



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Children's Rights in Wales

A 'How to Guide' to Developing  
Participation Strategies

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**Hawliau Plant**  
Cymru

**Children's Rights**  
Wales

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# About This Guide

**We want a Wales where all children feel valued, respected, and heard. Our ambition is for Wales to be a wonderful place to grow up, live and to work, now and in the future.**

**This guide will take you through a step by step process to develop and implement a participation strategy which aligns with the [National Participation Standards for Wales](#). It also helps to meet statutory duties to involve children in decision-making<sup>1</sup>.**

## What is a Participation Strategy?

A participation strategy is a long-term plan for how your organisation will involve children in decisions. It should reflect your organisation's values and aims, be shaped with children, and include clear actions, responsibilities, and ways to measure progress.

## Why Develop a Strategy?

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (UNCRC) is the basis for all our work with and for children. Article 12 of the UNCRC says children have the right to be involved in decisions that affect them. Article 12 provides a gateway to accessing the rest of their UNCRC rights.

A strategy helps embed the principle of participation into everyday practice within your organisation.

Developing a strategy can provide a space to articulate the benefits of participation. For children, that may be developing problem solving and communication skills and influencing the type and location of services. For your organisation, benefits may be developing better relationships within the community or improved targeting, access to and use of local services. For the community, benefits may be in developing children as active engaged participants in the democratic process and increased recognition of the importance of children's issues.

'[The Right Way](#)', is a practical framework with five key principles to help you take a children's rights approach to your work:

- Embedding children's rights
- Equality and non-discrimination
- Empowering children
- Participation
- Accountability

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<sup>1</sup> The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011; The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014; The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; Additional Learning Needs Education & Tribunal Act (ALNET); Equality Act 2010; Curriculum and Assessment Wales Act 2021

## Who should be involved?

Participation strategies should be developed collaboratively. Partners, within and outside of your organisation, including children, should be involved from the outset. They should be identified early, with engagement tailored to their communication needs and the different stages of the process to ensure meaningful input.

Once finalised, the strategy should be clearly communicated to all partners in accessible and inclusive ways.



# Stage 1:

## Understanding Participation

**A shared understanding of participation is essential to guide your strategy. Consider co-developing a definition with children.**

*Participation means listening to children and taking their views meaningfully into account.*

*Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing an action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice.*

- How will you ensure this definition is understood and supported across your organisation?

## Case study

**Eurochild have National Eurochild Forums in different countries across Europe. Each year, these groups take part in a consultation. In 2025 this consultation focused on child participation.**

The aim was to make sure children's voices are heard and that they can help shape decision-making processes at both European and national levels.

The consultation involved activities to find out:

- What participation means to children
- Why it matters to them
- What the barriers to participation are, and
- Ideas on how it can be improved.

Different organisations across Europe took part in the same consultation. This made it possible to compare and learn from the results across a range of countries.

In Wales, Young Wales led consultations in Conwy and Cardiff working with local authorities and third sector partners.

The findings from all National Forums were brought together in a report which was launched at the Eurochild conference in Cyprus in June 2026.

# Stage 2:

## Mapping Partners and Current Practice

**Mapping helps identify your partners and assess current participation activity. Different partners will have different interests in the strategy – you should think about the best way to communicate with them.**

Your organisation may have statutory duties to undertake engagement and participation activities. Try to identify these and consider how the duties are being met.

Your organisation will have a range of participation approaches. Try to get an understanding of how participation works for different age groups – babies, children and young people. Use strategy documents, data, and engagement methods like surveys, interviews, or workshops to gather insights and identify gaps.

- Who are your internal and external partners in your strategy?
- What participation activities are already happening in your organisation?
- How are you evidencing that your statutory duties are being met?
- What gaps or areas for improvement have you identified?
- What methods will you use to gather this information?



## Case study

**Torfaen Council's Children and Families Directorate support children and young people through their education and social care teams. They wanted a consistent way to measure the impact of children and young people's voices on the planning and delivery of services.**

Torfaen used the Children's Commissioner for Wales 'The Right Way – Self-assessment' tool to help map their approach. This framework, based on the UNCRC, helps public bodies embed children's rights into decision-making, policy, and practice.

In completing the self-assessment, teams were asked to rate their work against the five principles of The Right Way using a traffic light system. Teams were then asked to identify areas for development and improvement in their Team Plans.

Using the tool across the Directorate enabled a consistent approach, identifying activities within each Team's Plan where children's views were being sought and tracking the impact on service delivery. Each team reported via their Leadership Teams to the Evaluation and Improvement Officer who ensured consistency, by monitoring the implementation of the plans.

Using the tool helped them improve how they worked with children and young people, including:

- linking the strategic plan to children's rights (Embedding)
- providing information to children in accessible language (Empowering)
- giving children opportunities to make changes and influence their work (Participation) being accountable to children and young people (Accountability).



# Stage 3:

## Models and Levels of Participation

**Participation models help assess current practice and set aspirations. Look at different participation models and consider which is more appropriate for your organisation.**

It is important to recognise the diversity of participation practice across Wales and to acknowledge that different organisations are at different stages and will have different aims and objectives.

The [National Participation Standards](#) provide a benchmark against which to measure progress. The standards are:



- Which participation models best fit your organisation and why?

## Case study

**The Football Association of Wales (FAW) set up a National Youth Council to give young people a meaningful voice in football. They needed a clear and consistent way to involve young people properly and make sure their views shaped decisions across the organisation.**

Children in Wales (CIW) worked with the FAW using the CIW Young Volunteer Model of Youth Engagement, based on the Lundy Model of Participation. The Lundy Model, is built on four key areas: space, voice, audience, and influence, which helped us make sure young people had safe spaces

to share their views, that their voices were heard by the right people and that their ideas led to change. Together with the FAW, we put these principles into action through training, support, and ongoing collaboration.

The project helped FAW build stronger, more inclusive relationships with young people and gave them real chances to shape how football is developed.

By applying the Lundy framework to our own practice, CIW learned how clear structures and shared values can turn youth participation into something that makes a real and lasting difference.

# Stage 4:

## Setting Aims, Objectives and Measuring Progress

**Being clear about what you want to achieve will help you to develop an effective strategy.**

Clear aims will set your broad long term vision. Objectives will break down your aim into achievable parts. You should try to make your objectives SMART so that you can measure your progress.

### Specific

What exactly do you want to achieve?

### Measurable

How will you know when it will be achieved?

### Achievable

Is it realistic and obtainable?

### Relevant

Does it align to broader aims?

### Timebound

When will it be achieved?

There are a number of activities that can be used to establish what needs to change and why, and to consider how you are going to do this. Working with others, use tools like SWOT to assess your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in implementing participation to help guide future progress.

- What are your high level aims?
- What SMART objectives will help you achieve your aims?
- How will you measure progress and gather feedback?
- What barriers might you face and how will you overcome them?



# Stage 5:

## Drafting the Strategy

Bring together your findings into a clear, actionable strategy.

### Have you included?

- your baseline (what you are already doing well and what you could improve),
- partners views,
- aims and objectives,
- rationale for your proposals,
- chosen participation models, and
- plans for monitoring and review.

- Do you need to develop more detailed policy guidance for staff at this stage?
- Should you also create a children's version?

## Case study

### **Powys Council's Youth Engagement Strategy was produced to help departments across the Council make sure young people's voices are heard within their decision-making processes.**

Staff from different departments including Communications, Children's Services, the Commissioning Team and the Youth Service worked together to write the Strategy. This collaborative approach helped to make the Strategy user friendly for staff, including those who hadn't been involved with participation work before.

Once a draft was ready, a county wide consultation with young people was held. They gave their thoughts on the Strategy,

which led to changes to the layout, overall message and the production of a one page fits all poster as a quick reference tool.

This joined-up approach showed how different parts of the council can work together to make sure young people are heard and involved in shaping services and decisions that affect them.

Poppy, 16 said:

*"if you continue to listen to the young people in Powys then you can continue making our lives more comfortable and the thought of remaining in Powys much more pleasurable to the youth of today."*

## Stage 6: Consulting on the Draft

**Consultation ensures your strategy is informed and inclusive.**

Engage with children, staff and partners, identifying how best to engage with different audiences. This may involve publishing a draft strategy for written feedback or hosting discussion sessions. Your strategy should be updated to reflect feedback before a final version is produced for approval by your management team.

- Who do you need to consult with internally and externally?
- How will you ensure accessibility of your consultation?
- How will you respond to feedback and update your strategy?

## Stage 7: Raising Awareness

**Awareness and buy-in are vital to successful implementation.**

Promote the strategy across your organisation and build support through communication and engagement throughout the process.

- Where will you publish and how will you promote your strategy?
- What opportunities exist to present and discuss the strategy with staff?
- How will you build support across the organisation?



# Stage 8: Action Planning and Implementation

**An action plan turns a strategy into practice.**

It helps set priorities, assign responsibilities, and monitor progress. An action plan is designed mainly for those within the organisation, however, any progress can be shared more widely; for example, with local partners, such as voluntary organisations or Youth Forums.

- What are your priorities and timelines?
- Who is responsible for each action?
- Do your actions support achievement of your SMART objectives?

# Stage 9: Reviewing the Strategy

**Reviewing your strategy helps assess impact and plan future improvements.**

Use new data and feedback to inform updates and ensure your strategy is still relevant to your organisation's wider plans and strategies.

- When and how will you review the strategy?
- What new data or evidence might influence any changes?
- How will you assess progress against your aims and objectives?
- How will you share progress with all partners?



The following example may help you to think about how to evaluate progress against your objectives

Objective – to enable a minimum of 8 children to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of your organisations work		
<b>Inputs</b> What is being put in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Staff time</li> <li>• Volunteer time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you use the resources you expected to use? If not, why not?</li> <li>• Did you stick to the budget? If not, why not?</li> <li>• Did you deliver on time? If not, why not?</li> </ul>
<b>Actions</b> What needs to be done/what is being done?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of a minimum of 8 children</li> <li>• Delivery of training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you meet the recruitment target? How did you do that? What were the difficulties? What could you have done differently?</li> <li>• Was the training delivered as planned? Was the frequency and content right? What attendance did you get?</li> <li>• What feedback did you get on the training? What can be learnt from it?</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b> The product of actions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of children received training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you meet your target for the numbers to attend the training?</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b> What changes have been brought about by the actions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in organisational practice</li> <li>• Children actively involved in organisational decision making and planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What changes have been made to Organisational practice? Were these intended/unintended? Positive or negative? How have the changes been received by the organization? Should these continue?</li> <li>• When have children actively participated in decision making and planning?</li> <li>• Will children be involved in the future? In what capacity? What are the barriers? What systems are needed to maintain their involvement?</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b> Wider reaching, longer term effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children participating fully in decision making as a matter of course</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has your work had a wider impact? Have other organisations followed your approach? What might be the longer-term effects?</li> </ul>

# Case study

**Cardiff's Participation Review aimed to understand how children take part in shaping their city. The aim was to find out what works well, identify gaps, and make sure that every young person's voice is heard, respected, and acted on.**

The review involved 46 people from 29 organisations across education, youth work, health, play, and community sectors. It looked at how these organisations listen to young people, including underrepresented groups, and give feedback on how their ideas influence decisions.

The review found a wealth of positive practice, but also some key challenges – including limited awareness of the National Participation Standards for Wales and inconsistent feedback mechanisms. From this, six recommendations were developed:

1. Raise awareness of the National Participation Standards.
2. Support organisations to adopt clear participation policies.
3. Strengthen feedback to children and young people.
4. Improve inclusion for underrepresented groups.
5. Create opportunities to share learning and collaborate.
6. Celebrate and recognise participation success across the city.

These findings are now helping Cardiff improve its participatory practice and supporting services to work together – helping to ensure every child and young person has a real say in the decisions that affect them.

## Need Support?

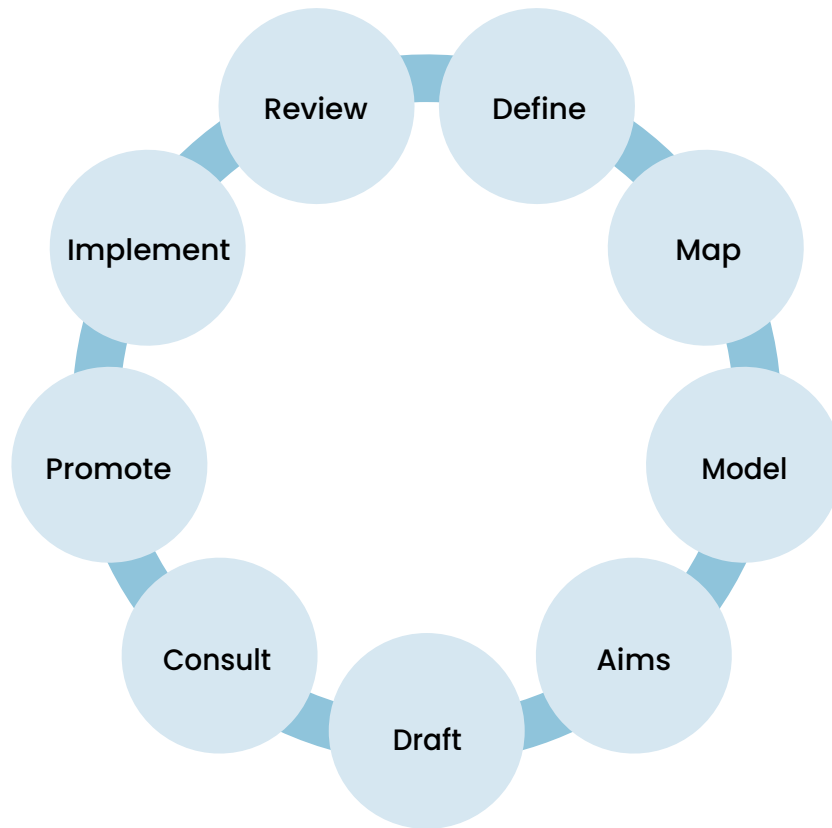
The All Wales Participation Workers Network is a group of professionals with a wealth of experience and expertise in children's participation. If you'd like to join the group, please contact [childrensrights@gov.wales](mailto:childrensrights@gov.wales)

## Resources

[Children in Wales](#) provide training, resources and advice for professionals.

# Annex A- Developing Participation Strategies Checklist

Have you?		Y/N
Stage 1 - Define	Defined what participation means for your organisation	
Stage 2 - Map	Identified your stake holders and current practice	
Stage 3 - Model	Decided on a model of participation	
Stage 4 - Aims	Set your aims and objectives and how you will measure progress	
Stage 5 - Draft	Drafted your strategy and decided on any supporting documents you may need	
Stage 6 - Consult	Asked your stakeholders what they think, before you finalise your strategy	
Stage 7 - Promote	Considered how you will promote your strategy across your organisation	
Stage 8 - Implement	Developed a plan to put your strategy into action	
Stage 9 - Review	Decided how and when you will review your strategy	



Developed in partnership with the  
All Wales Participation Workers Network for Wales.