

SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS

AGENCY PROCESSES

Agency Process: Participation and Co-production (Including the voice/lived experience of the child)

Introduction

Participation is the term used to describe the different ways that services hear the voice of its service users.

Children, parents and carers have a wealth of 'lived experience' that can be used to support services to improve, and in doing so, increase the effectiveness of treatment/support and service satisfaction that a service provides.

Co-production is a term that is often used interchangeably with participation. Co-production is when service users and the service providers work together on objectives that are agreed together and both parties have equal standing in delivering a project or service change. Whilst this is the highest level of participation, other versions such as consultation and representation, are also effective for certain objectives.

What is the impact on safeguarding adolescents?

All services, whether specialist, targeted or universal, have a duty to safeguard children. For young people with the highest needs, the services they receive are a vital part of the way that they are kept safe. When young people are unhappy with a service or receive a poor service, they are likely to disengage and so the safety the service provides is reduced. In using participation, a service can significantly improve and therefore increase its safeguarding capabilities.

In 1989, the [United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child](#) ensured children's right to have a say in decisions that impact on them (Article 12). This is recognition that children have valuable insight into their own situation and how it can be improved, and it is their right to be actively listened to in this regard.

Local Examples of Participation

[The Youth Commission](#) aims to make children part of the solution to tackling crime and improving policing, rather than being seen as part of the problem. There are up to 50 members aged 14-25 from all backgrounds from Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton.

[The Isle of Wight Youth Council](#) is an elected group of young people that meet regularly to discuss and address issues that affect young people. At the beginning of their two-year term, they agree what their priority issues should be and then meet with the relevant service, company, politician, or council worker, to share their views and champion change.

HYPE members on the Isle of Wight and Care Ambassadors in Hampshire are increasingly co-producing significant service developments, such as a new procurement process for care leavers accommodation, where they were involved at every stage.

HYPE members and Care Ambassadors are similarly supporting local councillors in their role as corporate parents, to understand the service user experience and assist in their scrutiny role. Larger service areas such as Children's Services and health will have their own participation strategy and resources dedicated to this objective.

Additional Resources and Information

[UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\) - UNICEF UK](#) - The Convention has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights.

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#) - This document sets out how all the rights and obligations set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) are protected in England and how implementation of the convention is achieved.

[UNICEF Children's Participation](#) - Page 8 visualises the varied degrees of participation.

[The Children's Commissioner for England](#) - One of the biggest champions for the voice of the child, particularly vulnerable children such as children in care, and advocates for their right to be an active agent in decision making.