



Evaluation of Young People's Fund

Year 3 – Involvement of Young People Chapter

A report to Big Lottery Fund

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GEN

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1 Involvement of young people

“Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”

Article 12 UN Convention of the Rights of the Child

Introduction

1.1 The ‘active involvement’ of children and young people in the development, delivery, management and evaluation of the projects they are involved in is a central theme of the Young People's Fund across the UK. The first two years of this evaluation have highlighted some interesting findings in relation to ‘involvement’; principally that **the vast majority of projects do involve young people** (to differing degrees) and that **the level of involvement is increasing** as projects develop and the capacity of young people increases.

1.2 The research team are using a variety of methods to investigate the active involvement of young people in YPF projects. These are: the telephone survey of projects and case study visits to a sample of projects in each country. During case study visits involvement is discussed through in-depth interviews with project workers and in individual interviews with young project beneficiaries.

1.3 To better understand the pattern of young people's involvement and how this impacts on the project and on the young people themselves, the study team also carried out a series of focus groups with ‘involved’ young people during year three of the evaluation. This was done with a sample of projects in addition to the case study visit. The specific aims of the focus group research was to:

- assess the rationale for involvement and the extent to which young people identify with it
- investigate the types and level of involvement within YPF projects
- identify the benefits gained by young people through their involvement
- identify barriers to involvement; how these have, or can be overcome
- draw out the lessons that can be learnt on encouraging and enabling participation and identify practical measures that young people believe contribute to successful involvement.

1.4 This chapter draws together research findings gathered through the telephone survey, the case study visits and the additional focus group research. This chapter presents analysis of findings concerning the nature, extent and impact of ‘involvement’ activity at a UK level.

1.5 The method for undertaking the focus group element of this research is described below. The method for undertaking the other elements is described in detail in Chapter 2.

Method

1.6 Focus groups involved a variety of active interview techniques, including the use of outcome stars¹, pairs and group work as well as round table discussion. This helped to ensure that all the young people could participate in a meaningful way.

1.7 A typology based on Hart’s (1992) ‘Ladder of Participation’ was used to measure, compare and contrast the level and nature of youth involvement across the different projects². The rungs of the ladder range from non-participation (where young people are manipulated or involved in a tokenistic way) to a state where young people are active citizens who share decisions with adults, initiate and lead action.

1.8 The study team aimed to carry out focus group research with involved young people in 15 case study projects. However, only 13 of the case study projects selected were able to provide a group of young people to take part in the research. We carried out focus group research in each country and spoke to a total of 69 young people. Young people involved in the research included:

- peer educators
- young people who are part of a youth committee/ steering group
- young people who sit on the organisation’s management committee
- young people involved in campaigning and awareness raising activity.

1.9 A summary of the focus group research is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 – Focus groups by country

Country	No. of focus groups	No. of young people
England	4	18
Scotland	3	16
Wales	2	8
Northern Ireland	4	27
Total	13	69

Source: GEN/ Wavehill focus groups with YPF Projects 2009.

¹ The Outcomes Star – Developed for the London Housing Foundation by Sara Burns, Kate Graham and Joy Keith of Triangle Consulting

² Hart, R. (1992), Children’s Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

1.10 The remainder of this chapter presents analysis of research findings concerning the active involvement of young people drawing on examples from specific projects. Full case study write ups for each project are available in appendices A to D.

Rationale for involvement

1.11 The right of children and young people to be involved in decision making is enshrined in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Recent years have seen a considerable push to increase participation and promote active citizenship in all spheres of public life. The active involvement of children and young people is now a central feature of policy and practice across the UK and it is increasingly expected that service providers will ensure the involvement of children and young people³.

1.12 The active involvement of children and young people can be defined as “the process by which children and young people influence decision making which brings about change in them, others, their services and their communities⁴.”

1.13 There are a number of reasons to promote the active involvement of children and young people. These include⁵:

- upholding children's rights
- fulfilling legal responsibilities
- improving services
- improving decision making
- enhancing democratic processes
- promoting children's protection
- enhancing children's skills
- empowering and enhancing self-esteem.

1.14 Ultimately, there is considerable evidence that the active involvement of children and young people will **engender change**⁶. This should lead to benefits for:

³ Tisdall, K., (2008) “Children, Young People and Participation” presentation available online at <http://www.iriss.ac.uk/files/iriss-cccs-1-1-kay-tisdall-2008-09-24.ppt>

⁴ Here by right; standards for the active involvement of children and young people, The National Youth Agency available online at http://hbr.nya.org.uk/pages/contexts_participation

⁵ Sinclair, R. and Franklin, A., (2000) “Young People’s Participation”, Quality Protects Research Briefing, available online at <http://www.rip.org.uk/publications/documents/QPB/QPB3.PDF>

⁶ Every Child Matters, Change for Children available online at <http://everychildmatters.gov.uk/participation/faq>

- **young people themselves**; who are given a voice, receive better services and can gain new skills
- **for organisations**; which should benefit from better targeted services, cost savings, new ideas and satisfied young people
- **the community**; which benefits from active citizenship, fresh ideas and enthusiasm.

Is involvement important to young people?

1.15 The vast majority of young people participating in the research consider involvement to be **important and valuable**. This was true of young people involved in the focus group research and of those interviewed individually.

1.16 Young people **value the opportunities** for involvement that they have been given and **feel empowered to make their views heard and to steer activities** in the direction that they want. Comments from young people included:

“It means a lot when someone asks you to be involved...it (involvement) really gets your creative side going”
“it makes you realise that young people are on the same level as adults”
“it means a lot to know that you're trusted and that project workers have the confidence in us to give us that responsibility”
“I couldn't believe someone had given me that chance”

1.17 Young people believe that **active involvement can improve services and ensure that projects are more likely to meet their needs**. Typical comments include:

“adults don't know everything, how can they know what young people are thinking”
“(those needs) have come straight from the horse's mouth”
“if we didn't get to choose (activities) we would get bored and not turn up”
“because we are involved we are confident enough to say what we need”

1.18 A number of participants commented on the **opportunities that active involvement brings for young people to develop and grow**. Through active involvement young people can develop skills, increase their self confidence and develop a mature and professional outlook. One young person involved with Get Ready for Geneva said that “it (involvement) alters the mindset and really makes you appreciate the work that people are putting into things...you are a better person really”.

1.19 Project workers also commented on the way in which young people develop and grow as a result of opportunities to be actively involved. Many provided anecdotal evidence of the change that they have witnessed in individual

young people. This is summed up by one project worker who said “it is like planting a seed and watching it grow”.

1.20 Another common theme that young people discussed is the importance of **‘peer support’**. Young people feel that their active involvement can set a good example for others, facilitate knowledge sharing, inspire others to become involved in activities and raise the aspirations of young people who witness ‘involvement’ in action. For example, actively involved young people in the Express Yourself project felt that because they had previously been project beneficiaries, they acted as a concrete example to young people and helped them believe that they could go on and become actively involved as peer educators. They feel that they are giving something back and bringing benefits to other young people. This is backed up by young people from the St Josephs Learning Partnership who said that “it is rewarding to see the progress of others”.

1.21 Young people from a number of projects also highlighted the importance of active involvement to aid the **inclusion of young people in society**. Some feel that they are viewed as anti-social by virtue of their age and that through active and meaningful participation young people can **make a valuable contribution**. One young person involved in YANE said “I feel like a member of society and part of the community”.

How are young people involved?

1.22 Findings from the telephone surveys in each of the countries show that the vast majority of projects across the UK involve young people in some way in the design, delivery, management and evaluation of project activity. As Table 4.2 shows, **“reviewing activity through informal feedback”** is the most common method of involving young people. This is used by 94 per cent of projects. Project workers feel this is a good way to involve young people as it is **very easily achieved, is not over onerous on young people, and can help to build a good rapport** between staff and young people.

1.23 Eighty eight per cent of the projects surveyed use **“structured feedback”** as a means of actively involving young people. Structured feedback most frequently takes the form of a survey questionnaire. This is a popular method as the surveys are **simple and quick for young people to complete but provide a sound evidence base to inform the development of the project**.

1.24 A large number of projects give young people the opportunity to be involved at a higher level; for example in the **delivery of activity or on a youth forum or steering group**. Comments from project workers indicate that this kind of involvement can successfully **increase the engagement of young people in the project as they have a sense of ownership and responsibility**. This form of active participation will generally involve a limited number of young people in a more intensive way.

Table 4.2 – Means of involvement across the UK

Means of involvement	Percentage
Review through informal feedback	94%
Review through structured feedback	88%
Design activity	87%
Engage other young people	83%
Youth forum/ steering group	72%
Deliver activity	67%
Manage certain projects	56%
Recruitment of staff	43%
YP rep on management committee	40%
None of these	2%

Source: Wavehill Survey of YPF Projects 2009 – 288 responses

NOTE: percentages do not equal 100 due to multiple responses

1.25 The evaluation found evidence of how young people became involved in the marketing of YPF in an unplanned way. Some countries reported that applications to the programme were slow to come in initially, which was a particular problem in Scotland where hundreds of young people had been recruited to the 32 Local Area Panels to review applications and make recommendations on whether they should receive funding. When the young people found that there were very few applications coming in initially, many felt frustrated and began to market YPF to local projects themselves. This not only highlights the need to ensure an extensive marketing campaign, but also shows BIG how young people can be involved in that campaign.

1.26 Young people in the focus group research were actively involved in project activity in a variety of different ways. Types of involvement include:

- membership of a youth committee or steering group
- representing young people on a management committee
- delivery of peer education
- campaigning on issues of importance to young people.

1.27 Analysis of research findings shows that it is possible to group styles of involvement into two broad categories:

- group one can be referred to as '**operational involvement**'
- group two can be referred to as '**strategic involvement**'.

1.28 While there is a degree of crossover between the projects, it is useful to frame the analysis in this way. Characteristics of each type of involvement are described below.

- **Operational involvement:** Young people in these projects are most heavily involved in the **day to day delivery and management** of project activity. These projects tend to have an 'internal' focus in that, while the wider community may benefit as a result of project activity, the **primary beneficiaries are the young participants**. In these projects young people meet regularly and may take an active role in:
 - developing and drafting training resources
 - gauging the opinion of project participants
 - planning 'everyday' project activities
 - delivering 'everyday' project activities
 - taking minutes in committee meetings
 - other roles and responsibilities related to the 'day to day' operation of the project.
- **Strategic involvement:** In these projects young people tend to take a **high level view of the direction and activity** of the projects, while **project workers deal with daily aspects** of development and delivery. Although there are exceptions to the rule, these young people are likely to meet less frequently than those involved in projects characterised by 'operational involvement'. Activities that characterise this type of involvement include:
 - setting the strategic direction of the project
 - identifying issues
 - identifying activities
 - identifying who, how and why to approach people.

1.29 These observations are backed up by the views of young people. For example:

- Projects characterised by **operational involvement**:
 - The youth committee of the **Y.A.X.** project meets on a regular basis to discuss current and future project activity, they identify and cost future opportunities, plan and deliver the club newsletter and address any difficulties that are arising in relation to ongoing activities, such as lack of attendance.
 - Young people who attend the **Pembrokeshire Activity Centre** meet every two weeks to discuss and plan the activities they want to take part in.
 - Young people involved with **Inspire** recently completed a questionnaire to identify and implement 'boredom busting activities' They also have the opportunity to voice their views, concerns, likes and dislikes through their new youth club.

- Young people who attend **Express Yourself** are given the opportunity to volunteer and become peer-educators. When they are confident and capable the girls plan, deliver and evaluate their own activity. They believe that having been participants themselves, they are well-placed to know what works and what the young people may enjoy doing.
- Projects characterised by **strategic involvement**:
 - Young people involved in Get Ready for Geneva said that “**We make the long term decisions about what we want to achieve and then CRAE will try their hardest to work on a day to day basis to achieve that**”. This shows that young people are primarily involved in setting the strategic direction for the project; by defining the focus of campaign activity and articulating their messages at a high level (including the UN), as opposed to the day to day management.
 - Young people involved in the **Eye Matter – Campaign for Equality** are involved in campaign activity by identifying the issues to be addressed, who they should approach and how they should frame the issues. Project workers take care of daily aspects of running the project such as event organisation, finance and funding.
 - Young people involved in **YANE** decide at the beginning of the year what three issues they want to address. They then form campaign teams, which comprise only young people. These teams report to a young person's steering group which has a strategic overview of the campaign work being undertaken across the region. Project staff are available to provide operational support where this is needed but the campaigns belong to the young people.

1.30 It is important to remember that these **categories are not mutually exclusive**. While some projects are characterised primarily by 'operational involvement and others by 'strategic involvement', there are elements of both types present in many of the projects.

1.31 For example, within Feile an Phobail, the youth sub committee is responsible for identifying and planning youth arts events and activities. These young people are supported by the youth arts coordinator and they meet on a regular basis to plan their activities and take part in social events. They are essentially involved in a operational manner. However, the management committee of Feile an Phobail currently includes two young people under the age of 25; one of whom has been involved with the organisation for over 10 years. Joining the management committee gives them the opportunity to gain valuable experience, develop their skills and have a role in the strategic development of a high profile organisation. Young people involved in the management committee are experienced, articulate and highly motivated. These young people are involved in a more strategic way.

Motivations for involvement

1.32 Young people highlighted a number of motivations for being 'actively involved' in all stages of project activity. It is again possible to draw a distinction between the two types of involvement identified previously; 'operational involvement' and 'strategic involvement'.

1.33 Two themes emerged:

- In those projects with '**operational involvement**', a considerable proportion of 'involved' young people had **grown up as part of the project**. For many of these young people active involvement in the delivery and management of the project is a **natural progression** and results from a desire to **give something back** to the project and to help their peers to benefit in the same way that they have. These tend to include peer education and recreational youth activities, such as those provided by the Ballybeen Peer Education Project, Y.A.X, Feile an Phobail and Express Yourself and the St Joseph's Learning Partnership.
- In those projects characterised by '**strategic involvement**', young people often come together as a result of a **specific issue** that unites them. Many of the young people are **looking to engender changes outside of the project** and their interest in particular issues is a key motivating factor. For example young people involved in the Eye Matter Campaign for Equality are campaigning for changes that will make a positive difference to the lives of visually impaired young people across Northern Ireland not just those who are members of the group. In many cases these young people did not separate their motivations for participation in project activity from their motivations for active involvement, suggesting that involvement is 'intrinsic' in the way these projects operate. These types of projects also include Get Ready for Geneva, the Anti Tobacco Youth Campaign and YANE.

1.34 While it is possible to separate projects into these two broad groups, the distinctions are not always that simple. For example, the Eye Matter Campaign for Equality gives young people the opportunity to gain qualifications and enhance their skills. Some of the young people who are actively involved in the campaigning aspect of the project are also involved in the delivery of this activity; acting as 'sessional workers' and supervising residential trips. These young people expressed the same desire to 'give something back' as those from projects characterised by 'operational involvement'.

1.35 Young people in all projects, regardless of the type of activities they are involved in, said that they were motivated to become involved as they thought it would be **fun; they could meet new people; learn new things and develop new skills**. In many cases young people also hoped to gain skills that would enhance their CV and help them in their future career.

1.36 These findings were backed up by anecdotal evidence provided by project workers.

Level of involvement

1.37 A typology based on the theory set out in Hart’s ‘Ladder of Youth Participation’ was used to identify the nature and extent of young people’s involvement⁷. The measurement scale is presented in Chapter 3. The ladder shows that participation can take various forms and that young people can be involved to varying degrees depending on a range of factors. It is used to help researchers gauge the nature and extent of involvement and make suggestions as to how it may be improved⁸. It is important to remember that the top rung of the ladder is not necessarily the ideal situation. Projects should be viewed on a case by case basis when considering the nature of involvement, as young people with differing issues will require different types and levels of support.

1.38 The telephone survey asked project workers to rate the level of youth participation within their project against the Hart’s Ladder framework.

1.39 Table 4.3 shows the level of participation reported by projects across the UK. It shows that the greatest percentage of projects rated themselves on rung six of the ladder of participation, where project workers have the initial idea but participants are involved in every step of the planning and implementation of activity.

Table 4.3 – Level of participation in relation to Hart’s Ladder – UK findings

Hart’s Ladder of Participation	UK
Rung 8	6%
Rung 7	23%
Rung 6	41%
Rung 5	28%
Rung 4	2%
Rung 3	0%
Rung 2	0%
Rung 1	0%
No. respondents	289

Source: Wavehill survey of YPF projects – 289 responses

⁷ Hart, R. (1992), Children’s Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

⁸ Hear by Right; standards for the active involvement of children and young people, The National Youth Agency available online at http://hbr.nya.org.uk/pages/contexts_participation

1.40 The research team asked young people involved in the focus group research to rate their level of involvement against Hart’s Ladder of Participation. Table 4.4 illustrates the views of young people in comparison to those of the project workers.

1.41 All of the projects involved in the focus group research consider themselves to be on rungs six to eight of the Ladder of Participation. In the majority of cases, **the views of young people map fairly closely with that of project workers**. Where there is a difference, young people tend to rank their level of involvement higher than do project workers. This suggests that young people **value the opportunities for involvement that they have been given and do not feel that their involvement is a ‘tokenistic’ gesture on the part of the projects**.

Table 4.4 – Level of participation in relation to Hart Ladder

Project	Project worker perception	Young people’s perception
England		
Project 1	Rung 8/7	Rung 8/7
Project 2	Rung 7/6	Rung 7
Project 3	Rung 6	Rung 7
Project 4	Rung 7	Unknown
Scotland		
Project 5	Rung 7	Rung 7
Project 6	Rung 7	Rung 7
Project 7	Unknown	Unknown
Northern Ireland		
Project 8	Rung 8	Rung 8
Project 9	Rung 6	Rung 7
Project 10	Rung 6	Rung 7
Project 11	Rung 7	Rung 7
Wales		
Project 12	Rung 7/6	Unknown
Project 13	Rung 6/5	Rung 6

Source: GEN/ Wavehill focus groups with YPF Projects 2009

NOTE: Project examples are highlighted where the view of young people matches that of project workers

NOTE: This data was not gathered from young people in three projects and from staff in one project

1.42 **All of the young people involved in the focus group research indicated that they are happy with the level of influence they have in their project** and they are satisfied that there are sufficient opportunities for them to be involved and to voice their opinions. Young people said:

“We choose what we want to do (who we interview, website design etc) and project workers help us to achieve if we don't know how...at the end of the day it is us actually making the decisions”

When asked if they could be more involved one group of young people said “No we are ok the way we do things – they ask us what we want to do and also if we like something we can do it again”

“We are given freedom to design and run our own activity, however if we need any help the project staff are always there to give us advice”

1.43 It is possible that the use of ‘Harts Ladder of Participation’, in the context of individual interviews and focus groups, could be open to a degree of ‘optimism bias’; with young people and project workers reporting greater levels of involvement than is the case in reality.

1.44 It is also apparent, that while young people **value the opportunities** for involvement that they have been given, this is **not something that they have actively sought**. Although the level of involvement differed significantly between projects, young people generally struggled to identify ways in which their involvement could be increased. There are three possible explanations here:

- It may be that the young people **are satisfied with the provision and with their role and do not need or want greater levels of involvement**. This is reinforced by the large number of young people who said they were satisfied with their current level of involvement. This could mean that young people feel highly involved and are satisfied or, alternatively, that there is low level involvement and that young people do not want to have greater involvement. This was highlighted by some project workers who indicated that some young people are happy to be involved primarily as beneficiaries.
- It may be that **‘you can't miss what you never had’**; young people and project workers may not be fully aware of how young people could be more actively involved in the development, delivery, management and evaluation of project activity. While young people are satisfied with their current level of involvement, it is unclear what they are benchmarking this against. As the profile of the participation and citizenship agenda continues to rise in all spheres of public life, it is possible that the expectations of young people, with regards to their involvement, will increase and they may begin to push for greater involvement in the services that affect them.
- Finally, it **may not be practical, appropriate or possible** to involve young people in all aspects of project activity. This issue was highlighted in the country chapters in relation to projects such as the Altnagelvin Teenage Pregnancy Support project in Northern Ireland and the Bridge Centre Motorcycle Project in Scotland in which young people are being supported to deal with multiple and complex issues.

1.45 The limitations of young people's involvement was also highlighted by young people from Get Ready For Geneva in the example below:

England – Get Ready for Geneva (CRAE)

“the project workers do make decisions that we aren't allowed to make (legal and financial decisions) and they also make day to day decisions. We aren't employed, we have school work and can't make every decision, but we make all the strategic decisions about what we want to achieve and how we want to achieve it. If there is any decision we aren't happy with they will definitely change it”

1.46 At this point it should be noted that the young people interviewed as part of the focus groups are those who are already actively involved and are therefore more likely to be aware of and satisfied with the opportunities available to them. However, none of the young people interviewed as part of the wider research about their participation in project activity highlighted any real concern regarding their level of active involvement.

The impact of involvement

1.47 This analysis has shown that it is possible to split projects into two broad groups depending on the nature of involvement: those characterised by operational involvement; and those characterised by strategic involvement.

1.48 In terms of the impacts and benefits accruing to young people as a result of their active involvement, the focus group research highlighted **more similarities than differences between the two groups**. There does not appear to be a particular type of involvement that brings about greater benefits than the other. In other words, it is the **process of involvement that is more significant in achieving impacts rather than the specific activities taken part in or the aims and outcomes of the project itself**.

1.49 The most significant benefits highlighted by young people include:

- increased confidence
- developing new skills including: team working, presentation, communication, IT, leadership, decision making and public speaking
- meeting new people and making new friends
- increased knowledge and awareness
- valuable addition to CV and increased focus on career options
- enjoyment
- making your voice heard.

1.50 Comments from young people include:

“I didn't think I had a voice and I didn't think there was any point in fighting for anything, but the project changed that”

“(We) can express ourselves in this group and don’t have to watch what you say like you would at school”

“The training helps you in your own life as well...it helps at school, with presentations, training days etc”

“We are learning all the skills we need to work in proper jobs”

“(The project is) great for your CV. Some people are gob smacked that you are working on this type of thing and I think that is just really amazing when you talk about all these things with people, to 40 year olds, and they just think that you have already done this and you are 15”

“To be able to say I am 15 and been to the United Nations...is an amazing thing. Not many people can say that they have done that”

1.51 The impacts and benefits found in the focus group research are similar to those highlighted by project workers through the telephone survey and case study visits. This is highlighted in Table 4.5 which presents survey findings from across the UK. The table shows that “increased confidence” is by far the most significant benefit reported by project workers. This is followed by “improved relationships”. This is reflected in the responses of young people by comments about meeting new people and making new friends.

1.52 “Increased achievement and learning” and the “development of new skills” are also frequently cited benefits of active involvement across the UK. This reinforces the comments made by young people relating to skills development and an enhanced CV.

Table 4.5 – Impact of involvement across the UK

Impact	Percentage of respondents
Increased confidence	73%
Improved relationships	47%
Increased achievement and learning	46%
New transferable skills	45%
Increased engagement	44%
Young people feel valued	41%
Improved communication skills	39%
Increased motivation	38%
Greater social awareness	35%
Improved mental well being	28%
Other	21%
Improved physical well being	16%

Source - Wavehill Survey of YPF Projects 2009 – 288 responses

1.53 The research shows that, while the impacts and benefits of active involvement are similar in nature to the benefits of participation in project activity, there is a greater emphasis on employability skills, developing a CV, career options and increased aspirations among those young people who are actively involved.

1.54 At this stage it is very difficult to make an assessment of the sustainability of these outcomes. However, it is **likely that activity that develops their skills, enhances their CVs, and helps to focus their mind on their future career options will result in considerable long term benefits** for young people.

1.55 This is illustrated in relation to Express Yourself, Feile an Phobail, the St Joseph’s Learning Partnership and Street League Scotland in the case study examples below.

1.56 The long term sustainability of outcomes will also be a focus of the research towards the end of the five year evaluation.

Scotland – Express Yourself

The impact of active involvement on employability was articulated strongly by teenage girls in the Express Yourself project. One of the activity strands actively involves young teenage girls as peer educators. The girls feel that through the project they are learning transferable skills that they can use in their working lives or in further education. They learn timekeeping skills (because their outreach work can be in different locations at various times) and they develop communication skills through engaging with numerous groups of young people and liaising with project staff about their activities and performance. The impact

of their involvement is tangible; one girl was inspired to enrol on a university degree course because of her work on the project, whilst all the girls have added it to their CVs.

Northern Ireland – Féile an Phobail

Researchers spoke with one girl who is now part of the management committee of Féile an Phobail. She originally became involved in the organisation to be a part of the radio station. She presented as part of the news team from age 13 to 16. At 16 she became an 'editor' and decided that she would also like to pursue a career in broadcasting. She is now a 'video editor'. She said that her involvement in the project has had a major impact on her confidence, her knowledge and skills and on her future career path. She feels the experience that she gained from her active involvement was invaluable and that she could not have gained the same level of exposure anywhere else.

Scotland – St Joseph's Learning Partnership

At the St Joseph's Learning Partnership young people said that as a direct result of being involved in decision making and peer support they had changed their mind with regards their original career aspirations. Some said that they are now hoping to pursue a career in social work or primary education. In addition, one of the young people has already received an offer of employment at Leisure Development Services at East Ayrshire Council.

Scotland – Street League Scotland

Street League is a structured programme of sport and education that aims to build confidence, improve health and develop skills that will help disadvantaged young people and adults towards long term sustainable education, employment and independence.

One young man from Street League Scotland spoke about the way his active involvement in the organisation has brought about a huge and lasting change in his life. When he first became involved in the organisation he was 23 and was not working. He originally became involved to take part in the football match days run in Glasgow. He suggested that instead of one off match days, the organisation should start a football league for the teams to compete in; an idea that has been successfully integrated into the structure of the organisation. This young man has since completed the Community Sports Leader Award (CSLA) and is now employed by Street League as an apprentice coach. In this role he has supervised groups of participants on residential trips abroad and he is about to lead a group of 16-19 year olds through a 16 week training programme, after which the organisation will take on another apprentice. As a result of long term active involvement in the project he feels that he has developed and enhanced his knowledge, social and interpersonal skills and been given the opportunity to "broaden his horizons". He commented that Street League empowers young people by encouraging meaningful involvement, respecting their opinions and

letting them have their say. In short involvement in Street League can “give people faith, many of whom have been put down all their lives”

NOTE. Street League was a case study project in year two of the evaluation. A full case study write up of the visit is available in the year two evaluation report.

Promoting involvement

1.57 There are a number of difficulties and barriers that could impact on the ability of projects to achieve and maintain the active involvement of children and young people. It is useful to think of these in two ways: **tangible barriers and intangible barriers**. **Tangible** barriers may include such things as:

- **lack of transport** to take young people to and from the project
- **lack of childcare** (for young parents)
- **costs** associated with accessing project activity
- **lack of capacity** among young people to take on greater levels of involvement
- **cultural barriers** (especially the engagement of Asian girls).

1.58 **Intangible** barriers may include:

- **lack of confidence** among young people to take on greater levels of involvement
- **lack of awareness** among project workers and young people around the ways in which they could be involved
- the **transient nature** of young people.

1.59 While a number of these issues were highlighted by project workers **young people themselves found it difficult to identify any major barriers** to the active involvement. The difficulties that were highlighted tended to focus on ‘intangible barriers’, such as the **maturity and mind set** of those involved and a **lack of confidence**:

- Young people recognised that there could be **difficulties involving “immature” young people**, those who want to “come along for a laugh” and who aren’t committed to developing the project.
- Young people in three of the projects mentioned **lack of confidence as a potential barrier to active involvement**. Young people involved in Fusion radio said that some people develop confidence more quickly than others. This could mean that some young people are not able to take advantage of opportunities for involvement to the same extent as others. Young people also commented that confident young people are the ones who are more likely to want to become involved initially.

1.60 There are a number of **practical measures** that can be taken to promote the active involvement of children and young people. These were highlighted by

project workers during case study visits and young people touched upon some of these issues in focus groups. Although young people did not explicitly refer to these measures as ways of promoting active involvement it is apparent that they have played a role in achieving, increasing and maintaining involvement within these projects.

- Young people involved in the Eye Matter – Campaign for Equality, mentioned the **role that training has played in increasing their confidence**. This project recognised that some of the young people lacked confidence in their ability to be actively involved. As a result they now offer OCN Level 2 'Preparation for Participation' training. This allows young people to become involved gradually, in the manner and at a speed that suits them.
- The active involvement of young people can be promoted by **increasing accessibility**, for example:
 - all the projects involved in the research are **free** to young participants
 - a number of projects provide transport (including taxis) to take young people to and from the project.
- **Incentives and rewards** can also help to sustain engagement in project activity and overcome some of the 'intangible' barriers to involvement for example, following meetings of the Feile an Phobail youth sub-committee young people tend to have a trip to the cinema or bowling.

Summary and conclusions

Is involvement important to young people?

1.61 Young people **recognise and agree with many aspects of the rationale** behind the increasing drive for the active involvement of children and young people in public life.

1.62 **Young people and project workers believe that both they and the projects they are a part of can benefit from young people's involvement.** Through active involvement, young people develop confidence and transferable skills and projects are better able to deliver services that meet their needs. This should in turn lead to increased engagement among young people.

How are young people involved?

1.63 **Active involvement can take a variety of different forms**, including peer support, youth committees and steering groups, and developing the strategic focus of project activity.

1.64 The survey of projects showed the frequency of each of these and the focus group research helped to identify two broad types of involvement:

- There are those projects where young people are mostly involved at an **operational** level; taking on the day to day tasks associated with the management of project activity.
- There are those projects where young people are more involved at a **strategic** level while project staff take on the daily delivery and management.

1.65 The characteristics of both types of involvement are outlined in Table 4.6. **There is no evidence to suggest that one form of involvement is more valuable to young people than the other.**

Table 4.6 – Characteristics of 'operational' and 'strategic involvement'

Type of involvement	Activity	Motivations	Impacts
Operational Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ developing and drafting resources ○ gauging the opinion of project participants ○ planning 'everyday' project activity ○ delivering 'everyday' project activity ○ taking minutes in committee meetings ○ other roles and responsibilities related to the 'day to day/ operation of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ grown up as part of the project ○ natural progression ○ give something back (to the project and to other young people) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increased confidence ○ develop new skills ○ meet new people ○ increased knowledge and awareness ○ addition to CV and increased focus on career options ○ enjoyment ○ making your voice heard
Strategic Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ set strategic direction ○ identify issues ○ identify activities ○ identify, who, how and why to approach/ influence people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ specific issues of interest ○ engender change outside of the project in the wider community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increased confidence ○ develop new skills ○ meet new people ○ increased knowledge and awareness ○ addition to CV and increased focus on career options ○ enjoyment ○ making your voice heard

Motivations for involvement

1.66 Motivations for 'active involvement' are varied and often differ depending on the nature of project activity, how, why and how long young people have been engaged in the project. Key findings include:

- young people want to be involved for their own benefit and also that of other young people
- young people often become more involved over time
- regardless of the type of participation, young people see their active involvement as a way to have fun, socialise and develop their skills.

Level of involvement

1.67 Whilst it is not possible to reach definitive conclusions regarding the extent of involvement across the Young People's Fund on the basis of a small sample of diverse projects, we can say that based on this evidence:

- young people are satisfied with their current level of involvement
- the perception of young people with regard to the extent of their involvement maps closely with that of project workers
- young people do not feel that their involvement is tokenistic.

The impact of involvement

1.68 **Project beneficiaries involved in both an 'operational and strategic' manner report largely similar benefits.** These are focused around increased confidence, the development of skills, a focus on future careers goals and aspirations and the opportunity to make their voices heard. It is likely that a number of these benefits will be sustained in the medium and longer term.

1.69 Overall, focus group research suggests that the **process of involvement is more important than the specifics of the activity in relation the benefits and impacts** accruing to young people.

Promoting involvement

1.70 **Young people have not experienced any major barriers in achieving and maintaining active involvement.** However, interviews with project workers and our previous experience shows that there are a number of potential barriers and difficulties; both tangible and intangible.

1.71 Practical measures to overcome such difficulties include, supporting young people to be actively involved through provision of training and activities which address issues around confidence and help to build the capacity of young people.

1.72 Projects can also introduce measures to reduce tangible barriers and increase the accessibility of involvement activity, such as provision of transport and meeting any costs incurred by young people.