

How To Involve Young People and Listen to Their Voices

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Young People

In 1991 the UK Government signed up to an international agreement called the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)'. This document sets out what children and young people worldwide have a right to expect in life. (You can find out more about the UNCRC [here](#))

These rights come in three types:

- **Protection** – including the right to life and to be protected from violence and neglect.
- **Provision** – including rights to education, information, play and recreation and support when you are in need.
- **Participation Rights** – which include the right to be listened to whenever a decision is made that affects you.

That means that you shouldn't have to face violence, abuse or bullying alone. Police, doctors, teachers and youth workers (to name just a few) should help you deal with others being violent or abusive towards you, and they should listen to and respect your views when they do so.

Schools, youth groups and other organisations drawing up plans to prevent violence should also listen to the young people they work with to help them create those plans. This is called consultation. You could ask your school or youth group whether they involved and consulted with young people when they developed ways to deal with violence.

There are many organisations and resources committed to helping make sure young people are listened to. You can find links to some of these below...

[Article 12](#) – An organisation run entirely by young people campaigning for your right to be involved and listened to.

[The Rights Site](#) – Find out about all your rights on this site from UNICEF

[Youth Information](#) – Youth Information from the [NYA](#) has all the facts on your rights under the UNCRC, as well as a wealth of information on all aspects of life as a young person.

For Professionals

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states; *“children and young people have a right to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter affecting them”*. Understanding and acknowledging the key role young people have to play in the design, development, delivery and review of anti-violence services and strategies is essential to making sure they are of the best quality and best value.

Participation empowers young people and gives them a sense of ownership over services, improving usage and effectiveness.

There are a wide variety of ways in which you can allow young people to be actively involved in your organisation and its work, including; consultation and peer research, steering and advisory group places for young people, youth councils, focus groups and residential workshops, peer delivery and young people on staff recruitment panels.

For more information about giving young people a true voice in your organisation, check out some of the following resources and organisations:

Organisation: [The National Youth Agency](#)

The NYA Active Involvement team offer training and support for organisations wishing to establish and improve the participation of children and young people in the design and delivery of their work. The NYA also has an extensive library of relevant resources.

Resource: [Hear By Right](#)

Hear By Right is a toolkit of tried and tested standards for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sector to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people.

Book: [Participation In Practice](#)

This work considers the policy context for consultation and participation and explores guiding principles and recommendations for achieving positive change with children and young people.