



G-Force

Participation forum mini-manual

Background

In March 2012, G-Force organised a forum on the participation of children and young people in the child protection system. The forum was called 'Voices in Action' because young people said that they wanted the forum to be proactive and action orientated, not a talk-fest. The aim of the forum was to promote the updated G-Force edition of the *Children and Young People's Participation Strategy* (the strategy) and energise and inspire workers about participation.

We think we achieved this aim because feedback from the 80 participants from the forum told us they feel inspired about participation and now have some great ideas that they can put into action in their own workplaces. They said:

- Well done! Great facilitation and format. One of the best forums I've been to. Actually THE best! Kudos to the entire planning committee of G-Force.
- Participation in activities was a great way of getting people to think about PARTICIPATION!!
- An excellent day – much food for thought and implementation for the benefit of children and young people.
- Cultural change!!
- Keep up the good work – positive vibe and enthusiasm.
- Brilliant!
- Well done – very helpful, gave me lots to think about and DO!
- Great to interact with people from a range of professions. Very well organised, relevant topics, would be good to invite magistrate who makes decisions for children. Need a set of tools that child safety officers can use at a state-wide level.
- I really enjoyed the whole forum and I found the young consultants amazing.
- Well organised and facilitated – needs to progress into actions.
- Would have liked to have seen the tools in action. Well done – thank you.
- Good use of a variety of inclusive approaches – formal and informal and a bit of fun. Thank you!

Purpose of the participation forum mini-manual

The purpose of the mini-manual is to provide workers with a tool to run participation forums in their local communities and put the strategy into action. We hope that these ideas are helpful but don't hesitate to make them yours. You might like to mix and match the activities or try new activities. You could also run the forum over a day or just for a few hours. It's completely up to you! Best of luck and let us know how it goes!



Contents of the mini-manual

Resources to run a participation forum:

1. Lessons and helpful hints for event organisers
2. Voices in Action Run Sheet
3. Participation data sheet
4. Energisers
5. Scenarios
6. Panel questions for young people
7. Participation passport
8. Action plan template
9. Quiz and evaluation forms

Lessons and helpful hints for event organisers

A forum on a shoestring ...

Our forum was big and we had around 80 people participate. We were able to access some funding which was great and this went on catering, to pay the CREATE Young Consultants and purchase resources (that is, printing postcards and buying the usbs for the Participation Toolkit).

A forum could definitely be run on a smaller scale with limited or no resources – after all, a small group of committed people can change the world!

What worked:

The involvement of CREATE Young Consultants was really important for the success of the day. Feedback from participants showed that they found the contributions from young people were inspiration and powerful. However, preparation and support of the young people was important – they were supported to unpack their experiences, think about what they wanted to say and talk about what worked for them.

Our facilitator was skilled and experienced and this was important to keep our large forum of 80 people moving.

We spent time planning the day with the facilitator and making sure that the table facilitators (or small group facilitators) understood the activities and encouraged participation.

A variety of activities kept participants engaged and energetic.



What we would do differently:

The young people provided feedback that they would have liked to be more involved on the day, for example, sitting among all the participants rather than at their own table, helping with housekeeping tasks eg handing out resources, butchers paper etc. However, this depends on where each young person is at – these young people were all skilled and experienced Young Consultants and other young people may not be as confident in group.

For the panel discussion activity, we had done a lot of preparatory work with the young people and pre-prepared a number of questions and answers. As the facilitation of the panel was more free-flowing, these questions weren't asked and the young people were disappointed. Next time, we would be aware of this and have a balance between pre-prepared responses and supporting young people to respond to questions as they arise.

Feedback from participants indicated that some of the activities were rushed and more discussion time would have been beneficial, however, other participants liked the pace and variety of activities.

Voices in Action – Run Sheet

Name of event

Time

Date

Venue

Time	Activity	Who	Resources (inc who) ¹
8.00 – 9.00	Set up		Microphone and audio equipment Whiteboard Whiteboard markers & eraser Lap top & data projector Lollies Water
9.00 – 9.30	Welcome and registration Welcome people as they arrive, hand out name badges and ask them to fill in the registration list		Tea & coffee Registration sign in form Coloured names on badges
9.30	Official welcome Facilitator to welcome everyone to the day and introduce welcome to country	Facilitator	
9.33	Welcome to country		
9.40	Welcome by host of venue or host of workshop	Host	
9.45	Purpose and overview Facilitator to explain the purpose of the day: 1. To promote the Children and Young People’s Participation Strategy. 2. To energise and inspire the sector about participation. 3. To explore with participants across the sector about how we can apply the participation strategy in our respective organisations.	Facilitator	Powerpoint Participation strategies ²

¹ Use this column to list who is responsible for bringing equipment and organising activities.

² These can be accessed from Community Door.

Time	Activity	Who	Resources (inc who) ¹
	<p><i>Name badges</i></p> <p>Facilitator to ask participants to look at the colour of the writing on their name badge.</p> <p>Facilitator to ask participants to move to the table where the cardboard is the same colour of the writing on their badge. That is, people with blue writing move to sit at the table with the blue cardboard. Facilitator to ask participants to reflect on how it felt to move from where they were sitting (possibly with people they know to sit with people they don't know) without having any choice or say. Facilitator to make analogy between this and the experience of children and young people in care.</p> <p>Facilitator to provide an overview of the activities of the day.</p> <p>Facilitator to explain that there will be a quiz at the end of the day about participant's knowledge of the strategy.</p> <p>Facilitator to mention that a 'Participation Toolkit' USB will be distributed at the end of the day when participants hand in their quiz and evaluation forms.</p>		Coloured cardboard
9.48	<p>Welcome from CREATE Young Consultant</p> <p>Young Consultant to introduce the day from his/her perspective.</p>	Young consultant	
10.00	<p>About participation and the strategy</p> <p>Worker to provide a summary of the theory behind participation and a snapshot of the strategy including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – why participation is important and its benefits – legislation in Queensland (and policy) – data about how young people describe their participation in the child protection system in Queensland – key messages and themes within the strategy. 	Appropriate worker	<p>Powerpoint presentation³</p> <p>Data sheet for each table (12)</p>
10.20	Energiser	Facilitator	
10.30	<p>Intro to Q + A panel session</p> <p>Facilitator to introduce the concept of the panel session and ask participants to write down questions (and hand to table facilitators) that they would like to ask after morning tea. The primary focus of the panel is the question of how to engage disenfranchised young people.</p>	<p>Facilitator</p> <p>Table facilitators</p>	Sticky notes

³ The powerpoint can be access from Community Door.

Time	Activity	Who	Resources (inc who) ¹	
11.45	<p>Another perspective from a CREATE Young Consultant</p> <p>Young Consultant to talk about participation from his/her perspective.</p>	Young Consultant		
11.55	<p>Q + A panel discussion: Engaging young people</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p> <p>1. To explore best practice in engaging disenfranchised young people from different perspectives including young people, non-government workers and departmental officers.</p> <p><i>Activity:</i></p> <p>Facilitator to remind participants about boundaries when asking questions, particularly of young people. Facilitator to chair a question and answer session using prepared questions as well as questions nominated prior to morning tea. Facilitator to also take questions and comments from the floor.</p>	<p>Facilitator</p> <p>CREATE Young Consultants</p> <p>Panel members: eg CSSC rep, youth worker, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worker</p>	<p>Prepared questions esp for young people</p> <p>Invite panel members</p> <p>Bios for panel members</p>	
12.55	Lunch		Lunch	
			Tea & coffee	
1:40	<p>Welcome back from lunch</p> <p>Facilitator to welcome everyone back from lunch and mention that as there is no break for afternoon tea, everyone is welcome to help themselves to tea, coffee and snacks throughout the afternoon.</p>	Facilitator	Snacks	
	Energiser	Facilitator		
1.55	<p>Another perspective from a CREATE Young Consultant</p> <p>Young Consultant to talk about participation from his/her perspective.</p>	Young Consultant		
2.00	<p>Making participation part of our work</p> <p><i>Setting the scene:</i></p> <p>Facilitator to summarise the day so far ie we have talked about the nature and importance of participation; systemic and practice issues; and best practice strategies in participation. The remaining part of the day is about action – what can we do to put the strategy into practice!</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i></p> <p>1. To develop strategies on a personal, organisational and systemic level to promote the strategy and its key messages.</p>	Facilitator		

Time	Activity	Who	Resources (inc who) ¹	
	<p>values. Each participant to be given a one page sheet containing a simple action plan format – what/when/how success will be measured.</p> <p><i>Our commitment to participation:</i></p> <p><i>Post-card activity:</i> Ask each participant to take a moment of individual reflection and make three commitments to participation in their work. Ask each participate to write these commitments on a post-card (and include their name and address) which will be returned to them in three months time.</p>		Postcards and envelopes	
3.00	<p>Where to from here? <i>Purpose:</i> To discuss where to from here in terms of keeping the participation strategy on the agenda.</p>	Facilitator Forum host		
3.15	<p>Closing remarks Young Consultant to offer closing remarks.</p>	Young Consultant		
3.25	<p>Wrap-up and thank yous <i>Quiz and evaluation</i> Facilitator to ask participants to fill out the quiz and evaluation and return it to the registration desk.</p> <p>Participants to pick up their USB at the registration desk.</p>	Facilitator	Toolkit (USBs) Display table of USB contents	

Participation data sheet

CREATE Foundation (Be.Heard Reports)

These statistics are based on feedback from 108 children and young people, from two de-identified Regions, in 2011.

What are the most important areas for you to have a say about?

- The three most important areas for children and young people to have a say about were:
 1. family contact
 2. placement decisions and
 3. being consulted about decisions made by the department.
- 26.6% of children and young people reported that they have never participated in any placement decisions.

How satisfied are you with the planning process you have been involved in?

- Of the children and young people that reported having a case plan, 32% reported that they were not at all involved in planning processes and 33% reported feeling dissatisfied with their level of involvement.

Have you participated in Family Group Meetings? If so, were your views considered?

- 57.9% of children and young people reported that they were not at all involved in Family Group Meetings.
- Of those that participated in Family Group Meetings, 51.5% of children and young people reported that their views were never considered, while 19% re-ported that their views were considered very often.

Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian (Views Survey Series)

These statistics are based on the responses of 1949 children and young people in foster care ⁴ and 221 children and young people in residential care⁵ from all regions in Queensland.

Do you have a case plan? Do you know what's in it?

- 63% of young people in foster care reported having a case plan. Of these young people, 58% are unaware of what is in their case plan.
- 60% of children and young people in residential care reported having a case plan.

Do you have a say about what happens to you (i.e case planning)?

- 53% of young people in foster care reported they have a say most or all of the time, while 47% reported that they never have a say or don't have a say very often.
- 60% of children agreed they have a say about what happens to them.

Do people explain decisions made about you?

- 68% young people in foster care reported that decisions are explained to them all or most of the time, compared to 56% of children and young people in residential care.

Do people listen to what you want?

- 87% of young people report that they are listened to most or all of the time.

⁴ CCYPCG. (2010). Views of Children and Young People in Foster Care, Queensland, 2010. Brisbane: Author.

⁵ CCYPCG. (2009). Views of Young People in Residential Care, Queensland, 2009. Brisbane: Author.

Energisers

Introduce your Partner

Time: 10 – 20 minutes, depending on group size.

1. Ask participants to pair up with someone that they don't know – encourage movement.
2. Ask participants to find out a number of pieces of information about their partner, for example:
 - name
 - occupation/role
 - where they live
 - favourite hobby
 - major likes/dislikes
 - greatest fear/ambition
3. Ask each participant to introduce his or her partner to the group.

Team Building Icebreaker Steps

- Divide the meeting participants into groups of four or five people by having them number off. (You do this because people generally begin a meeting by sitting with the people they already know best.)
- Tell the newly formed groups that their assignment is to find ten things they have in common, with every other person in the group, that have nothing to do with work. (I tell people no body parts (we all have legs; we all have arms) and no clothing (we all wear shoes, we all wear pants). This helps the group explore shared interests more broadly.)
- Tell the groups that one person must take notes and be ready to read their list to the whole group upon completion of the assignment.
- Ask for a volunteer to read their whole list of things in common first. Then, ask each group to share their whole list with the whole group. Because people are your best source for laughter and fun, the reading of the lists always generates a lot of laughter and discussion. You can also catch the drift of the conversation in the small groups based on the transitions made from item to item.
- This team building icebreaker takes 10 – 15 minutes, depending on the number of groups. To keep the activity to ten minutes, after seven minutes of brainstorming together, I usually tell the groups that the lists they have created are perfect, no matter how many items they have, and debrief.

Scenarios

Scenario 1 – ‘Danni’

Danni was brought into a child safety service centre by her mother who no longer wanted to care for her. Danni said that she didn't want to live with her mother but she wanted to live with her brother in Tasmania or sister in Brisbane. At the time, Danni's sister was 17 years of age with no stable accommodation, and more information was needed about Danni's brother's ability to care for her.

Danni has now been in care for four years, is active in having her say about the next child protection order the department is considering and has a direct representative. A long term guardianship order is being applied for in the court and Danni wants to return to her mum's care. Danni has started absconding from her placement, couch surfing, and sometimes stays at her mum's house. Danni states that no one listens to her and she just wants to be with her mum.

Scenario 2 – ‘Tom’

Tom has a number of disabilities and his mum placed Tom in care when he was 15 years old. He received 24 hour youth worker support up until his 18th birthday. Tom would often ask to see his mother and siblings and get upset when his mother would not visit. He would also ask for more freedom to do things on his own and manage his own diet/food without youth workers. When Tom was told the youth worker would continue to monitor his diet (as directed by his doctors), he would get angry and try to hurt himself.

Tom was excited about turning 18 because he thought it was a sign of independence and he would no longer need youth workers to manage his dietary intake. Prior to his 18th birthday, Tom's child safety officer worked with services and other government departments to prepare for Tom's transition to independence. However, on his 18th birthday, Tom was still waiting for accommodation that would support his disability.

Scenario 3 – ‘Jamie’

Jamie is 16 years old and had a placement breakdown two weeks ago because he was violent towards another child in his foster home. Jamie had been in the placement for one and a half years. Jamie has often slept on the streets and is known to take illicit substances. Jamie has an on-off, sporadic relationship with his father and aunt.

A family group meeting has been called by a new FGM convenor. Jamie's family has refused to attend because they are angry about his behaviour in the placement. When Jamie arrives at the FGM with his agency worker, he is introduced to the new convenor. The new convenor tells him that his views are important and he will be listened to. Jamie says that he does not want to be there. He is told again that he needs to be part of the FGM and will be listened to. He repeats that he does not want to be there.

Scenario 4 – From an agency

Our organisation usually encourages all children and young people to participate in writing their case plans. We wonder if this is a good thing though or whether we just do it because it is the right thing to do. We worry that involving young people in writing their case plans could be damaging to them because the documents aren't youth friendly and because there is sometimes information in there about their backgrounds that may not be positive.

Panel questions for young people

1. **What is participation to you? Is it different for kids in care and kids who are not in care?**
2. **Do you feel like you participated when you were in care?**
3. **What impact has not participating had on you as an adult?**
4. **How does hearing the discussion today make you feel?**
5. **What are your tips and advice for workers and children and young people?**

Participation passport

Participation Passport		
1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

Participation Passport		
1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

Participation Passport		
1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

Participation Passport		
1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

Participation Passport		
1.	2.	3.
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Participation Passport		
1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

Participation Passport		
1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

Participation Passport		
1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

Action plan template

Implementing the Children and Young People’s Participation Strategy

What can I do to implement the strategy within my sphere of influence?	How can this be achieved?	Who else is involved?	When should it be done by?

Quiz and evaluation forms

Voices in Action Forum

QUIZ

Question 1

Participation of children and young people can be focussed on matters and decisions that relate to them as individuals or to them as a group.

TRUE or FALSE?

Question 2

What is an example of a formal approach to participation?

Question 3

What are the four (4) approaches or pathways to participation identified by research?

Question 4

Children and young people's participation is optional.

TRUE or FALSE?

Question 5

**Structures and processes used by adults for decision-making can be a _____
to children and young peoples participation.**

FILL IN THE BLANK

Voices in Action Forum

EVALUATION SHEET

Please give a rating on a scale of 1 – 5 with a rating of 1 representing 'I strongly disagree with the statement' and 5 representing 'I strongly agree with the statement'.

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
The day was informative and interesting and relevant to my role	1	2	3	4	5

Comment:

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
The duration of the sessions were appropriate & there was adequate time to present the material & work through scenarios	1	2	3	4	5

Comment:

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
There was adequate time to have questions answered	1	2	3	4	5

Comment:

	Strongly disagree				Strongly agree
I have a better understanding of what participation is and how to promote & champion this in my role in the future	1	2	3	4	5

Comment:

Overall

	Poor				Excellent
My overall rating of the forum is	1	2	3	4	5

Comment:

Thank you for your attendance today!