



# Getting Started





## Section 02

# Getting started

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## Introduction

Some people find it easy to get straight into the middle of things, but for many of us, it's more difficult and takes plenty of courage. Taking part in decision making and taking steps toward control in our own lives is never easy and we can't do it alone. We need help and we need skills. This resource is aimed at providing some interesting insights and useful information to help guide you towards taking those steps and acquiring some of the skills needed, so read on!!

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### Youth-adult partnerships

Youth participation is all about developing and building good partnerships and working relationships between young people and adults. We have already reviewed some of the reasons for, and benefits of youth participation in Section 1. However, in order to turn these ideals into reality, we must now look at some of the fundamentals of youth-adult partnership in action and also at how to go about sustaining effective relationships.

Effective working relationships and partnerships are based on the principle that each person has the opportunity to make suggestions and decisions. In order for effective youth participation to take place, these youth-adult relationships need to be properly initiated and maintained. As with any relationship, this means that both parties need to work at it and have some shared understanding about the basis for the relationship. They also need to have mutual respect for each other.

### Types of partnerships

Youth-adult partnerships come in all shapes and sizes and many of the different ways of working are reflected in the case studies throughout this resource. You will see that young people have taken on many different roles such as:

- Advisors
- Advocates
- Lobbyists
- Board members
- Service providers
- Campaigners

Adults have played the roles of:

- Mentors
- Grant providers
- Trainers
- Coaches
- Role models
- Researchers
- Facilitators

### What to consider in advance<sup>6</sup>

In order to be prepared for effective youth-adult partnerships, there are three fundamental pre-conditions which must be met. They are as follows:

- Adults need to be willing to share their power with young people
  - Young people need to take on some responsibility
  - Both need skills to successfully work together
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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from 'Making it Work, A Guide to Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships', TNYS & TDPRS, 2002

**\*See Section 1 for the levels of participation and an accompanying useful tool i.e. 'Group assessment activity for organisations/youth groups.'**

### Sustaining effective youth-adult partnerships

Sustaining effective and genuinely collaborative youth-adult partnerships can be a challenge for any youth group. Successful partnerships have some key elements in common.

#### Effective partnerships:

- **Establish clear goals for the partnership.**
  - Both young people and the adults must understand what their roles and responsibilities will be in achieving the goals. Time frames are also important; you may just want to set up a specific short-term partnership for a particular project.
- **Share the power when making decisions.**
  - If young people have no power to make decisions, their participation is not one of partnership.
- **Get the highest levels of the organisation to fully commit to young people's participation in the organisation's work.**
  - This will help ensure the success of the partnership.
- **Are selective.**
  - Young people vary widely in their development and in their readiness and willingness to assume responsibility. Being clear about the goals of the partnership and the roles that young people will play will help in identifying young people who are committed, reliable and effective. At the same time, effective partnerships are selective about adult participants. The adults must believe that young people are assets and be willing and able to advocate on behalf of young people when stereotyping or negative assumptions about teens arise.
- **Provide capacity building and training.**
  - Effective partnerships don't set young people or adults up for failure by putting them in situations for which they are not prepared. Young people may need training in communication, leadership, assertiveness skills, interviewing, etc., as well as in specific areas of expertise. Adults may need training in communication, collaborative work, interviewing, or working with young people.
- **Are aware that different styles of communication do not imply disrespect, disinterest, or different goals and expectations.**
  - Young people and adults say that the best way to resolve conflicts that arise out of different communication styles is to ask questions for clarification. Keeping the common goal in mind can also help resolve conflicts arising out of different communication styles.
- **Value young people's participation and what they bring.**
  - Effective partnerships hold high expectations for participating young people and are not afraid of holding young people accountable for their responsibilities.



- **Value adults' participation and what they bring.**
  - Adults frequently offer the partnership knowledge, experience, and access to resources. Effective partnerships guard against discounting potential adult allies, assuming that all adults hold negative stereotypes about young people, or believing that adults will have nothing of value to contribute to a programme intended for young people.
- **Include room for growth – next steps.**
  - Where can young people and adults go next? Effective programmes ensure that young people and the adults who work with them have opportunities for advancement.
- **Remember that young people have other interests and priorities.**
  - Sometimes, adults will enthusiastically enlist the participation of a particularly effective and articulate young person in an overwhelming number of obligations and commitments, resulting in undue pressure.



## What do young people need to know about working with adults?<sup>7</sup>

1. Most adults have good intentions. Remember they may not used to working in partnership with young people.
2. Criticism doesn't necessarily mean that an adult doesn't value or respect your contribution. It may mean that the adult is treating you in the same way that he/she would treat an adult colleague.
3. Adults may not be aware of the capabilities of young people. They can be told that young people are mature, but showing them is the best way to make the case.
4. Adults often feel responsible for the success or failure of the project. This makes it hard for them to share power. They may need reassurance that you are willing to share in both the successes and the failures.
5. Adults are just as uncertain as young people. They have just learned to disguise it better.
6. Sometimes adults use expressions, whether consciously or not, which annoy young people and are red flags that they aren't treating young people as partners. These expressions can erode a relationship. Be prepared to call adults on their language.
7. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Adults sometimes use words, phrases, and acronyms that you might not understand. Adults new to the service may also not understand them. The language of the community and voluntary sector is riddled with terms that can bewilder any newcomer.
8. Don't be afraid to say "No". Adults will understand that you have other important commitments, like your education, family, friends, hobbies, and sports.

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from 'Making it Work, A Guide to Successful Youth-Adult Partnerships', TNYS & TDPRS, 2002



## What do adults need to know about working with young people?

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1. Be open and non-judgmental about young people's insights and suggestions. Let them know that their involvement is important.
2. Take advantage of the expertise that young people offer. They know about and share the needs of their community. Affirm this input.
3. Make sure that young people participate in meaningful ways. Young people should be involved in making decisions from the beginning of the project. Actively ask for young people's opinions.
4. Be honest about expectations for the project, what you want the young people to contribute and how you hope to benefit from their participation. Don't expect more of young people than you do of adults. Keep expectations realistic; hold young people to your expectations. Do not patronise young people by lowering expectations.
5. Integrate young people into group and coalition efforts. Schedule meetings when they can attend and in accessible locations. Keep young people informed about plans and meeting times.
6. Treat young people as individuals. Don't assume that one young person represents the views of all young people. Assure the young people that you are interested in their individual opinions and that you don't expect one young person to speak for an entire population.
7. Be prepared to offer support. Think about the kinds of support (financial, logistical, training, emotional, etc.) required to involve young people, and about who will provide this support.
8. Celebrate participation and acknowledge individual effort. All young people have different strengths and skills, so try to ensure that project work is developed in a way which allows all young people the opportunity to participate fully, in an ethos of equality.
9. Some young people feel intimidated by adults and are not used to participating in discussions with adults. Others may feel they have nothing to contribute. It requires time and commitment to get the input of these young people. Be aware of this factor and work to overcome it.
10. Don't make assumptions about what young people are like.
11. Don't move too fast. It takes time to develop trust and rapport with young people. Take time to develop a good relationship with young people before expecting too much. Remember that this work is often new to young people. Take the time to explain what is happening and why.
12. Remember there are times when young people need to say "No". They have competing interests and responsibilities in their lives. Their education, relationships and communities are important.
13. Having fun is important. They need time and energy for these interests and responsibilities.



### **Youth Participation Policy**

A policy is a statement of the ethos and values of an organisation. A youth participation policy clarifies an organisation's ethos and boundaries in terms of how young people can participate in matters that affect them within that organisation. It also outlines an organisation's commitment and what it aims to achieve in terms of involving young people in decision making. The policy is usually implemented through the development of a Youth Charter. The policy and the charter should be developed in partnership with the young people. The process of developing a Youth Participation Charter is outlined below.

### **Youth Participation Charter**

A Youth Participation Charter is a document which assists organisations/youth groups in fulfilling their commitment to involving young people in decision-making processes. It is also an indication of best practice in youth-adult partnership working. The Charter highlights what the organisation or youth group's beliefs and values are in terms of Youth participation and outlines how adults and young people will work together.

The goal of the Charter is to ensure that young people have a role in decision-making processes and receive feedback about the outcomes or impact of their participation. As such, the Charter should benefit a range of groups in the organisational planning and monitoring of youth participation activities and processes. Implementing the Charter requires the commitment of staff at every level within the organisation and the implementation of a range of strategies, processes and policies that value the meaningful engagement of young people. The Youth Participation Charter should be clearly displayed for all to see. Both adults and young people in the organisation need to be familiar with it and understand it, if it is to be effective.

As with all policies, it is important to monitor and review your organisation's Youth Participation Charter regularly. Your Youth Participation Charter should also feature within training/induction programmes for both staff and volunteers.

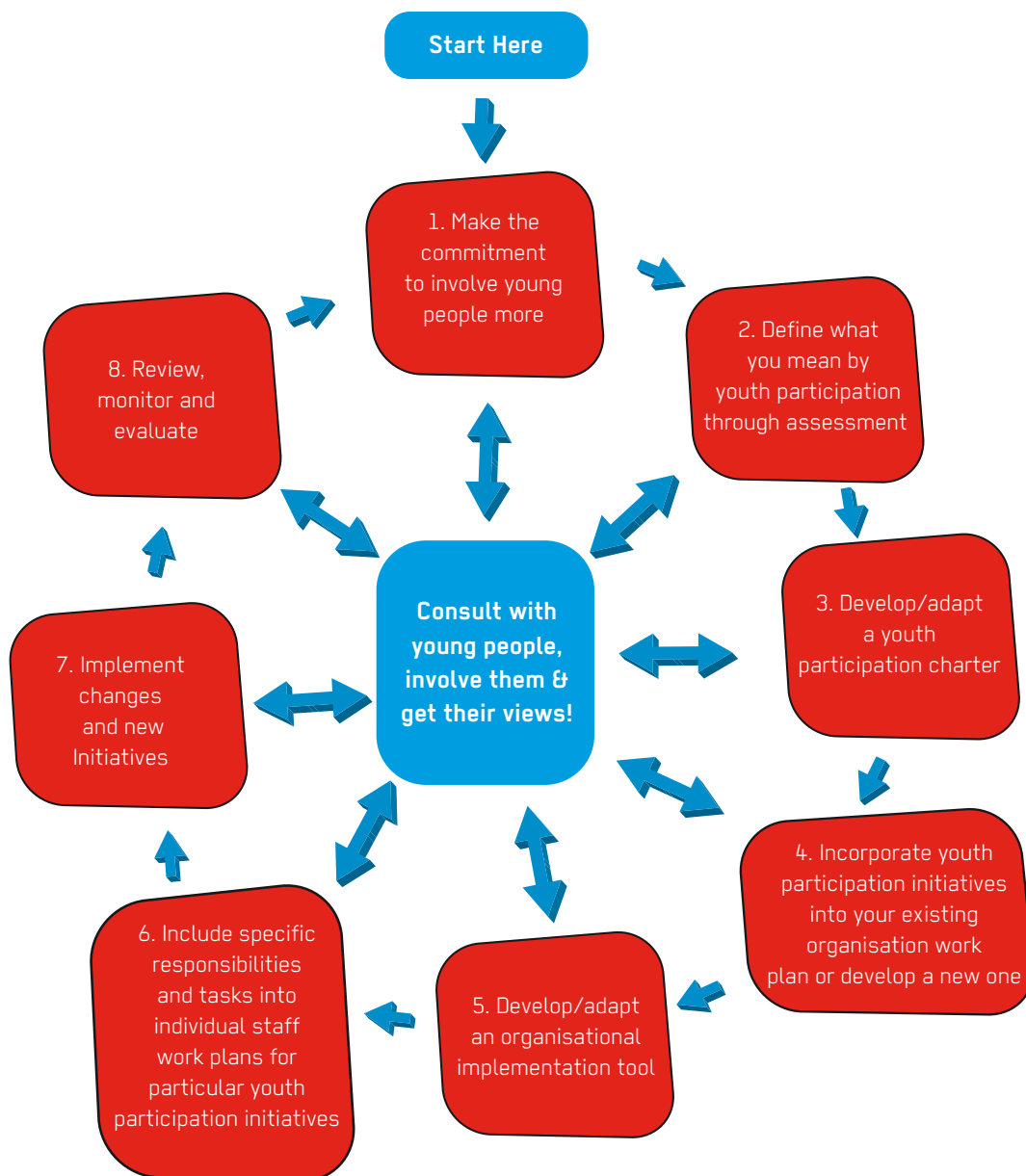
### **How to go about developing a Youth Participation Charter**

In developing a Youth Participation Charter, it is important that both adults and young people are involved in the process and feel that their views are reflected in the finished draft. (We have included NYC1's Youth Participation Charter at the back of this resource as an example of this work.)

Displaying the charter in the form of a colourful and creative poster and in a prominent place within your club will help in bringing people's attention to it. Involving young people in the creation of the poster is a good way of initiating discussion on what it is all about and what it should include. Young people should be given the opportunity to input their thoughts and views on what it should contain.

## Implementing the Youth Participation Charter – making it real!

The Youth Participation Charter provides guidance to organisations about their commitment to engage with young people in the development of policy, programmes, activities and services. The following chart illustrates a practical example of how an organisation could begin a more structured approach to youth participation in the day-to-day running of services. At the heart of this structure is the constant need to consult with young people, involve them and get their views. This is vital in order to ensure that young people are a fundamental part of the entire process.







## Case Study: Dream Depot - Kildare Town Youth Project

**This case study highlights the collaboration of young people and adults through the medium of art.**

During the first four months of 2007, 10 young people aged 14 - 17 took part in the first phase of a project called Dream Depot in Kildare Town Youth Project. A group of 10 young people had approached the project leader and asked for an arts programme that was separate to their youth work activities. They had previously participated in a drama skills programme which sparked their interest in the area. Because of the limits on the youth project's resources and capacity, the project leader sought to develop links with an artist interested in working with young people. Through an article in Youth Arts News, he made contact with artist Fiona Whelan, who was developing an idea for an international youth arts project called 'Dream Depot'. The project leader applied to the National Youth Arts Programme to fund a consultation phase with the group of young people in Kildare Town and this application was successful.

The concept of 'Dream Depot' is to stimulate young people to question the amount of direction they can give to their own lives and to address the ways in which they can influence their own thoughts and behaviour. 'Dream Depot' uses an artistic process which does not focus on the outcomes, but rather on the 'experience' of working together to explore and create an artwork about themselves. During the consultation process, they were guided by the artist and the project leader to address and tackle issues such as their place in society, as well as segregation and prejudice that they themselves both experience and show to others. The general theme and enquiry of the project was the issue of self-efficacy (the belief that you can influence your own thoughts and behaviour).

After consulting with the young people, a time slot was created to suit them and they had an initial ideas sharing session around their hopes and fears for the project. Throughout the project they had access to a video diary room, which the project leader had set up in a walk-in-cupboard. The idea behind it was to enable the young people to record each other on video camera, while voicing their opinions about how they experienced Dream Depot. It was also used as a way to evaluate the process. The young people were introduced to the adults involved in the process and were consulted the entire time.

Everyone was given the opportunity to input into the project and make decisions on the next steps to be taken throughout the process.

The young people worked with printed photos, disposable cameras and with sound recording equipment as they felt this was an easier way of relaying their thoughts and opinions. They talked about their own identity and how they were different to the young people living in the next town. Through role play, the group discussed how they had felt about playing a particular role and how stereotyping, behaviour and attitudes were used to judge people and put them into boxes. An idea developed from what the group had been discussing in workshops, around where they hang out in the town. The idea was to explore, develop and build a mobile hang out unit for the young people. Through a process using multi-media, the group succeeded in producing their own portable life size hangout space or 'gaff'. They did this with the help of a professional carpenter who was willing to work, free of charge, with the group to build the mobile hang out 'gaff'. He was very enthusiastic about helping out and he really liked the idea of the 'Gaff'.

Because the group was becoming more confident and skilled with the different tasks involved in making the 'gaff', the work became more efficient and organised. This resulted in a stimulating, productive and fun atmosphere. As the 'gaff' was being assembled, the young people were able to test it and make clear choices. They recognised what was missing and what the next step was.

In an evaluation meeting, the artist and the project leader agreed that the impact of the Dream Depot pilot was very substantial on the young people and on the Kildare Town Youth Project. It impacted on the individuals and on the group as a whole in relation to the growth in confidence observed during the workshops.



What the young people had to say:

Brian 17: **'I think the best thing about the project was that I learned a little bit of carpentry, I didn't have the chance to do that before. I don't really think it was an art project 'cos we built something that we can use.'**

Dean 15: **'I think we did do an art project 'cos we came together with an idea and now we have something that represents that idea.'**

Danielle 16: **'It was just good to have something to do with the lads on a Wednesday evening, some of the planning stuff was boring but it was good craic being here.'**

Kelvin 15: **'I think we all worked well, I hope we do something with the gaff and that it just doesn't stay sitting there.'**



## Youth Participation Quiz

### The Activist Personality Quiz

The following quiz has been adapted from a resource called "Do it yourself". This is an excellent guide to youth participation which was written by a group of young people from the YWCA in New Zealand known as Ydub. In terms of becoming more active, they believe that<sup>8</sup> 'regardless of your politics, ideals or belief system, you'll have a style that will shape how you could best organise for change.'

Try out this quiz, and decide whether you fit into any of the following personality types. Then check out the following section for some ideas on the types of action you may want to get involved in! It's important to remember that this quiz is supposed to be fun and is not meant to label or pigeon hole anyone into a specific personality type. You will probably find that each section only describes some of your characteristics and should therefore only be used as a guide and to provide you with some more ideas!

#### Q1. How would friends and family describe your personality?

- A. A chilled out peace keeper
- B. Way out there!
- C. Creative
- D. A deep thinker

#### Q2. What's your favourite pastime?

- A. Hanging out
- B. Chaining yourself to a tree
- C. Jamming with your mates
- D. Surfing the net

#### Q3. What kind of periodicals do you read?

- A. Fashion/lifestyle magazine
- B. Newspaper
- C. Arty type publications
- D. Techy based Magz

#### Q4. What slogan best describes your values?

- A. People just need a fair chance
- B. People before profit
- C. One love
- D. Censorship is death to free speech

#### Q5. What celebrity styled 'hero' best matches your values?

- A. Angelina Jolie
- B. Bob Geldof
- C. Bob Marley
- D. My own avatar

#### Q6. Do you hold out hope for the world?

- A. Sure while things aren't perfect it's not bad now
- B. Only if there are big changes
- C. Yes, there's hope in the passion and dreams of everyone
- D. If we breakdown the barriers and false boundaries

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from "Do it Yourself". For copies email them at [ydub@ywca.org.nz](mailto:ydub@ywca.org.nz)

## Quiz Results

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### Mostly A's – Equaliser

You're probably busy with school or work or just hanging out. You're probably pretty satisfied with your world. You've got a good heart and could make a real contribution if you could narrow down your focus. Spend some time thinking about what you're most passionate about. Seek out some people who aren't like you and listen to what things are like for them. You're likely to take a moderate path that doesn't change the whole system, but looks to make the one we've got better.

### Mostly B's – Stirrer

Maybe you've looked at the world and found it wanting. You've probably read a lot and probably know people from lots of different walks of life. You should have a good sense of your own power and have been out there doing it for a while, or at least talking about it. You need to remember to look after yourself. It's possible to burn out doing too much and then you'll be a liability to yourself and others, so make sure you have some fun! Humour and positivity will make you more accessible to the people you want to reach.

### Mostly C's – Styler

Following in the steps of Bob Marley, you can see how the power of art can influence people and promote change. You're most likely artistic with a strong connection to whoever you define as your community. You might use words, music, colour or movement to explore and present issues. The process is probably as important to you as the outcome. Just make sure that you keep the big picture in mind, because whatever is happening within your community is influenced by what is happening in the world.

### Mostly D's – Connector

You could be a cyber activist. Most at home on the web, you have the potential to mobilise thousands through the click of one button. You've probably read all the theories and understand different views on a whole range of issues. Maybe you have a political analysis for most things and believe the internet could revolutionise societies as we know them. Just watch out that you don't neglect your personal relationships and lose touch with the real world. Some people don't have access to the internet, so think about some way of connecting beyond the computer.

Information





## Now take action

Type	Examples of activities/actions
<p><b>The Equaliser</b></p> <p>You may not consider yourself an activist, but you care about people and want to create a level playing field. You're big on checks and balances and you try to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities. So take the plunge and go for it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend community meetings</li> <li>• Write a feature for your school, university or local newspaper</li> <li>• Sign a petition or online appeal</li> <li>• Get more involved in your local youth/community club</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Stirrer</b></p> <p>You probably feel passionately about things that are going on in the world and love to stir people up and challenge them to think. You ask a lot of questions and accept that just because this is how things have always been, they don't have to stay this way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise a public meeting, rally or peaceful protest</li> <li>• Get TV, radio, newspaper interviews</li> <li>• Get involved in the local Comhairle na nÓg</li> <li>• Start a petition</li> <li>• Write to or meet with local councillors</li> <li>• If you are over 18 run for local council</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Styler</b></p> <p>Music and the arts have always played a role in provoking, supporting and documenting social change. In Ireland, art and music often explore things like identity, culture and place. Use your talents to express yourself, explore ideas and get people talking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print up some funky t-shirts with your message and sell them at the market or shops. Give free ones to prominent local figures</li> <li>• Organise a talent show in your local community centre</li> <li>• Write a song or poem and perform it</li> <li>• Ask your local council for permission to paint a public mural</li> <li>• Screen a film or documentary about your issues or make one of your own</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Connector</b></p> <p>You dream of reshaping society via the internet. You see the potential of the internet for communication, sharing information and initiating action! Just turn on your computer and get connected!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up an activists email network, to discuss issues and action plans</li> <li>• Start an email petition to send to an MP or other decision maker</li> <li>• Join an activist chat group</li> <li>• Express yourself, your ideas and your views on your own webpage</li> </ul>

# ipation





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