

Nothing about me, without me

Action for
Children

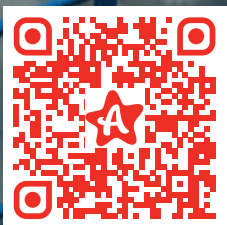
In this issue:

**So, what
is youth
participation?**



**Why it's
important
to us**

**How can you
get involved?**



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Fresh Start

Welcome to a special edition of *Nothing About Me, Without Me* – the magazine that's all about sharing your voice, your views, and getting involved.

In this issue, we're talking participation. What is it? Why's it important? What kind of participation is right for you? It's also about us as staff learning from you and ensuring your voices are always heard.

This magazine is our strategy for children, young people and adults up to the age of 25. It's mainly for those of you who use our services, take part in our activities or feel passionate about the issues we care about.

What do you think about this magazine? Whether it's something you think works well. Something that could be better. Or maybe something completely out of the blue. Whatever thoughts you have, get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

Now dive in to see how you can get involved!

Want to be our



You could be the next editor of *Nothing About Me, Without Me*. Write your own articles, learn how to interview someone, decide what to put on the cover. These are just a few of the things our guest editor will be involved in. Sound fun? Drop us an email at youthvoice@actionforchildren.org.uk

“ I need to be more than a place at the table. Don't just invite me because it feels like the right thing to do. **”**



Interview

So, what's

participation?



We sat down with **Frankie**, Participation Lead at Action for Children, to find out what participation is all about.

Q: Hey Frankie. Let's jump straight in. What is participation?

A: To us, participation means that children and young people, like you, have every opportunity to take part, be heard and see real change as a result of what you've told us. Participation is all about being involved in the decisions that affect you.

Q: Okay. But how is participation going to help me?

A: You'll have more chances to have a say in the things that matter to you. Feel more in control of the decisions that affect your life. Develop skills in decision making, influencing, communication, confidence and resilience. It'll help you gain a greater understanding of your own – and other people's – needs and rights. You will meet new people, make new friends and experience new things; all while building your CV with fantastic experiences to support your future career.

Q: What's in it for Action for Children?

A: We'll get a deeper understanding of your wants, needs, wishes and feelings. Our services and programmes will meet real needs, rather than just the ones we feel are important. Your views and lived experiences will help us make better decisions. Working with you will keep us better connected to children and young people, so we will have a better understanding of what you want and need. This will also make our practice more inclusive. And help us to spend the money we have in better ways.

Q: Why do you need a strategy? Can't you just involve people like me?

A: We want to get better at participation and improve your experiences when working with us. To do this, we need a strategy (or plan), which sets out the steps we need to take to amplify your voices and increase

the level of influence you have over the decisions we make.

Q: What will you do to make participation as good as possible for me?

A: The most important thing we can do is to listen to you. And, with help from young people, we've created seven guiding stars to participation. These stars are standards which we will follow to help you have the best experience possible with us. Find the stars on page 10.

Q: Finally, how will you know if you're doing it well?

A: The most important measure is your opinions. Whether it's immediately after you've taken part in a project or activity, or later down the line, your voices matter and must be heard! We are always looking to hear what you think, especially on ideas of how we can do better.



“Adults should not dismiss ideas as useless, even if they aren't perfect. All ideas should be considered and adapted to fit what is possible.”

Is participation a right?

Yes!

Your right to participate in decisions that affect you is listed in a legal document called the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, also known as the UNCRC.

One of the things the UNCRC does is to make it clear that human rights apply to children and young people as much as they do to adults.

This means that every child and young person has the right to express themselves and have their views considered in everything that affects them.

You can find out more at: [unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf](https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf)

Article 12 of the UNCRC

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.



Participation quiz

What type of participation is right for me?

There are so many ways to get involved in decision making at Action for Children. Take our quiz to find out what type of participation could be right for you.



Start here



Participation benefits everybody

Not only is participation your basic human right, but it also benefits us all. We can learn so much from you, and your participation can help us to identify new opportunities and shape our way of thinking for years to come.



"I like being able to pick what we should do and having the opportunities to say what I think to other leaders and children"



How to get involved

We want you to get involved. But we know that sometimes it can be hard to know where to start. If you're interested and want to find out more, drop us an email at:

youthvoice@actionforchildren.org.uk.

You can also find out more about what we do on our website and social media channels.

/actionforchildren @actnforchildren @actionforchildrenuk

Understanding the

Lundy Model



By Sarah Reynolds
Participation & Engagement Officer
at Action For Children

In the participation world, there are lots of different 'models' which help organisations get better at understanding and bringing to life children's right to participation.

Action for Children have chosen the Lundy Model, developed by Professor Laura Lundy. The model has four important areas which will help us understand the best way to work with children and young people. These follow a chronological order and are:

1. Space

We must make sure that you have access to safe and inclusive spaces so that you are able to express your views.

2. Voice

We must support you to have your voices heard and express yourself in a way that's best for you.

3. Audience

We must ensure that you will be listened to by the right people.

4. Influence

We must ensure that your views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate. We must always explain to you if decisions are made that are different to what you wanted.

The model comes with a checklist of questions. We'll use this to ensure that you have the space to express your views, your voice is enabled, you are listened to by the right people, and your views will have an influence. This checklist will be used in our everyday work, and will be particularly helpful when we:

- Create and update our policies and strategies.
- Develop and evaluate services for children, young people and families.
- Plan activities and events.
- Campaign for change.
- Recruit new members of staff.
- Fundraise.
- And lots more!

These are the reason why Action for Children has chosen to use this model. If you have any questions or thoughts, we'd love to hear from you.

Get in touch with us at:
youthvoice@actionforchildren.org.uk

“we must ensure that you will be listened to by the right people”



1. Space

2. Voice

Stage 1
The right to express views

Article 12

Stage 2
The right to have views given due weight

3. Audience

4. Influence



In



words

Our Guiding Stars for Participation

To make sure you have the best possible experiences with us, we will follow a set of six guiding stars (sometimes known as principles). These guiding stars have been created by young people, and ALL staff across Action for Children will follow them. You said:



“ You must support us to feel empowered so that we can create positive and influential change.



“ You must make sure that we have equal chances to participate and feel heard.



“ You must see us as individuals with different needs and circumstances and make sure that we're able to participate in a way that's right for us.



“ You must thank us for taking the time to work with you and celebrate our achievements.



“ You must make sure there are plenty of enjoyable opportunities for us to take part in.



“ You must have safe spaces for us to participate both face-to-face and online.

“ We should be involved in decisions that affect us, so we can feel in control of our lives ”



If at any point you don't think we have followed these guiding stars, it's important that you hold us to account. You can feedback on your experiences at any time, be that good or bad, we want to hear from you!

What's On?

What does next year look like for participation?

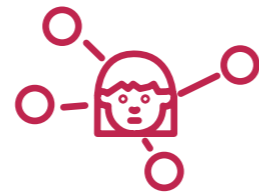
Here's a flavour of the types of activities we have in mind:

Nothing about me, without me

Produce this magazine twice a year with young people.



Grow our national Young Ambassador Network.



Create more opportunities for children and young people to influence decisions by our senior staff and trustees.



Create more opportunities for youth-led activism.



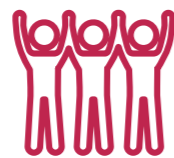
Recruit staff Participation Champions who will drive participation in their services.



Develop participation training for staff (created by young people, of course!).



Provide staff with 'how-to guides' to give them tips and ideas.



Work with young people to deliver an annual youth voice event to celebrate your achievements.



Review and improve young people's involvement.



Discuss participation work in supervision, staff meetings and annual performance appraisals.



Involve children and young people more in the recruitment and induction of staff.



Create an events calendar to promote opportunities to young people.



Campaigning for change to children's social care in parliament



Fundraising for Action for Children



It's our Care Campaign- Day of Action in Parliament



Stepping Stones Wales - family support



Young Ambassadors- Independent Travel Training



Ireland National Advisory Committee Members- Ballyscullion Ball

Get to know **US**

We were founded by Reverend
Dr Thomas Bowman Stephenson in

1869



We are a children's charity that protects and supports children, young people and families in the UK.

Our vision is that every child and young person has a safe and happy childhood, and the foundations they need to thrive.

We have an independent special school called Headlands in Wales.



Our values reflect the way we want to work.

We're **passionate, ambitious, collaborative** and **inclusive**.
And we put children first.



We used to be called the National Children's Home (NCH) before becoming Action for Children in 2008.

We work closely with children and families to spot problems early and offer extra help when it's needed. We do this in many ways – from childcare to mental health programmes and parenting support.



We run **447** services in local communities, in schools and online.

We helped more than **2,000** young people access jobs and learning last year.

In 2021/22,
we supported

671,275

children, young people and families.

We have celebrity supporters including **Sir Trevor McDonald**, **Olympian Fatima Whitbread** and **Matthew Lewis** (who plays Neville Longbottom in the Harry Potter films).

We have a Young Ambassador network for young people who have lived experience of our services. They volunteer their time to attend events, speak at conferences and events. They even get involved in recruiting our staff and trustees.

Key words explained

Co-production - Working together as equals to produce a product, service or activity.

Strategy - A plan of action to achieve something.

Influence - The power to have an important effect on someone or something.

Resilience - The ability to bounce back from a negative experience or difficult challenge.

Governance - The way a group of people, such as a charity, do things. Governance structures are put in place to help charities comply with the law and relevant regulations. We use it to make sure that we are working towards fulfilling our vision that every child and young person has a safe and happy childhood, and the foundations they need to thrive.

Monitoring - Keeping an eye on something.

Model (of participation) - A structure that we can follow to help us get better at participation.

Policies - A set of rules or guidelines for an organisation and staff to follow.





Want to get involved?

youthvoice@actionforchildren.org.uk

Safe and happy childhood



Action for Children protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.