

## **Summary of Notes from Youth Worker Workshop**

Lizzie's Group

### **Summary notes on participation:**

3 stages: Voice, Platform, Action

Meaningful evaluation of the process

Participation is on a continuum: engagement at one end – leadership at the other

On this continuum, young people change as they go on the journey – as a result services need to change with them. Participation is a process.

View on engagement: Engagement is just a step through the door. Participation is about meaningful actions to come out the process. Engagement is an individual activity.

Participation and the young person's perspective: driven by young people and young people led. Participation happens from the perspective of the young person. There has to be an incentive for people to get involved.

Role of the youth worker in participation: Young people being listened to. Youth workers and the service have to have a track record – so that young people can see the service. Participation is encouraged through: Friendly staff and a good facilitator, with set opening times of the centre. Skilled participation: keeps young people safe while encouraging self development. Good facilitators are those who care about young people, are proactive and care about young people's participation.

Participation depends on the relationship between the youth worker and the young person, depends on how much effort each is inclined to put in.

Importance of variety: participation is encouraged by variety – variety of activities and media. Balance of fun and education. Friendly environments, providing what young people want.

Design of participation process: Honesty through transparency. The participatory process needs to be open and promote an honest dialogue with young people.

### **Safeguarding**

Consent takes place off-line: form-filling just part of the consent process. Much of consent gathering depends on trust and face to face contact.

Consent is gathered between different parties, depending on the context. If the activities are to take place in school time or on school property, then engagement with the school is required. The relationships with the schools are built in different ways and result in different types of consent being necessary.

Parental involvement depends on the relationship to be built with the young person. Consent from parents depends on the age of the child. How do you know the consent is

really from the parent? Youth worker makes this decision based on the relationship with the young person.

Constraints for youth workers to engage on-line: time poor, technology knowledge poor, complexity of safeguarding issues.

Structure of safeguarding rules: different safeguarding rules apply for different activities. In the promotion of activities, it depends who you are promoting to and what you are promoting. So somewhere there needs to be basic rules that underpin all forms of engagement. The safeguarding rules related to the principles of youth work are different from the technology rules.

Young people coming from a different technological perspective, making agreement of safeguarding rules difficult.

Need a central knowledge base, rather than acquiring local knowledge.

The group raised a question as to how well equipped are young people to assess and respond to privacy risks? The group suggested: a game to demonstrate the message of the safeguarding rules.

Safeguarding rules are as much about letting young people know what they are getting in to, as they are about telling them what they can and can't do.

In order to make safeguarding young people led: need to appoint roles of safeguarding responsibility to young people and provide training in IT skills for young people.

Elahe's Group

**Participation:** Physical involvement of young people in services or activities. Participation gives young people a voice and a platform to be heard and listened to. Participation is continued and followed through the whole process. It is a two-way process, getting young people actively involved.

Participation means being involved and engaged within any aspect of the youth project and taking part in sessions and activities and having a say in what they would like within the project. Young people accessing information through the internet and engaging with different sites.

Participation has a number of perspectives: For young people to be engaged in employment, training or education and for youth workers to remain in contact with young people for engagement to happen. Participation enables young people to take part in a service, changing services to meet their needs and following through to make sure that their need is carried out/enabled. Young person should be active in all elements: consultation, development, delivery and client.

**Engagement:** Not effectively the same as participation. Level of commitment within the process may assign whether it is participation or engagement. Engagement is a one-off activity, where as participation long term. Young people sometimes engage but do not progress to participation. You could participate in any activity but not necessarily engage. You might participate in an activity but not engage with the youth programme. You can engage but not take part. You can try to engage people but it is up to them as to whether they participate.

**Good participation** is complex because of the informal nature of youth work. Good participation is young person led. It may be seen as being linked to outcomes. Each young person is on a different journey so the outcomes should be set by each young person. An alternative view is that all participation is good and helps City targets.

For some good participation is about young people understanding their achievements, no matter how big or small. Good participation is not always tangible. Good participation can come from input of all shapes and sizes. Good participation varies on the project or activity or service.

**Stakeholders:** Wide range of people on a sliding scale: young people, parents, youth workers, partner agencies. The level of involvement by each stakeholder is driven by circumstance and information sharing agreements in place.

**Consent and information sharing:** The complexity of information sharing varies: Stakeholders engage in many ways ranging from basic consent forms through to sharing information. Primarily young people and parents are the main stakeholders and youth workers share with other agencies on a "need to know basis" and must have permission. Under 18s must have their parents complete their consent forms, over 18s can complete

themselves. Everyone linked to youth work is involved. Also included can be partners and organisations. The stakeholders involved depend on the activity but the City Council is the main organisation. Peers are another stakeholder group.

**The participation implications of delivering a service on-line:** On-line participation is about getting the message out, connecting with new young people, opportunities to get feedback, planning and prep. Etc. it's also about encouraging (but in what format?) On-line participation needs safety controls, lock downs and clear guidelines for youth workers and young people. On-line participation needs good computer systems, funding (youth worker time, new systems etc.), training, up to date knowledge of technologies, text messaging and secure servers. Need to use an on-line platform that young people are already familiar with, discussions, events and information – encourage discussions that may lead to more honest dialogue.

Interactive systems: games, voting systems, polls and prize draw are all useful ways to engage young people on-line. Awareness that on-line it is difficult to restrict access and prevent other parties (e.g. advertising) from contacting or promoting to young people.

### **Safeguarding**

The scenario was a positive activities wheel. The conclusion from the group was they would not put the Journey of Learning on-line. The consensus was that this form of on-line engagement would not get good engagement – on-line the wrong sort of tool and it would be possible to mis-represent young people. On-line tools are not a means of replacing face to face engagement but a means of supporting face to face engagement. The information in the positive activities wheel is too sensitive and too personal. It was also noted that there is no way of checking the accuracy.

*Leads to the question: should safeguarding rules be also about what goes on-line, rules for authenticity and honest participation?*

Chris and Michael's Group

**Participation:** Participation is the process of taking part in activities provided by the youth workers where young people are involved in the services that are provided. As part of participation the young people are engaged in the service, where participation is more than just turning up. Young people participate in activities that they want to.

**Engagement:** getting something from the service. Engagement is taking things further, establishing a relationship with youth workers and other young people. Participation is just turning up, engagement is turning up and taking part. Engagement happens once you have built up a trust relationship (*do you have to have trust to participate?*). Engagement is more meaningful than participation i.e. consultation.

**Good participation:** Good participation was described with a number of individual words: laughter, sharing, discussing, support and advice. Good participation is built through trust relationships, regular contact, choice and variety and is a worthwhile experience for young people. Good participation encompasses: turning up, engaging and helping themselves with facilitation.

Stakeholders: young people, peers, youth workers, volunteers (which might be parents) other agencies. Youth providers and connexions. Schools might be involved.

Social Networking (SNS) is an important platform for on-line participation. Role of SNS for young people:

Find out what's on when and where

Photos from events that they've been at

Find new friends from events

Share information and send to our friends to see if they'll participate

Videos/dance competition

Consultations

Get information about other events in the area (links to other events)

Contribute ideas (ownership)

Easy access

Private message/chat facility

**Safeguarding:**

The context for this group was the promotion of mobile youth villages.

In this context the following on-line information would need to be available:

Event Info

Complaints procedure

Feedback and input on activities

Different media: podcasts, video, photos, posters. Much of the content is controlled by young people.

### **Safeguarding issues**

Problems related to content: consent and type of content.

Problem with creating rules: different perspectives on privacy and different perspective on risks.

Little control that a youth worker can have: moderation would have to be instant, advertising a mobile youth village on-line potentially opens up access too wide.

### **Implications of Safeguarding issues on the process for design of safeguarding policies and technologies**

On-line rules have to be negotiated with young people, young people have to know what they are signing up for and the consequences.

Young people do not read privacy statements – tick boxes are not a way to communicate with young people. Therefore, on-line design has to be interactive: perhaps using audio and questions, as well as communication of knowledge.

Consideration also needs to be given to what constitutes membership of an on-line community related to a youth team.

An on-line platform for engagement will use various sites and so the rules can't be site specific.

A site needs to contain photos and basic information about youth workers in order to aide off-line verification of youth workers.

Confidential contact details for youth workers and external organisations

Youth led: form of youth council to help moderate and should be involved from the beginning.

### **Safeguarding rules**

*Youth perspective:* using various sites. Would like to have a means of verifying youth workers – photos are a way of identifying people in real life. No parents allowed.

*Parental perspective:* young people need protecting from off-line threats and on-line advertising of events is a possible source of information for attackers. Parents would like off-line consent. Young people not mature enough to come with facebook content.

*Youth worker:* how do you respond to a young person asking to “friend” you? Does on-line presence extend your working hours?

*All perspectives:* Code of conduct important. Needs to be young person led

Misc comments:

Youth worker needs IT knowledge – mainly from a confidence perspective

Big commitment, need to kept it up

Need to provide good advice and discussions.