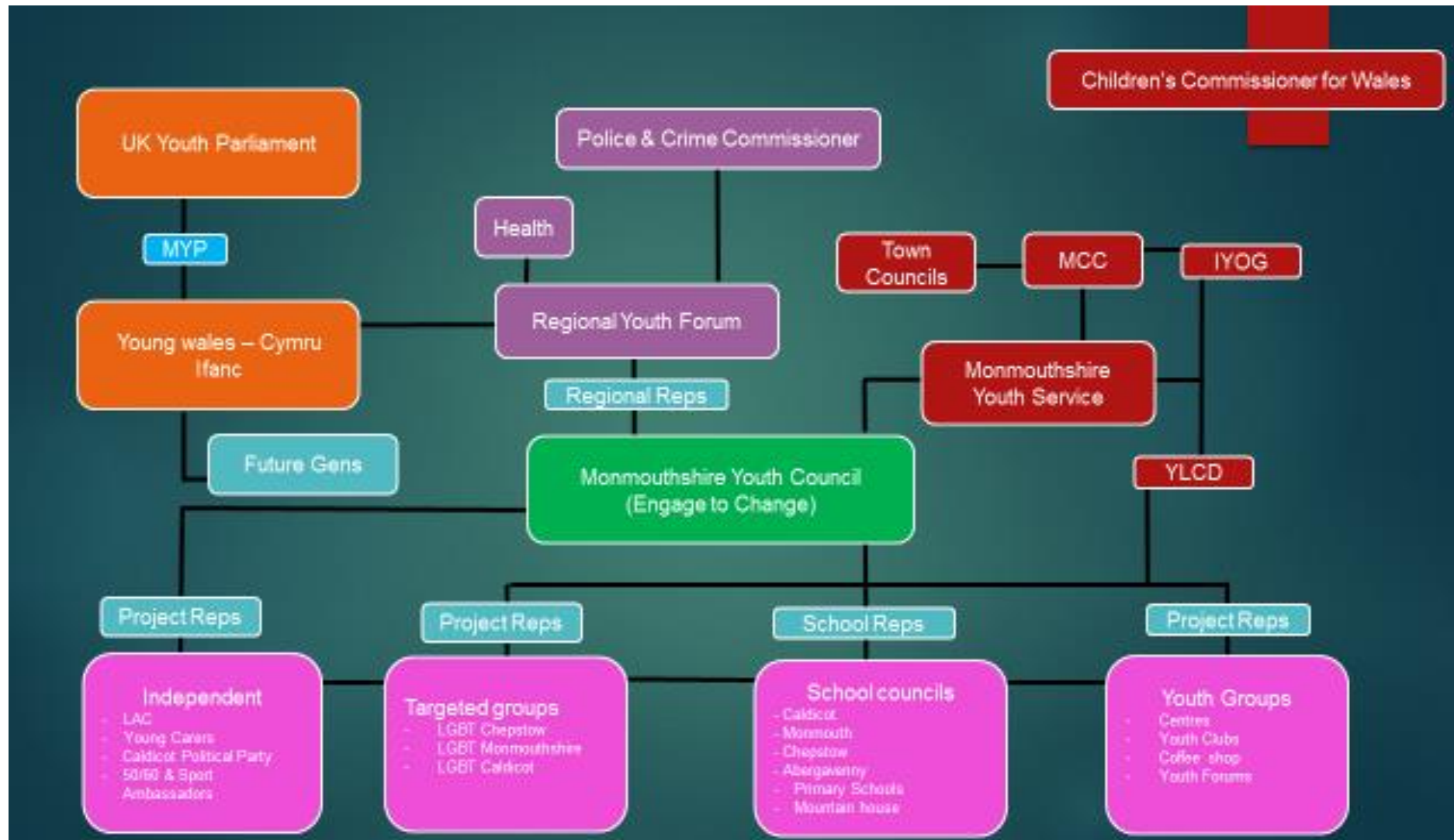
Measurable Outcomes

- Number of young people engaging with our service
- Number of activities delivered that are focused around true participation
- Number of E2C members
- Number of YP's voices being heard and opinions taken account of; through forums, provisions and social media
- Number of young people who are informed
- Number of young people who receive feedback

We shall measure our success by recording the outcomes in the following documents

Type of record:	For who:
Quarterly report	- Monmouthshire County Council
Quarterly participation figures	- Welsh Government
Celebration of success event report and evaluation	- Young people and any other stakeholders including funders
Youth Council report annual report (and any associated news articles, PowerPoints, case studies, quotes, photos)	- Monmouthshire County Council and wider community (including online)

Lines of Communication for Participation Work



Annual Project Plan

Participation opportunity	Purpose	Process	Dates
Democracy Days	Young people are exposed to democracy on a local regional and national level, opportunity to learn how these operate, opportunity to inspire young people, increase individuals confidence to aim for this as career aspirations	One trip every school term: Trip to Monmouthshire County council Trip to Senedd Trip to houses of commons	Spring term Autumn term Winter term
Engage 2 Change Youth Council	Offer young people the opportunity and the space to have their voices heard, to be consulted with and informed about matters that affect them and their peers	Monthly meetings with youth led agenda & Contributions to agenda from MCC services External providers & Youth Service. Additional meetings: AGM / Elections Team building / Recruitment	First Monday of every month Easter break October half term
LGBT	Youth initiated group who discuss matter regarding LGBT for Monmouthshire, influence school policy, offer support for peers, plan and deliver celebratory event for young people	Weekly Meetings Annual Event Pride awareness day LGBT history Month	Every Wednesday June October
Gwent Regional Youth Forum	Young people to influence decision making on a regional level represent peers. Two way process of information sharing with external youth services	Attend meetings on a quarterly basis Host GRYF meeting	Summer Term Autumn Term Winter Term Spring Term

Annual Project Plan

Participation opportunity	Purpose	Process	Dates
Make Your Mark	Young people influencing the decision making process on a local regional and national scale in line with the standards	Propose as project to school councils Consultation Youth Conference House of Commons Trip Action Months Youth Feedback Event	July Aug – Oct November Jun – July July
School Council Engagement	Line of two way communication between youth council & schools	One meeting with each secondary school council per term	Autumn Term Spring Term Summer Term Winter Term
Celebration Event	Recognise achievements of young people		Annually
Training & Volunteers	Provide young people with skills and accreditation as an addition and to support the role in E2C	Young inspectors UNCRC	Oct Half term When requested
Other	Offering additional opportunities for young people to participate	Budget Engagement session PCC Question Time Welsh youth parliament	January Annually Bi Annually