



A word to the wise?

A report into young people and decision-making in Craigmillar

Introduction:

The information in this booklet has been written to tell people about the work of Particip8. Particip8 is a project that was carried out by youth workers employed in the community of Greater Craigmillar, which is in East Edinburgh. The project was carried out between October 2003 and November 2004.

The booklet has been written for both local workers and community residents; it is written in an informal and accessible style. The booklet has four different sections. Each section tells you about the different parts of the project. The sections each have a different title. There are some notes below to help you understand what each section is about,

Section 1 – Background, p3

Section 1 tells you basic information about Particip8, including, how the project started and what the aims of the project were.

Section 2 – Asking the right questions, p4-5

Section 2 tells you how the workers involved in the Particip8 project carried out their work.

Section 3 – The Result, p6-7

Section 3 tells you about all the information that was collected during the project

Section 4 – Recommendations, p8

Section 4 tells you about what happens next

Section 5 – Further Information, p9

Section 5 tells you where you can get further information

Background:

Particip8 was set up to speak with young people living in Craigmillar about their experiences of attending youth services. The Youth Workers who carried out the project wanted to find out if young people felt that youth services take their opinions seriously when making decisions about how clubs and projects should be run. Particip8 was set up because young people themselves had spoken about their frustrations when attending clubs. The youth projects involved in this work are listed below:

- Craigmillar Capacity Building Project
- Café K
- Instep
- Community Education
- NHS Lothian

The following projects also contributed at specific parts of the process

- Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership
- The Venchie
- Health Opportunities Team
- Bristo Memorial Church

This project was funded by the City of Edinburgh Council, through both Community Education and the Education Managers Strategy Fund.

Asking the right questions:

In order to help the Particip8 workers' understand all the issues connected to young people and the ways in which youth services involve them in decision making, we carried out a number of activities. These included,

- Background Reading
- Carrying out a questionnaire
- Group Work

Background Reading

Our background reading included reports that other youth projects have written about young people and decision-making. This helped us to understand some of the issues we would need to focus upon in our own work. The main points that we learned from our reading are noted below,

- Through the work of the United Nations, young people have a legal right to be included in the ways in which youth services make decisions. The United Nations is a worldwide body, which makes laws that all governments should uphold. They have made a law that gives young people the right to express an opinion on any decision that affects them. This means that all services that work with young people must involve young people when making decisions.
- Many adults think that young people are not interested in having their say; they believe that young people do not understand that decision making is important and that they are unconcerned about the things that affect them.
- Not surprisingly, most young people dispute the claims noted above. They argue that they understand how important it is to have your say, and that they also hold clear opinions about the issues that affect both them and their wider community. Young people also claim that they work hard to tell people about their issues; however, they feel that it is really hard to make youth services listen to them, and that this can lead to frustration and anger.
- Defining 'Participation: if youth services are serious about listening to young people, then they must allow young people to express their opinions about the issues that are important to them; they must also allow young people to play an equal part in deciding any actions that are necessary.
- The best way of measuring how well youth services are listening to young people is through the ladder of participation (see page 10). This allows young people to position how well the services they attend are currently performing; it also allows them to identify how well they want their services to perform in the future.

The Questionnaire

The next stage in our process was to find out how the information noted above relates to young people living in Craigmillar. To do this we carried out a questionnaire. The main questions we asked focussed upon exploring the two areas noted below,

- Are young people unconcerned and ignorant about the importance of decision making? Or, are young people informed and aware about the importance of decision-making, and do they hold clear opinions about the issues affecting their lives?
- Using the ladder of participation, how well would young people rate the main youth services and wider community services that operate within Craigmillar? Do these services listen to young peoples' viewpoints, and do they involve them in deciding courses of action?

Group Work

To help us think more about what models of participation young people find helpful, we devised a group work session. This was designed to help young people explore and identify inclusive approaches to decision-making.

The Result:

Questionnaire results:

- We questioned 80 young people living in Craigmillar
- 55% were female – 45% were male
- The youngest person to fill in a questionnaire was 10, the oldest was 17
- The majority of young people who filled in the questionnaire were between the ages of 12 and 16.

Unconcerned & Ignorant, or, informed and aware?

To help explore this area, we asked young people to answer the following questions:

1. What are the benefits for young people if youth services listen to their views and opinions?
2. What are the benefits for youth services of listening to young peoples' views and opinions?
3. What are the issues you think organizations who work with young people should be tackling?
4. Why do you think these issues exist
5. Would you be willing to work with youth services to address these issues

The answers that young people gave us show us that they are clearly well informed and aware. Some of the answers they gave to each question are listed below,

1. Young people felt that their clubs would be more fun, and that more people would attend them because they would be running activities that young people are interested in. The young people also felt that the more young people who are attending clubs, the less trouble there would be on the streets of Craigmillar.
2. Young people thought that there would be better understanding and respect between them and workers. They also felt that workers would enjoy their jobs more, and that clubs would save money by only putting on activities and services that young people need and are interested in.
3. The issues that young people discussed fitted into five general areas, which are,
 - 41% of young people felt that issues related to Community Safety were a major concern, including: crime, racism, bullying, feeling safe, territorialism, traffic, anti social behaviour, guns & gangs
 - 21% thought that issues related to Health & Well Being were a concern, including: drugs, relationships, alcohol, sexuality, mentoring and general health
 - 14% of young people felt that issues related to Leisure & Recreation were a problem, including: boredom, lack of leisure opportunities, the need for more clubs and exclusion from sport facilities
 - 11% of young people felt that issues related to Poverty were a concern, including: poverty in general, homelessness, employment opportunities & social inclusion.

4. Young people felt that these issues happen for various reasons. Some answers focussed upon the attitudes of young people themselves, young people were seen as 'Lazy' or 'acting like fools'. Other answers focussed upon general things that can happen in any community, including, 'boredom', 'a lack of respect' and also 'peer pressure'. However, the majority of answers focussed upon aspects that young people are not in control of, such as 'no jobs we want', 'workers not caring', 'there is not much to do at night time, and no facilities to go to', 'there is no one to teach us, no role models'.

5. Over 60% of the young people who completed the questionnaire were willing to work with youth services to address these issues.

Being heard and deciding upon action:

To help us explore this area we used the ladder of participation. The ladder allows young people to easily identify how well youth services in Craigmillar involve them; it also allows them to understand that there are different levels of participation. We asked young people the following questions:

1. Using the ladder of participation, how well do you think local youth services listen to young people when making decisions?
2. Has the Craigmillar Social Inclusion Project ever asked you your views/opinions?
3. Using the ladder of participation, how well do you think Craigmillar Social Inclusion Project listens to young people when making decisions?
4. Has the City of Edinburgh Council ever asked you your opinions/views?
5. Using the ladder of participation, how well do you think the City of Edinburgh Council listens to young people when making decisions?

The information young people gave was really interesting. Using the definition of participation detailed on page 3, we would expect effective involvement in decision making to be anything around number 8 on the ladder of participation. The information supplied shows that whilst local youth services do work hard to involve young people, there are difficulties in the mechanisms that both Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership and the City of Edinburgh Council use to involve young people. Don't just take our word for it, check out the young peoples' answers,

1. Over 50% of the young people who completed the questionnaires scored local youth services at number 7 or above on the ladder of participation.
2. Only 25% of young people had been asked about their views/opinions by Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership
3. Of the young people who had heard of Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership, 80% scored it below number 8 on the ladder of participation
4. Only 24% of young people had been asked their views/opinions by the City of Edinburgh Council
5. 88% of young people scored the City of Edinburgh Council below number 8 on the ladder of participation

Group Work Results:

Unfortunately our group work sessions did not go to plan. Due to a combination of factors including, tight timescales, short term funding and school holidays, we found it difficult to sustain contact with groups of young people. However, we did manage to hold two sessions, and though they did not provide us with enough information to write anything substantial, they did suggest that this area is well worth exploring.

Recommendations:

There are a number of recommendations to be made; these include,

1. Through this research, young people in Craigmillar have clearly shown that they are motivated to actively participate in the decision making processes of all youth services and wider decision making bodies. In respect to such energy, a local participation strategy could be developed to ensure that the needs and opinions of young people are at the forefront of the work of all local agencies.
2. This research project has highlighted some of the issues that affect/concern young people in Craigmillar. Until an effective youth participation strategy has been developed, it is necessary that all local agencies take account of such concerns/issues. Where possible, resources and energy should be directed toward developing pieces of work to further explore these areas.
3. The local youth projects that participated in this research have scored well on the ladder of participation; they are obviously using models of practice which young people find accessible. Further research could be conducted to explore this area; the findings could be used to inform the work of other agencies.
4. Though it is appreciated that the work of Craigmillar Social Inclusion Partnership and the City of Edinburgh Council is driven forward through complex structures and processes, the results of this project suggest that both organisations need to review the mechanisms they use to involve young people in decision-making.
5. In order to further discuss and implement the points noted above, it is recommended that the Youth Service Providers Forum, which operates in Craigmillar, be the lead body in driving this work forward.
6. It is also recommended that if any of these recommendations are taken forward, then young people must be involved right at the start of each specific piece of work. Further, there should be a balanced mixture of workers and young people taking forward each area of work, and appropriate support and guidance should be made available to the young people.

Section 5 – Further Information

During the course of this project, Particip8 workers took advice from various projects, and read many articles relating to youth participation in decision-making. We have listed contact details below for Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership and Save the Children, both of whom were particularly helpful.

Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership
F/1 Timber Bush Lane
Leith
Edinburgh
EH6 6QH
Edinburgh@youthinclusion.org

Save the Children UK
2nd Floor Haymarket House
8 Clifton House
Edinburgh
EH12 5DR
www.savethechildren.org.uk

Y o u d e c i d e ...

<p>10. Young People in Charge Young people decide what to do, adults only get involved when asked to do so</p>
<p>9. Young people lead/adults help Young People make all decisions with adults help</p>
<p>8. Joint Decision Adults and young people consider each other's ideas and opinions. Young people and adults have an equal say in any decisions that are made.</p>
<p>7. Consultation Adults ask young people's opinions and genuinely consider them when making decisions</p>
<p>6. Invitation Adults ask young people's opinions but make decisions of their own accord.</p>
<p>5. Tokenism Adults make the majority of decisions, young people are allowed to make small scale decisions</p>
<p>4. Decoration Adults decide what to do, young people take part</p>
<p>3. Manipulation Adults decide what to do and ask young people if they agree</p>
<p>2. Adults Rule Kindly Adults make all the decisions, young people are given reasons and explanations, but must conform</p>
<p>1. Adults Rule Adults make all the decisions, young people instructed to conform</p>

(The Ladder of Participation is taken from Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership's 'Action Research Toolkit')

If you wish to speak with anyone about the work of Particip8, please contact Mike Bell at Craigmillar Capacity Building Project, or Scott Fraser at the Jack Kane Centre. Contact details are noted below,

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Edinburgh
EH16 4NX
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208 Niddrie Mains Road
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EH16 4ND
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This report can be downloaded from the following web address -
<http://www.craigmillarcapacitybuilding.org/empowering.htm>