








Towards a Policy On Youth Participation within NAYD



In reforming the structures of NAYD and in our commitment to the young people that we work with through our youth theatres and programme, NAYD needs to have in place a youth participation policy that truly reflects the value we place on the voices of young people being appropriately represented in NAYD.

In developing a policy on youth participation we need to clarify that participation by young people in NAYD involves young people currently involved in youth theatre in Ireland, previous members under-25 years and from time to time (depending on the programme) young people in other contexts from the formal education sector to the youth work sector.

To date NAYD has always been committed to consulting with and working with young people in the development of the organisation. This paper serves to formalise this process as we re-define the governance of NAYD. We have consulted with young people who have been involved on the Board of NAYD in the past who all agree that the most effective way in which young people can and should be consulted on the work of NAYD is through the programme.







The following serve as mechanisms for ensuring effective and appropriate future consultation:

-  Consult youth theatre members when NAYD policies or programmes are under review or when NAYD is constructing a new strategic plan;
-  Consultation should be built into project or timeline reviews and not be 'decorative' or 'tokenistic';
-  Consultations should happen on a needs basis and not automatically slot into the annual schedule to eliminate any 'tokenistic' consultations;
-  The issue/question should dictate the manner of the consultation (It may be appropriate to invite young people from all youth theatres to a consultation on the suitable age range for youth theatre members. It may be appropriate for NAYD to invite only previous NYT participants to a feed into the design of a forthcoming NYT);
-  The consultation should have integrity, that is, NAYD board members and staff should be prepared to give the recommendations of youth theatre members serious consideration. Within this consultation should be framed in a way that seeks advice and opinion on the broad context of an area/project and not the detailed implementation. This will ensure that young people will not be disappointed at a later stage;







-  NAYD has a responsibility to feedback to young people involved in a consultation on how their recommendations have been reported and considered and what the outcome of their input was/will be;
-  NAYD should promote and support youth participation at local youth theatre level.

From *Young Voices*¹





Honesty, Transparency, Accountability

-  Young people should be made aware of the purpose of the work and why they are being involved.
-  They should be involved in ways that are appropriate to their age and stage of development.
-  They should know what level of influence they will have.
-  There should be a real possibility of influencing what is planned.
-  The contributions of children and young people should be taken seriously.
-  They should get feedback that lets them know the impact of their views.

Ensuring Quality Outcomes...






-  The young people's views should be accurately captured so that they can have influence;
-  Note-takers should report accurately what children say, and not 'translate' their views into 'adult speak'.
-  If art or drama is used to enable young people to express their views, the young people themselves must be allowed to describe their work rather than it being interpreted.
-  Young people should have the opportunity to present their views directly to the organisation and have dialogue with adult policy-makers.
-  Young people should know exactly how their views will be used and how they will be quoted.
-  Participants should get copies of any written accounts of their views and should have the opportunity to check the accuracy of what has been recorded and to amend any inaccuracies.

Getting Feedback...

-  The feedback should make clear what has happened as a result of their participation and what difference their participation has made.
-  Where adult groups have also been involved, the young people should get feedback on their views.
-  Where the young people's views have not been taken on board, the reasons for this should be given.
-  Young people should be informed of next steps, especially in a policy-making process that may take a long time.

¹ **Young Voices** – *Guidelines on how to involve children and young people in your work*. The National Children's Office, The Children's Rights Alliance, The National Youth Council of Ireland (2005)

Participation is most likely to be successful when:

-  The topic draws on the interest and experience of participants;
-  Participants can see clearly that the work is relevant and worthwhile;
-  The timescale for the work allows it to follow good practice in involving young people;
-  The degree of involvement should fit the purpose;
-  The strategy of working with young people should match the issue.

Models for Youth Participation in NAYD

1. Consultation on strategy/policy development
2. Participation on Advisory Groups for programmes (ie previous members of NYT, EYTEs)
3. Programme Planning, Review and Evaluation (ie current Stage It! participants in preparation for next Stage it! planning process)
4. Representative Groups for Young People – Youth Theatre Members Forum
5. Working Groups and Committees
6. Young People on Delegations