



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Participation Guidance and Best Practice

Monmouthshire's Children, Learning, Skills and Economy
Directorate

Participation Guidance and Best Practice (January 2025)

This guidance sets out Monmouthshire Local Authority's approach to participation.

Date of issue	September 2025
Updated	
Review frequency	Every 3 years
Name of person responsible for maintaining this policy	Hayley Page
Contact details	HayleyPage@monmouthshire.gov.uk

This document is available in English and Welsh.

Introduction	4
Definition and Scope	5
What is participation?	5
Legislation and Policy	5
Benefits of Participation.....	7
Participation of Children and Young People	7
Participation Standards	12
Methods of Participation	13
Key areas of Participation.....	15

Introduction

In Monmouthshire our aim is to support all children and young people, their families and other partners supporting to contribute positively to the development of the Inclusion Service across Monmouthshire. We want to build and maintain relationships with partners to ensure that when we carry out engagement activities, it is clear what we are trying to achieve and that all voices are heard. We aim to give members of our school communities opportunities to impact and shape the decisions made.

This guidance and best practice is our commitment to:

- a. place children and young people and their families at the centre of what we do, learning from them about what matters, their thoughts, wishes and opinions, the services they access and any barriers they face.
- b. build relationships and empower our children and young people and families by giving them a voice to influence decisions which impact them.
- c. learn from those who use our Inclusion Service and those who are directly impacted.
- d. pursue best practice to improve participation of our children and young people, their families and wider partners.
- e. provide appropriate approaches, methods and environments for participation to be accessible and purposeful, supporting those who may find it more difficult to participate to share their views, wishes and feelings.
- f. use the information captured through participation to inform the decision making, striving to continuously improve what we do and how we work.

This guidance and best practice document has been written to ensure everyone working in the Inclusion Service has a common understanding and is confident in their approach to capturing the views of all partners, including children and young people, ensuring our work is rights-based, inclusive and respectful.

By embedding participation, we will create opportunities for children and young people, their families, and other partners to actively contribute to matters that are important to them by cultivating an environment in which involvement and participation is acknowledged, supported, encouraged, listened to, understood, and actioned.

Definition and Scope

Inclusion of children and young people in decisions which impact their lives is a fundamental right. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that every child has the right to express their views on matters which affect them and for their views to be given due weight in accordance with their age, understanding and maturity. This is echoed in the Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales 2021, which also considers the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Chapter 3 of the Code highlights that central to the ALNET Act 2018 is the rights-based approach - listening to children, their parents and young people and taking their views into account.

The Inclusion Service is committed to working towards the key outcomes of the Corporate Plan with a focus on ensuring a truly inclusive educational system that recognises learners starting points, strengths and educational needs. In order to achieve this, engagement and participation of partners is vital.

What is participation?

Participation is involving children and young people, their families and any other partners in making decisions, planning and reviewing any actions which might impact them. It is a process by which we capture the views of those involved through listening to and learning about individuals and encouraging them to give their views, wishes and opinions, appropriately to their need and developmental stage, about what should happen. This may be in relation to a specific issue, a service they receive, or the development of a new service, provision or initiative.

Participation does not necessarily mean that those who have engaged receive or experience their desired outcome, but those involved should see that their views have been heard and considered. Any decisions made or outcomes will be a balance between the views, wishes and opinions of those involved, the risks, resources and what is possible.

The Inclusion Service makes decisions which impact individuals, groups of children and young people, as well as the services provided and the policies, procedures and practices which inform how we work. The Inclusion Service aims to actively seek the views, wishes and opinions of children and young people, their families and wider partners to evaluate and further develop practice, provision and service delivery.

Legislation and Policy

The Welsh Government is committed to ensuring that the UNCRC becomes a reality in Wales and this is at the heart of Welsh Government legislation including:

- The Children Act 2004¹ which states that when a local authority is making a decision relating to a child, it should as far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare: ascertain and give due consideration to the child's wishes and feelings in any decisions being taken.
- The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011² which places a duty on Welsh Ministers to have 'due regard' to children's rights when making decisions.
- The Children and Families' (Wales) Measure 2010³ which places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to promote and facilitate participation by children and young people in decisions of the Local Authority that affect them.
- The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014⁴ places a duty on Local Authorities to work in partnership with the person's wishes and feelings as far as is reasonable, practicable and in-line with the person's welfare and must have regard to children, young people and families participating as fully as possible in decisions that affect them and having the information and support to do this.
- The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015⁵ which outlines key ways of working, in order to achieve the 'well-being goals'. The participation of children and young people is at the heart of this legislation including involvement in identifying problems before they arise, hearing the views of the most vulnerable and involvement in developing and improving services.
- The ALNET Act (Wales) 2018⁶ and Additional learning Needs Code for Wales 2021⁷ outline the importance of a rights-based approach, with collaboration and integration being central. Those working with children and young people must have due regard to the views, wishes and feelings of a child and their parents or the young person and place an importance participating as fully as possible in decisions related to them.
- The anti-racist Wales Plan⁸ outlines a commitment to work with a wide range of communities to jointly shape goals and actions. It is fundamental that the lived experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people underpin the plan.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/2/contents>

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2010/1/contents>

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents>

⁵ <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2018/2/contents>

⁷ <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-06/220622-the-additional-learning-needs-code-for-wales-2021.pdf>

⁸ [An introduction to an Anti-racist Wales \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

Benefits of Participation

As well as being a legal right for children and young people and their families, participation has a positive impact on improving our service delivery. Wider perspectives can be captured which influence change and development to better meet need. Through capturing the views of those who use our service, ownership becomes shared and the positive impact increased.

The positive impacts include:

- People feel that they are valued and heard.
- There is an investment in the decisions which are made.
- Experience positive achievements.
- Improved relationships for all.
- Empowering children and young people, increasing confidence and self-esteem.

Wider benefits to service development and delivery include:

- Improved decision making – we improve our understanding of the views and needs of children and young people.
- Improved services – children, young people and their families can share what works and does not work to allow us to improve services.
- Improved use of resources – we can develop new approaches and services which are relevant to the current needs of children and young people.
- Improved practice – we are able to refine existing practice.

An inclusive education system is one where every child or young person, regardless of their abilities or differences, feels valued, supported, and empowered to succeed. By working collaboratively with schools, families, healthcare professionals, and other stakeholders, we aim to continue to develop a culture of inclusion and support within schools and settings in Monmouthshire, where every child is valued for who they are and what they can achieve.

Participation of Children and Young People

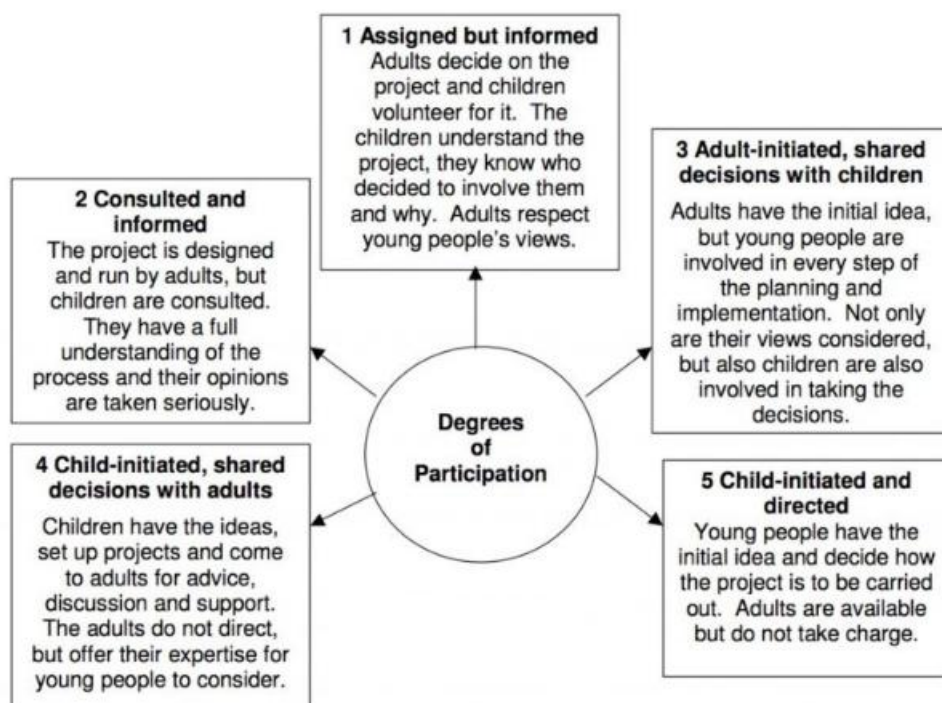
Participation will form part of the review and development of all aspects of the Inclusion Service, however will be completed in different ways according to the purpose of the participation and the needs of those engaging. Key to participation is empowering those who are sharing their views, wishes and feelings.

Careful consideration is taken to the approach taken when engaging with children and young people, following Lundy's Voice Model Checklist for Participation (2007)⁹, which focuses on space, voice, audience and influence.



⁹ https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/lundy_model_of_participation.pdf

Not all participation will happen in the same way. Engagement with children and young people will be adapted to the situation using Treseder's model of Degrees of Participation (1997)¹⁰.



No one degree of participation allows for more participation than the next. For each engagement, the degree of participation will be carefully considered to determine the most appropriate approach.

¹⁰ <https://360participation.com/models-of-participation/>

Degree	Explanation	Examples
Assigned but Informed	This is a description of an adult-chosen and led project where it is clear that children and young people can volunteer and be involved but that the direction and governance of the project is owned by the adults within the dynamic. The children and young people are clear that this is an adult-owned project, and they understand the requirements of their volunteering. It is important to stress that they also know that their views, thoughts and impressions will be listened to and respected.	Autistic Young People Panels have been developed to support the Monmouthshire in Schools and Setting Project. Young people have been supported to contribute to the project, share their lived experiences, including films and quotes to add to the training materials.
Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children	Although adults generate the initial ideas, the subsequent phases of planning and implementation actively involve children. At this level, children's views are considered and they take part in making decisions.	Uniform reviews in schools often begin with adults generating the ideas and children and young people being actively involved in the decision-making process.

Consulted and Informed	With a project or programme designed and run by adults there remains only consultation as a way of involving children. Being consulted requires comprehension of the proposals and an expectation that views expressed are taken seriously. Consultation differs from participation; it is based on asking, not involving.	Review of policies and processes are developed by adults and the concepts consulted on with children and young people to capture their views.
Child-initiated and directed	This stage represents a shift in the power balance; children have the original idea and determine what will happen, when, and how. Adults are available but do not control.	Young people within schools have established their own projects around period poverty, developing their own plans to present to school staff and determine ways forward.
Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults	At this stage it is the children who have the ideas, establish the project, and determine when to seek support, advice, and consultation, but not direction, from adults.	Charity Committees sit across schools with projects developed by children and young people and support provided by the adults around them.

Participation Standards

For participation to be impactful, purposeful and meaningful, there must be a genuine interest in the views and pinions of children and young people. They need a clear overview of their role within the participation and the impact it will have. The seven National Participation Standards in Wales (2016)¹¹ are used to support those who are working with children and young people, and to make sure that participation is developed appropriately, ensuring that children and young people are part of the design, delivery and evaluation of services.

Having a voice Having a choice		Children and Young People's National Participation Standards		"Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account." Article 12: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	
Mae hyn yn golygu:	Byddwn ni:	This means:	We will:		
- Mae gennych chi'n hawl i wybodaeth sy'n hawdd ei deall ac sy'n gadael i chi wneud penderfyniad gwybodus. - Mae gennych chi'n hawl i ddewis cymryd rhan a gweithio ar bethau sy'n bwysig i chi.	- Yn darparu gwybodaeth o safon dda, yn glir ac yn hawdd mynd ati. - Yn rhoi gwybodaeth i chi pwy sy'n mynd i wrando a gadael i chi wybod pa wahaniaeth gallai'ch cyfranogiad chi ei wneud.	1 Gwybodaeth Information	You have the right to information that is easy to understand and allows you to make an informed decision.	- 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.	
	Yn rhoi digon o gefnogaeth ac amser i chi ddewis a ydych chi eisiau cymryd rhan.	2 Chi biau'r dewis It's your choice	You have the right to choose to be involved and work on things that are important to you.	Give you enough support and time to choose if you want to get involved.	
Mae plant a phobl ifanc i gyd yn wahanol ac mae ganddyn nhw'r hawl i gael eu trin yn deg.	- Yn herio gwahaniaethu. - Yn cynnig amrediad o gyfleoedd a chefnogaeth i fodoni anghenion plant a phobl ifanc.	3 Dim gwahaniaethu No discrimination	Children and young people are all different and have the right to be treated fairly.	- Challenge discrimination. - Provide a range of opportunities and support to meet the needs of children and young people.	
- Mae gennych chi'n hawl i leisio barn. Mae'ch safbwyntiau chi'n bwysig a charit eu parchu. - Yn gwerthfawrogi beth sydd gennych chi i'w gynnig.	- Yn gwerando ar eich barn, eich profiadau a'ch syniadau ac yn eich cymryd chi o ddifn. - Yn gweithio gyda chi ar bethau rydych chi'n dweud eu bod nhw'n bwysig. - Yn gwerthfawrogi beth sydd gennych chi i'w gynnig.	4 Parch Respect	You have the right to have a say. Your opinions are important and will be respected.	- Listen to your views, experiences and ideas and take us seriously. - Work with you on things you say are important. - Value what you have to offer.	
- Mae gennych chi'n hawl i ddysgu a bod y gorau y gallwch chi fod. - Bydd gennych chi gyfleoedd i weithio gyda phobl eraill a gwneud gwahaniaeth. - Rydym ni eisiau i chi gymryd rhan mewn profiadau positif.	- Yn gweithio gyda chi mewn ffordd ddiogel, hwyli a phlesurus. - Yn manteisio i'r eithaf ar beth rydych chi'n ei wybod ac yn gwneud pethau sy'n mhelltrn eich fydder a'ch sgiliau chi.	5 Bod ar eich ennill You get something out of it	- 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.	- 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.	
Mae gennych chi'n hawl i wybod pa wahaniaethau rydych chi wedi eu gwneud a sut mae rhywun wedi gwerando ar eich syniadau chi.	- Bob amser yn sicrhau eich bod chi'n cael adborth o'f leu amser sydd wedi'ch gyfrnau. - Yn dweud wrthy'ch chi sut mae'ch syniadau wedi cael eu defnyddio a pham. - Yn dweud wrthy'ch chi beth sy'n digwydd nesaf.	6 Adborth Feedback	You have the right to know what differences you have made and how your ideas have been listened to.	- Always ensure you have feedback in an agreed time. - Tell you how your ideas have been used and why. - Tell you what happens next.	
Dylai' bobl sy'n gwneud penderfyniadau sy'n effeithio ar blant a phobl ifanc roi hawliau plant yng nghof pobeth maen nhw'n ei wneud.	- Yn gweithio gyda chi ac yn dysgu sut i wneud pethau'n well. - Yn gwneud yn siŵr bod eich barn yn gwneud gwahaniaeth i'r ffordd rydym ni'n gwneud cynlluniau a phenderfyniadau.	7 Gweithio'n well drosoch chi Working better for you	Those who make decisions that affect children and young people should put children's rights at the centre of everything they do.	- 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.	

The approach taken by the Inclusion Service will be underpinned by the seven National Participation Standards:

1. Information – Information is provided in an easy and accessible way allowing children and young people to make an informed decision.
2. Choice – There is a right for children and young people to choose to be involved and work on things which matter to them.
3. No discrimination – Children and young people are all different and have the right to be treated fairly, what they share will be listened to, valued and taken seriously.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/Bilingual-Participation-Standards-poster2016.pdf>

4. Respect – Children and young people have a right to share their views, experiences and opinions, these are important and will be respected.
5. You get something out of it – Children and young people have the right to learn and be the best they can be, having opportunities to work with others and make a difference. Participation is designed to be a positive experience.
6. Feedback – Children and young people have the right to know what differences they have made and how ideas have been listened to and used.
7. Working better – The rights of children and young people remain central to all of the work we do, therefore their views can shape the way we can do things better.

Methods of Participation

Different methods of participation will be used to capture the views, wishes and opinions of children and young people, their families and wider partners. There are resources available to support these engagement processes. Many of these approaches will link to person centred practice.

Approach	Explanation
Individual	Direct conversations with children, young people, families and other partners happen through service delivery. These can be focused on individual children or young people and the decisions which impact them personally which help inform and evaluate provision and support as a whole.
Consultation Events	Awareness raising and gaining feedback on a specific issue, change in provision or a document. This can provide an opportunity for a range of partners to share their views to develop a way forward and contribute towards action planning.
Formal Groups	A participation group allows the on-going exploration and engagement with the same group of people around a project area or service, capturing their views and opinions over a period of time.
Focus Groups	When evaluating or creating a project/service, a small group of partners can be brought together capture views. This also creates an opportunity for co-production.

Consultation and feedback Forms	Accessible forms can be used to capture valuable information about a specific area of the service, its impact and ways forward.
------------------------------------	---

There are times when verbal input to these approaches is not possible linked to self-esteem and confidence or an identified additional learning need. On these occasions, every effort will be made to capture the views, wishes and opinions of those individuals. Use of Person-Centred Practice in Education: a guide for early years, schools and colleges in Wales¹² will be used to support our approaches, alongside the associated person-centred thinking tools¹³.

- When engaging in one of the methods of participation, those capturing the views will have planned accordingly, considering:
- Those who are engaging in the participation activity – nature, inclusive, impact.
- Information sharing – key information having been shared with the participants.
- The outcomes intended - whether these have been communicated to those involved.
- Approaches to meet need and any adjustments required.
- Resources required – time, space, equipment.

Feedback will be provided to those partners involved in participation, ensuring they have information on the outcomes of decisions. The service will also evaluate key elements of participation with those involved, as well as evaluating the impact participation has on shaping service development.

Key areas of Participation

- All service areas will have methods and approaches to capture feedback outlining the views of children and young people and their families to evaluate their service on at least an annual basis.
- The development of new projects and initiatives will include the use of focus groups to capture the views of partners.
- All significant new policies and changes in provision will be consulted on with groups of children and young people and families.
- Data from participation will be analysed and shared with the Senior Inclusion Officers supporting the development of specific Action Plans.

¹² <https://www.gov.wales/person-centred-practice-education>

¹³ <http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/person-centred-practice/person-centred-thinking-tools/>