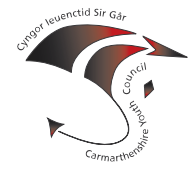


Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2015-2018

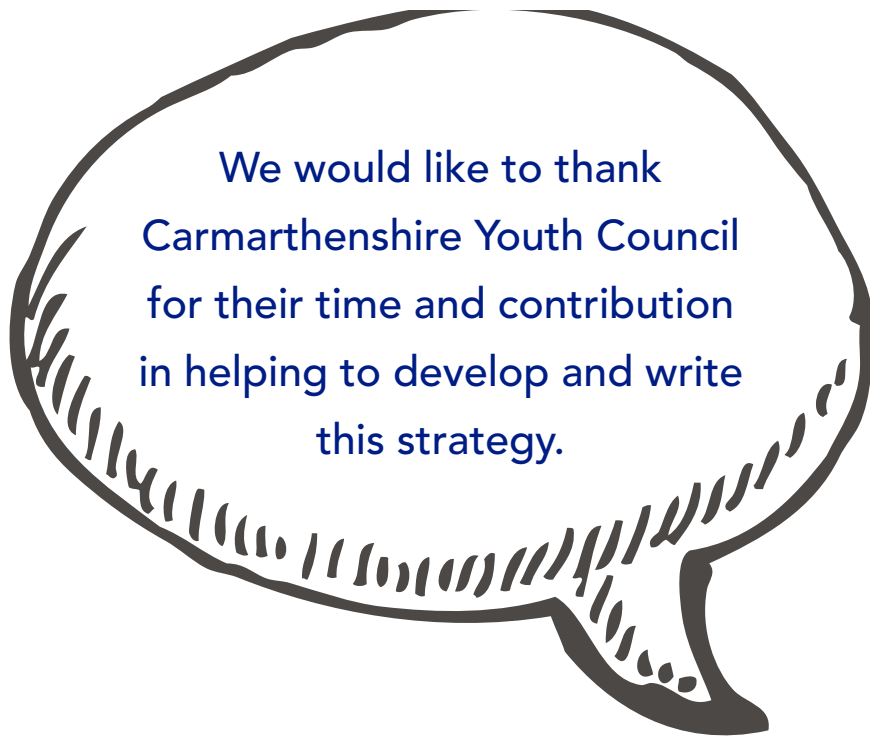
Effective engagement
in Local Authority
decision making



YOU'VE GOT A CHOICE, SO USE YOUR VOICE!



YOUR COUNCIL doitonline
www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales



We would like to thank
Carmarthenshire Youth Council
for their time and contribution
in helping to develop and write
this strategy.

**If you require this information in large print,
Braille or on audiotape, please telephone
01267 24567**

100% recycled

This publication is printed
on 100% recycled paper



**recycle
ailgylchu**

Please recycle this publication
Cofiwch ailgylchu'r cyhoeddiad yma

FOREWORD



We want to embed a culture of participation across the County Council, by positively engaging with children and young people and ensuring that children and young people know how to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives and futures.

We will provide and develop opportunities and initiatives that truly engage children and young people in decision making. Our success depends on the meaningful involvement of children and young people. This means listening to their opinions, concerns and views in the design and delivery of our services that they use, to ensure that we meet their needs and improve the way we work.

We are committed to ensuring that children and young people are at the centre of all that we do. Through their long-term involvement we hope that children and young people are at the heart of planning and shaping our services. If we do not meet this commitment then please let us know so that we can put it right.

OUR VISION

Over the next three years we aim to embed a culture of participation across the Council, that gives all children and young people a voice, and ensures that their opinions can influence decisions that affect them and their daily lives.



WHAT WE MEAN BY PARTICIPATION

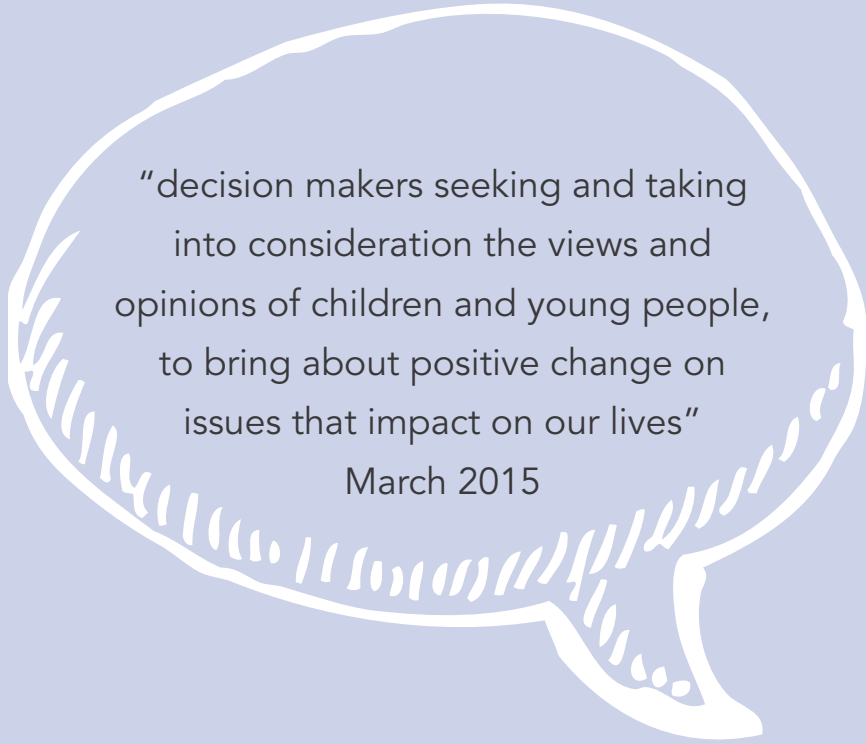
Involvement in decisions that affect their lives is a fundamental right for all children and young people; The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child or UNCRC says that children and young people

*“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”
(Article 12 of the UNCRC)*

Therefore, participation is about giving children and young people the opportunity to have their voices heard and to support them to make decisions for themselves.

We are committed to driving forward Article 12 to make sure that all children and young people in Carmarthenshire have opportunities to contribute to and have their voices heard.

CARMARTHENSHIRE YOUTH COUNCIL SAY THAT PARTICIPATION MEANS...



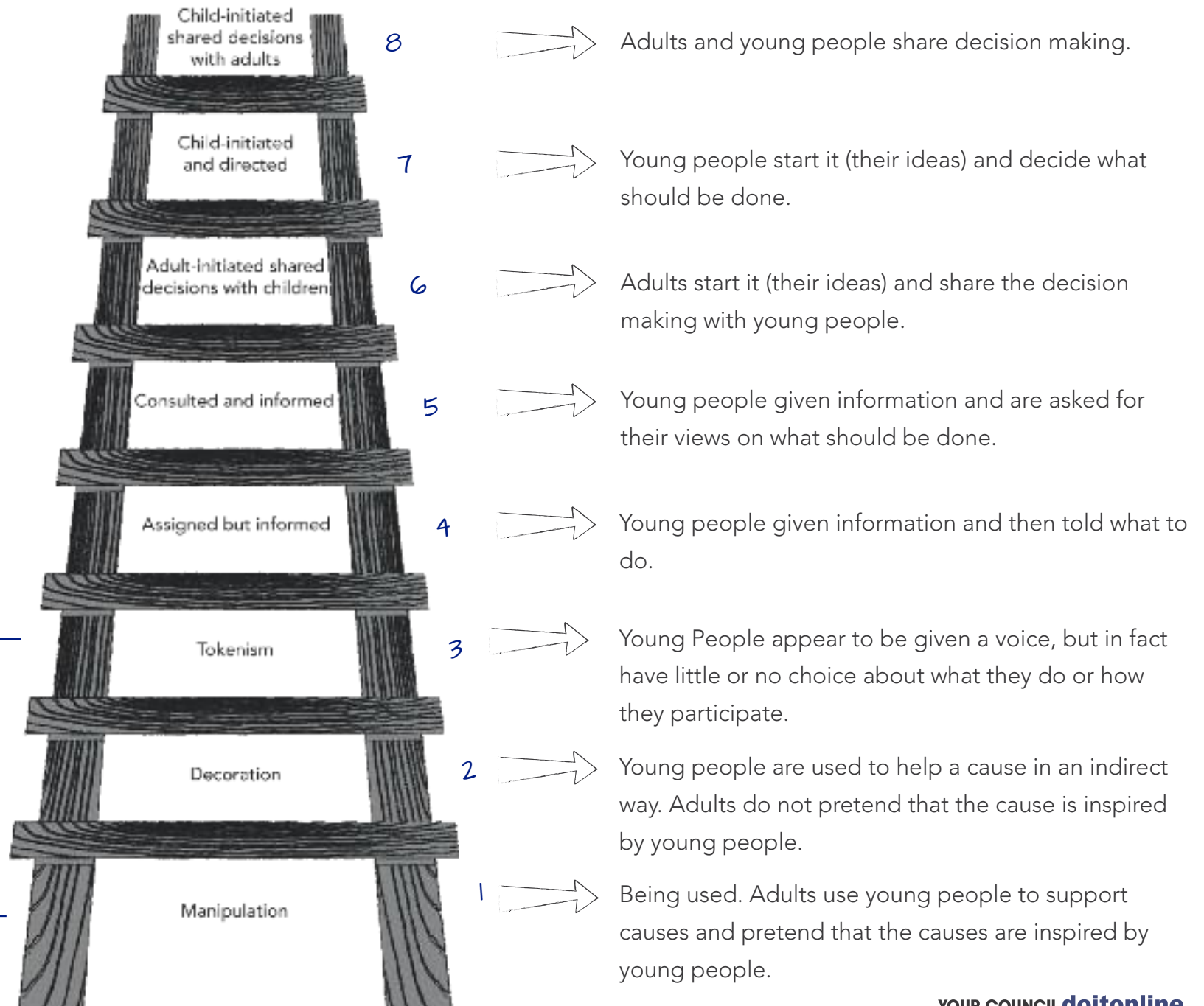
“decision makers seeking and taking into consideration the views and opinions of children and young people, to bring about positive change on issues that impact on our lives”

March 2015

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

The ladder of participation is an idea developed by Roger Hart (1992) that identifies eight levels of children and young people's participation. It is designed to demonstrate the degrees to which children and young people can be involved in organisations, with the bottom three levels seen as 'Non- Participation'.

Non- Participation



WHY HAVE A STRATEGY?

This strategy helps young people and decision makers understand the importance of meaningful participation and what we can achieve.

Building on good work already happening, this Strategy and the supporting Action Plan sets out our commitment and priorities for engaging children and young people in our decision making processes.

We must involve children and young people in order to understand their needs otherwise it is impossible to create and deliver effective services that meet their needs.



PARTICIPATION:

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Participation has the potential to;

- Give children and young people a role within an organisation or service where our opinions are taken seriously, valued and listened to and we feel respected.
- Make changes for us and other young people by challenging and holding decision makers to account.
- Develop and improve our skills and knowledge, while also having the chance to gain accreditations and awards.
- Increase our confidence, self esteem and aspirations that in turn creates a better quality of life.
- Play an active part in our communities and understand how we can make a difference by understanding systems and processes.
- Giving us a sense of pride in our own achievements.



FOR ORGANISATIONS AND SERVICES

Encouraging and supporting participation can;

- Plan, create and shape better quality services that meet the needs of children and young people.
- Help make sure that money is spent in a better and more efficient way.
- Improve attendance, attainment and behaviour.
- Help improve the quality of life for children and young people by services recognising, understanding and responding to their needs.
- Bring new perspectives and influence outcomes to improve organisations and services



Meaningful and sustainable engagement of children young people requires commitment from children and young people, the whole organisation and the community.

FOR THE COMMUNITY

Encouraging and supporting young people to participate in decision making can;

- Promote active citizenship and ownership so children and young people feel valued and respected.
- Improve the quality of life for children and young people in their community.
- Make better use of resources
- Promote working with others and working together more effectively
- Help dispel negative stereotypes of young people
- Adult decision makers know what young people want and need.



7 NATIONAL PARTICIPATION STANDARDS

In Wales there are 7 National Standards that organisations working with children and young people should aim to meet so that children and young people have a good experience of participation. (see appendices for poster)

The Seven National Participation Standards are;



INFORMATION -

which is easy for children and young people to understand

IT'S YOUR CHOICE -

enough information and time to make an informed choice

NO DISCRIMINATION -

every child and young person has the same chance to participate.

RESPECT -

Your opinion will be taken seriously

YOU GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT -

You will enjoy the experience

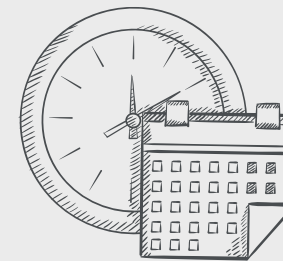
FEEDBACK -

You will find out what difference your opinion has made

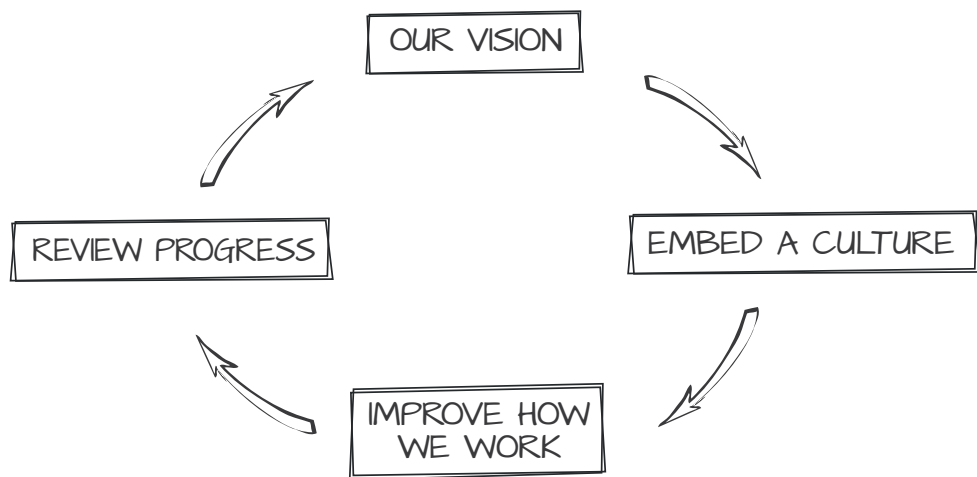
IMPROVING HOW WE WORK -

Adults will ask you how we can do our work better.

OUR PRIORITIES



1. To be a County Council that has embedded a culture of participation that positively engages with listens to and takes into account what children and young people say.
2. To have children and young people involved in shaping current County Council work (when there is the proposal of a new policy and any review of, or change to, an existing policy, strategy and service delivery that may impact on the lives of children and young people in Carmarthenshire)
3. To generate a culture of participation that truly respects, protects, values and supports children and young people in Carmarthenshire.
4. To have greater awareness of children's and young people's needs and providing services that are meeting their needs appropriately.
5. To enable children and young people to voice issues important to them through recognised representative groups on local, regional and national decision making.
6. To make sure that children and young people have different ways to get their views and opinions heard to influence decision making processes that affect them.
7. Ensure pupils have meaningful opportunities to influence their school work, education and school life.
8. To raise awareness and promote meaningful participation and Children's Rights
9. To make sure that Carmarthenshire County Council Staff have the ability to communicate and work positively with children and young people to ensure more efficient, better quality and more accessible services.
10. Ensure children and young people are aware of how to give comments, suggestions and complaints about the services they use.



BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Our **VISION** - that highlights how important listening to children and young people is to us.
- **EMBED A CULTURE** - that truly supports and values the participation of children and young people
- **IMPROVE HOW WE WORK** - by improving our ways of engaging and working with children and young people to support their participation individually and as a group to bring about positive change
- **REVIEW PROGRESS** - evaluate the impact of children and young people's participation on the decisions we make and the outcomes for children and young people

HOW WILL WE KNOW WHAT'S CHANGED?

- We will closely monitor our Action Plan throughout the year to ensure we are on track
- We will produce an Annual Report that will report on our progress with our Action Plan, updated it if needed, and report on the activity we have undertaken and what difference it has made
- Our progress will be monitored by the Welsh Government (next scheduled for 2016) and they will review whether we are doing well or not

Having a Voice – Having a Choice

Do we meet your standards?*

*'We' means anyone asking children and young people to participate. 'You' have a right to expect these standards.

"Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing any action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice"



INFORMATION



This means:

- Information that is easy to understand for everyone
- Adults working with you who know what is going on and are up front and clear.

We will:

- Ensure everyone has enough information to get properly involved
- Let you know what difference you being involved will make
- Inform you about who is going to listen and make changes.

This means:

- You choose if you want to get involved or not
- You choose to work on things that are important to you
- You choose what you do and how you do it.

We will:

- Give you enough information and time to decide if this is something you want to do.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE



NO DISCRIMINATION



This means:

- Children and young people are all different but you all have the same right to have a say about the things that matter to you.
- We want everyone to feel welcome and be able to get involved if they want to be.

We will:

- challenge any discrimination
- get in touch with children and young people in lots of different situations
- get you involved in things you want to do.

This means:

- Everyone has a chance to have a say, your opinions are important and we will respect them.

We will:

- listen to your ideas, views and experiences
- take you seriously and treat you fairly
- work with you to do something about the things you tell us are important
- work with you to help change things for the better.

RESPECT



YOU GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT



This means:

- We want you to enjoy and benefit from taking part
- We know that you have other things to do in your lives as well!
- Making sure that participating is a positive not a negative experience.

We will:

- work in safe, fun, and enjoyable ways
- make the most of what you know
- do positive things that build your confidence
- meet in friendly places that are easy for all young people to use
- value and respect what you have to offer.

This means:

- It's really important that you know what difference you have made and how your ideas have been used.

We will:

- keep you up to date with what is happening
- give feedback as soon as possible and in ways that are easy to understand for everyone.

FEEDBACK



IMPROVING HOW WE WORK



This means:

- We want to learn and get better at the way we work with you.

We will:

- look at the way we work with you and how to improve it

- ask you what has gone well and what needs to change
- make sure your views make a difference to the way we make plans and decisions.

