



Youth participation: getting started

When you decide to take youth participation on board, it is essential that you develop a strategy and set yourself targets to make it happen. It is important to bring young people into the process as early as possible and before your ideas are too far developed. The following steps may help you implement your plans.

- Step 1:** Get other people with a passion for youth participation involved - youth participation cannot be achieved by one person alone. Build your allies; hopefully these will include senior decision makers within your organisation, youth workers who will support young people to get involved and young volunteers who are keen to help you bring about this change.
- Step 2:** Assess achievements so far and strengths within your organisation.
- Step 3:** Set goals for raising awareness about youth participation within your organisation, with trustees, staff, volunteers and young people.
- Step 4:** Develop a vision with young people, staff and volunteers from your organisation. What would your organisation look like if young people were more actively involved? What activities and services would it offer?
- Step 5:** Identify what resources and opportunities you have at present.
- Step 6:** Meet with young people, either when you visit their projects or by inviting them to come together. Explain your ideas and what resources there are available, and explore with them possible areas that they want to get involved in.
- Step 7:** Work with young people to prioritise ideas and areas of work that they can get involved in according to resources available and organisational priorities.
- Step 8:** Identify groups with special needs in the area, for example disabled young people or those from ethnic minority backgrounds, and plan ways to encourage them to take part.
- Step 9:** Take action - no matter how small the step or the project. Test the waters and see where youth participation takes you.
- Step 10:** Provide training and support for young people and adult staff and volunteers.
- Step 11:** Be open and frank at all times. If there are problems explain them as fully as possible. Young people are far more likely to help solve problems if they think people are being open and honest.
- Step 12:** Review and evaluate. Is there enough support for yourself and your allies? Do you need to alter your targets? Have real changes taken place in the organisation? But whatever happens, make sure that you celebrate all the positive developments that have taken place - this will encourage yourself and others.

These 12 steps to getting started in youth participation are taken from NCVYS's forthcoming youth participation toolkit for local voluntary youth networks. For more information please contact us on 020 7278 1041 or mail@ncvys.org.uk

