



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Service

Children and Young People's Participation and Engagement Strategy 2022-2025



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Welsh Section Title
Education, Leisure & Lifelong Learning

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- Sandfields Primary School Pupils
- Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Cwmnedd Pupils
- Crynallt Primary School Pupils
- Cefn Season Secondary Education Nurture Centre Pupils
- Cefn Season Comprehensive School Pupils
- Neath Port Talbot Youth Justice Service young people
- Ysgol Bae Baglan Pupils
- Dwr Y Felin Comprehensive School Pupils
- Lincolnshire Participation Strategy 2021-2024
- National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (Government of Ireland 2021).

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1. Vision

Within the Education, Leisure and Lifelong Learning Service (ELLS) our vision is to give all children and young people the best start in life so they have the opportunity to achieve excellence in all they do. To enable this we will champion the needs of all children and young people, particularly our vulnerable and disadvantaged, and build strong relationships with families, schools and communities.

As set out in the Curriculum for Wales (2020) we want children and young people in Neath Port Talbot to be:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

We adopt a **rights-based approach** where the views, wishes and feelings of the child, young person and their parents / carers are central to the planning and provision of support; and the child, young person and their parents / carers are enabled to participate as fully as possible in the decision-making processes. This can be achieved through the implementation of Person Centred Practice (PCP).

In order to achieve this vision this strategy will further support the meaningful participation of children and young people through inclusive engagement. This will ensure children and young people will be able to share views on matters and influence decisions that impact directly and indirectly on them, their families and communities. This is a fundamental right which is protected under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Article 12:

“Every child has the right to express their views on matters that affect them and for their views to be given due weight in accordance with their age, understanding and maturity”.

2. What is participation and why it is important.

Defining Participation.

According to children and young people (CYP) in Wales¹, participation means:

"It is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing an action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice" (Welsh Government 2010).

Young people in Neath Port Talbot described participation as:

Making social connections and communicating in ways which suit you.

Involving yourself so you can improve your skills and push your boundaries.

Giving 100% effort in everything you do.

Taking part in something and joining in.

Trying something new, even if it's out of your comfort zone.

Participation is acting on the views of CYP and using them to develop and review what we do as a Directorate. It is also about ensuring that we know what is important to children and young people so that it drives future developments.

Participation is not about giving CYP whatever they ask for. It is about us enabling them to have realistic expectations by providing information and empowering them to develop skills, to ensure inclusive engagement. It is being honest about some of the

¹ Children and Young People's Participation in Wales (2010). Welsh Government. Available at: [Microsoft Word - e_Participation \[E\] - 11.12.09.doc \(gov.wales\)](#)

constraints we work within, along with exploring ways to overcome them when appropriate and most importantly providing feedback.

There are groups of CYP that are often missing from opportunities to participate. Barriers can include language, culture, access, transport, confidence, additional learning needs and communication. From initial planning stages any barriers will be identified and appropriate steps taken to enable their participation, ensuring engagement is inclusive.

Benefits of Participation.

Participation has a wide range of benefits for children and young people, service providers and local communities. Examples of these benefits were identified by NPT Youth Council and CYP in NPT schools, they are outlined below:

Children and Young People

- Makes children and young people feel included and heard.
- Provides opportunities to improve skills including confidence and communication.
- Improves connection with others and provides opportunities to meet new people and have new experiences.
- Provides opportunities to be active in communities.
- Helps children and young people feel safe.



Service Providers

- Children and young people's opinions and points of view will allow services to see things differently, becoming more inclusive.
- Ensures services meet the needs of children and young people.
- Planning for better use of resources.



Local Communities

- Develops positive community relations.
- Improves connection with community.
- Promotes citizenship.

Local and National Context.

There are a number of key drivers both locally and nationally linked to developing and embedding good participation practice.

The Additional Learning Needs Education & Tribunal Act (ALNET) 2018 places new duties on Local Authorities, local health boards, schools and further education institutes (FEI) who support CYP with additional learning needs (ALN) to:

- Listen to the views, wishes and feelings of the child and the child's parent or the young person.
- Understand the importance of the child and the child's parent or the young person participating as fully as possible in decisions.
- Provide information and support to the child and the child's parent, or young person, to so they can participate in those decisions.

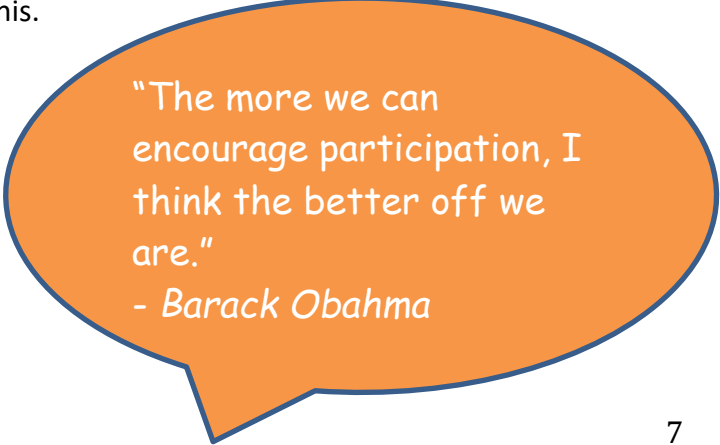
Person Centered Practice (PCP) is used to facilitate the above and is used in all schools in NPT. It supports CYP and families to participate meaningfully by providing a better understanding of CYP needs and any support required. This in turn leads to the development of better outcomes for CYP.

The Curriculum for Wales is designed to promote the four purposes whereby all learners in NPT develop as ambitious capable learners, enterprising and creative contributors, ethical and informed individuals and healthy confident individuals. This is entirely in alignment with the aims of this strategy, children and young people who realise the four purposes will be fully engaged in the life of their community and make progress throughout their lives.

Additional important drivers include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Equality Act (2010), which are outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Skills for Participation.

It is important that CYP are supported to find their voice and develop the skills and confidence to be heard. It is our responsibility to ensure participation opportunities are accessible. Some CYP need support to understand their role as active members of communities and what matters to them. As part of this strategy a training programme will be piloted to enable CYP to do this.



"The more we can encourage participation, I think the better off we are."

- Barack Obama

3. Meaningful Participation.

It is important that meaningful participation takes place in all aspects of work with CYP. This includes everyday engagement in classes, sessions, interventions, clubs, projects or activities to more strategic decisions such as developing programmes, services, funding bids, policies, legislation or research. There will also be times when CYP share their views during informal conversations, rather than during planned activities. These occasions are equally as important as planned engagement and will take place wherever children and young people are. Good participation can happen anywhere and it can take place at different levels:

- Individual- engaging with individuals where services are provided before decisions that affect them are made.
- Collective- targeting and engaging groups of CYP, in particular those who are may be affected by any possible developments/ changes before decisions are made.

The following section outlines the principles that underpin our approach to all forms of participation and how we will ensure engagement is meaningful and inclusive.

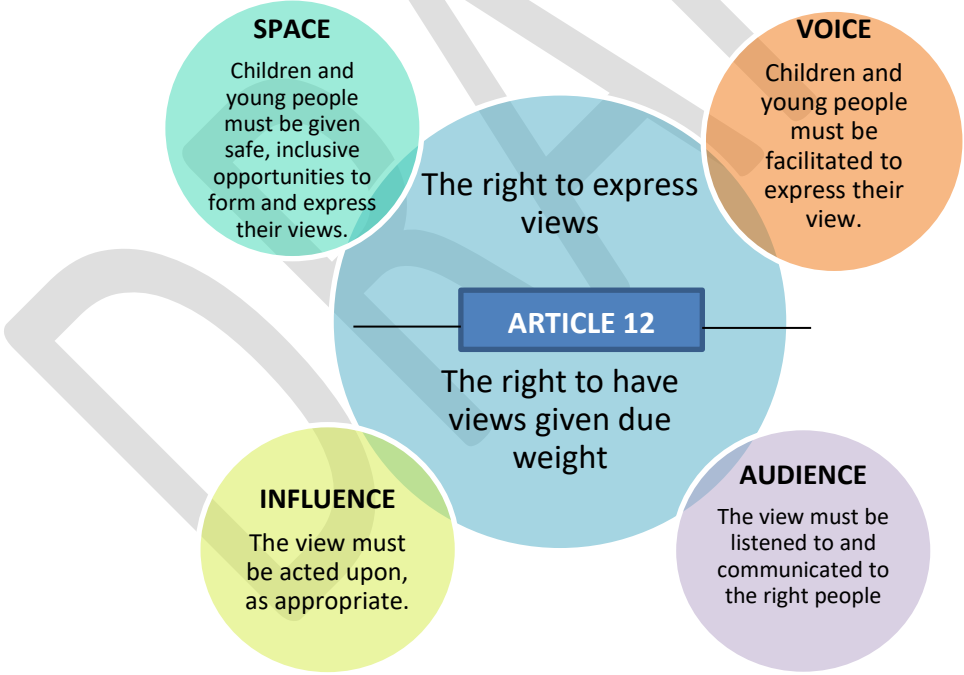
The **Wales National Participation Standards** encompass our principles, the seven standards are:

1. INFORMATION - should be easy to understand.
2. IT'S YOUR CHOICE - there should be enough information and time to make a choice.
3. NO DISCRIMINATION - every child and young person should have the same chance to take part.
4. RESPECT – children and young people's opinions are important and will be respected.
5. YOU GET SOMETHING OUT OF IT - to learn, have opportunities to work with others and make a difference. To have a positive experiences.
6. FEEDBACK – to ensure children and young people know what differences have been made and what ideas have been used and why.
7. WORKING BETTER FOR YOU – ensuring children's rights are at the centre of everything.

"Voice is not enough....."
- Laura Lundy



To ensure good participation and engagement practice is embedded we will adopt the **Lundy Model (2014)** which conceptualises Article 12 of the UNCRC by considering four inter-related concepts: Space, Voice, Audience and Influence. The model is set out below:



These concepts provide a checklist to plan and reflect on participation and engagement activities (see **Appendix 2**).

4. Models of Engagement

Different models suit different needs, situations and settings, sometimes it will be appropriate to use different models alongside each other, for example using digital tools with a face to face event. Whatever model is used consideration must always be given to any support a CYP or group need to participate (see section 7).

The below outlines existing engagement models and also engagement models that will be developed as part of this strategy.

Formal Groups

Formal groups can provide permanent structures for participation:

NPT Youth Council- The current Youth Council has some excellent outcomes. It holds an election every 2 years, with all secondary schools invited to participate. Targeted groups are given guaranteed seats, such as Speech and Language, Young Carers, Children Looked After (CLA), vulnerable learners. The Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor play a key role in promoting the voice of CYP across NPT. The Youth Council also have links to the national Welsh Youth Parliament and British Youth Council.

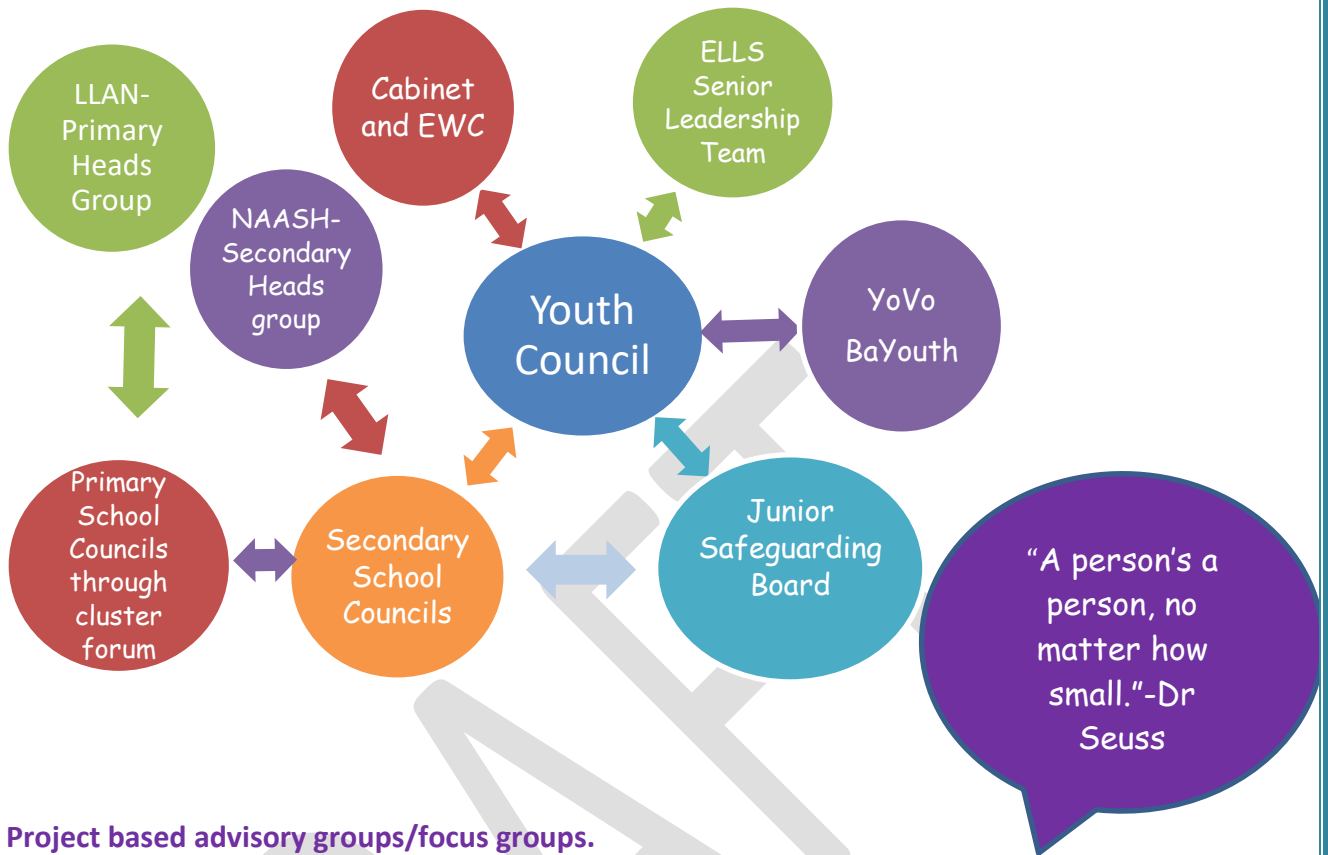
The Youth Council is the key mechanism for young people to meet with Cabinet therefore it is essential that there are key links with all formal groups for CYP across NPT. These include:

- **School councils**
- **YoVo (Your Voice Matters) and Jnr YoVo-** for care experienced CYP.
- **Junior Safeguarding Board-** for pupils across NPT to discuss safeguarding issues they face at home, school, in their community and online.
- **BAYouth-** Swansea Bay University Health Board's Youth Advisory Panel.

Young Persons Mental Health Forum- Representing all NPT secondary and specialist provision schools. The aim of the forum is to raise awareness of mental health issues within schools and for the young people to drive change.

Primary Cluster Forums – Representatives from primary schools will meet as a cluster group with representatives from the secondary school youth council once a term to discuss issues identified by big conversations, local issues and improving links with feeder secondary schools. The outcomes from these meetings will feed into the Youth Council.

The framework below illustrates how the formal groups will interact.



Project based advisory groups/focus groups.

When designing, running or evaluating a project or service a small group of CYP can be brought together. They may be YP with particular experiences of certain issues. This creates opportunities for co-production.

County Wide.

These provide an opportunity for CYP to identify and share their views on what is important them. This will provide opportunities to develop pieces of work and influence decision making.

- **Whole Authority Surveys**- CYP currently take part in the British Youth Council Make your Mark Survey, this identifies the top three issues for children and young people. CYP in secondary schools also take part in the School Health Research Network. All results from these will feed into the Youth Council. Let's Talk - Together We Are NPT is the Local Authority mechanism for consulting on plans and policies.
- **Participation Conference**- An annual participation conference will be held, led by children and young people, to include the Council's Leader, Chief Executive and Children's Commissioner to showcase and highlight issues relating to participation, communication and advocacy.

Feedback/Evaluation Forms

Feedback forms are used extensively across services. It is essential that forms are accessible for all CYP including those with additional learning needs. Care needs to be

taken to design forms which are easy to complete and will provide valuable information. It is also important to ensure CYP have the option for feedback to remain anonymous, online forms, even in face-to-face settings can enable this.

Digital Engagement

Digital tools, including social media, provide the potential to engage CYP in on-going dialogue and promote participation events and groups. Video conferencing cuts out the travel time and costs of bringing people together physically. The use of these tools needs to be carefully thought out and the relevant policies and guidelines followed. In consultation with children and young people, the directorate will develop digital engagement tools that will ensure that our communication with children and young people is effective. The use of social media would widen the opportunities for individuals to participate in an innovative and relevant way.

"I'm still proud of who I am, of my youth, and I feel like now, as individuals, we begin to realise that we can change the future. We all have to participate."
- Khalid



5. Recording & Monitoring

Teams and services across the Directorate are expected to use the **Lundy Model** for planning both formal and informal participation activity. This is to ensure participation opportunities are accessible and inclusive. We are also accountable for the outcomes of any participation activity which will be recorded and shared using **You Said, We Did (YSWD)** (see **Appendix 3**).



You Said- CYP share their views/ are involved in engagement activity.



We Did- A service/team responds to what CYP said. These should involve working in partnership with CYP to ensure they have been understood, any action is relevant and provide opportunities for co-production. This must be fed back to CYP so they understand what has happened from their involvement. Where it was not possible to take an action then this needs to be explained to CYP.



Impact- The impact for CYP and the service/directorate must be reported to the CYP and internally. This helps CYP understand what their participation has achieved. Where there is no impact then alternative solutions should be explored with CYP.

Participation training will be available to all staff to support them in understanding and developing participation and engagement opportunities which are inclusive and accessible.

Participation Reviews will take place to enable services/teams to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

6. Our Participation Priorities

As a Directorate we know that positive interaction and building trust is a key priority for successful participation. We are committed to:

- Ensuring children and young people have a key role in the development and design of services for them, by sharing information, consulting and where possible co-producing.
- Involve children and young people in assessing our services by identifying what we do well and what we need to improve.
- Embed good participation and engagement practice across our services.
- Work to reduce and remove any barriers to participation.

Young people in NPT came up with the following priorities:

- Ensuring any participation activity can include everyone.
- Make participation interesting so CYP want to take part.
- Committing to listening to CYP and making changes.
- Ensuring activities are free and easy to get to.
- Using different resources and methods to suit everyone, i.e. computers instead of pens, drawing and stories instead of writing.
- Making sure participation feels safe for everyone to get involved, especially those less confident.

"Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, others make it happen".
- Michael Jordan



7. Participation and Engagement Toolkits

There are numerous toolkits available to support the participation of children and young people. The following are ones recommended to support the principles throughout this strategy. When planning any participation and engagement opportunities it is important to refer back to the Lundy Model to ensure the opportunities are inclusive.

- Childrens Commissioner for Wales Taking Decisions Together- an accessible toolkit to be used with all CYP including those with additional learning needs- [TOOLKIT](#)
- Young Minds Participation Toolkits- to support participation around Mental Health- [Participation Toolkits](#) | [Resources for Professionals](#) | [YoungMinds](#)

8. Participation Action Plan

In order to achieve everything set out in this strategy and to support the ongoing inclusive engagement of CYP an action plan has been developed which will guide the work for the next year 2023-2024.

"I raise my voice not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard."
-Malala Yousafzai Activist for female education.

Participation and Engagement Strategy Action Plan Year Jan 2023 to Dec 2024

Priority	Task	By Whom?	By When?	Resources	Young People's involvement	Outcome
Improving Participation and Engagement across the Directorate	Finalise design and graphics of strategy to ensure it is engaging, innovative and accessible.		Feb 2023	Design support.	Youth Council members and specialist groups of young people including those with ALN and seldom heard.	Innovative, accessible, digital and paper strategy.
	All areas of the directorate work towards the strategy.	All staff	Jan 2023 and on-going	Launch Event	Youth Council Members to help develop awareness raising sessions for staff and plan a launch.	Staff and partners to gain a better understanding of participation and the strategy.
Developing the Youth Council	Increase membership and clearer links with school councils. In particular special schools and specialist provision.	Staff and young people	Jan- March 2023 and ongoing	Co-ordinating staffing levels, resources to ensure participation is accessible, transport costs.	Young people promoting opportunities and speaking to young people in schools and provision.	A more representative Youth Council with clear processes for feedback.

	Explore ways of ensuring links with other formal groups/forums.		April to July 2023	Travel, increased staffing levels	Youth council members and staff consult with other groups on how to develop more formal links.	Clear links between all formal groups in NPT.
Training	Participation and Engagement staff training to be available.		Feb 2023 and ongoing	Training resources, staff time	Co-training and development of training package	Trained staff
	Training for young people to develop skills to enable participation.		March 2023 start pilot	Training resources	Co-training and participation	Young People with improved skills
	Develop role of peer mentoring in relation to participation.		March 2023 onwards	Training resources, staff time	Co-training and participation	Young People with improved skills being able to offer support to peers.
	Training for key stakeholders on engaging young people Children's Rights and Participation		March 2023 and ongoing	Training resources	Co-training	Trained Members

Staff Recruitment	Strengthen the involvement of CYP in the recruitment process.	Senior Managers, HR and young people	April 2023	Staff time	CYP involved in consultation around recruitment and interviewing where appropriate.	To further empower CYP to be part of interview processes and decision making.
Improving Opportunities to get involved	Promote and support active involvement in the Make your Mark Campaign across schools and provisions. Include NPT focused issues.		April 2023	Staff and young people's time	Distribution and encouraging other young people	Knowledge and understanding of the key issues important to CYP which can drive future developments.
	Support opportunities for participation across a range of settings and provisions including outreach work, clubs etc.		April 2023	Staff time to map.	Promote opportunities.	Greater representative views. Increased opportunities for engagement.
	Support opportunities for pupil voice to reach the right decision makers, including LLAN and NAASH.		April 2023 and on-going.		Representatives from school councils to sit on youth council and support primary forums.	Improved meaningful participation opportunities for school councils.

	Support the continued development of school councils and share good practice.		March 2023		Cluster forum meetings to share good practice.	Improved practice in terms of school councils.
	Develop opportunities for digital engagement.		March 2023	Website and social media development.	Develop use of social media	Wider participation.
Improving Equality of Opportunity	Develop participation and engagement opportunities to ensure they are inclusive in particular for CYP with ALN and those who are seldom heard.		Jan 2023	Special schools/ provisions and targeted groups.	Consult and design approaches with CYP.	Wider participation
Being able to prove we listen and that it makes a difference	Young people involved in evaluations and case studies		January 2023	Young people to design evaluations	Involvement in training	Effective participation and engagement
	Embed monitoring and feedback processes.		January 2023	Increased staffing levels	Monitoring and feedback shared with CYP.	Effective participation and engagement Better feedback, young people feel valued.

Local and National Drivers for Participation in Wales

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the internationally accepted standard for children's rights, it is built into Welsh Policy and Law. The UNCRC has 54 children's rights; 42 outline children's rights; 12 are concerned with how governments can ensure that children enjoy these rights.

Article 3:

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children.

Article 12:

Children have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13:

Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive information of any kind as long as it is within the law.

The **Children's Commissioner Framework *The Right Way*** provides guidance on embedding a rights based approach in order to:

- Provide meaningful opportunities for children and young people to influence decisions about their lives.
- Ensure authorities and individuals are accountable to children and young people for decisions, and for outcomes that affect their lives.

Additional Learning Needs Education & Tribunal Act (ALNET) 2018 makes explicit the need for the participation of children and young people through person centred practice.

Equality Act 2010 mandates schools and education services to make reasonable adjustments and take positive actions for children and young people with protected characteristics to ensure equal access to education provision. It goes beyond the formal education provided, covering all school activities such as extra-curricular and leisure activities, afterschool and homework clubs, sports activities and school trips, as well as school facilities such as libraries and IT facilities.

A New Curriculum for Wales sets out pupil voice as being embedded across all areas. Improved participation will help our children and young people to develop all four of the core purposes within the New Curriculum. Improved participation will help them to

become more healthy and confident. They will become more ambitious and capable, more enterprising and creative contributors and more ethically informed citizens.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 puts the involvement of people and communities at the heart of improving wellbeing and the Children and Family Measure 2010 requires Local Authorities to put in place and publish arrangements to promote and facilitate the participation of children and young people.

NPT Corporate Plan 2022 - 2027 (Recover, Reset, Renew) has participation as a key theme to achieve the wellbeing objectives.

DRAFT

Appendix 2

Participation and Engagement Planning Checklist.

SPACE

- How will you ensure children and young people (CYP) are involved as early as possible?
- How will those who have been, or may be, directly affected by the topic be involved?
- What steps will be taken to ensure the space and timing of the session is accessible and inclusive?
- How will CYP be supported to feel safe and comfortable in expressing themselves?
- What support will be provided to those who may become anxious, uncomfortable or triggered by the topic?

VOICE

- Have you made a clear list of the topics you want to cover/ the work you want to do?
- How will CYP know that participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time?
- How will you support them in giving their own views, while including developmentally-appropriate and accessible information?
- How will you ensure that CYP are given a range of ways to express themselves that best suits their needs and choices?
- How will the process allow them to identify topics they want to discuss?




AUDIENCE

- Have you identified and involved the relevant decision makers, who can influence change?
- Do CYP know who their views/work will be shared with and how this will be done?
- How will you ensure that CYP are given an opportunity to confirm that their views/actions are accurately recorded?
- When will a participation record be completed and shared with CYP in a developmentally-appropriate and accessible way?
- What plans are in place to support CYP in playing a role in communicating the outcomes of this activity?

INFLUENCE

- How will CYP be informed about the scope they have to influence decision-making (including the limitations)?
- How will CYP be given developmentally- appropriate and accessible feedback at key points during any service, project or policy development?
- How will you ensure CYP are given opportunities to evaluate and respond to the process throughout, including holding decision makers to account?
- How will CYP be given developmentally- appropriate and accessible feedback on the impact of their participation, in a timely manner?

Participation and Engagement Recording Form.

Participation Activity:			
Date:		Service/Staff Member:	
	You Said/Took Part In:		
	We did:		
	Impact:		
Next Steps:			