

**Supporting youth
participation in
local democracy
through the
youth voice
vehicle**

a handbook for
practitioners



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What is this handbook for?

This is NOT another guide to young people's participation...

- This handbook has been developed to accompany the guide, '[Measuring the Impact and Success of Your Youth Voice Vehicle \(BYC, 2012\)](#)'. It is aimed at managers, practitioners and elected members involved in delivering a youth voice structure within a local authority setting. We don't want to reinvent the wheel – we know there are plenty of participation guides out there, including our own series on how to set up and operate models of youth councils, young mayors and local youth parliaments, and this handbook will signpost you to some of them.

We expect that if you are reading this handbook you already have a commitment to developing and supporting young people's participation to enable them to have a strong voice in local decision making. You are probably either:

- Employed (paid or unpaid) to support young people's participation in decision making in your area.
- A local authority manager or commissioner with strategic responsibility for ensuring young people have a voice in decision making.
- An elected member of a local authority with a leadership role in supporting young people's participation in decision making.

The handbook is designed to be a simple reference for you to find:

- Information - on things you need to think about as you involve young people in decision making in your area.
- Case studies - so you can see some real life examples.
- Links to guides and websites that can help you.
- Support - as you fill in the self assessment in '[Measuring the Impact and Success of Your Youth Voice Vehicle](#)'

How does this handbook work?

We have written this handbook to mirror the toolkit '[Measuring the Impact and Success of Your Youth Voice Vehicle](#)', so that the two documents can be easily used together. Each section will give the definition of key words and actions along with questions you may want to consider, a case study to show what we mean using an example and lots of links to the great range of resources out there for you to use. In the **appendix** there are links to lots of **general resources on participation**.

What is a ‘Youth Voice Vehicle’?¹

We acknowledge that ‘Youth Voice Vehicle’ (YVV) is a clunky term, and we are pretty sure that nobody out there actually uses it to describe the mechanisms available to hear young people’s voices locally. However, in order to write this handbook we needed a generic term that could encompass all the different, creative forms that young people’s participation takes. We know you may be using one or several of these models:

- Young Commissioners
- Councillor Shadowing
- Youth Council for Disabled Young people
- Young People Scrutiny Panel
- Young Mayors
- Youth Steering Groups Boards
- Children and Young People’s Advisory Boards
- Youthbank
- Locally based Youth Council/Forum/Cabinet
- Authority wide Youth Council/Forum/Cabinet
- UK Youth Parliament
- Children in Care Councils

All of these are fantastic ways of involving young people in decision making, and we do not want to give the impression that BYC (or the Government) has one chosen model they think is better than the rest. That’s why we use the term Youth Voice Vehicle throughout this handbook – but we urge you not to change the name of your own body!

What we mean by YVV is:

- A body that covers the whole or part of a local authority area, possibly by drawing together more local and special interest young people’s forums.
- A body whose membership is representative of and accountable to the youth population of the local authority area.

¹ Extract from Measuring the Impact and Success of Your Youth Voice Vehicle (BYC 2012)

- A body with a broad spread of interests and priorities that reflect the demands of the youth population as a whole.
- A body which is recognised by the local authority and other decision makers as representing young people’s voices across the area.
- A body where young people speak directly to adult decision makers through consultations, scrutiny processes etc.

Why is this important, and what difference does the YVV make?

The Government, in ‘Positive for Youth’ the cross-government policy for young people aged 13- 19 (December 2011), has stated clearly:

Young people should be given the metaphorical keys to the town hall, so that they are able to put forward their views and know that these are welcomed, valued, and taken into account. There are many ways in which to do this. The Government does not mind what approach is used, but would like to see recognised representatives of local young people properly consulted and involved.²

This reflects the Government’s commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the importance of involving young people in making decisions on matters that affect them.

The Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People’s Wellbeing (June 2012) also underlines that commitment;

Local authorities must take steps to ascertain the views of young people and to take them into account in making decisions about services and activities for them, in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). They should establish and maintain structured arrangements for doing so. To inform continuous improvement, these arrangements should enable young people to inspect and report at least annually on the quality and accessibility of provision. As appropriate they should also be involved actively in service design, delivery and governance. Young people should receive the

² Positive for Youth (December 2011) Page 66

support they need to participate, ensuring representation of the full diversity of local young people, and those who may not otherwise have a voice³

Principles and values

We are reproducing these principles from the toolkit '[Measuring the Impact and Success of Your Youth Voice Vehicle](#)', as we think they are important and should always be considered when planning. They are the set of principles which we believe should inform the involvement of young people in decision making.

- Young people have the *opportunity* to be involved in making decisions on what their involvement should be and which vehicle is used.
- YVVs should have a clear *vision and purpose*, shared by young people and understood by the local authority and support providers.
- Local authorities should recognise the value of involving young people in decision making at a strategic level, and make *sufficient resources* available to support their involvement.
- YVVs should be *inclusive* of young people from different backgrounds and with different needs, and should ensure that their ways of working do not exclude or discriminate against specific groups.
- YVVs should be *representative of the diversity* of the young people living in the local authority area.
- Adults involved in supporting, advising and liaising with YVVs should fully *understand and support the processes of young people's involvement*.
- Young people should be involved in developing and deciding on appropriate *resources, support and training* required to establish a productive environment for young people's participation.
- YVVs and local authorities should be *outward focused* and draw on good practice in other settings and organisations.
- YVVs and local authorities should regularly *assess the impact* of young people's involvement to ensure that investment in young people's voice is making a difference to young people's lives.
- YVVs and local authorities should be able to *articulate the benefits* they have seen from involving young people in decision making.

³ Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Wellbeing

Representative

What does this mean?

Young people become a **representative** when they are **elected** by their peers onto the YVV (for a specified period) and given the responsibility of acting in other people's interest. This does not mean they act for each person who voted for them, nor necessarily always in the way they think those people might want them to vote, but with enough authority to vote on issues in a way that they think reflects the views and needs of all their constituents. This means a representative needs to think about all the people they represent, especially those from vulnerable groups, and, in turn, how they will be **accountable** back to them.

YVVs offer an opportunity for young people to be represented. To be a **representative** body the YVV needs to have a **transparent recruitment and election process**. Young people must be aware how they can get involved, as a candidate or as a voter. There may be a number of **barriers** to young people getting involved. What are those barriers in your area? What can you do to remove them? Is information easily available to young people, is it clear how they can get support?

How do you organise an **election**? This is something that people think about and worry about. There are lots of ways of organising elections and how you do it depends on the resources available to you to run them. Involving schools and colleges and targeting groups that work with under-represented groups through outreach and publicity can help increase the turnout and make the YVV **representative**. Another useful resource could be the Electoral Services Department of the Local Authority. It is important that elections are fair and transparent and seen to be so. Fair elections are something that people get concerned about so whatever process you use, whether it be a traditional paper ballot or online voting, make sure the voting method is secure.

Accessibility is something you will need to consider. In deciding where and when meetings and other events are held think about how members will get there, is public transport available? Can young people get into the building, is the right equipment available? Can young people contribute online?

You should also be making sure that young people with additional and particular needs can participate both in elections and in the YVV and **barriers** to their participation are removed, e.g. are care requirements met? What about written information for those with basic skills needs – could posters and pictures be used?

Case study

Hillingdon

The Youth Council is an elected body and has quarterly meetings with the Chief Executive of the Council. At these meetings young people from the Youth Council had the opportunity to look at the policies that had been agreed by the Council.

The Youth Council decided that it wasn't enough that the council just sent through policies for them to see and expressed the view that we would like to be involved earlier in the development of those policies to make sure the voice of young people in Hillingdon was considered from the beginning.

How?

To make the involvement of young people more meaningful it was agreed that representatives from council departments would meet the Youth Council on a monthly basis. To put this in place the Youth Council used the relationship they had with the Chief Executive. We also put a request through the Youth Service management team to be part of the decision making process.

The Head of Youth Services raised this with Corporate Management and between them they got agreement for the monthly meetings with representatives from 11 departments. The meetings are governed by agreed terms of reference.

[For full case study click here](#)

Resources and links – further reading and references to assist you

Name	Description / content/ abstract	Format	Where can I find it?
Representative, representation, elections, accessibility, barriers			
How 2 be an effective representative	Guide for young people on acting as a representative	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-centre/training-materials.aspx
Barriers to participation	Youth led research looking at barriers young people identify they face	Downloadable resource	http://www.nwrywu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/NWRYWU-Research-Report-Improving-Participation-in-the-North-West-version-for-distribution.pdf
How 2 Remove Barriers that prevent young people from getting involved in activities	A guide to making activities more accessible	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-download-log.aspx?doc=/media/17367/How%20%20Guide%20-%20How%20%20remove%20barriers%20that%20prevent%20young%20people%20from%20getting%20involved%20in%20activities.pdf
How to support inclusive groups in schools and other education settings	A quick guide to inclusive working	Purchasable resource	http://www.participationworks.org.uk/resources/how-to-support-inclusive-groups-in-schools-and-other-educational-settings
Team building activities	A range of activities to help build your youth voice vehicle members into a team	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-centre/training-materials.aspx
How to support disabled and non-disabled children	This guide will help workers who want to ensure that the groups they are	Downloadable resource	http://www.participationworks.org.uk/resources/how-to-support-disabled-and-

and young people to work together	working with are inclusive by providing support and advice		non-disabled-children-and-young-people-to-work-together-in-inc
How to involve children and young people with communication impairment in decision making	This guide will help workers working with children and young people with communication impairment	Downloadable resource	http://www.participationworks.org.uk/resources/how-to-involve-children-and-young-people-with-communication-impairments-in-decision-making
Making ourselves heard	Making Ourselves Heard will be of interest to those working with children and young people in both universal and specialist settings who wish to ensure that they are doing all that they can to effectively engage with and involve disabled children and young people	Purchasable resource	http://www.participationworks.org.uk/resources/making-ourselves-heard
Challenges of working in multi-cultural teams	This report explores which kinds of challenges are common across teams in general and which maybe unique to multicultural teams	Downloadable resource	http://web.gsm.uci.edu/~kbehfar/papers/managing.pdf
How to support and develop an effective youth council	A guide to support, develop and sustain local youth councils – including parish and community councils	Downloadable resource	http://byc.org.uk/media/15035/Supporting and Developing an Effective Local Youth Council.pdf
UKYP Elections	Information and guidance on UKYP elections	Website	http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/elections
Your Community Uncovered	A guide on finding and using information about your local area	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/media/15275/You+r+Local+Community+Uncovered.pdf

Accountability

What does this mean?

How **accountable** is the YVV in your area? When we ask about **accountability** we are asking how answerable the YVV is to **young people** in your local authority area. Do the young people in the area know what the purpose of the YVV? Is there a **manifesto** or work plan they can look at and comment on?

A **manifesto** is produced by the YVV to set out what direction it will go in and what the priorities are it will work on. For example, the priority may be campaigning for lower public transport costs. A **manifesto** can be published and circulated so that young people know what the YVV will be doing on their behalf. It means the young people can ask the YVV questions about how far they have got in their work and how successful they have been – the YVV can be **held to account** for their actions on behalf of young people in the area.

It is good practice for the YVV to **consult** with young people in the local area on what should be in the **manifesto** and on other issues. If questions come up on significant issues it is likely that the YVV will want to **consult** the young people they represent. Consultation can be undertaken in lots of ways. It is important that people understand what a **consultation** is – an opportunity to give an opinion on an issue or decision that will affect you. It involves finding out what people's views are as well as their perceived needs/wants and demands.

It doesn't mean the people **consulting** will necessarily do what the people being **consulted** want. It is part of being representative and ensuring a wide range of views are listened to and considered before a decision is made. If the YVV does **consult** it is very important that they **feedback** to the people who took part in the **consultation** and explain the decision made and why they made that decision.

The YVV needs to be sure it is liaising with other youth forums (e.g. district forums and special interest groups such as Children in Care Councils) so there is a clear communication channel for views and decisions to be shared between the different groups.

It is very useful to have a **communications strategy** to help the YVV be **accountable** and to be in touch with other forums. Developing a **communications strategy** will help you think through what you want and need to communicate and the best way to do it. A communications strategy might include:

- regular publication of priorities and achievements
- web-site regularly updated with interactive consultation opportunities
- advertised and specified ways for young people to contact their representatives
- creative and appropriate use of new social media to promote the activities of the YVV
- mailing list of supporters/member organisations who are regularly asked for their views
- engaging with schools, colleges and academies
- annual report on activities
- agreed protocols for media engagement by YVV
- targets for positive media mentions for YVV activities

The Press department of the local authority is a very useful contact as it is important that they understand the work of the YVV and support young people in getting their message out. They can play a crucial role in supporting young people to get the YVV message across.

Case studies

Wiltshire

Wiltshire Assembly of Youth (WAY) is an elected group of 22 young people from across Wiltshire who represent young people's views and make sure young people are listened to. In 2009 WAY ran a large scale consultation with young people across the county through online surveys, face to face focus groups and school and youth group workshops to help set the

priorities for the current Agenda for Action. WAY took responses from over 3,000 young people to a series of open questions. This gave them the top four issues to be worked on for a 3 year period. They were: Transport, Life Opportunities, the Environment and Health, in particular **mental health and emotional wellbeing**. The Voice & Influence team supported WAY with resources and time and enabled them to reach groups of young people who might ordinarily be missed from other consultations e.g. looked after, disabled and NEET.

What?

Using the information gathered through the consultation WAY approached the Voice & Influence team with the idea of holding a conference to promote mental health awareness and to improve services and support for children and young people across Wiltshire. WAY wanted an event where young people could meet with a range of mental health professionals, Local Authority workers, Commissioners and other key decision makers. They decided to develop a **Be Kind to Your Mind Mental Health**.

Conference

The aim of the conference was to develop a Young Minds Matter Charter which would help raise awareness of the impact of mental health issues on young people, guide professionals working with young people on how to talk about and address mental health, make it an accessible topic and to challenge the stigma associated with mental health disorders. WAY wanted the Charter to be introduced into schools, youth centres and voluntary sector youth groups as well as to get buy-in from local health care providers (GPs, schools nurses, counsellors, healthy schools team workers, and Young Minds representatives etc).

[For the full case study click here](#)

Sandwell

Sandwell's Shadow Youth Cabinet and Youth Parliament regularly consults with young people on priorities and significant issues, and regularly liaises with other youth forums (e.g. district forums, special interest groups).

The YVV has a clear Communications Strategy which includes:

- regular publication of priorities and achievements
- website regularly updated with interactive consultation opportunities
- creative and appropriate use of new social media to promote the activities of the YVV
- mailing list of supporters/member organisations who are regularly asked for their views
- engaging with schools, colleges and academies
- annual report on activities
- agreed protocols for media engagement by YVV
- targets for positive media mentions for YVV activities

[For the full case study click here](#)

Resources and links – further reading and references to assist you

Name	Description / content/ abstract	Format	Where can I find it?
Accountability, manifesto, consultation, communication			
The British Youth Council Manifesto	An example of a youth council manifesto	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-centre/byc-manifesto.aspx
Young Researchers guide to Publicity	A guide to generating publicity about your work	Downloadable resource	http://nya.org.uk/dynamic_files/YRN%20Guide%20to%20Publicity.pdf
How to write a press release	A sample press release and guide to writing them	Website	http://www.amnesty.ca/youth/youth_action_toolkit/how_to_write_press_release.php
Planning Tools; How to write a communications strategy	Toolkit for developing a communications strategy	Downloadable resource	http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=5186&title=communications-strategy-planning
Engaging young people in evaluation and consultation	A report looking at effective methods for consulting with young people	Downloadable resource	http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/er_res_engaging_young_people_uk.pdf
Young People in Research, how to involve us	A guide to supporting young people to research issues that affect them	Downloadable resource	http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/111093/peer_guidelines.pdf
Young Researchers Network	A network for young people acting as researchers	Network and downloadable resources	http://www.nya.org.uk/integrated-youth-support-services/young-researcher-network

Independence

What does this mean?

The most effective YVVs are **independent**. This is an area where there may be disputes and tensions with the local authority so it is very important to have discussions on the level of independence of the YVV from the local authority. An independent YVV will be able to act according to its own rules and not be told by adults what it can discuss and focus on. This can sometimes create tension if the YVV is campaigning on issues that are not a priority for the local authority or challenge a decision the local authority has made.

To be as independent as possible the YVV should have a **constitution** or **terms of reference**. These act as rules for the YVV and set out how it operates, the roles of elected officers and the **powers** it has. It is important to get these agreed with the local authority, because, by being clear about what powers the YVV has, young people can be confident in getting on and representing the youth population. All new members of the YVV should understand and accept the constitution, so make sure it is part of the induction of new members. It is good practice to keep a constitution and/or terms of reference under review to keep it relevant and fit for purpose.

Another way for the YVV to be independent is for them to have their own **bank account**. This gives young people the opportunity to raise money through **applying for grants** and taking part in **fundraising activities**. The YVV can then spend the money on what it thinks is important. If the YVV has its own bank account there are things you need to consider, e.g. who signs cheques, how many signatures should you have, how is expenditure recorded and how will it be reported on? You might want to have something in the **constitution** on how money and bank accounts will be managed.

A key indicator of independence is being able to put out your own press releases and speak to the press. This is another good reason to have a clear and agreed **communications strategy**. This is sometimes an area where YVVs find they can not be as independent as they wish. Local authorities work hard to make sure they have a coherent and approved message about their services and workforce and although a YVV may be held to be independent, a local authority may require that press releases

and interviews with the media are put through their Press/Media Department as they feel the comments and opinions of a YVV may reflect on them as a body. Often the youth workers supporting the YVV are local authority workers and also bound by their policies. There are no easy answers to this and every case will be different, but we believe young people should be able to express their views freely, and within same constraints as any elected representative would have in a democracy.

It is important that this is discussed at senior level, and has senior-level buy in from the local authority and that support is sought for the YVV to have an independent voice and communications strategy. A positive relationship with the Press department is helpful as they will have a lot of contacts and useful expertise. As they and the rest of the local authority become more confident in the YVV it may be possible to increase their independence in dealing with the media.

Case studies

York

York Youth Council is a group of young people from all over the city who represent the voice of young people in York. They work to make a difference and positive change for the young people of York. Young people 11 – 18 years can get involved. Every secondary school, youth group and college in the York City Council area is encouraged to send two or more representatives to be part of the Youth Council.

What?

A demonstration of the independence of York Youth Council is that it has its own constitution that governs the way it works and operates. The Youth Council also has its own bank account that enables it to fundraise to support the work it wants to do and its campaigns.

[For full case study click here](#)

Tower Hamlets

What?

The Tower Hamlets Youth Council created and delivered a borough-wide 'Hidden Hero' event aimed at celebrating the achievements of individual young people. These are young people who have excelled or overcome personal hardships to achieve their dreams/goals in life, nominated by their peers and youth workers.

The youth council wanted to put on an event but wasn't sure of what it would be about. The group brainstormed, and the initial idea was inspired by the Mayor of Tower Hamlets celebration event for young people who had done well in their exams. The group felt that although this was a very worthwhile event, not enough was being done to celebrate those who may not necessarily have achieved great grades but had overcome personal barriers and hardships to achieve in their chosen area, e.g. those with a physical or mental disability and those who were young carers or had had a troubled background.

[For full case study click here](#)

Resources and links – further reading and references to assist you

Name	Description / content/ abstract	Format	Where can I find it?
constitution, terms of reference, bank accounts, applying for grants, fundraising, communication			
Writing a constitution	A guide to writing a constitution for an organisation	Downloadable resource	http://www.grantnet.com/HelpfulReports/writingaconstitution.pdf
Write a constitution	A guide to writing constitutions	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-download-log.aspx?doc=/media/17370/How%20%20Guide%20-%20How%20%20Write%20a%20Constitution.pdf
Model Terms of Reference	Model Terms of reference for a group or committee	Downloadable resource	http://www.hertsdirect.org/infobase/docs/worddocs/ctteetsofref0507.doc
Opening a bank account	A guide to opening a bank account for a constituted group	Website	http://cvswl.org/opening-a-bank-account.html
Funding Central	A website providing information on upcoming grants and funding and advice on applying	Website	http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/Default.aspx
O2 Think Big	A funding scheme for youth led activities	Funding scheme	http://www.o2thinkbig.co.uk/
Youth in Action	A European Funding scheme for youth projects	Funding scheme	http://www.britishcouncil.org/youthinaction.htm
Oldham Youth Council	An example of a Youth Council constitution	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/media/15023/Oldham+Youth+Council+Constitution.pdf

Support

What does this mean?

For the YVV to work well, it needs to work out what sort of **support** it needs and how much. Much of this support will probably come from the local authority, so the package of support should be **negotiated** when the YVV is set up and then reviewed annually. This is because the YVV might be asked to do more or less work; the local authority may have financial challenges and have to consider reducing budgets. All these reasons to reduce support may be very valid, however the amount of support the YVV receives will affect its ability to fulfill the role it has and avoid tokenism.

Young people should receive the support they need to participate, ensuring representation of the full diversity of local young people, and those who may not otherwise have a voice.⁴

Support can mean a number of different things and should not always be seen as money. It could be that the local authority is happy to offer meeting space and office accommodation for the YVV. This is **in-kind** support and can cover lots of other things such as phones, access to email and equipment.

Often the **support** young people in the YVV find most useful is that of experienced and skilled **youth workers**. **Youth workers** can support the development of the YVV, **run elections**, act on the decisions made by young people, make sure young people have information and are aware of opportunities available to them. As well as supporting the YVV organisation, youth workers can give support to individuals depending on their needs to help them play a full part in the YVV. A youth worker can deliver the **training** young people may need to understand how to be a good representative and make the YVV work. They can offer advice and help young people think through options and the impact of decisions.

⁴ Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Well-being June 2012

Elections will result in a turnover of representatives who sit on the YVV and as young people move on to new stages in their lives youth worker support can offer continuity. Although a YVV may well change and develop as different opportunities arise it is important to have a sense of the journey and understand the decisions that have been made previously.

The local authority may offer the expert help of other council officers to help young people make decisions. Often local authorities have good relationship with other organisations that run services that are used by young people such as the National Health Service or the Police. The local authority can **support** the YVV to make its own relationships with these organisations.

Local authorities should use the guidance in the context of related policy developments and reforms including Raising the Participation Age, the development of health and wellbeing boards, and the duty to develop a joint strategic needs assessment⁵. Other common areas to seek some kind of support for are **accreditation, transport, and safeguarding**.

The YVV can benefit from support to get its voice heard and decisions acted on from the local authority too. Often the voice of young people is not as loud as the voice of adult voters. The local authority can help get the YVV heard, how effectively it is heard can often depend on the amount of **political and senior level buy-in** the YVV has.

Case study

Islington

February 2012 saw the first elections held in Islington for the Youth Council. The Youth Council is made up of eight Youth Councillors elected through open elections for a two-year term. Young people able to stand for election are those aged 13-17 who live, study or are looked after in the borough. Young people aged 11-17 who live, study or are looked after could vote in elections.

⁵ Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People's Well-being June 2012

What?

Young people in the borough were able to cast their votes in the election through polling stations in secondary schools, through polling stations in two Youth Hubs and through postal votes for those schooled out of borough. Using the children's services database, households with young people who live in Islington but go to school out of borough were sent an application for a postal vote and every looked after young person who goes to school in the borough automatically got a postal vote opportunity. The election was advertised through the use of outdoor banners, flyers, website, wristbands, texts and campaign manifestos drawing on one of eight key areas decided on through consultations with young people. There was a three and a half week campaign period. As young people voted they had their hand stamped with a specially designed stamp.

[For full case study click here](#)

Resources and links – further reading and references to assist you

Name	Description / content/ abstract	Format	Where can I find it?
Support, budgets, role of youth workers, accreditation, safeguarding, transport, working with partners.			
Youth Work, an Introduction	Article discussing the role of youth work	Website	http://www.infed.org/youthwork/b-yw.htm
Act by Right	An accreditation toolkit, to measure and support young people's individual growth during a youth participation process	Purchasable resource and accreditation	http://www.nya.org.uk/catalogue/youth-work-activities/act-by-right-1
Councillor Shadowing Award	A 10 hour accredited award for young people shadowing local councillors in their communities	Accreditation	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-centre/byc-awards.aspx
Youth Voice Award	A 10 hour accredited awards for young people in representational roles	Accreditation	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-centre/byc-awards.aspx
dopolitics.org.uk	This site, from the Electoral Commission, is designed to provide easy access to materials, guidance and case studies for 'democracy practitioners' - electoral administrators, teachers, youth workers, or anyone else with an interest in democracy	Downloadable resource	http://www.dopolitics.org.uk/
Action for change	Starting with original research materials on young people and social action from the Trust for The Study of Adolescence, Will Ord and Don Rowe of the Citizenship Foundation have	Purchasable activity pack	http://www.nya.org.uk/catalogue/youth-work-activities/action-for-a-change

	created an invaluable activity pack for use in formal and non-formal settings by everyone working with young people.		
Young people and citizenship - a resource handbook for youth workers and Connexions workers (2003)	This book introduces key themes that will enable youth workers, teachers and Connexions personal advisers to develop lively and creative programmes for young people aged 11 to 16, to help and encourage them to become informed and active members of their communities.	Purchasable book	http://www.nya.org.uk/catalogue/youth-work-activities/young-people-and-citizenship-a-resource-handbook-for-youth-workers-conne
Developing Relationships with Key People	An activity to support young people to develop relationship with decision makers	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-download-log.aspx?doc=/media/17637/Activity%20idea%20-%20'Develop%20relationships%20with%20key%20people'.pdf
BYC Training	A wide variety of training resources are available from the BYC website	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-centre/training-materials.aspx
BYC training courses	A wide variety of training is available directly from BYC including to enable young people to develop skills to act effectively	Training	http://www.byc.org.uk/training-and-services/training.aspx
Keeping it Safe	NCVYS resource on developing Safeguarding	Purchasable resource	http://ncvys.org.uk/index.php?page=262
The Volunteer Recruitment Process	A guide exploring effective support around volunteering	Downloadable resource	http://www.nwrywu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Volunteer-recruitment-process.doc

Political and senior level buy-in

What does this mean?

The Government has signed up to the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** and through **Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People’s Wellbeing** and **Positive for Youth** sets out certain things for local authorities to do to make sure they listen to young people and involve them in decision making. The expectation is that there will be a YVV in every local authority but what form that takes is left to local decision making. We refer to the many different forms the YVV can take in the introductory pages of this handbook.

For young people we hope this will increase their sense of belonging, improve the services they use and increase their engagement in democratic processes. Giving young people a voice in decision making will help Local Authorities and other bodies become more responsive to the needs of young people and improve the design and delivery of services.⁶

Local authorities can demonstrate their support for young peoples’ voice by having a **strategy for listening to the views young people**. You may want to consider if the strategy covers the work of the whole council or just the Directorate for Children and Young People’s Services? There are lots of ways of writing a strategy but it should set out the vision, what does the organisation want to achieve, how it is going to achieve it, what resources are necessary and how they will know if they have been successful.

Some local authorities have an **elected member** or **senior officer** who acts as a **Young People’s Champion** and is the link between the YVV and the elected members. Having a champion at the heart of decision making can make a big difference to how much young people are listened to and to how much **power and influence** they have. It is a good idea to get as much

⁶ Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Services and Activities to Improve Young People’s Well-being June 2012

support as possible. Often organisations will commission training for senior staff, trustees and elected members on ‘how to involve young people’ and there are a number of courses available you can deliver locally.

When policies are written or changed a local authority may ask young people to **‘youth-proof’** it. **‘Youth-proofing’** involves young people having a say and questioning how policies developed by local authorities and other organisations, will affect them. It helps make sure that the needs of young people are being considered alongside those of other members of the community. This role of **youth proofing** does not mean ‘youth approved’ and is a form of **scrutiny** in advance. **Scrutiny** also looks at the impact of decisions. The Government has asked BYC to establish a national Youth Scrutiny Group that is acting as the hub to prioritise issues of concern for young people, as well as respond to the government's agenda. You may want to find out more about how this group works [here](#), and to set up a local version.

Case study

Doncaster

Doncaster Youth Council is made up of young people aged 14 - 19 who are elected through the 17 secondary schools to represent the four areas across Doncaster. These, along with other young people from school councils, minority and under-represented groups establish the full Youth Council for Doncaster.

What?

The Youth Council has good political and senior level buy in with Doncaster Council through the good relationships it has built up with the elected Mayor of Doncaster, the Director of Children’s Services and the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People. Having a place on the Children’s Trust Board and being a partner of the Trust is another way the Youth Council has buy in from politicians and senior officers. At a local level ward members work alongside members of the Youth Council to hold youth surgeries in youth spaces.

[For the full case study click here](#)

Resources and links – further reading and references to assist you

Name	Description / content/ abstract	Format	Where can I find it?
Positive for Youth, UNCRC, statutory guidance, participation strategy,			
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	A legally binding international instrument which incorporate the full range of human rights	Legislation	http://www.unicef.org/crc/
Positive for Youth	A National Government Policy statement which brings together for the first time all of the Government's policies for young people aged 13 to 19	Government policy	http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/Positive%20for%20Youth
Hear by Rights standards	A tool kit to help you provide evidence of the participation that is already happening and then to plan for strategic improvement	Downloadable /purchasable resource	http://www.nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right
Councillor Shadowing	A local councillor-shadowing programme which gives 600 young people the chance to experiencing the day-to-day role of a councillor	Programme	http://www.theyouthoftoday.org/shadow-local-councillor
Valuing Young Voices, strengthening democracy: the contribution made by youth engagement (Executive Summary and Full Report)	This report demonstrates the contribution that youth engagement makes to strengthening democracy and delivering many outcomes that communities and local authorities seek	Downloadable resource	http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=22879857
Tomorrow's people? A guide for overview and scrutiny committees about involving young	A guide for Councillors who are on scrutiny committees. It explains why engaging young people is important, illustrates the points in the scrutiny	Downloadable resource	http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=25096778

people in scrutiny	process where youth engagement can add value		
Lancashire Active Participation Strategy	Information and checklists for Councillors and Officers to consider when actively involving young people	Downloadable resources	http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/enewsviewer/index.asp?id=2011/07/12/65589&news=725&page=pr&

Power and influence

What does this mean?

For a YVV to have **power**, it will have a defined role and the capacity, or ability, to direct or **influence** the behaviour of others or the course of events.

The words power and influence are often used together but they're different. Power 'can' act or do something and influence 'hopes' to shape powers decisions. In this context by **influence** we mean young people have the capacity to have an effect on the development, or behaviour of someone or something, or the outcome itself by providing information, evidence and views.

A YVV may have a combination of limited powers and authority to influence. For example it might have been delegated formal power to make decisions on certain issues, for example small grant giving to youth services, but only influence, for example on the provision of youth transport, through scrutiny and consultation.

So the combined defined role of a YVV can include decision-making, scrutinising council policy, and being involved in commissioning. This should be an agreed role and could be part the **constitution** or **terms of reference** of the YVV so that it is transparent and is clear about the right of a YVV to make **independent** decisions.

A useful reference is BYC's report – '[Young Voices Stronger Together](#)' which maps the roles and impact of YVVs through both decision-making and consultation.

A YVV may exercise its influence by **campaigning** on issues that are important to young people in that area. E.g. If young people are campaigning to reduce leisure centre fees; they will be working in an organised and active way towards that goal. The YVV does not have the power to reduce the fees itself but it can influence the decision by making young people's views known and explaining the impact reducing the fees could have upon them.

The reach of YVV **power and influence** may extend beyond the local authority to health and police authorities where young people can make recommendations that are seriously considered. YVVs may take the opportunity to come together regionally and nationally through the work of Regional Youth Work Units, BYC, UKYP, NCVYS, Participation Works and UK Youth. It is important that young people are given feedback on the results of decisions that they have contributed to so they understand the rationale. Young people often complain of the 'consultation black hole' where they give information and views and then never hear anything back.

Youth workers providing support to a YVV need to be aware of the **power and influence** it has and how these relate to those of elected members. These and the roles need to be reflected in guidance to staff/ workers and young people so that everyone's role and authority is clear, and highlighting that the support workers are educators and facilitators of young people in the process.

Case study

Bedford

What?

A number of YVVs are involved in strategic decision making with Bedford Borough Council, through a variety of representatives on a number of boards and bodies.

How?

Young people are represented on a number of boards and bodies by having two places as decision makers on these boards plus room for observers. They are able to make presentations representing their views and consultation results gathered from youth cabinet meetings, children and young people in the Borough. Additionally they have influence via the engagement officer.

- The Youth Cabinet is represented on the Children's Trust Board
- The Children in Care Council is represented on the Corporate Parenting Board

- The LINK Young Advisors are represented on the Healthwatch Steering Group
- SuperKids Young Carers have influence at Carers Partnership Board via engagement officer representing their views / consultation results from SuperKids meetings / children and young people in the Borough

There is an annual corporate management takeover day – where up to 10 children and young people shadow the Chief Executive and Directors for a morning in the council, taking part in their corporate management group meeting. In the afternoon the young people meet with different parts of the council to interview them on child and youth topics, they have a question and answer session with the elected Mayor and Portfolio Holders.

Every term there are meetings with the Elected Mayor involving children and young people representatives from strategic projects. At these meetings they raise issues, inform and find out what the Council is looking at next.

Consultations are carried out with children and young people on various topics, i.e. Vision for Education, housing strategy, HealthWatch, statement of community involvement. The information is then fed into the formal consultation and decision making process.

[For full case study click here](#)

Resources and links – further reading and references to assist you

Name	Description / content/ abstract	Format	Where can I find it?
Campaigning , lobbying, leadership,			
Formal Meeting	This guide aims to help those who want to more effectively include children and young people in their adult-led meetings	Downloadable resource	http://www.participationworks.org.uk/resources/children-and-young-peoples-involvement-in-formal-meetings-a-practical-guide
Takeover Day	Takeover Day gives children and young people the chance to work with adults for the day and be involved in decision-making by taking over from adults for a day	Event	http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/takeover_day
Participatory Budgeting	PB support public sector and community groups in developing participatory budgeting processes in their local areas within the UK.	Organisation	http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/
Campaigning Effectiveness	NCVO's guide to effective campaigning	Downloadable resource	http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/campaigningeffectiveness
Campaign strategy	Explore ideas for structure & strategy applicable to most campaigns	Downloadable resource	http://www.campaignstrategy.org/
How to make a great student council campaign	Are you having trouble distinguishing yourself from the crowd? Boring posters and dull speeches not doing the trick? Use these tips to turn your Student Council bid into a winning campaign	Downloadable resource	http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Great-Student-Council-Campaign
Participation Works Campaigning Guide	This guide will help practitioners support children and young people to	Downloadable resource	http://www.participationworks.org.uk/resources/how-to-support-children-and-

	design, deliver and evaluate campaigns that bring about change		young-peoples-campaigning
BYC Campaigning Resources	A wide variety of resources including campaign toolkits, and campaign guides such as how to lobby your councillor	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/resource-centre/campaigning.aspx
UK Youth Campaign for change Toolkit	The Campaign for Change Toolkit aims to give disadvantaged young people the skills and opportunities to speak up to shape their services, through media and campaigning activities	Purchasable resource	http://www.ukyouthhearingunheardvoices.org/smartweb/campaign-tools/campaign-for-change-toolkit
Challenge and Lead	Challenge and Lead can help young people identify issues which are important to them, to organise a campaign, challenge decision makers and bring about change	Downloadable resource	http://nya.org.uk/dynamic_files/challandlead/Challenge%2520%26%2520Lead.pdf
Fight For Change	A toolkit to enable young people to take part in campaigns around transport, citizenship and youth opportunities	Downloadable resource	http://www.nwrywu.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Fight-for-change-Join-a-campaign.pdf

Impact

What does this mean?

How do you know the **impact** of the YVV on the lives of young people, and indeed the whole community? By impact we mean the effect and or influence that an activity or process has. This will include the young representatives as individuals as well as those they represent and everyone in the community. Young people will want to know how strong and significant their impact has been, funders will certainly want to know, and so will the local authorities or organisations the YVV has worked with.

Members of the YVV and the local authority will want to know what **outputs** and **outcomes** have been achieved so they can see the **impact** the YVV is making. By **outputs** we mean what has been created by the work of the YVV e.g. number of meetings held, the number of policies scrutinised, the number of young people voting in elections. By **outcomes** we mean the changes and benefits to young people and organisations that come about as a result of the YVV activities, e.g. how services have been improved, how the views of young people have altered a policy, if money has been saved.

There are other sorts of impact you will want to measure too. You may want to understand the impact being part of a YVV has had on individual young people, what the **outcomes** are for those young people, what the outcomes are for the wider community of young people, for specific groups and for the local authority.

These may be planned outcomes or unintended outcomes, we hope they will be positive outcomes but occasionally they may be negative. They are all part of the **feedback** that can inform the future plans of the YVV.

Impact can be measured in many ways. **Feedback** can be gathered from **surveys** i.e. a local authority **survey** of young people conducted annually can assess the impact of the YVV. **Evaluations** by users can measure the satisfaction of users of a service and identify further areas for improvement. **Data analysis** can help identify if the numbers and type of young people using a service or participating in an activity has changed as a result of the YVV.

A survey of impact was conducted by BYC in 2010 and is a useful reference: [‘Young Voices, Stronger Together’](#).

Case study

Poole

What?

Six years ago the Youth Team in Poole were given the responsibility for developing a robust participation strategy for the local authority and partners. The aim was to give young people a voice and to ensure they could influence change.

How?

To make the policy real it was developed at a strategic and an operational level. A range of different agencies, service units, and voluntary organisations formed the two working groups to contribute to the production of the Strategy, providing a practical example of agencies coming together to work. The Strategy was also shared for consultation with service units and organisations outside of Children & Young People's Services.

All departments are asked to identify targets and outcomes and to report on them. A guidance pack is available to sit alongside the strategy and this with the Workers Project Group supports practice. Practical examples of how the strategy has had an ongoing impact and feed information into strategic thinking include:

- Annual calendar of events
- Young people invited by default to local planning meetings
- Other Departments make young people's attendance priority
- Young people sit on Overview and Scrutiny Group
- Shadow Children's Board agree three priorities that the Children's Trust pledge to support
- Young People are involved in recruitment and selection

[For full case study click here](#)

Resources and links – further reading and references to assist you

Name	Description / content/ abstract	Format	Where can I find it?
What's Changed Tool	A tool for recording changes which result from young people's participation	Downloadable resource	http://www.nya.org.uk/catalogue/hear-by-right-2/whats-changed-tool-2010
Measuring the Magic	A report examining methods to evaluate the impact of youth participation	Downloadable resource	http://www.participationworks.org.uk/files/webfm/files/resources/k-items/carnegie/Measure+the+Magic.pdf
Recording Participation in Positive Activities: A Guide for Frontline Staff	A template for recording individual participation designed for Connexions Staff	Downloadable resource	http://eazysecure12a.net/nya.org.uk/dynamic_files/policy/Recording+positive+activities+-+frontline+staff17+Dec.doc
Evaluating Participation Work – The toolkit and guide	A guide to evaluating participation work	Purchasable toolkits	http://www.participationworks.org.uk/resources/evaluating-participation-work-the-toolkit-and-the-guide
Evaluating Participation Work – Evaluation in a Nutshell	This short guide breaks down the evaluation process into simple easy to follow steps.	Purchasable guide	http://www.participationworks.org.uk/resources/evaluating-participation-work-evaluation-in-a-nutshell
UKYP's Got any Change DVD and resource pack	A DVD and resource for young people explaining the impact of youth participation	DVD and resource pack	http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/gotanychange
Youth Participation, Growing up?	LGIU report on the impact of Youth Participation	Downloadable resource	http://www.partnershipforyounglondon.org.uk/data/files/Resource_Library/Equality_and_Rights/youth20participation.pdf
A Framework of Outcomes for Young People	From the Young Foundation on behalf of the Catalyst Consortium a Framework	Downloadable resource	http://www.youngfoundation.org/publications/reports/framework-outcomes-

	to help address the key challenges in measuring impact		young-people
Young People Stronger Together, BYC, 2010	This report of a survey of 145 youth councils across the UK describes youth councils and their impact	Downloadable resource	http://www.byc.org.uk/resources/research-and-reports.aspx#2237

Other resources

There are a multitude of resources and links, further reading and references to assist you, here are some of them:

Name	Description / content/ abstract	Format	Where can I find it?
British Youth Council website	The BYC website contains a wide variety of resources and case studies around youth participation, as well as more information on becoming a BYC member	Website / organisation	www.byc.org.uk
Participation Works website	This website contains a range of resources and guides around youth participation and information about participation workers networks across the country	Website / organisation	http://www.participationworks.org.uk
Participation: spice it up	Save the Children's resource book on practical activities for youth participation for children as young as 18 months	Purchasable resource	http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/participation-%E2%80%94-spice-it
UKYP website	Information on UK Youth Parliament	Website/ network	www.ukyp.org.uk
Young Mayors Network	Network for authorities running the young mayors scheme	Website/ network	http://ymn.org.uk/
Salto	Support for youth participation from a European Level	Website/ organisation	http://www.salto-youth.net/rc/participation/