

Appendix A

Background to Involving Children and Young People

The existing body of knowledge confirms that, when done well, children's participation and involvement can:

- help children to develop a range of social and communication skills, including confidence-building and the capacity to participate in more sophisticated decision making (Taylor, 2003) To help children become politically aware and active (Kellett et al., 2004)
- help parents, carers, policy makers and service providers improve their support for children (Department for Constitutional Affairs, 2004)
- provide children with a platform for learning about and demonstrating their capacities for good citizenship (Thomson and Holdsworth, 2003)
- provide children with space in which they can articulate their needs but also demonstrate their resources (Kay et al., 2006) To help keep children safe – protection and participation are mutually reinforcing rights (Marchant and Kirby, 2004, in Kirby and Gibbs, 2006, p. 211)
- be important for children's self-reflective processes and identity constructions both at a personal and a collective level (Eide and Winger, 2005, p. 77)
- accord children the rights of respect and dignity as equal human beings (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

In 1991, the UK Government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This human rights treaty guarantees to all children and young people¹ the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and for these views to be given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity (Article 12). Since this time many publications across health, social care (SCIE Guide¹¹ (2006) 'The Participation of Children and Young People in Developing Social Care') and the voluntary sector have offered levers and guidance to progress this work across the sphere of the children and young people's network. Some examples of these models can be found in Appendix A.

The participation of children leads to better decision-making (Ackermann et al, 2003). From babyhood, being listened to can promote a sense of security; alternatively not being listened to creates low self-esteem (Roberts, 2000). However, where to start, who to include and how often presents professionals and organisations with a challenge. Many youth groups exist such as school councils, youth parliament, being a member of such a forum means that some children are ideally placed to develop their confidence and public speaking skills. As a result, they have a number of opportunities to negotiate and think through problems from different angles and to use their own initiative. However, these opportunities are only open to a select number of children. For example, children said that having only those who were 'clever', 'popular' and 'well behaved' are elected onto school councils, this fails to reflect the differences among and between children in terms of life experiences, class background, age, gender, disability and ethnicity. Refugee, migrant and disabled children were particularly likely to emphasise the importance of having a balanced representation of different groups of children on community and youth forums.

In addition, younger children are often forgotten by virtue of their limited vocabulary or dependence on adults. Lets Listen- Early Years – is a profiling and planning resource designed to support all those working with, and for, young children aged birth to five in developing a listening culture within their services.

Legal framework

In addition to UNCRC legislation also requires a commitment to enable children and young people to 'making a positive contribution'.

The Children Act 1989 requires that social workers always consult a child or young person who is in care, or who might come into care, before making any decision about them.

The Children Act 2004 amended this Act so that now children involved in child protection inquiries or children in need assessments must be consulted.

The Children Act 1989 requires that, in family law proceedings, the court must consider the child's wishes and feelings.

Section 7 of the Education Act 2005 requires Ofsted to have regard to the views of school students, as well as other stakeholders, when carrying out school inspections.

Section 3 of the Child Care Act 2006 says that local authorities must have regard to the views of young children where relevant and available.

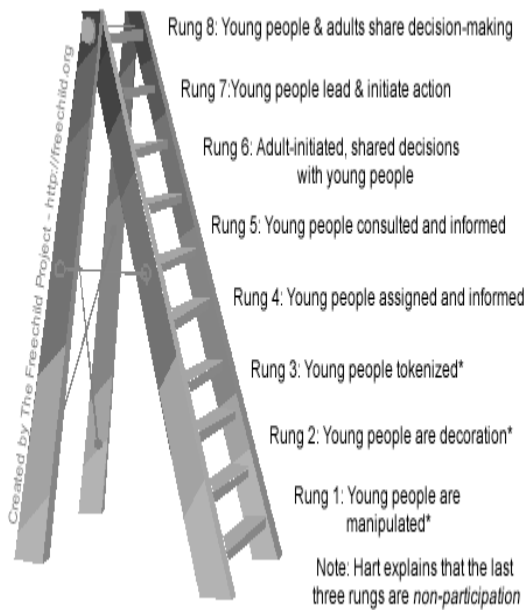
The Disability Discrimination Act requires local authorities to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.

[Type text]

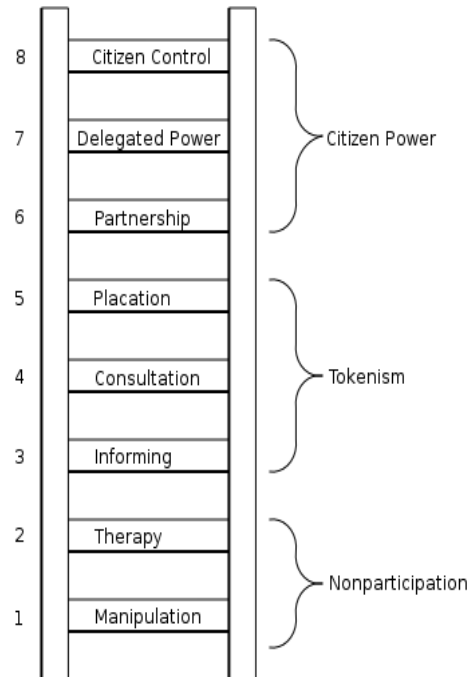
Appendix B: Models of Participation

Whilst 'participation' is the most common term used for the process of listening to and engaging with children and young people, the exact definition remains contested. There is no one fixed meaning or definition which has universal agreement. Common models include: Hart's (1992) 'ladder of participation and its adaptation by Arnstein (1969).

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

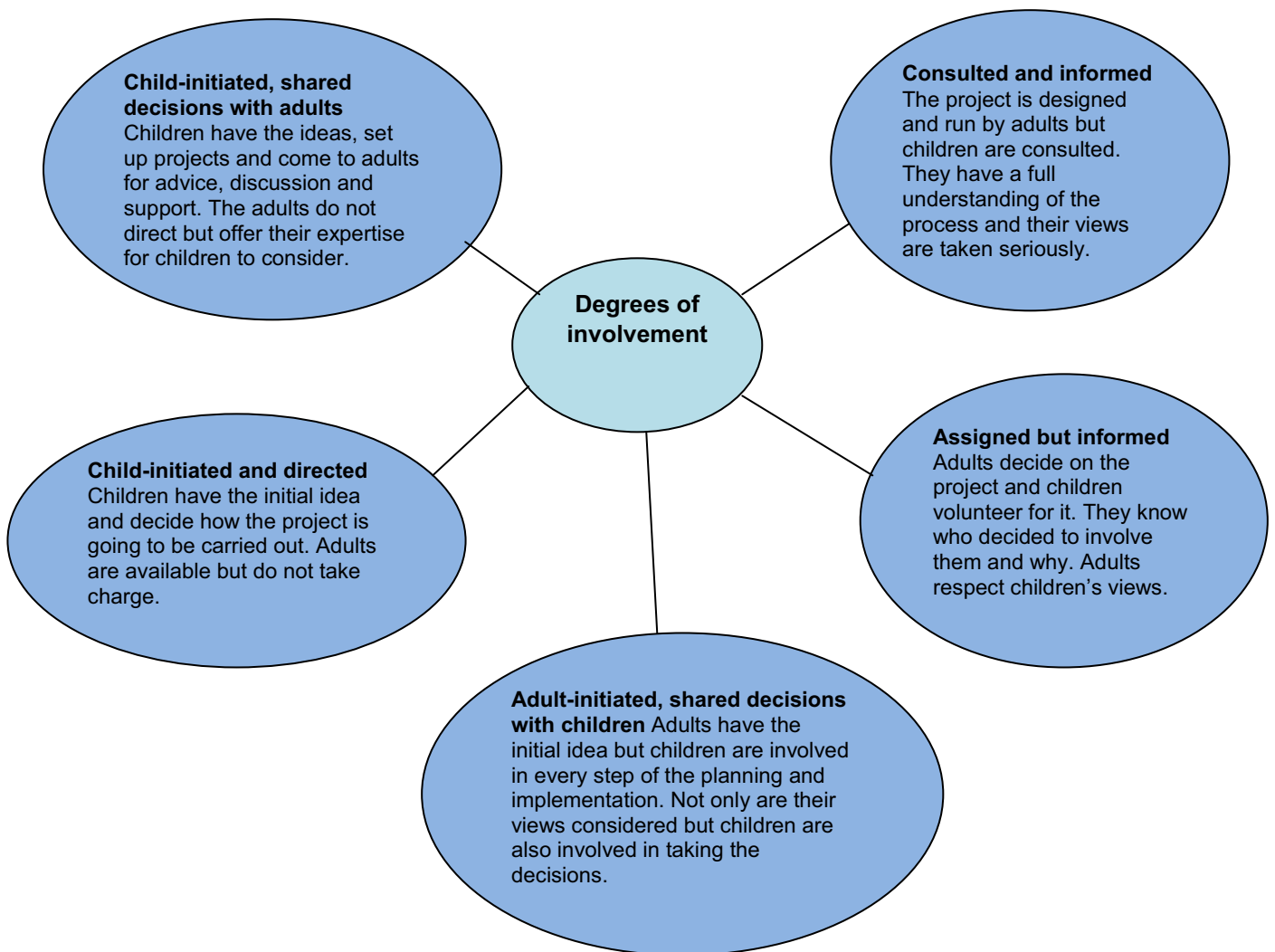


Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.



[Type text]

Treseder's Circle: Degrees of participation (1997) Phil Treseder's model uses the concepts of child and adult initiated participation. Treseder says that children need to be empowered to be able to participate and that organisations have to assist them in this. Treseder's model also acknowledges that although some children may wish to participate, they may choose to do so at a level that best reflects their abilities, resources and ambitions. This model is supported by the SCIE *Whole systems approach to participation* which identifies the component parts to support the development of positive culture, structures, practice and review.



[Type text]