

Current Participation Strategy

What is participation?

We believe participation is the active involvement of children and young people in experiences, opportunities and decisions that affect their lives and their ability to fulfil their potential. In summary, participation includes:

				
Having the opportunity to be involved in decision making	Having a say in services that affect you	Being able to influence and shape outcomes	Being listened to and knowing what you say will be taken seriously	Knowing what difference your views and ideas have made

Why should young people participate?

For children and young people there are very clear laws which say they should have a right to participate. Article 12 of The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says every young person has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them and to have those views considered and taken seriously. The participation of young people is also enshrined in law in section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014.

In addition to the law dictating that young people should be able to participate, there are also a number of benefits to young people and the organisation as a result of young people's participation.

Benefits for young people	Benefits for the organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling respected and listened to • Building their self-confidence and self-esteem • Playing an active role in their community • Gaining new skills such as problem solving, decision making, negotiation, listening and communication • Improving services to meet their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, creating and shaping better quality services that meet the needs of young people • Improving the quality of life for young people by services recognising, understanding and responding to their needs • Improving decision making • Making practice more inclusive

Barriers to participation

Despite the importance of participation, there can be a number of barriers which prevent meaningful participation. For example:

- Young people are unaware of their right to participate
- Staff are not aware of young people's right to participate
- There are not structures in place to respond to young people's ideas
- Young people do not have all the information they need to participate
- Decisions made through the participation process do not come to fruition

In order to avoid these barriers and realise the benefits, a considered approach to participation must be followed.

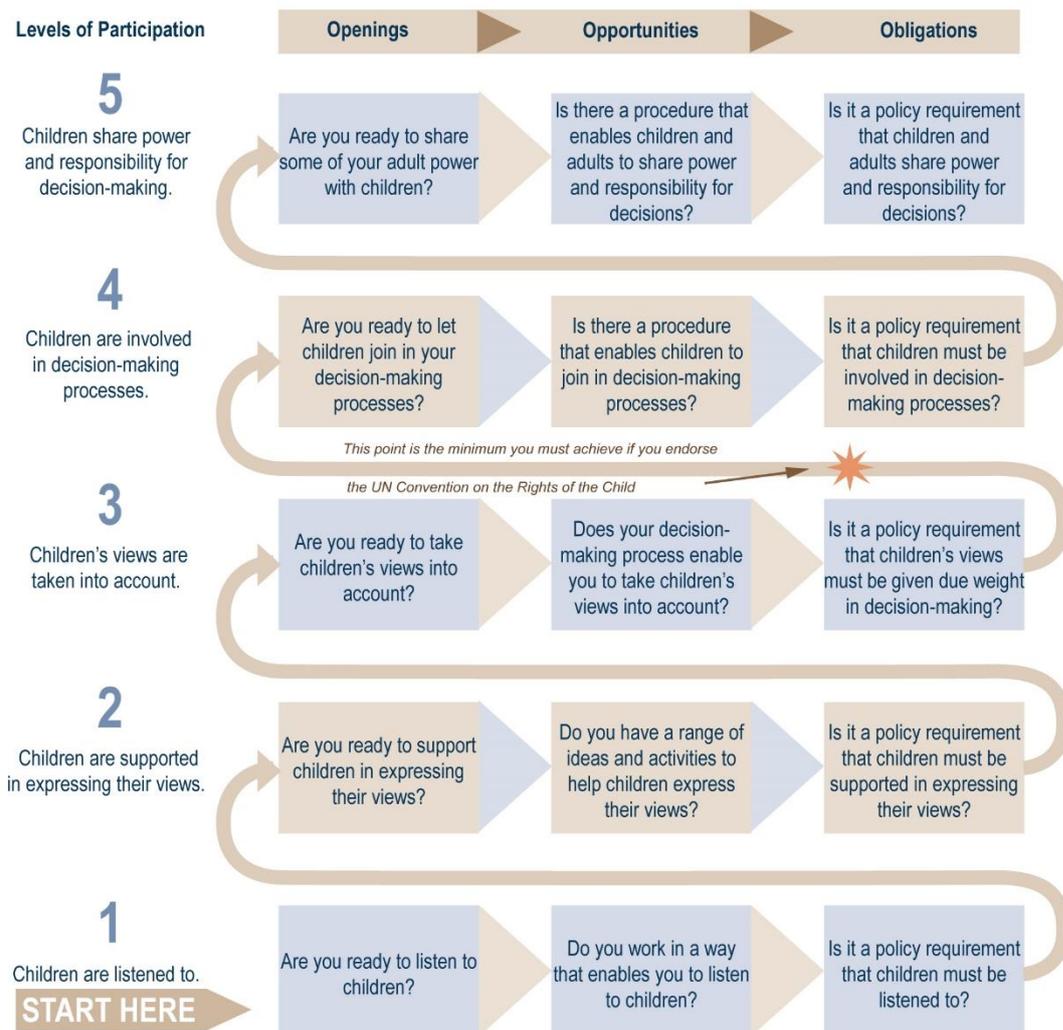
Rutland’s model of participation.

Rutland actively implement Shier’s (2001) model of participation. In which from the lowest level – children are listened to – to the highest – children share power and responsibility for decision making – Shier frames questions for adults to consider when planning or evaluating participatory projects around ‘openings’, ‘opportunities’ and ‘obligations’.

Harry Shier designed his model (2001) to be an additional contribution to active participation not as a replacement for the work that had come before, particularly the seminal work of Arnstein and Hart. His *Pathways to Participation*, shown below, demonstrates the stages of development that decision-making processes take when working with children; it is perfectly possible to substitute ‘youth’ or ‘citizen’ for ‘child’ and find the process still applicable to wider audiences.

Shier identifies five levels of participation (2001: 110):

- Children are listened to.
- Children are supported in expressing their views.
- Children’s views are taken into account.
- Children are involved in decision-making processes.
- Children share power and responsibility for decision-making.



Ensuring true participation

To ensure that all children and young people experience true participation our non-negotiables in line with signs of safety is that our actions are at 3 and above and will be evidenced via our participation action plan.

Different focuses of participation

Just as people can participate in lots of different ways, participation can have different focuses. For example, participation might be individual, operational or strategic as summarised in the table below. We are committed to ensuring that children and young people are involved at all three levels.

	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decisions relate directly to the participants' own lives• Decisions are made about day to day activities• Outcomes primarily impact the individual
	Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decisions relate to planning, delivery and evaluation• The activity aims to improve the quality of service provision• Outcomes affect the individual and other service users
	Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decisions relate to long term planning• The activity includes meaningful roles in priority setting, monitoring and designing services• Outcomes influence policy and practice

Ensuring young people can participate

We will ensure that young people have plenty of opportunities to participate and have made a number of commitments to support young people's involvement. Our action plan for participation highlights the openings, opportunities and obligations within Rutland for our children and young people.

Our commitment in Rutland is to be at level 3 and above and therefore our action plan reflects this standard.

Level	Openings	Opportunities	Obligations
Level 3- Children's views are taken into account	We will ensure that children and young people's voices are heard and influence our policy, strategy and decision making within children's services.	<p>Embed Signs of Safety approach to enable more child focussed work.</p> <p>Ensure all young people are invited to meetings and are invited to contribute</p> <p>Young people are given different ways to share their views.</p> <p>All CLA are automatically members of Rutland children in care council.</p>	<p>Ensure all staff are trained and understand participation.</p> <p>Participation champions across the service to embed participation across the teams.</p> <p>Ensure young people are given training opportunities to enable engagement with participation.</p> <p>Ensure young people know their rights and opportunities to be involved.</p> <p>Breakdown barriers for all young people are given the opportunities to be involved in their own way.</p>
Level 4- Young people are involved in decision making	We will ensure that young people are given and understand information in a way that helps facilitate them making decisions and the impact of that.	<p>Participation groups, young advisors and youth services.</p> <p>Independent Advocacy</p> <p>Be actively involved in recruitment of staff.</p> <p>Be involved in Education, Health and Care Plan</p> <p>CLA Reviews, PEP's and CP conferences</p>	<p>Young people are actively involved in decision making from the outset. For example design and implementation of a recruitment campaign</p> <p>Statutory guidance</p> <p>Ensure young people know their rights and opportunities to be involved.</p> <p>Breakdown barriers for all young people are given the opportunities to be involved in their own way.</p>
Level 5- children share power and responsibility for decision making.	We will ensure that where appropriate children and young people are given information that they	Enabling children and young people to chair their own meetings- including Child protection conferences,	<p>Statutory duty to involve young people.</p> <p>Young people are the focus of practice.</p>

	<p>are clearly able to understand in order to make decisions for themselves</p>	<p>Core Groups, PEP's and CLA reviews.</p> <p>Big conversation</p> <p>Young people design and lead recruitment processes and panels</p> <p>Young advisors as consultants commissioning of services</p>	<p>Ensure young people know their rights and opportunities to be involved.</p> <p>Breakdown barriers for all young people are given the opportunities to be involved in their own way.</p>
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How we will review the impact

- Evidence through audit. We will review and analyse audit findings and look for the impact of participation in all work.
- Participation action plan reviewed quarterly to ensure progress. Support practitioners to feel confident to enable participation and to evidence this in the work we carry out.
- Feedback from young people, from audit and case reviews but through young advisors critical analysis of the services they receive and how participation is evident.