



Youth Advisory Processes at Youthline

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IS TRIGGERED WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE FULLY PARTICIPATE

This principle acknowledges the importance of providing opportunities for young people to increase their control of what happens to them and around them, through participation and engagement

WHY YOUTH PARTICIPATION?

The Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa recognises that participation is an important factor in healthy youth development. It is therefore a priority for communities to facilitate *meaningful* youth participation. This involves enabling young people to make a real difference by creating opportunities for decision-making that encourage young people to feel connected and play a valued and authoritative role in this process (Oliver, Collins, Burns and Nicholas, 2006).

Meaningful participation can be promoted in many areas of a young person's life, including social, political and educational contexts. It can also be nurtured within the family, establishing the young person as a valued and respected member of the family/whanau. All of these environments afford important opportunities for young people to develop new skills and explore their opinions. At Youthline, young people are encouraged to get involved in a wide variety of activities, events and developmental programmes. Engaging through participation creates quality relationships and fosters connections. The strengths-based approach Youthline adopts enables the young person to enhance protective factors in their lives and build resilience, while understanding and managing risks.

FUNDAMENTALS OF PARTICIPATION

- Ensure that young people are valued by acknowledging their importance to our communities and affirm their contribution through reciprocal exchange (not necessarily money - although it could be appropriate at times).
- Respect young people and their views – they will sense tokenism or exploitation. Give them the time they need and deserve.
- Understand that the views and experiences of a small group of young people do not usually represent those of all young people.
- Provide relevant training for the task and clearly identify development opportunities and pathways. Often young people need to be mentored and their skills developed in order to participate fully.
- Accommodating transport needs and providing food at meetings is essential for young people to participate.
- Take care with scheduling. Young people may have trouble negotiating time off with their workplace or school. Sometimes communicating directly with work, school and parents/guardians will increase participation.
- Having several youth members will increase their individual participation and enrich their experience and contributions.
- Give them tasks that are achievable and meaningful.

BENEFITS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The encouragement and facilitation of youth participation benefits the personal growth and development of young people. Participation can add value to many aspects of a young person's life (e.g. school, community, wider society).

Including youth in participation activities can have many positive outcomes.

Pragmatic – Projects and organisations involved in youth work need young people to participate to ensure their work remains relevant and appropriate and may enable access to new youth networks.

Educational – Young people benefit through participation from taking on leadership roles and developing their skills and capabilities.

Human Rights – Young people have the right to be involved in decisions that affect them. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 12 and 13)

Democratic – Truly democratic societies can only be developed through full and meaningful participation of all members of society. The participation of young people creates a “broader base of citizen involvement... and more inclusive communities” (Ministry of Youth Development, 2009).

The latter two points particularly emphasise Principle 1 of the YDSA: *‘Youth development is shaped by the bigger picture.’* Young people's lives are directly influenced and shaped by their values and belief systems. It is the fundamental right of young people to be actively involved in the ‘big picture’ as they perceive this and meaningful participation enables this to happen.

Meaningful youth participation strengthens a young person's:

- Sense of contributing something of value to society.
- Feelings of connectedness to others and to society.
- Belief that they have choices about their future.
- Positive feelings and being comfortable with their own identity.

Meaningful participation can also:

- Provide opportunities to enhance protective factors which will foster resiliency (Oliver et al, 2006).
- Bring fresh perspectives to the challenges young people face.
- Create new ideas and angles which genuinely represent the perspectives of young people.
- Allow young people to meet other young people.
- Create new opportunities and skills for young people to develop themselves further.
- Make young people more likely to accept the programme's services and message when they are central to the processes involved.
- Increase self-esteem and confidence, motivation to pursue new goals and provide opportunities for personal advancement, employment and educational opportunities.

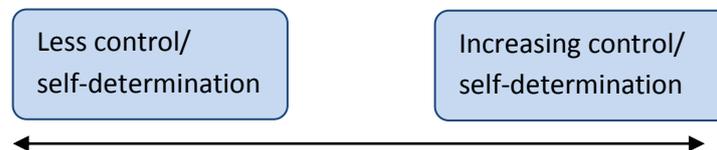
YDSA: PRINCIPLE 2

“Healthy youth development depends on young people having positive connections with others in society”

Positive connections between young people and the wider community should be encouraged, fostered and harnessed to inform practice within organisations.

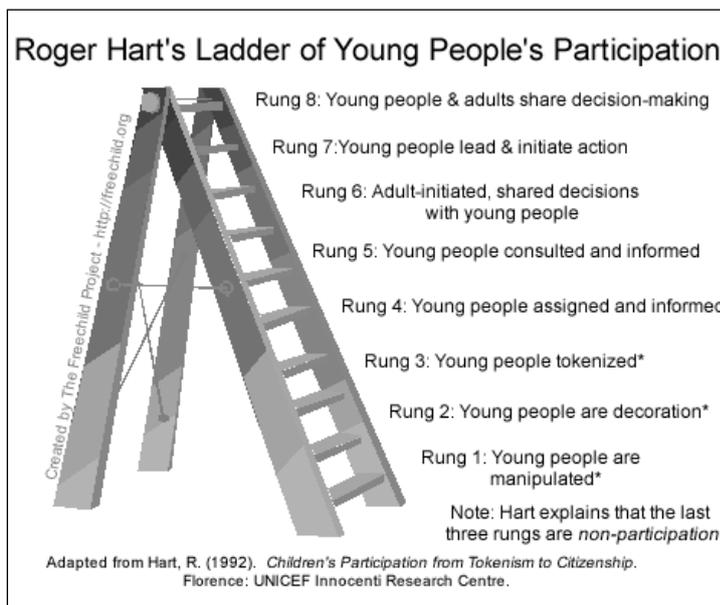
MODELS OF PARTICIPATION

A range of models have been proposed to understand how participation and empowerment occur. Most are expressed as a continuum:



Empowerment

For young people, the most well-known model of participation was developed by Hart (1992). Other similar models include Westhorp (1987), Sheir (2001) and Rocha (1997).



Youthline strives to achieve the highest levels of youth participation (the top rungs of Hart's ladder). We aim to include participatory processes in any research we complete.

Youthline is committed to providing young people with roles, responsibilities and authority within the decision making processes in all aspects of the organisation so that full integration of participation is achieved.

Principles to guide youth participation (UN, 1999)

1. Definition of benefits to Youth
2. Democracy
3. Development of youth
4. Education
5. Enabling environment
6. Enjoyment
7. Informed Choice
8. Real Power

BARRIERS TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Common challenges to meaningful youth participation include (Ministry of Youth Development, 2009):

- Failing to recognize youth as a distinct developmental period.
- Defining youth as a homogenous group.
- Differences in power between adults and youth that prevent quality partnerships.
- Little attention given in academic literature to evidence supporting the inclusion of youth.
- Limited organisational opportunities for young people to participate with existing avenues which are often not designed for youth.
- Not knowing how to involve or discuss issues with young people.
- A widespread and 'false' belief that young people are incapable of contributing to public debate.
- Interpretation and co-option of young people's 'voice'.
- Complicated and unnecessary processes required in order to include youth in adult activities.
- Underestimating the time and preparation needed before young people can be fully included.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Each of the above barriers represents a threat to healthy youth development and can be counteracted with a few simple and careful approaches by organisations and facilitators:

- Acknowledge that young people might be new to the environment in which they are participating and that flexibility and patience is needed to allow them to learn.
- Ensure participating young people know that their ideas are heard and valued through affirmation and acknowledgment.
- Create a guide for new participants to take home and review including how to achieve set tasks in order to complete the job properly and safely, technical terms, acronyms, and jargon of the group/workplace/organisation.
- Help young people with career-planning and identifying opportunities for advancement in the workplace/organisation.
- Create challenging work with attainable goals and measurable results.
- Help to ensure good communication between all members of the group, especially among the youth in the group. This might be facilitated through sharing, communication and trust building exercises.
- Ensure all young people who participate are aware of appropriate communication methods, channels, and tools for addressing problems, obstacles, and concerns.

THE EXCHANGE

**Meaningful Participation
And
Youth Development
And
Positive Opportunities
=
BEST OUTCOMES FOR EVERYONE**

Youthline's History in Youth Development and Youth Advisory Group Facilitation

Youthline was established over 42 years ago founded on the belief that to have a lasting positive impact on the lives of young people: they needed to be placed at the heart of the solution as active partners rather than passive recipients of services. Youthline was also created to address the fact that many young people were not accessing existing health and social services. It was designed as a way to support and refer young people and their families.

From the beginning Youthline involved young people in leadership development programmes and they acquired skills so that they could give back to the community effecting and creating positive change. Youthline currently has over 200 young people in staff positions (paid and voluntary) including on Youthline's Trust Board and Youth development is a cornerstone of all we do! Youth development is about being connected, having quality relationships, fostering participation and being able to access good information.

Te Remu Tohu: A Framework for Youth Health Workforce Development (2009) recognises that young people need to be at the centre of a youth health workforce development framework. The framework incorporates strategic, organisational and individual/team approaches to build an ecological system that supports the delivery of services based on youth development/youth participation principles.

There is a continuum of ways that young people can receive and participate in services from recipients of services to active involvement in the design, delivery and ongoing reflection and evaluation.

The delivery of quality professional services is vital however to fully embody the core belief that holistic health comes from quality positive youth participation then we need to ensure engagement is as a strong focus as treatment in the delivery of quality services.

The flow on effect of meaningful participation, quality youth development and positive opportunities equals the best outcomes for everyone in a community.

Youth advisory groups at Youthline are established to provide youth input and consultancy; to inform projects, develop resources and ensure our work is relevant to young people, while offering development and leadership opportunities to youth in the community.

Youthline has a number of Youth Advisory Groups who help to guide the work of Youthline, assist with developing effective service provision and provide guidance to other projects and external organizations and agencies.

The Counties Manukau District Health Board YAG

The CMDHB YAG is made up of young people from across the Manukau area and has worked on a wide range of health based projects, including:

- Teaching Health Professionals how to do HEADSS assessments
- The development of a Youth Code of Rights for the Counties Manukau District Health Board – a youth friendly resource for young people when accessing health services
- The performance of anti- violence role plays in their schools to support the family violence prevention campaign
- The scoping of a One-Stop Shop in Manukau
- Research around how young people access services in Manukau
- Research around sexual health
- Developing a brochure called “your health check” that is aimed at young people entering into CYF care
- Re-developing the “Look Closer” brochure – a guide to places for young people in Manukau.

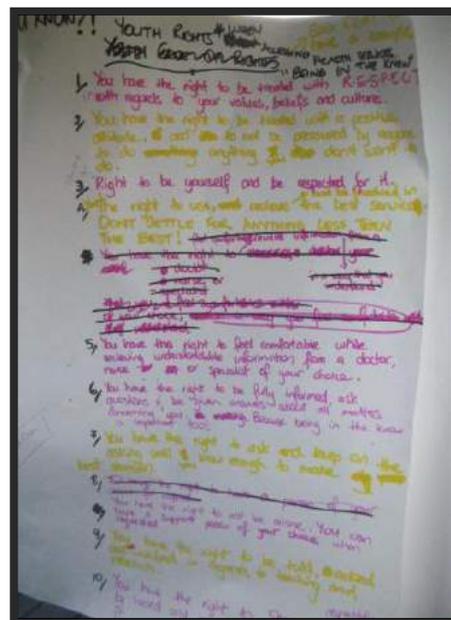
An example of the project process that is often undertaken by a YAG in relation to the development of a resource can be seen with the development of the ‘Youth Code of Rights’ project:

PHASE ONE: Introduction to the document

We were given the Health and Disability Code of Rights to get our heads around. This was difficult as it was pretty complex in its wording, so the facilitators took the document and broke it down and defined the words and meanings so the we could begin to explore how this document could be made youth friendly.

PHASE TWO: Understanding the document

We then split into groups and took three points each,



which we then broke down in to terms that made sense for us. These we presented back to the group. This process was repeated a few times as each group had to have a good grasp on each of the code points and their meanings.

PHASE THREE: The get-away and working day

The YAG then met for a one-day workshop out at Muriwai with the aim of coming away with our own “Youth Code of Rights” – the terms, the graphics and marketing ideas.



PHASE FOUR: Design and Marketing of the Resource

The YAG were then presented with draft one of the poster. We provided Scott the designer with our feedback who came back to us with a second draft. Again, it didn’t incorporate all our feedback so we went back to Scott a third time...and finally we got the desired result!



The Youth Urge Advisory Group and Youth '07

The Youth Urge Advisory Group was formed in 2003 to assist in the development of online health promotion and information resources for young people. The role of the group has evolved over the years to include a wide range of tasks and is also now co-facilitated with youth organisation Youthlaw



Tino Rangatiratanga Taitamariki. The group is made up of young people from across the country who come together to assist in the development of resources aimed at young people, and to assist other organisations with providing feedback on projects they are working on.

A significant body of work that was carried out by the YAG (with funding from the Vodafone Foundation) was the development of youth friendly resources that presented the findings of the Youth '07 study back to young people in a way that was interactive and engaging.

Youth '07 was a study undertaken by University of Auckland School of Population Health, surveying over 9000 young people in secondary schools across New Zealand. The survey had been completed previously in 2000 and has subsequently been surveyed again in 2012.

Several workshops were held introducing the young people to the content of the survey, identifying significant statistics and designing several methods of feeding the information back to young people that had participated. These were developed in the form of printed posters, and an online interactive game.



Waitemata District Health Board Youth Advisory Group and Cut Collective

The WDHB YAG was formed in 2009 with the support of Youthline to advise the WDHB on youth health initiatives.

In 2012 the WDHB teamed up with Auckland art company 'Cut Collective', to create a 30m metre mural (New Zealand's longest) displayed on the perimeter fence of North Shore's car park which is under construction. The project was a chance to highlight the issues and barriers youth face when accessing health services in a fun, creative and sustainable way. The project involved meeting with the Cut Collective to define what they wanted to appear on the wall, with a theme of vibrant colours, uplifting messages and inspirational quotes on key issues that pertain to young people and wellness.



Heyday Youth Online Magazine

Over the past year, Youthline has developed an online magazine designed to inspire, promote and engage young people across the country. The magazine is led by Youthline's young

Communications team and involves young people in developing content and ideas. The magazine profiles up and coming Kiwis with interesting career paths and provides insight into how they got into their industry of choice, it provides information on transitions (from school and general life transitions), and other relevant topics.



Youth Health Councils (YHCs)

Youth Health Councils are groups of young people who are passionate about youth health. Youthline facilitates over 30 Youth Health Councils across Auckland, assisting them with their projects and other functions.

YHCs increase the health status of young people by:

- identifying and discussing key youth health needs
- creating resources
- ensuring that health information, services and programs are relevant, responsive and are accessible to young people
- promoting healthy lifestyles

A Youth Health Council steps up and takes responsibility for being proactive about addressing youth health needs, and making a positive difference in their school and community.

Youth Health Councils provide real opportunities to become involved in advising policies and policy makers so that the voices of young people are heard on decisions that affect their wellbeing.

Youth Health Councils can work on a wide range of projects; fitness and exercise, healthy eating and nutrition, peer pressure, stress, relationships, service gaps, youth rights and much more!



Youthline as an Organisation

Within the Youthline paid and volunteer staff teams, there is a clear development pathway for all those involved. Young people enter Youthline through different pathways (through volunteer training programmes, event volunteering, paid staff teams, youth development programmes) and engage with service provision such as providing support to other young people on the youth helpline, connecting with other volunteers across the country, enabled by the VOIP platform and other online tools.

Young people are involved at every level of Youthline and participate in ensuring the direction of the organisation and our services are relevant and applicable to young people.



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