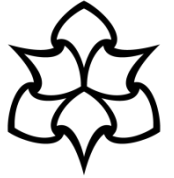


Participatory Youth Practice

An Introduction

Professor Hannah Smithson
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#PYP2023



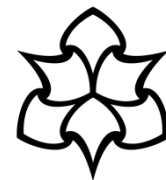
A new Participatory Framework

Developed transformative new youth justice framework – Participatory Youth Practice (PYP).

Encourage practitioners to take a distinct, co-creative approach to engagement, encouraging a solution-focussed youth justice practice that is evidence-based and user-led.

Co-created (with young people) - framework of eight-principles of practice.

The PYP framework has now been embedded in practice within local Youth Justice Services (YJS) across in a national context.



Participatory Activities

BOXING

Practical boxing exercises alongside discussions covering topics such as identity, anger management, self-discipline, respect and masculinity

They met local boxing role models to discuss life experiences, challenges & identities as boxers



LYRIC WRITING

With the help of a local grime artist & MC, we discussed identity, authenticity, expression, admiration and respect.

The young people wrote their own deeply personal lyrics/stories and expressed their perspectives, which some then performed



URBAN ART

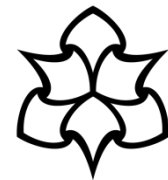
Styled around graffiti art, covering branding, tagging, identities, expression, culture & self-worth.

They developed a concept that expressed one or more of their characteristics- drawing on their vulnerabilities, strengths, wishes and fears



MCys

MCys



Eight Key Principles



Let Them Participate



Always Unpick Why



Acknowledge Limited Life Chances



Help Problem Solve



Help Them Find Better Options



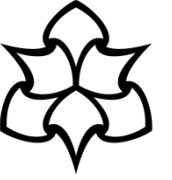
Develop Ambitions



Remember It's Their Choice

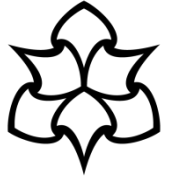


Afford them a Fresh Start



Part I

What is participation?



Participation is a Legal Right

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNCRC can be characterised by 3 Ps –
participation, protection and provision

- Rights to resources and care
- Rights to protection from harm
- Rights to self-determination, dignity, respect, integrity, non-interference, the right to make personal decisions





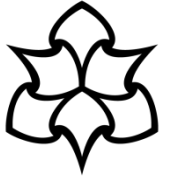
Participation is a Legal Right



By law, children have a **right to express their opinions** on decisions that affect them, and to have those opinions taken into account by the adults who work with them.



They also have the right **to contribute to an effective response to their own behaviour**.



Meaningful Participation



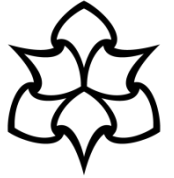
When young people **'have a reason to believe that their involvement will make a difference'**

(Sinclair, 2004: 110-1)



For this to happen they must be involved at the point **'where the decisions are actually made'**

(Shier, 2001: 113-4)



Participation is a Core Principle



INNOVATIVE: As young people to contribute to the development of youth services we find new, unexpected and inspiring avenues for improving them.



EQUALISING: being social justice-based, participatory approaches promote power with children, whose views are often otherwise not considered as valuable as adults



EMPOWERING: instead of doing interventions “to” young people, they are empowered to work ‘with’ adult professionals, and even guide the process themselves



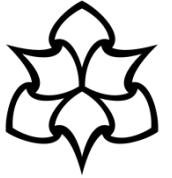
Participation is a Core Principle



Children are part of the solution and not the problem



We need to recognise positive potential and development and avoid defining young people by the behaviours we want them to leave behind

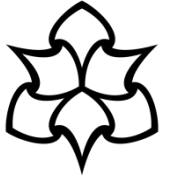


Participation is an Active Practice

When we think about embedding participation into our professional services we need to think about...

Actively creating opportunities for children to:

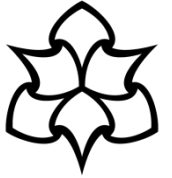
- Share opinions
- Impact interventions and processes
- Create change across youth services



Participation is an Active Practice

Remember....

“Participation is a way of doing things,
not just something we do.”

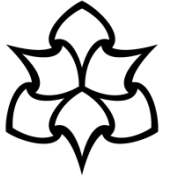


Group Task: What does participation mean to you?

In your professional practice how is participation currently embedded as:

- A legal right
- A core principle
- An active practice

How could this be better?



Children's participation: Actions speak louder than words

- Child First, child participation, children's voice, and co-production are used interchangeably with little thought as to what they mean for youth justice practice 'on the ground'. **This is problematic.**
- Tokenistic approaches to participation have the potential to be extremely damaging for children (Smithson & Gray, 2021).

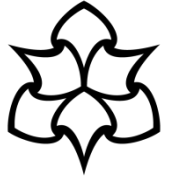




Children's participation: Actions speak louder than words

- Any meaningful reform of youth justice systems at both a macro and micro level **needs to be developed with significant input from justice-involved children.**
- Without this input, youth justice system reform will achieve 'little more than repeated iterations of flawed practices, as those tasked with the responsibility will lack both **the fundamental understanding and knowledge needed to achieve meaningful improvement**'.





PYP in the Youth Justice Service



Most significant challenge to embedding PYP in youth justice services is its acceptance and prioritisation among youth justice professionals.



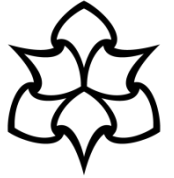
Embedding the principles of PYP relies on an acceptance that justice-involved children have a right to participate in decision-making.



PYP compels practitioners to question some of their own beliefs about children's rights and the purpose of the justice system.



They need to have the confidence that the wider youth justice system is committed to shifting towards Child First and participatory approaches.



A 'How to Guide' for Co-Creation and Participation



Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Probation

Supporting children's meaningful participation in the youth
justice system

Professor Hannah Smithson and Dr Paul Gray

HM Inspectorate of Probation
Academic Insights 2021/10

- Justice-involved children have often experienced traumatic life events and are navigating complex situations. As such, their full participation in research projects and/or participatory activities may not be possible.
- Professionals can struggle to cultivate equitable relationships when children feel they do not have the necessary skills to contribute to a project and/or activities.
- Gaining children's trust is vital in fostering meaningful participation.
- Be clear about the purpose of children's participation as co-creators in projects and activities.
- Co-creation and participation with children done badly can be damaging.
- "Motivate the powerful" (Vaughan, 2014:19) to commit to transformative action and change