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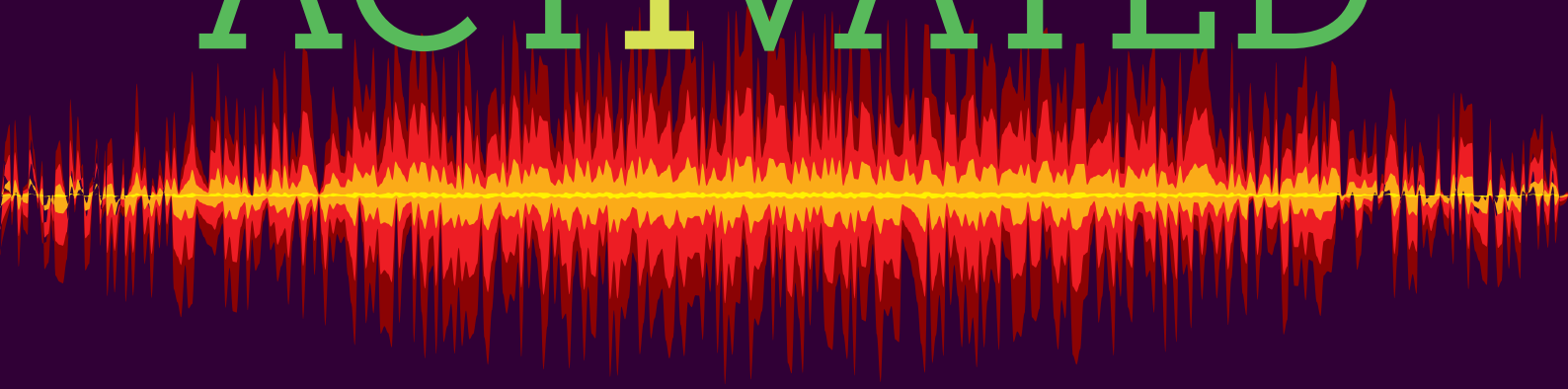

Developing participation in the Methodist Church

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the well
THE NETWORK FOR METHODIST CHILDREN & YOUTH WORKERS

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Foreword

First things first: participation is about everyone, not just children and young people. It's part of the Methodist Church's bigger vision – part of the Children & Youth Team's wider strategy – to see the *whole* Church participating more; making and moulding the shape and substance of the Church, *together*. This handbook is an attempt to share that vision and the learning that has taken place over five years of journeying with the Church.

The Church's approach to children's and youth work has traditionally been educational and pastoral. That was fine when society knew what Christianity was and what the Church was for. But we can no longer assume this. The task of children's and youth work has shifted. Participation is the next step in the journey towards a true understanding of what an inclusive Church will look like. It will provide children and young people opportunities to be involved in and to influence the mission and ministry of the Methodist Church. This might renew our existing models of Church. Or it might lead to completely new and fresh expressions of Church.

The decision of the Methodist Conference in 2007 to set up the Youth Participation Strategy (YPS) was brave. It was also pioneering. The Methodist Church is the *first* mainstream church in the UK to be developing participation as an integral part of its mission. The ground-breaking nature of this work was recognised by the National Youth Agency in 2012, when we were awarded the Hear By Right bronze award for participation – at that time the largest organisation ever to receive this award and the first national church body.

Participation isn't a new thing; it's an integral part of best practice in children's and youth work (as outlined later in section 1). However, whilst some people naturally work in a participative way, others are still seeking to move beyond the more traditional forms of children's and youth work.

If you work with children and young people, you probably know only too well that we can face a huge challenge when trying to change the culture of our churches, allowing everyone to participate in relevant and authentic ways. The focussed work of the YPS may have come to an end but the learning continues and we hope this resource will help us to face this challenge. This is an ever-changing journey and one the whole Church is on together.

Section 1: The context of participation

When we begin to think about implementing participation practices in a local or immediate setting, it's important to understand where we fit in the grand scheme of things. This section will explore the bigger picture; what's going on in the wider world and where participation fits theologically.

Participation on an international scale

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) aims to ensure that every child and young person can fulfil their potential, with an emphasis on freedom, respect, non-discrimination and human dignity.

The UNCRC comprises of 54 articles. Articles 1-42 specify how children should be treated and articles 43-54 describe how adults and governments should work together to ensure that all children and young people are entitled to their rights. The United Kingdom and Northern Ireland signed up to the UNCRC in 1991.

The article we are particularly interested in, in terms of this resource, is Article 12, which says

> States 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.[1]

Therefore the UNCRC makes it very clear that children and young people have the right (it is not an 'optional extra') to fully participate in matters and services that affect their lives. This is based on the principle that children and young people are of equal value to adults and therefore have the same right.

> Human personhood is not divided into childhood or adulthood; it is merely personhood irrespective of age, social status or amount of learning, wisdom and experience.[2]

However there are often barriers to participation – due to many factors – and consequently children and young people need extra support to ensure that their views are heard and taken seriously.

Participation on a national scale

Whilst the United Nations was discussing the rights of the child, back in the UK the government was also exploring children's rights. This led to the Children's Act, which was amended several times between its introduction in 1989 and 2008. This act introduced the idea of legal parental responsibility, which means "all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property.[3]

The act's later amendments include legislation on universal services (those baseline provisions available to all in the UK). At the heart of these laws is the aim of making sure that children and young people's needs and interests are at the centre of any decisions made about them. Service providers are encouraged to avoid the common trap of simply assuming they know what these needs and interests are. Instead they are expected to consult with children and young people, allowing them to help shape plans that affect them. Likewise, when planning our own activities for children and young people, we need to be sure we are meeting real needs and wants, not just perceived ones.

Participation in the Methodist Church

The Youth Participation Strategy (YPS) was agreed by the Methodist Conference in 2007. The Methodist Church has a long and proud history of being at the forefront of shaping youth work and of challenging society to be more inclusive of the marginalised. This pioneering way of doing children's and youth work seeks to redress the power imbalance and challenges the power distribution in our churches and communities.

The YPS was (and is) also part of the Methodist Church's bigger vision to create space for children and young people to think, talk and be disciples, through pathways, places and people, and to see the whole Church participating more.

The whole aim of the resource you're currently reading is to help you embed participation in your local context so that you can build community, connect with your children and young people and encourage a 'priesthood of all believers'[4].

> The YPS challenges us to hear the views and contributions of young people right at the heart of the Methodist Church, in our structures, our committees, in our policy and practice. That's a bold, courageous and deeply spiritual step to take – as Jesus said in Luke 9: "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."[5]

Participation biblically and theologically

Core Skills for Children's Work claims that one of the aims of children's ministry

should be "enabling children to be a full part of the community of the church ... encouraging our children to grow into God's image as they tell stories, share ideas, explore the Bible and seek inspiration from the Holy Spirit."[6]

Core Skills also talks about the importance of helping children to listen and find meanings for themselves in Bible stories. It poses a challenging thought:

> It is *not helpful* to tell the children what the story 'means', or to impose one's own understanding of the story on them. As Jesus encouraged his listeners to discover their own understanding of his parables, so children's workers can allow their listeners to interpret stories in their own way.[7]

It then goes on to ask, "Does it make you feel uneasy because you think you ought to have all the right answers? Or does it feel better to know that you are not expected to know everything?"

The Methodist Children & Youth Team resource, *Creating S p a c e for Children and Young People to Think, Talk and Be Disciples* uses the example of Samuel and Eli:

> When God calls Samuel, thinking Eli is calling him, Samuel runs to Eli to see what he wants. Eli sends Samuel away because he didn't call him. This happens two more times and, on the third time, Eli realises that God is calling Samuel. Eli tells Samuel to go back and lie down and when God calls him again to answer, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant is listening." Eli doesn't intervene or speak on Samuel's behalf, he allows Samuel to speak to and be with God.[8]

We have highlighted just one passage from Scripture that demonstrates a calling to participation as good practice, but by simply picking up a copy of the Bible and reading from any point, you won't have to look hard to find more. At its heart, participation is essentially about how we relate to each other. It is an idea that values all humans as equal and valuable, which is how Jesus interacted with people. It's why he had disciples; why he chose to speak with people, not just to them. It's also how God treats us, allowing us to be co-creators in his creation. And it's how the Holy Spirit works, as the one who comes alongside.

Questions for thought and discussion

Look at each of the statements below:

- Do you agree? Why?
- How does it affect the way in which you see discipleship for your children and young people?
- How does it affect the way in which you see discipleship for your church?
- How successful is your church at doing these things?

Statements:

1. Children's and youth work should be about enabling children and young people to think for themselves, ask questions and develop their own faith

through conversation with those around them, rather than simply inheriting the faith of previous generations.

2. Participation is about enabling children and young people to think outside of the box and to challenge the status quo. It is about making change happen, both in our churches and our communities, and challenging even the way in which we do children's and youth work!

3. Participation is about the whole body of Christ working in partnership, seeing one another as equals and working out how to do discipleship together – being willing to listen, engage with and share power with one another.

4. Participation is about helping young people to develop in every way – physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually – so that they have the tools to identify and respond, in a way that is relevant and informed, to the needs that their communities and peers face.

5. Article 12 on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says, "Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account." Participation is about equipping children and young people to understand and take part in decision-making.

6. Participation is based on the importance of whole-church relationships, trust, empowerment and taking risks.

Suggested activity: participation pyramid

You will need:

- Copy of the Participation Pyramid from Appendix 2.3.
- A copy of '10 arguments for youth participation' from Appendix 1.1. These will need to be cut into individual 'bricks' before starting the activity.

What to do:

1. Each brick represents a possible reason for people to work in a participatory way.

2. Working in a group, take turns to each pick up a brick/reason and place it on the pyramid in the position that best represents how important you think that reason is, the top of the pyramid being the most important reason and the bottom being the least important.

3. When you have put down a brick/reason, you may also move someone else's, but you must give a good reason why you are moving it.

4. When all bricks/reasons have been placed on the pyramid, try to reach a consensus as a group.

5. Discuss, as a group, what the pyramid you have created says about your view of participation. How should this affect your approach to children's and youth work?

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[1] *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx, 1989.
[2] Anne Richards and Peter Privett, *Through the Eyes of a Child*, London, Church House Publishing, 2009, p.7.
[3] *Children Act 1989,* www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents, 1989.
[4] 1 Peter 2: 9
[5] Rev Dr Peter Phillips, Secretary to the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, *Participation Strategy, It's About Everyone*, Methodist Church Children and Youth Team, 2011, p.6.
[6] The Consultancy Group on Ministry Among Children, *Core Skills for Children's Work*, Oxford, Bible Reading Fellowship, 2006, p.9
[7] *Ibid*,p.76
[8] Methodist Children and Youth Team, *Creating S p a c e for Children and Young People to Think, Talk and Be Disciples*, London, 2012, p.9.

Section 2: The theory

We could fill a whole book with the theories of participation, and some people have! Our aim in this section is to give you a brief overview of the subject, including definitions and models and, in some cases, how they might apply to the Methodist Church. You could go into much more depth if you are that way inclined; if that's you, then please do check out the 'Further Reading' recommendations in Appendix 4. For everyone else, we encourage you to have a look at the following information so you have a good grounding in the basics.

In discussing participation, people have used both words and diagrams. This section will take time to look at both, as well as some theory on general group dynamics. We hope you will find something that connects with the work you are doing.

Working towards a definition

There are many definitions of participation. However, as Nigel Thomas and Barry Percy-Smith point out in their book *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation*, it

> is a field, to use a resonant phrase, 'in search of a definition' ... Although there have been immense advances in the practice of children's participation, we still lack a credible and coherent body of theory to inform this practice ... In some ways, practice has outstripped theory.[1]

Here are just three definitions of participation:

1) Participation is the process by which individuals and groups of individuals can influence decision making and bring about change.[2]

2) This word 'participation' is currently used in the context of working with children and young people to mean a variety of things. Participation is often used as a method to serve a purpose or function, in the sense it is used to make changes or transform something, be it a person, group, organisation, service... you get the idea![3]

3) Authentic participation needs to be about children and young people being at the centre of – rather than at the end of – or on the outside of – or on the fringes of – or

even beyond the reach of... So what we are really talking about here is the difference between being child-led and adult-led.[4]

Models of participation

'Hart's ladder'

In 1992 sociologist Roger Hart, through his work with UNICEF, created what could be considered the first ever diagrammatic model of youth participation – the soon-to-be-infamous 'Hart's Ladder'.[5] It quickly became a popular and often referred to tool for organisations to measure their youth engagement against.

Hart identified the following eight 'rungs' on his ladder of participation, which were later adapted and expanded upon by Adam Fletcher on behalf of the Freechild Project[6]. We have taken those rungs and explored what they might look like in real life for a Methodist Church or project.

1) Manipulation Several grant funders request that young people support, or even complete, their application forms. In this situation a youth leader may tell a young person what to write or, even worse, pretend to be the young person themselves.
2) Decoration As the paid church youth worker, you've had some complaints that there aren't enough young people showing up on a Sunday morning. To sort this problem, you have managed to scramble together some local teenagers to attend the next all-age worship service, with the promise that you will all go out for pizza afterwards. You sit the young people at the front of the church (even though they don't want to), so that everyone can see them.
3) Tokenism Young people are asked to play some songs as a worship group in the local church, but you retain control of what songs they are singing and how they will deliver them. The key thing that's missing is planning with the young people; exploring the meaning and context of the worship time together.
4) Assigned but informed You are organising a holiday club for children. The teenagers you work with are assigned specific roles, but you also spend time working with them to inform them how their involvement shapes what you're doing and why it is important for them to be involved.

5) Consulted and informed

In a church redevelopment, local young people are consulted about what a successful redevelopment would look like for them. Time is spent hearing their voices and then you follow this up, telling them how their feedback will affect the redevelopment. You keep in touch to let them know the outcomes of the adult decisions.

6) Adult initiated shared decisions with young people

This is the start of sharing roles of influence on an equal footing. For example, this may include specifically involving young people in your church leadership. Working within existing church council structures, your meeting times are chosen to be accessible to young people but are still strongly influenced by the 'adult' ways of working.

7) Young people initiated and directed

You are running a drop-in cafe. You set up a management group that is made up of young people and has young people leading the meetings. The way the group meets and works is completely directed by the young people. Key workers may be there to support the sessions, but play no influencing role in the process.

8) Young people initiated shared decisions with adults

You are setting up a new youth project and you establish a development group in which young people and adults function on an equal footing. The initial work is initiated through the direction of young people, but then the group recognises experience and expertise around them and development is shared intergenerationally, balancing the wide variety of experiences, insights and areas of expertise.

The first three rungs of the ladder are considered not to be participation, whereas the other five rungs are considered to be degrees of participation.

Strengths of this model:

- It's a good introduction to participation, providing people with an easily accessible and simplistic model to measure their work against.
- It clearly draws a line between participation and non-participation. The lower rungs in particular encourage improved practice.
- 'Hart's Ladder' was groundbreaking when first introduced – providing a starting point for future, more developed, models of participation.

- It's aspirational – it clearly encourages projects to improve their levels of participation and sets out clear goals.

Weaknesses of this model:

- Hart developed this model when practice was outstripping theory (as suggested above) and therefore he developed it as a way to start applying theory to practice. The understanding and practice has gone beyond this initial simplistic model.
- The ladder implies that participation is sequential and there is a hierarchy with regards to access points for/types of participation.
- At the top of the ladder, Hart places 'young people initiated, shared discussion with adults' as the premium form of participation. It could, however, be suggested that the uppermost rung should see adults, children and young people working together as equals, each with their own skills, experience and expertise.

Our knowledge and experiences are not 'better' than children's knowledge – it's just different. We have merely had more time than the children and young people we work with to gather information, play with that information, test it out on the world, store it and make use of it.[7]

"[F]rom my perspective, I see the ladder lying in the long grass of an orchard at the end of the season. It has served its purpose. I look forward to the next season for I know there are many different routes up through the branches and better ways to talk about how children can climb into meaningful, and shall we say fruitful, ways of working with other."[8]

'Shier's pathways of participation'

While Hart's Ladder can help you get your head around the basics of participation and what it *could* look like, Shier's Pathways to Participation[9] is a useful tool for assessing your church or project's readiness and commitment to youth participation, beyond specific projects.

Shier's model sees good participation as adults and young people sharing power and responsibility. From our experience, it is when there is complete shared working between young people and adults, that participation can become an amazing, dynamic and organic model of working. However, it can require us to be open to new ways of working, to make everything we do suitable and accessible for all. It requires disempowering ourselves to empower others.

See next page for a diagram of Shier's Pathway...

Levels of participation	Openings	Opportunities	Obligations
Level 5 Young people share power and responsibility in decision-making.	Are you ready to share some of your adult power with young people?	Is there a procedure that enables young people and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?	Is it a policy requirement that young people and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?
Level 4 Young people are involved in decision-making processes.	Are you ready to let young people join in your decision-making processes?	Is there a procedure that enables young people to join in decision-making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that young people must be involved in decision-making processes?
Level 3* Young people's views are taken into account.	Are you ready to take young people's views into account?	Does your decision-making process enable you to take young people's views into account?	Is it a policy requirement that young people's views must be given weight in decision-making?
Level 2 Young people are supported in expressing their views.	Are you ready to support young people in expressing their views?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help young people express their views?	Is it a policy requirement that young people must be supported in expressing their views?
Level 1 Young people are listened to. **START HERE**	Are you ready to listen to young people?	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to young people?	Is it a policy requirement that young people must be listened to?

*Shier states that Level 3 of his model is the minimum practice needed to meet the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

One final participation model: 'Treseder's degrees of participation'

We realise by now that your head is probably spinning with all this theory! However there is one more key thinker to mention. Phil Treseder[10] has developed a model that demonstrates how children and young people can be involved, to varying degrees, in decision making. This model recognises the fact that, in certain circumstances, not all degrees of participation are applicable or relevant. For instance, in schools or in many council decisions, children and young people will never be able to completely control the decision that is made, and this is okay.

The five degrees of participation identified by Treseder are listed below. As you look at them you will notice some crossover between his thinking and that of Hart, although Treseder would argue that each of these degrees are, in some form or another, participation. The setting and context would dictate which degree is the most appropriate.

1. **Child initiated, shared decisions with adults**
   Children have the ideas, set up their own projects and come to adults for advice, discussion and support. The adults do not direct but offer expertise.

2. **Consulted and informed**
   Project is designed and run by adults but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.

3. **Assigned but informed**
   Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The children understand the project, they know who decided to involve them and why. Adults respect the young people's views.

4. **Adult initiated, shared decisions with children**
   Adults have the initial idea but children are involved in every step of planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered but children are also involved in decision making.

5. **Child initiated and directed**
   Children have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.[11]

While Treseder's work provides us with a fairly comprehensive model of participation, our work on the Youth Participation Strategy (YPS) has led us to argue that there is another degree that exists in decision making and participation, which is:

6. **Adults and child initiated and directed**
   Adults and children generate and develop ideas together. The adults and children then work as a team of equals to implement these ideas.

Questions for thought and discussion

1. Think about the work your church/project is engaged in. Can you think of examples of work that fit into the different levels of involvement?
2. To what extent are the children and young people in your church/project involved in decision-making? What would be the ideal?
3. Are there different levels of involvement that are appropriate for different contexts/types of decision or activity?
4. Look at Shier's Pathways and the questions he asks about your participation practices.
    - Where would you say you, personally, sit on the Pathways?
    - Where does your church or project sit?
    - Are you and your church/project in the same place on the Pathways?

Suggested activity: elevator definition

Imagine you have just got into a lift with a complete stranger and they ask you to define participation for them. How would you explain it in the time it takes to travel a few floors?

Group theory

> Groups are a fundamental part of social life. As we will see they can be very small - just two people - or very large. They can be highly rewarding to their members and to society as a whole, but there are also significant problems and dangers with them...[12]

Whilst there are many different types of group, each with a life of its own, it has been noted that there are often some core behaviours exhibited as groups grow and develop. It is important, when facilitating group work, that you are aware of the underlying theory. Understanding these dynamics can help you to recognise the behaviours, plan as a group grows and avoid some of the common pitfalls in group work. This next section outlines some of this theory and, hopefully, highlights some ways that you can make your group work increasingly effective.

What are the first steps?

Start by thinking about why the group exists. When starting a group for the first time, it is important to know its purpose and the sort of values that will be shared by its members. For example, thinking about a church small group/cell group, there will normally be some core values that group members can agree on.

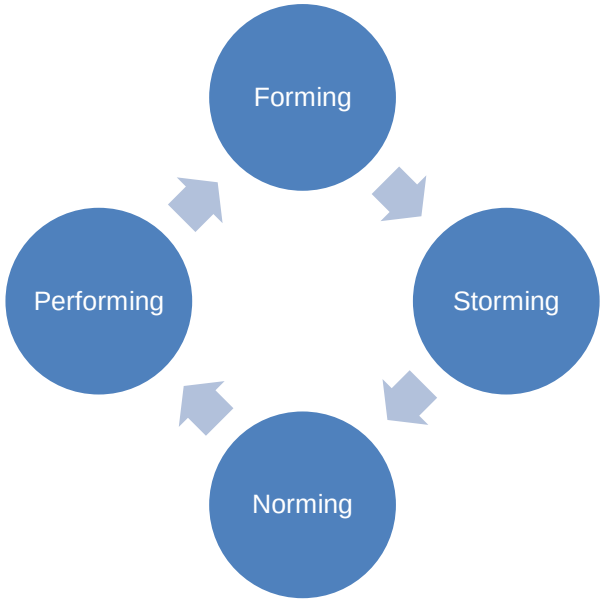
In some cases, an external influence may have led to the group being set up (eg your minister told you to do it) or the group may have come into existence as a result of a need expressed directly to you. Where you have an 'inherited purpose' (a purpose that someone has passed on to you) it is important to explore this with the group members and refine it with their insight. If the group is developing with an 'incarnate purpose' (and by this we mean a purpose that has come from the members themselves) then you should flesh this out together and agree as to why the group exists.

Regarding values of the group, it is a good idea to run a session on this subject together during the early stages of the group's formation. You can draw up a formal contract or simply agree a way of being together. There is a whole spectrum of ways to develop, present and review your purposes and values, from the very formal (signing a contract!) to the very casual verbal agreement. Choose a way that suits you!

Group development theory

There are several different models that help us to understand how groups grow and develop. One of the most commonly referred to is that of Bruce Tuckman[13] . He proposed a four-stage cyclical model of group development, as shown in the diagram below:

The four stages are as follows:



Forming
This is the initial stage. The group is coming together and everyone is finding their place. Everything is new and energy can be high at this stage. There can be a strong focus on why the group exists.

Storming
People begin to see themselves as part of the group. However, at this stage they may challenge each other and the person leading the group. This can be about such things as what the group is doing and how things should be done. As the name of this stage suggests, it is typified by conflict and confrontation as differences surface. This can result in the energy of the group dropping and a loss of focus on why the group exists. Personality types can play a strong part in this stage.

Norming
This is the phase where group members start to come together; developing how things work, establishing ground rules, clarifying who does what and how things will be done. There's a growing sense of the group being together and belonging together.

Performing
This is the final stage. Increased focus on why the group exists and on team relationships combines to provide a high energy level (often called synergy). Performance is delivered through people working effectively together and the group members participate more in putting the values of the group into action.

Some common pitfalls of small group work

There are some frequent problems that can arise in group work and you may find some of the following issues quite familiar if you have done any work with groups in the past.

1. **Groups become inward-looking**
   Once a group loses touch with the wider world around it, it can lose touch with why it exists. Again, taking the example of a church small group, it can easily become a clique – closed to new people and possibly not meeting some of its core values.

2. **Negativity**
   Sometimes groups can develop a focus on negative emotions. These can be a strong, binding force. Using this sort of energy is occasionally useful (for example dealing with social issues such as fair trade or poverty) but when "all that is wrong with everything" becomes the core purpose, this can impact the health of your group and its members.

3. **Dealing with issues around privacy and trust**
   What happens when someone within your youth group talks about something personal and, after the group is finished, somehow it gets around half of their year group at school? Building and keeping trust within the group is an important thing and a key value to uphold. Whilst developing an environment of trust, you should also be aware that there may be matters (such as abuse) that you may become aware of that will need to be followed up in line with your safeguarding policy.

4. **Dominant individuals take over the group**
   When one or two group members take over the bulk of the group session, it can leave others feeling detached or pushed out. You need to develop ways of working with the variety of personalities you have. How do you deflect the impact of dominant personalities? For more information, see the 'Understanding Personalities' section below. You might also find some of the creative facilitation techniques in section 4 useful tools for helping everyone in your group make their voice heard.

5. **People stop coming to the group**
   One of the hardest things to work through is what happens if a group seems to have come to the end of its life. It is important to be reflective in all your sessions and review whether or not your group is still meeting its purpose. Working with group members, you can give them real and participative ways of developing their own group. But you should not be afraid to bring the group to an end if it has fulfilled its purpose.

Understanding personalities

There are many different types of personality when it comes to group work. Below we've listed some of the personalities that regularly crop up in work connected with churches or church children's and youth groups:

The TALKER: never stops talking, always has a comment for everything
With this group member, you may need to be much more proactive about facilitating discussion and drawing others into the conversation. Again, check out the different creative facilitation techniques in Section 4 for ideas on how to do this. You may also want to work with the talker him/herself and encourage them to facilitate your group. This is a positive way of exploring with them how the group works.

The THINKER: extremely shy, doesn't speak, keeps to him/herself
This person can often go unheard because the Talker fills all the empty space! Remember talking is just one way to express yourself in group work. You can use a variety of media, including drawing and writing, to allow group members to express themselves. One danger is that, in a well-meaning attempt to draw them into the group, you continually put the Thinker on the spot, which can cause them to become increasingly shy and actually exacerbate the situation. Again, you may want to work with this group member and explore ways that they could contribute. Draw on their ideas to connect with other quieter members of the group.

The CHURCH KID: has all the right answers, tells you what they think you want to hear
This group member can often be keen to seek the acceptance of their group leaders and others. There may be fear to express what they are thinking and so they always offer the 'safe' answers. This can sometimes prevent your group from going to a greater depth of conversation or group work. Encourage this type of person to wrestle with issues and avoid yes/no questions. Allow the group personalities (for example, the Talker) to interact and explore questions deeper. Don't be afraid to ask the 'what if' questions!

The CLOWN: can't sit still, distracts others with jokes and comments
This group member isn't necessarily deliberately trying to destroy the group through inappropriate jokes or random clowning around. They may simply be seeking acceptance through comedy. They may be covering up hurt or they may be just so full of energy that this is their outlet. With this group member, you may want to plan activities that they can connect with and also get them to lead some. Feel free to use their energy and to allow them to express it appropriately within the group.

The RELUCTANTLY PRESENT... they've been dragged to your group and just don't want to do anything
This can be a real challenge as the group member really doesn't want to be there. Sometimes the interaction of this group member, and their impact on the group, can be deliberately negative. Again, take time to look beyond behaviour and explore what the underlying causes may be. By building positive and healthy relationships, you may find key areas of interest that allows this person to have a feeling of belonging to the group.

Questions for thought or discussion

1. What stage in Tuckman's cycle do you think your group is at? How is this affecting the behaviour of your group and what techniques might you need to introduce to move the group on in its development?
2. What is the purpose of your group? What shared values does your group have?
3. Are you always clear on your group's purpose? Do you sometimes lose focus? What can you do to prevent this from happening?
4. Is your group in danger of falling into any of the common pitfalls? If so, what should be done differently?
5. Working with your fellow children's and youth leaders, discuss the members of the group you are working with and try to identify some of the personality types that you are working with. Make sure this is done constructively – this is not a witch-hunt and it's not about criticising or labelling young people.
6. What facilitation techniques can you bring into use to help these different personalities interact better with the group?
7. How can you better channel the different personalities in your group? Who could you use as a peer facilitator?

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[1] Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas, *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2010, p.1 – 3.
[2] *Listen and Change: A Guide to Children and Young People's Participation Rights*, 1st ed., London, CRAE and Participation Works, 2008, p.9.
[3] Philip Waters, *The Buskers Guide to Participation*, Eastleigh, Common Threads Publications, 2009, p.7.
[4] Ibid, p.8.

[5] Roger Hart, *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*, Florence, Italy, UNICEF, 1992, p.8.
[6] www.freechild.org/ladder.htm
[7] Op. cit., p.49.
[8] Roger Hart, *Stepping Back from 'the Ladder': Reflections on a model of participatory work with children,* Springer Netherlands, 2008, p.29
[9] Harry Shier, *Pathways to Participation: Openings, Opportunities and Obligations, Young People and Society, Vol. 15*, U.S.A., John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2001, p.107 – 117.
[10] Lina Fajerman and Phil Treseder, *Empowering Children and Young People*, London, Save the Children, 1997, p.7.
[11] Adapted from Ibid
[12] Mark K. Smith, *What is a Group?* In *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education,* 2008, www.infed.org/groupwork/what_is_a_group.htm
[13] Bruce W. Tuckman, *Developmental sequence in small groups* in *Psychological Bulletin,* Issue 63, 1965, p.384 – 399. The article was reprinted in *Group Facilitation: A Research and Applications Journal,* Issue 3, Spring 2001 and is available as a Word document: www.dennislearningcenter.osu.edu/references/GROUP%20DEV%20ARTICLE.doc

Section 3: Plotting a way forward

When heading out on a journey, the best way to get lost is to not know the point you are starting from! In Section 2 we provided three different models of participation and encouraged you to think about where your church/project is positioned on Hart's Ladder, Shier's Pathways and Treseder's Degrees of Participation.

This section will go on to offer support in planning your onward journey as you work out how participation can shape your children's and youth ministry.

Where are you starting from?

Suggested activity: participation checklist

You will need:

- A copy of Participation Checklist from Appendix 2.1.

What to do:

1. Working either as an individual or as a group, complete the Participation Checklist as an audit of your church's/project's children's and youth work.
2. If working individually, we recommend you compare notes with others once you have completed the checklist.
3. Take your time with each question, answer as honestly as you can and consider the full scope of your work with children and young people.
4. Evaluate your results using the advice section at the end of the checklist. Agree on an action plan (you might want to use the template in Appendix 2.2).

Where are you going?

Staying with the metaphor of participation as a journey, the list of questions on the next page will help you to check that you are actually ready to undertake this voyage. What will it look like when you've 'arrived'?

What implications will there be for your church/project? What will it mean for your church/project if you are successful?

Questions for thought and discussion

As individuals or in small groups, consider and write down responses to the following questions (you can brainstorm responses if working in a group).

1) What is motivating your church/project to develop participative practices? Is it because you want to meet the genuine needs of young people, or are you motivated more by what the church/project needs (for instance, increased attendance at Sunday services)?

2) What real impact would you like to see as a result of involving children and young people in shaping your work? What skills, experience, knowledge and expertise do you think young people will bring?

3) How will this benefit the children and young people you work with?

4) Why have you never done it before? What barriers have prevented you from involving young people in decision making before today? What problems do you anticipate now?

5) What worries you about working with children and young people in this way? What would help to boost your confidence?

6) How do you feel about sharing some of your decision-making power? What happens if the young people come back with a very different idea of Church/ways of working to you? Are you ready to compromise and how will this compromise be worked out?

7) Are you prepared to receive critical feedback from young people?

8) Are you willing to enter into dialogue with young people about the big questions of theology, beliefs and spirituality? Are you willing to engage in shared learning, rather than directive 'teaching' of young people?

9) Is this a serious commitment on the part of your church/project? Are you willing and able to give the time and resources needed to see this through?

Adult involvement in moving forward

There seems to be some confusion over the role adults play within participation. Inaccurate preconceptions of what participation is can lead to resistance from adults, based on lack of confidence, fear of losing control or the worry that something could go wrong.

> Children's participation does not diminish adults' roles and responsibilities. On the contrary, it increase the challenges to scaffold children's participation effectively and appropriately in respect to their situation and capacities.[1]

We hope that what you have read so far – in sections 1 and 2 – has demonstrated that participation isn't about losing power to young people. Instead it is about sharing power and about working out, together, what it truly means to be the body of Christ.

Participation calls us, as adults, to be flexible enough to work with the needs and situations that we are presented with. When working with children and young people there is a balance to be struck – as the adult, don't assume that you have all the answers but, at the same time, you should not assume the young people have all the same knowledge as you, the knowledge they need in order to make an informed decision. This takes time, which brings us back to the need for flexibility:

> Meaningful participation requires that children and young people have access to information appropriate to their understanding and circumstances. They may need advice and support to develop their views and ideas for making change happen. It requires decision-makers that are open and honest, can communicate respect and who respond quickly to the child or young person's proposals, requests, questions or demands.[2]

So, how do we do this in practice? The quote above can be summed up in three core requirements for meaningful participation:

- appropriate information
- advice and support
- action.

1. Appropriate information

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees every child, aged 17 and under, the right to express their views on all matters that affect them. As Percy-Smith and Thomas argue, "Children from the very youngest ages are able to form views, even where they are not able to communicate them verbally."[3] The work we do needs to be ability and age appropriate. It should equally value all forms of communication such as play, facial expressions, drawing and painting, the verbal and non-verbal.

2. Advice and support

This comes down to informal education:

> Unlike formal education, youth work and ministry is responsive to the diverse interests and needs of young people. It is based on informal education. It starts where they are at, not where the curriculum says they should be. Youth work and ministry creates, and makes use of, opportunities to develop the skills, attitudes and beliefs of the young people.[4]

There has been a lot of movement in how we view the concept of education, particularly informal education, which has led to a distinction being made between 'educate' and 'educare'. To 'educate' is to impart knowledge onto someone, whereas 'educare' is the drawing out of sometimes unrealised knowledge from a person.

The concept of 'education' versus 'educare' is highly relevant within participation. At times it is appropriate to give your knowledge and understanding on a subject/

issues, other times it might be appropriate to facilitate and empower others to give their knowledge and understanding instead.

3. Action

There is a huge difference between consultation and participation. Consultation is the process by which children and young people are asked their opinions, but that is where it ends. Participation goes further and puts the ideas gathered during consultation into action. It is the process by which individuals and groups can influence decision making and bring about change. Children and young people need to be involved in this too.

Things that will help participation

1) Children and young people being given opportunities that:

i. are accessible:

- They have permission to have honest conversations about issues they are passionate about.
- There is space to express and record their views and opinions.
- Times and venues are chosen that suit children and young people.
- There is a genuine acceptance and welcome (eg not judging a young person on what they are wearing).
- The opinions of children and young people are heard with respect (including those others don't agree with) and are met with a willingness to be challenged and engaged in dialogue.
- There is provision of different engagement points and approaches catering for all learning styles, etc.
- A variety of media are used to advertise and communicate.
- There is consultation with children and young people as to what is working /not working.
- Any child or young person is allowed to participate.

ii. are voluntary:

- Children and young people should have all the information they need to make an informed decision as to whether to get involved.
- Children and young people should be given permission not to participate.
- Children and young people should have accessibility at all times, should they wish to re-engage.
- Children and young people should not have to wait for an invitation from adults to participate.

iii. allow for creativity

iv. are planned well, so that it is a positive experience for all and children and young people are involved from beginning to end (see the participation project plan outline in Appendix 2.2)

v. encourage inter-generational dialogue and understanding.

2) **Information, support and training** (see Participation Project Plan and Participation Checklist in the Appendix 2.1). This should ensure that everyone:

i. is on board from the start (see sections 1 and 2 exploring the context and theory of participation)

ii. understands the language used in meetings and churches and there is clarity as to how decisions are made, including who has the final say

iii. understands their own rights and responsibilities, and the rights and responsibilities of others (see section 1)

iv. is clear with regards to expectations and any restrictions (eg finance, politics, church vision/priorities) from the very start

v. receives the necessary training on project planning and management, including:

- policies, procedures and good practice
- research
- setting aims and objectives, monitoring and evaluation
- advertising/publicity
- managing budgets and resources.

vi. receives the necessary training on communication skills, including:

- confidence and presentation
- listening, empathy and communication
- assertiveness and negotiation
- accessing support and advice.

vii. has a willingness to accept that things might not go quite right, and try again!

3) **Being taken seriously**

> The idea that children and young people's feelings, experience and wisdom are less important than those of adults remains prevalent – if not in the children's sector, certainly in wider society... [P]articipation requires a commitment to share power with children and young people as equals. It also requires a belief that children (and their opinions) are of inherent equal worth to adults.[5]

i. Young people should be involved at every stage, so that they feel a sense of ownership and therefore motivation. This includes setting aims and objectives and evaluating success.

ii. Young people should be given the same information as everyone else, so that they can make a fully informed contribution.

iii. Keep young people updated as to progress/impact of their input.

iv. Evaluate not only the success of the project, but also the participation process with children and young people.

v. You will need a willingness to trust and support young people to take on real roles and responsibilities that will stretch them and help them feel and sense of achievement and ownership.

vi. Young people need to be taken seriously and their views given equal credence, even if you disagree with them.

vii. You will need to avoid the temptation to 'tell' children and young people the answers. Instead, allow them to be creative and explore ideas for themselves

Suggested activity: participation project plan outline

You will need:

- A copy of the Participation Project Plan template from Appendix 2.2.

What to do:

1. Before beginning a piece of work that will have an impact on children and/or young people, take time, preferably as a small group, to work through the Participation Project Plan template as a means of making sure that all your bases are covered.
2. Take your time with each question, answer as honestly as you can and consider the full scope of the project.

Overcoming barriers

Empowering Children and Young People, by Lina Fajerman and Phil Treseder, has a whole chapter entitled Tackling the Barriers to Empowerment. In it they say:

> Although empowerment has the potential to benefit children, young people, adults and the wider community, there are several barriers to its success ... These barriers fall into four broad categories:
>
> - Access to decision-making;
> - Preconceived attitudes (adults and children's);

- Access to information
- Availability of resources.[6]

Suggested activity: another brick in the wall

You will need:

- a pile of paper 'bricks', which could be simply blank sheets of A4 paper or paper cut to actual brick size/shape (alternatively you can use jenga, duplo bricks or cardboard boxes depending on how extravagant you want to be)
- sharpies or other permanent/marker pens
- plenty of space.

What to do:

1. Working as a group, first agree what level of participation is appropriate for the particular project at hand (you may want to refer back to section 2 on theory, particularly the information on Treseder's degrees of participation). It might also be helpful to have completed a Participation Project Plan using the template from Appendix 2.2 (see earlier in this section).

2. As a group, start to brainstorm potential barriers that might prevent children and young people from participating fully in the shaping and delivery of the project. Write each potential barrier on a brick – one barrier per brick.

3. As you write the potential barriers on to the bricks, start to build up a 'wall', either on a table top or on the floor.

4. Once you have built your wall and exhausted your list of potential barriers, start to discuss what changes you will need to make in order to overcome these problems.

    a. What methods and resources must be employed to implement these changes?

    b. Does your organisation have the money to achieve these necessary changes?

    c. If the answer to the above question is no, can the necessary funds be generated?

5. As you find solutions to each potential barrier, write these solutions, the actions needed and who is responsible on to the reverse of the 'brick'. As you do this, remove the brick from the wall.

6. The aim is to break through the wall of potential barriers you have identified, creating a large hole – or ideally demolishing the wall altogether.

TIP: You might find it helpful to look at the list titled *Things that will help* participation, from earlier in this section. This list might provide useful headings to guide your discussion.

Ideas you might want to consider

1. Have conversations with others in your church/project and actively identify opportunities and access points for children's and youth participation within the decision-making structures. How can what you have learnt so far impact your wider work?
2. Involve your children and young people in shaping the way your church/project engages with them and their peers.
3. Consider hosting a 'Big SleepOver'. This is a resource produced by Methodist Children & Youth, which aims to help churches, circuits and projects engage in conversations with young people on a local level – discussing the issues that matter to them. For more information and to download the latest pack, visit www.childrenandyouth.org.uk.
4. Provide a small grant for your children and young people and encourage them to come up with ideas on how they want to spend it. Their idea could be big or small and might even have an enterprising aspect to it. You might find it helpful/necessary to set some parameters, such as the church's vision and aims or, for instance, stating that the money cannot be used to set up a casino or go to the pub! However, there is a fine balance between guiding the young people as to what is realistic/appropriate and controlling them through imposing your own ideas of what is the best course of action. Adults could have a supporting role, so long as they don't take over! Encourage the young people to come up with a plan, budget, team roles etc. Talk together afterwards about what it felt like to hand over/have power and how well it worked.
5. Run a participation workshop for the church/circuit with everyone involved (using some of the resources in this pack). You could contact the Methodist Church Church & Community Team for support with this.

The workers who attended the participation workshop at *Connecting Disciples 2012* came up with 60 ideas for participation (see Appendix 1.2).

Questions for thought and discussion:

1. How young is too young to participate?
2. What might participation look like in different types of group (eg Messy Church, uniformed groups)?

In working with young people… do not try to call them back to where they were, and do not try to call them to where you are, as beautiful as that place might seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a place that neither you nor they have ever been before.[7]

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[1] Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Patrick Thomas, *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2010, p.xxi.
[2] Thomas Burke, *Listen and Change: A Guide to Children and Young People's Participation Rights*, London, Children's Rights Office, 2008, p.9
[3] Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Patrick Thomas, Op. Cit., p.12.
[4] Danny Brierley, *What Every Volunteer Youth Worker Should Know,* Carlisle, Authentic Lifestyle, 2003, p.10.
[5] Thomas Burke, Op. Cit. p.51.
[6] Lina Fajerman and Phil Treseder, *Empowering Children and Young People*, London, Save the Children, 2007, p.22.
[7] A young person, quoted in Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (third edition), London, SCM Press, 2004, p.xix

Section 4: Creative facilitation

Now that you've (hopefully) read through the first three sections on theory, we're sure you're itching to get started on some practical work – consulting with your children and/or young people and then putting their ideas into action! This section is designed to help you do just that – it's filled with lots of creative ways in which you can draw out ideas and facilitate productive conversations.

4.1 Mind mapping

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- plenty of paper (flipchart)
- markers/pens.

Approximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

Most people know how to create a mind-map (also known as a 'spider' or 'web diagram' or a 'brainstorm'). This is normally done on a large sheet of flip-chart paper that is positioned where everyone in the room can see it. In the middle of the paper, the facilitator writes a word, phrase, issue or question and asks the participants to call out associations/ideas/answers. These are then written around the outside of the sheet by the facilitator, often joined to the original prompt with lines. Developing on this, the facilitator or group can then start to make connections, by drawing lines between those ideas/suggestions that relate to one another.

See following page for an example mind map…

A mind-mapping exercise can be led from the front, or the group can be split into smaller sub groups, who each have their own piece of flip-chart paper to fill with ideas. If splitting into small groups, the facilitator will need to think about how each group will feedback when the activity is coming to an end. The facilitator will also need to give some consideration as to how they will ensure everyone has equal opportunity to contribute.

Variation 1: paper carousel

Split the group into smaller sub-groups and give each sub-group a sheet of flip-chart paper and a set of marker pens. Each sheet of paper should have a different question/issue on it. Give the groups a set amount of time (five minutes, for example) to brainstorm answers/suggestions on their paper. When the time is up, the facilitator can ring a bell, sound a buzzer or simply yell, “Time up!” At this point the groups pass their sheet of paper (in a clockwise direction) and the timer starts again - with the groups now working on their new question/issue. If people have similar opinions to the previous group, they needn’t repeat what has been said; instead they can put a tick next to the statements they agree with (similarly they can put a cross next to those they disagree with). This continues until every group has had opportunity to comment on every sheet of paper.

If the group has been sitting for a while, the people could ‘carousel’ around the paper to encourage some movement!

Variation 2: group jigsaws

As before the group is split into smaller sub-groups of about four people. Each group is asked to spend a set amount of time discussing the same issue/question. The group’s thoughts and ideas can be recorded on flip-chart paper. When the set amount of time is up, the facilitator numbers everyone in each group from one to four. All the ones form a group together, the twos form another group and so on. In

the newly formed groups the participants are then encouraged to share the opinions/feelings they encountered in their original groups, discussing any differences.

Variation 3: influencing people

Working either alone or in groups, participants write an issue or their name in the centre of a large sheet of paper. Around that they write down all the things that can influence that issue/them and draw a line from each to the centre. Along the line, write down how this is an influence. The length of the line should represent how much of an influence that item is.

For more like this:

There are loads of ideas in this pack that build on the basic mind-mapping technique. The following are probably closest for generating initial discussions/identifying key themes.

- Discussion carousel (Section 4.4)
- Post-it ideas storm and affinity diagram (Section 4.7)
- Snowball consensus (Section 4.8)
- Sharing circles (Section 4.24)
- Graffiti wall (Section 4.26).

4.2 'How?' and 'Why?' chains

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- a long piece of paper (eg the back of a roll of wallpaper or a roll of craft paper)
- marker pens.

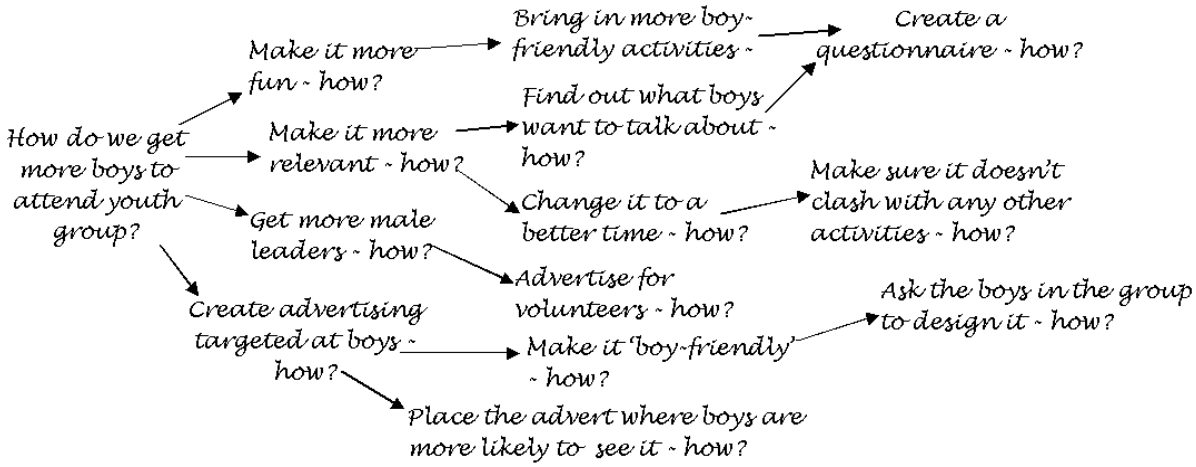
Approximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

This exercise is useful for taking issues or suggestions raised during a mind-mapping session or other discussion starter, and exploring those ideas further. For

instance, if someone had raised the fact that there needed to be more boys attending the youth group, you could start a 'How?' chain.

The paper needs to be tacked to a wall where everyone can see it. At one end of the paper, the facilitator writes a 'How?' question (for instance, "How do we get more boys to attend the youth group?"). He/she then draws four or five arrows coming from this question and puts the question to the group, writing down any answers given at the ends of the arrows. These suggestions can then be explored further by simply turning them into 'How?' questions again. For instance...



...and so on! Obviously this can be adapted to be a 'Why?' chain if you are trying to explain the cause/root of a certain issue - or even a 'What?' chain if you wanted to explore consequences etc. You could also split a large group into smaller sub-groups to work on individual ideas or issues.

For more like this:

Other activities that help to explore initial ideas further include

- SWOT analysis (Section 4.6)
- Today, Heaven & Hell (Section 4.11)
- Forum theatre (Section 4.15)
- Storytelling (Section 4.17)
- More trees!! (Section 4.23).

4.3 Participation pyramid

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑

15 to 18 years ☑
Over 18 ☑

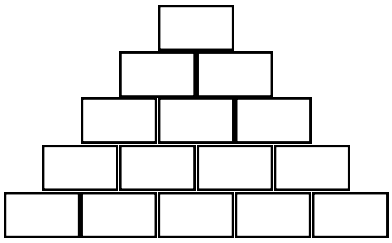
You will need:

- a pyramid, made as large as you can/is appropriate (use the template in Appendix 2.3)
- fifteen different option cards, sized and cut out to fit the pyramid (or, alternatively, post-its for suggestions to be written on).

Approximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

This is a participation pyramid. A template for this can be found in Appendix 2.3.



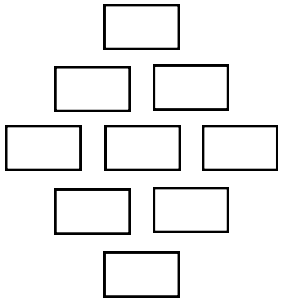
A participation pyramid is a great way for a group to prioritise a number of ideas (using this template - up to 15 ideas). Some or all of these ideas can be prepared in advance by the facilitator, or all ideas could be suggested by the group, written on post-its and then stuck to the pyramid.

The facilitator asks the group to arrange the different options on the pyramid, with their top priority at the top, their next two priorities on the row below and so on. Alternatively, the group could be asked to place the most important ideas on the *bottom* row of the pyramid - as 'foundation stones' - those things that are essential and need to be in place before all other ideas can build on them.

The group will need to find a consensus, which might take some healthy debate as to the worth of each idea. If this works well, the group should end up talking about different ideas without it feeling like a formal discussion. The ideas can be moved around on the pyramid as many times as needed, until the group agrees on the order.

This activity works well with smaller groups., to ease discussion avoid having groups larger than between six to eight people. Larger groups can be split into smaller discussion groups.

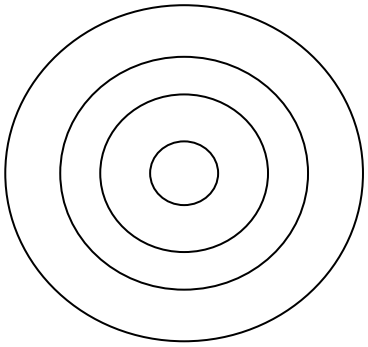
Variation 1: diamond nine



A template for the 'diamond nine' can be found in Appendix 2.4. This works pretty much exactly the same as above - the group's top priority is placed at the top, the next two most important ideas are placed on the second row, the next three in third place, two ideas in fourth place and then the lowest priority at the bottom of the diamond.

Variation 2: target practice

A template for the target can be found in Appendix 2.5. This can be used, like the participation pyramid, to gauge a group's priorities - with the more important suggestions/ideas placed more toward the centre of the target and the less important ones placed in the outer rings.



However, the target is also a useful evaluation tool. For instance, during or following an event participants can be asked to place sticky dots (or, using a marker they could make their dots) on the target to show how much they enjoyed the activities offered. Those who think the event was near perfect can put their mark more towards the middle of the rings, whereas those who think there was plenty of room for improvement can place their dot in the outer rings - or even outside the circle (off-target) altogether!

If you want to gather feedback on different aspects of an event, you could also divide the target into quarters (or thirds, or halves!) and use a different quarter to evaluate different aspects of the event.

For more like this:

Other ideas that can help you explore group priorities include

- Post-It ideas storm and affinity diagram (Section 4.7)
- Snowball consensus (Section 4.8)
- Dot voting (Section 4.9)
- Vote with your feet (Section 4.20).

4.4 Discussion carousel

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☒
11 to 14 years	☑

15 to 18 years ☑
Over 18 ☑

You will need:

- chairs for all participants (if required)
- a clock/stopwatch.

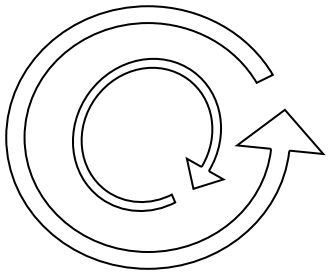
Aproximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

To begin with the group should move their chairs so that they are sat in two concentric circles - inner circle facing outwards and outer circle facing in - with the same number of people in each so everyone is facing someone they can talk to (if it helps, think speed dating!). If you do not have chairs, this could be done on the floor - as long as participants don't mind regularly standing up, moving and sitting down again.

The facilitator then sets a topic for discussion (eg "How can we raise money for the youth group weekend away?"). Participants are then given a set amount of time (three minutes, for instance) to discuss this topic. This could simply be an open discussion, or the facilitator could break the time further and manage the discussion more by allowing one minute to think, one minute for the inner circle to talk (the outer circle must only listen and say nothing) and then one minute for the outer circle to talk (whilst the inner circle takes their turn at being silent).

When the set time is up, the facilitator asks everyone to move - the inner circle one seat clockwise, the outer circle one seat anti-clockwise. The participants are now given a set amount of time to explain the discussion they have just had with their new partner - again this could be done as a free-for-all within the pairs, or the facilitator could manage the process - allowing first a minute for the inner circle, then a minute for the outer circle to talk.



The activity could end here and the facilitator could then lead the group in a follow-on activity to feedback the ideas and plan a way forward - or the participants could continue moving around the two circles until everyone on the outer circle has talked to everyone on the inner circle.

For a slightly less manic version, only move the outer circle each time.

Variation 1: problem solving

The people in the outer circle could think of a problem or issue that they would like help with. The time in pairs is spent exploring solutions with their partners in the inner circle.

Variation 2: reporters

The discussion carousel is run as a press conference with the people in the inner circle given the task of 'interviewing' their counterparts in the outer circle, gathering their thoughts and opinions on a specific subject. The inner circle reporters are then responsible for feeding back their findings to the group. This could be used in conjunction with the headlines activity in section 4.6.

For more like this:

Other discussion-based activities include

- Mind-mapping (Section 4.1)
- Post-it ideas storm and affinity diagram (Section 4.7)
- Snowball consensus (Section 4.8)
- "Our survey says…" (Section 4.10)
- Sharing circles (Section 4.24).

4.5 Headline!

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

Depending on how creative you want to get

- paper and marker pens
- glue
- paint
- scissors and newspapers to cut up
- access to a computer?

Approximate time required for activity:

Anything from 10 to 120 minutes (or more)!

At its most basic level, this activity is designed to get participants to hone their thinking so that they can sum up their opinions in one short sentence. However, once the initial task is carried out, the creative possibilities are endless!

The facilitator asks the group to think about a particular piece of work (for example the refurbishment of the youth room) and consider what the ideal future situation

would be. In pairs or small groups the participants then come up with a fictional newspaper headline to sum up this ideal future. They could simply work on this on scrap paper with a standard pen, or they could get more creative - using marker pens, or even cutting up existing newspapers and using glue to put their headlines together as a collage.

Once the pairs/groups have a headline you could then develop the idea further and encourage them to come up with the supporting news story - which could be typed or hand-written and could also include photographs/drawn pictures.

Variation 1: television headlines

In small groups the participants can create a television news headline and then have a member of the group deliver it in the style of a TV newsreader (you could introduce each group with a *News at Ten*-style "BONG!"). Again, if the group are feeling dramatic, they can develop their ideas further by role-playing the supporting news report.

Variation 2: elevator statement

This goes back to the original aim of the activity: helping participants to sum up their thoughts on a subject succinctly. An elevator statement is so called because the idea is based on the length of time it takes to ride in a lift. Participants are asked to imagine they get into an elevator and one of their fellow passengers asks them for their thoughts on a particular topic. They have a very short time (until they reach their destination floor) to explain their opinion. For instance, "In the length of a lift ride, tell us what you would like the youth group to look like in two years' time."

This could also be used as a way of checking that a group has understood a complex issue that has been discussed (for example: "In the space of a lift ride, sum up what is meant by 'youth participation'").

For more like this:

This pack contains many different activities that are designed to help young people sum up opinions, thoughts and feelings. Some suggestions are

- Photography (Section 4.29)
- Hopes and fears in a hat (Section 4.12)
- Trigger material (Section 4.13)
- Field of words (Section 4.14)
- Values continuum (Section 4.18)
- Line-ups (Section 4.19)
- Vote with your feet (Section 4.20).

4.6 SWOT analysis

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☒
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- flipchart paper and markers.

Approximate time required for activity:

40 minutes

SWOT is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. These headings provide a great framework for reviewing the strategy, position and direction of any proposition or idea.

The facilitator divides a piece of flipchart paper into four sections entitled ‘Strengths’, ‘Weaknesses’, ‘Opportunities’ and ‘Threats’ respectively. All participants then suggest things to be written in each section. At the end of the exercise the group should then discuss ways of reducing weaknesses and minimising threats - or turning them into strengths or opportunities.

Strengths	*Weaknesses*
Opportunities	*Threats*

Here are some sample questions the facilitator can ask the group, to encourage discussion for each of the sections:

Strengths

- What are the advantages of the idea? How does it benefit the group?
- What do we already have in place that will help us do this? Skills? People? Equipment? Knowledge?
- Is this a new idea? How? What is different from things we have tried before?

Weaknesses

- What are the disadvantages of the idea? What will it cost the group in time, money and effort?
- What would we need to do this that we don't have? Skills? People? Equipment? Knowledge? Money?
- How much time will it take to do this properly? Do we have the time?
- How will this affect other activities the group does?
- What might stop this from working? What will happen if it doesn't work?

Opportunities

- What seasons, trends and fashions in the wider world support this idea?
- What information or research do we know of that supports this idea?
- Will this idea help us to reach people we have never reached before?
- Are there any other groups or organisations who would like to work with us on this?

Threats

- Is what we are doing legal? Could this idea pose any risks with regards to health and safety? How do we make sure our project is environmentally responsible?
- Is there anything we are relying on to make this project work - for instance, the weather? What happens if this goes wrong?
- What obstacles might we face along the way when trying to put our plan into action?
- Can we be sure we will have enough money, people, time etc. to see us through to the end of the project?

Obviously, this method of exploring an idea further can be used in conjunction with many other activities in this pack. For instance, a Post-it ideas storm (section 4.7) could be used to generate suggestions for each of the sections.

Variation 1: SWOTT analysis

Pretty much the same idea as above, except this time you add an extra section - Training. This helps the group to think further about what they might need to have in place before they move ahead with an idea.

Variation 2: force field analysis

A force field analysis helps to assess a problem carefully by identifying the forces that support and hinder a particular idea/issue. This technique can be used in a fairly large group, as long as everyone has the chance to participate.

The group identifies a current problem, phenomenon, difficulty or idea that they would like to see changed/acted on. The facilitator writes this issue in the centre of a piece of flipchart paper. Then, on the right side of the paper, the group lists all the forces that are preventing the change or idea from taking place (barriers). On the left side of the paper the group lists all the forces that are pushing for or supporting the change (supports).

Supports	*YOUR ISSUE*	*Barriers*

After the group has completed the above lists, they will need to discuss how to increase the supports and/or decrease the barriers.

For more like this:

For slightly more creative/active ways of exploring plans further and discussing pros and cons, see

- Today, Heaven and Hell (Section 4.11)
- More trees!! (Section 4.23).

4.7 Post-it ideas storm and affinity diagram

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☒
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- a lot of post-it notes (approximately 5 – 7 per group member)
- pens for each group member
- a large sheet of paper.

Approximate time required for activity:

30 to 40 minutes

A Post-it ideas storm is another way of brainstorming an idea. The main difference between this activity and mind-mapping (section 4.1) is that the group have the opportunity to generate ideas as individuals before the discussion is opened up to the wider group. This has its advantages and its disadvantages. On the plus side, a Post-it ideas storm can be slightly more anonymous because it requires the writing down of ideas, rather than speaking them out in front of the group. It ensures everyone, including the more timid members of the group, have a chance to say what they think. The problem with this is there is less opportunity to develop/build on each others' ideas.

The affinity diagram is a valuable process to follow on from the Ideas Storm. It helps to organise ideas, demonstrating the differences or similarities in thinking of the members of the group, and explore key themes further.

Post-it ideas storm

The facilitator writes the question to be discussed (for example, "What should the aims of the youth group be?") somewhere where everyone can see it and then gives a pen and five to seven small post-it notes to every member of the group. Members of the group are then given a few minutes, working silently and individually, to write five to seven ideas (one idea per post-it) in answer to the question.

When the set amount of time (should be about five to ten minutes) is up, the facilitator asks the group to stick their post-it ideas randomly on a large piece of paper or a wall.

Affinity diagram

The facilitator then asks everyone in the group, with an absolute minimum of talking, to look at all the post-its and rearrange them on the sheet of paper/wall according to categories (ie, group like-minded Post-its together). Everyone should be involved in the grouping and sometimes this means post-its being moved from group to group a number of times. This is okay and part of the process, which may take up to 20 minutes.

When the Post-its have been rearranged into groups of similar ideas, the facilitator can tape each group of Post-its together with a long string of sticky tape, so that they are not lost in transit after the meeting.

The facilitator then asks the group to help assign a title or heading to each group of Post-its. This could be done as a large group or, alternatively, the wider group could

be split into smaller sub-groups, who each take a group of Post-its to work with. The titles should clearly and completely describe the ideas expressed in the group of Post-its. It should also be a complete sentence. The idea of this exercise is to capture the total essence of the ideas so that, if the Post-its were ever lost, you have a concrete statement that clearly represents the ideas of the group.

When all the groups of Post-its have been given a suitable heading, the facilitator should then have a list of themes or priorities that can be used to continue working or to plan a course of action. These could be taken, for instance, to a Church Council meeting and presented by members of the youth group with the help of the facilitator. Alternatively, the group could use some of the other activity ideas in this pack and, continuing to work in the small sub-groups that came up with the headings for the Post-it groupings, could start to explore some of the key themes arising from the Post-it iIdeas storm and affinity diagram.

Variations:

There are many different ways in which this activity can be adapted to better suit the group using it. Here are a few suggestions:

- Instead of the group taking responsibility for arranging the Post-its into an affinity diagram, they could be asked to hand their post-it ideas in to the facilitator, who arranges them into key themes as they are stuck on the paper/wall.
- The Post-its could be stuck on to an image, for example draw around a youth leader and then run a Post-it ideas storm on what makes a good leader.
- The participants could draw visual images on their Post-its if they are not comfortable with writing their thoughts down.
- The Post-it ideas storm could be used in conjunction with several other activities in this pack - for instance the SWOT analysis (section 4.6).

For more like this:

Other ways of exploring similarities and differences of opinion in a group include

- Mind-mapping (Section 4.1)
- Snowball consensus (Section 4.8)
- Dot voting (Section 4.9)
- Collage (Section 4.30).

4.8 Snowball consensus

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☒
11 to 14 years	☑

15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- paper and pens for participants
- flip-chart paper and markers.

Approximate time required for activity:

20 to 30 minutes

This activity is designed to follow on from an ideas generation activity, such as mind-mapping (section 4.1). It will help group members reach an agreement regarding the most important priorities, next steps or actions.

For example, suppose a youth group has generated a lot of ideas about what activities they would like to do over the coming term, and the group now needs to decide the three or four most important of these activities. The following steps would help them to come to a consensus - prioritising time and spending.

The facilitator gives each member of the group a piece of paper and a pen and asks each individual to write down the three ideas they like the most from what they have just heard. After a few minutes, the facilitator asks everyone to find a partner. They will have five minutes to share what they have written with their partner and the two of them must reach a consensus - writing down the top three ideas they agree upon (this will narrow down a list of potentially six items to just three).

After five minutes the facilitator asks each pair to find another pair (to make a foursome). Again they are given five minutes to discuss the priorities they have agreed upon and reach another consensus - agreeing on no more than three ideas. These recommendations should be written by their group on a piece of flip-chart paper (or just a large sheet of paper), which should then be tacked on the wall where everyone in the wider group can see it.

The facilitator then brings everyone together and asks the group to look for any ideas that appear on all the separate lists. If there are any, these are written again on a fresh sheet of paper and crossed off the individual sheets. Next, the group should look for those that appear on a lot but not all of the sheets and these should be noted, in order of popularity, on the fresh list. When all that is left are ideas that only appear on a few sheets, the facilitator should ask the group to discuss/vote on whether these suggestions are important enough to be included.

Finally, the facilitator should ask all participants to review the new sheet - which should represent a group consensus on the top priorities for action.

Variation: musical snowball consensus

This activity is crying out to be adapted into a game of musical statues/musical chairs. Have fun and come up with your own creative alternative!

For more like this:

Other activities that help a group to assess priorities include

- Participation pyramid (Section 4.3)
- Dot voting (Section 4.9)
- Vote with your feet (Section 4.20)
- 'Whooh!' rating (Section 4.22).

4.9 Dot voting

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- whiteboard or flipchart paper
- sticky dots (preferred but could use marker pens as alternative)
- marker pens.

Approximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

From time to time during a meeting or workshop, it may become necessary to gather votes on a particular issue. Dot voting provides a fun and anonymous way for everyone to vote on what is most important.

On a whiteboard or flipchart that can be seen by everyone, the facilitator writes a list of all the items to be voted on.

Each member of the group is then given a set number of votes. The number given should depend on the number of items on the list and the resources and time of the group. If you give more than one vote to each person, you are allowing more than one item to be identified as important. For each allowed vote the individual gets to place one dot next to the item they deem the most important on the list. This could be done with either sticky dots or simply using a marker pen. Obviously it is much easier to 'police' sticky dots and make sure no one is cheating!

If individuals are allowed more than one vote, they may choose to allocate more than one dot to one particular item on the list to indicate just how important they deem that item to be.

Participants should be allowed to make their vote at any time and in any order as this

is more anonymous.

Once everyone has cast their votes, the facilitator should tally up the number and the list item with the higher number of votes is the group's priority.

If it would help to break down the results of the vote even further, different coloured dots can be allocated to different genders, age groups etc.

Variation 1: ballot balls

In this version, each vote is represented by a ball and each option a bucket. Individuals drop their balls into the bucket representing the option they think is the best/most important. As with dot voting, participants can place more than one 'vote' in a bucket, or spread their votes around several buckets.

Variation 2: spend your pound

Instead of voting with dots, participants can vote with an imagined 'pound'. They can divide their pound into any amounts they wish and spend their pound any way they wish. For example, an individual may choose to place 25p on four items, or their entire pound on just one item.

ITEMS	AMOUNT
FOOTBALL	£0.25
ROUNDERS	£0.50
CRAFT	£0.10
QUIZ	£0.15
TOTAL	**£1.00**

For more like this:

Other ways of agreeing priorities include

- Participation pyramid (Section 4.3)
- Snowball consensus (Section 4.8)
- Vote with your feet (Section 4.20)
- 'Whooh!' rating (Section 4.22).

4.10 "Our survey says…"

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑

15 to 18 years ☑
Over 18 ☑

You will need:

- Copy of the "Our survey says…" template (from Appendix 2.6) for each participant (printed on several different coloured sheets of paper – see below)
- clipboards
- pens
- piece of flipchart paper and a marker.

Approximate time required for activity:

15 minutes

This activity is a way of getting people moving and a means of finding everyone's opinion on a number of statements.

Everyone in the group is given a copy of the "Our survey says…" template (from Appendix 2.6), with the 'Statement' box at the top of the page completed. There should be a variety of different statements and each statement should be on a different coloured paper.

Before beginning the activity, the facilitator should ensure that everyone understands the statement they have been given. The group is then asked to mingle with each other, asking for people's opinions on the statement they have been given. The colour coding means that participants can easily find people with statements different to their own. Everyone gives and collects opinions simultaneously and, as people give their opinion, the grid next to their response is ticked.

The facilitator should encourage everyone to give their opinion on every statement. After about ten minutes, the activity should be called to a halt and the facilitator should ask people to get into groups with those who have the same coloured sheets (and therefore the same statement). These groups then tally up the total results across their individual sheets. These results should then be written up on a piece of flipchart paper, either by the facilitator or by the small groups.

STATEMENT: *Church is a welcoming place for young people.*		
AGREE STRONGLY	✓✓ ✓ ✓	4
AGREE	✓ ✓ ✓	3
NO OPINION	✓✓	2
DISAGREE	✓✓✓	3
DISAGREE STRONGLY	✓	1
COMMENTS:		

Variation 1: "Our survey says…" II

The facilitator writes each statement and the grid on flip-chart sheets and sticks these around the room, asking the participants to go to each sheet and tick their opinion.

Variation 2: "Our survey says…" III

For groups that might struggle with the language of "Agree strongly" etc, emoticons could be used instead of words. See the example below:

STATEMENT: *Church is a welcoming place for young people*		
	✓✓ ✓ ✓	4
	✓ ✓ ✓	3
	✓✓	2
	✓✓✓	3
	✓	1
COMMENTS:		

For more like this:

Other ways of gathering the group's opinions include

- Dot voting (Section 4.9)
- Values continuum (Section 4.18)
- Vote with your feet (Section 4.20).

4.11 Today, heaven and hell

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☒
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- lots of hexagons (see Appendix 2.7 for template)
- lots of floor or table space
- bold marker pens.

Approximate time required for activity:

45 minutes

Today: the current situation

In the centre of one of the hexagons, the facilitator writes the word 'TODAY' in large letters. This hexagon is then placed on the floor and the group are asked to come up with six short statements that describe where the project currently up for discussion is at (for instance, six statements describing the current status of the youth group). These six statements are written in a hexagon each, and these hexagons are then placed around the original TODAY hexagon on the floor.

Hell: the worst case scenario

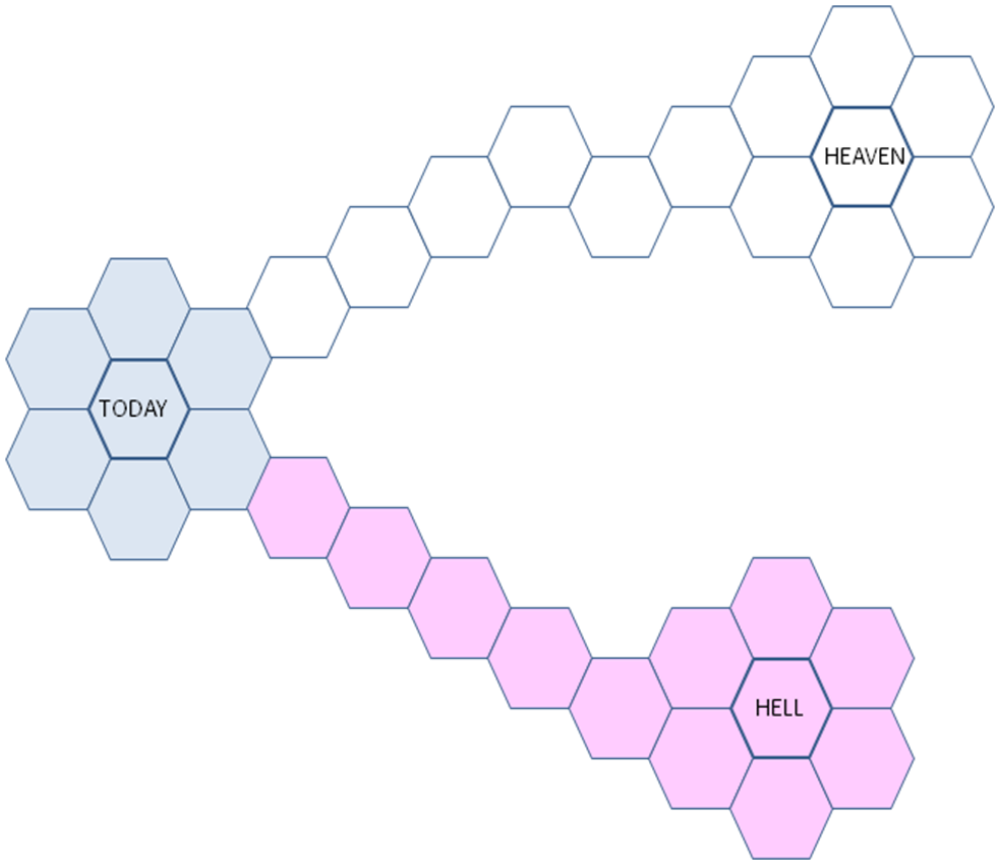
The facilitator now takes another hexagon and this time writes 'HELL' in its centre. This is placed on the floor at a distance from the TODAY hexagon. The group are then asked to come up with another six short statements - this time describing the worst case scenario for their project.

Next, the group are asked to build a single line of hexagons from the TODAY cluster to the HELL cluster. Each hexagon in this line should describe a step in a fictional story of the road to HELL.

Heaven: thinking big, dreaming dreams

Finally the facilitator writes 'HEAVEN' in another hexagon and again places this on the floor at a distance from the TODAY hexagon. The group create six more hexagons, describing their ideals for the project, and then place these around HEAVEN.

As before, the group then build a single line of hexagons from TODAY to HEAVEN, describing the step by step fictional journey the project could take to get to that point.



Group discussion

The facilitator then leads the group in a discussion looking at how they can avoid the road to HELL and best aim for the ideals of HEAVEN.

Variation 1: introducing 'THEN'

If the group has more time, an extra step can be introduced at the beginning of the story - in between TODAY and HEAVEN - exploring how the project has arrived at its current status.

The facilitator writes 'THEN' on a hexagon and places this on the floor at a distance from the TODAY hexagon. Working backwards from TODAY, the group then build a single line going back, one step at a time, as far as they can into the project's past.

Variation 2: goals and expectations

This is a much more basic exercise, and one that would work well at an event such as a vision day. The facilitator asks the group to close their eyes and imagine they have travelled forward in time to the end of the meeting/event. They have spent a significant amount of time together exploring a particular idea/project/plan and they are now packing up and getting ready to leave. The facilitator asks them relevant

questions. Suggestions include:

- *What has happened during our time together that makes you feel it was time well-spent?*
- *What topics and issues have we talked about?*
- *What might have happened that you didn't like?*

The facilitator gives the group a few moments to think about these questions and then invites people to share thoughts with the wider group. These thoughts should be recorded on a piece of flip-chart paper entitled 'Goals', which can be stuck to a wall for the duration of the time together and referred back to throughout the meeting. The facilitator could also lead a discussion on how these goal and expectations can be realised.

For more like this:

There are lots of different activities that help groups explore possible futures (good or bad) and the helps/hindrances a project may encounter along the way. Some of these are

- SWOT analysis (Section 4.6)
- Hopes and fears in a hat (Section 4.12)
- Forum theatre (Section 4.15)
- More trees!! (Section 4.23)
- World's worst, world's best (Section 4.25).

4.12 Hopes and fears in a hat

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- two hats (as 'fun' as possible)
- a pen and two pieces of paper for each participant.

Approximate time required for activity:

10 minutes

This is an extremely simple and quick activity that allows members of a group to share their hopes and fears about a particular issue anonymously.

The facilitator gives each participant two pieces of paper and a pen. Working alone, everyone is asked to write down their hopes about a particular topic (for example a youth group weekend away) on one piece of paper, and their fears on the other. Make it clear that people do not have to write their names on the papers.

On the floor there will be two collection hats - one for hopes and one for fears - which are used to gather up all the pieces of paper once people have finished writing.

The facilitator can then take both hats away and use what has been written on the bits of paper to create a decisive list of the group's hopes and fears. These can then be addressed later in the session or at a follow-up meeting.

Variation: hopes and fears in a...

This activity is obviously crying out to be creatively adapted to better suit the group or the topic being discussed. The receptacles for the hopes and fears do not have to be hats, they could be buckets, envelopes, wishing wells, postboxes... The list is almost endless.

For more like this:

Other activities that could be used to help explore a group's concerns or ambitions for a particular piece of work include...

- SWOT analysis (Section 4.6)
- Post-it Ideas Storm and affinity diagram (Section 4.7)
- Storytelling (Section 4.17)
- Graffiti wall (Section 4.26).

4.13 Trigger material

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- a selection of images (these could be clip art, a pile of postcards with different pictures on each, photographs or newspaper/magazine clippings). You could also use a selection of short pieces of text with older groups. It is important, however, that these are fairly random images/pieces of text with no headings or attached explanations as to a possible meaning.

Approximate time required for activity:

10 minutes

This activity can take some preparation, as you gather together enough 'trigger material' (see 'You will need' above). However, once you have your initial stock of images, you can keep adding to your collection and returning to them as part of your toolkit forever more!

If using clip art, the facilitator could give each participant a sheet of paper with the same selection of images on it. After a few minutes to examine the pictures and think about it, the facilitator asks each member of the group in turn to choose one of the images from the piece of paper that best demonstrates how they are feeling at that particular moment. The individual then has to explain why they chose that particular image, what they think it might be about and why they feel it represents them.

Alternatively, if using postcards, photographs or magazine clippings, the images could be spread out on a table or floor. The facilitator asks everyone to pick up one image that they think demonstrates their current thoughts/feelings before returning to their seats. Again the facilitator then asks each member of the group in turn to explain why they chose that particular image.

This could be used simply as an ice breaker for a group, or it could be used as a non-threatening way of exploring how people in the group feel about a particular activity or event. For instance, "Choose a picture that demonstrates how you feel about coming to church on Sunday."

Variation: without any material to trigger?

If you really want to run an exercise along these lines, but you haven't got the time to gather trigger material, you could ask participants to choose something from their shared experience to represent their feelings/thoughts. Here are a few examples:

- Choose a cartoon character that you strongly identify with.
- Choose one song title to sum up the perfect youth leader.
- What chocolate bar best represents how you feel about the holiday club?
- Choose one animal that best demonstrates how you feel about the youth forum.

Obviously, these questions only make sense and help to explore thoughts and feelings if they are followed up with the all-important "Why?"

For more like this:

Other ways of exploring a group's thoughts and feelings can be found in

- Hopes and fears in a hat (Section 4.12)
- Field of words (Section 4.14)

- Storytelling (Section 4.17)
- Sharing circle (Section 4.24)
- Photography (Section 4.29)
- Bob (Section 4.31).

4.14 Field of words

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☒
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- a 'Field of words' on a sheet of paper for each participant (see ours in Appendix 2.8 or create your own at www.wordle.net).

Approximate time required for activity:

10 to 20 minutes

This exercise is very similar to the 'trigger material' activity (section 4.13) but relies more on words than on pictures. A field of words is simply a sheet of paper that contains a random selection of words, phrases, verses etc jumbled fairly haphazardly on it (see our template in Appendix 2.8 or create your own at www.wordle.net).

In response to something they have seen/heard/discussed, participants are asked to circle one or two of the words, phrases etc that most closely match their opinions or feelings on that subject. The facilitator can then either gather in the sheets and use this feedback to develop further work, or they could lead a group discussion - giving each individual a chance to explain their choice of words before taking the group on to explore the more commonly held opinions and the underlying reasons for them.

For more like this:

Other creative ways to collect feedback from a group include

- Post-it ideas storm and affinity diagram (Section 4.7)
- "Our survey says…" (Section 4.10)
- Hopes and fears in a hat (Section 4.12)
- Trigger material (Section 4.13)
- Vote with your feet (Section 4.20)
- 'Whooh!' rating (Section 4.22).

4.15 Forum theatre

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

Approximate time required for activity:

30 minutes

Role play is a fantastic way of encouraging young people to think through consequences of different decisions. It is also a great way of exploring an issue from different perspectives.

The facilitator chooses a number of participants and gives them a scenario to act out as a role play in front of the rest of the group (the 'actors' may want some time to prepare/think about this). After a few moments, the facilitator calls "Time out" and leads the whole group in a discussion about

- how each character is feeling and what they might be thinking
- why characters might have acted in the way they did
- what each character should/would do next, and why.

Once this discussion has been had, the role play can recommence. The facilitator can call time outs and lead discussions as many times as they feel it will be useful.

Variation 1: one character at a time

Once the facilitator has chosen the 'actors' for the role play, the rest of the group is divided into two sections. When 'time out' is called, the actors split into the two different groups and each group discusses just one of the characters during that time out. The 'time out' exercise can be repeated with different characters as the scenario is played out.

Variation 2: for shy or non-theatrical groups

The facilitator asks participants to form several small groups of around four people and then gives each group a copy of the same written scenario to read through. They are told they will all be looking at the same situation, but each from the point of view of different people in the community. For instance, if the scenario was challenging behaviour in a youth club, one group could take the perspective of the youth leaders, one the people with challenging behaviour and one the rest of the youth club. Each group has time to discuss what is happening in the scenario from the point of view of their characters before presenting back to the whole group with

regards to what they think their thoughts, feelings and motivations might be.

For more like this:

Other creative ways of exploring motives/points of view include

- Storytelling (Section 4.17)
- Bob (Section 4.31).

4.16 Freeze frame

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

Approximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

Another activity that will suit the more dramatic in the group!

The facilitator asks participants to get into groups of between five and eight people and asks them to create a still scene (imagine a 'freeze frame' or 'pause' on a DVD) that illustrates a particular theme - for instance 'the perfect Church' or 'a great night at Youth Club'. The groups are given a set amount of time to work on their idea before showing their tableau to everyone else. People could try to guess what is going on in each scene, or the freeze frame could be explained by a member of the performing group.

If the groups are struggling to come up with a freeze frame in isolation, the facilitator could suggest they act out a scene and then have someone hit 'pause' at the best moment.

If the facilitator could take photographs of the different groups, you will have a permanent record of people's thoughts on a particular subject (remember your photo permission forms though!).

Variation 1: human model-making

This adaptation can be used as either a facilitation technique or simply a highly amusing game. The facilitator asks participants to get into groups of any number of people and then challenges the group to create certain shapes, using only their bodies - for instance (if you're playing just for fun) a car, an elephant or the Eiffel

Tower! If you want to get some serious feedback in a fun way, ask them to create a piece of equipment they think the youth group should have, or a place they would like to visit on the next club trip out.

Variation 2: add music!

Taking the idea further, this could be a musical game (similar to musical statues). When the music stops, the facilitator yells a number and the participants must form a group with that amount of people. The facilitator shouts out a shape that groups should make.

For more like this:

Other ideas for the more outgoing, flamboyant or creative groups include

- Forum theatre (Section 4.15)
- Storytelling (Section 4.17)
- 'Whooh!' rating (Section 4.22)
- World's worst, world's best (Section 4.25).

4.17 Storytelling

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☒
Over 18	☒

Approximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

Projecting thoughts and opinions onto a fictional character can often help young people – particularly smaller children – to have confidence to speak their mind and discuss certain issues. That said, when using this technique, the facilitator needs to be clear about the aims of the exercise and tell participants that they are trying to find out what young people think about a certain topic and that what they say may make a difference and lead to change.

The facilitator should introduce the theme or issue under discussion and explain that, to find out what the group thinks, they will be telling a story. The group needs to imagine what it would be like to be a child experiencing the things in the story. The young people will be asked to help make up the story as the tale unfolds.

The facilitator should create key points within the tale that are about the theme to be discussed - for instance young people's experiences of Church. The facilitator starts the story off; where there are gaps, they open it up to the group and ask them to offer their suggestions for that part of the narrative. For older groups, the story could be written out on a sheet of paper, leaving blank spaces for participants to add their own ideas and pictures.

Here are some examples of story pointers on the suggested theme of young people's experiences of Church:

- It was nearly Christmas/Easter/Summer Holidays and there was a young girl called...
- [Girl's name] was lonely because she had moved to a new town called...
- She moved with her mum and dad and her...
- On the first Sunday they were there, they visited a church called...
- When [girl's name] went into the church, she looked around and saw...
- This made her feel...
- The first person she spoke to was...
- And they said...
- Which made [girl's name] feel...
- The minister welcomed everyone and some music began to play. [Girl's name] thought the music was...
- She wished that...
- Then the minister said it was time for the children to go to Sunday School.
- [Girl's name] felt...
- She followed the other children through into a room. The room was...
- The Sunday School teacher came up to [girl's name] and said...
- What kind of things did [girl's name] do in Sunday School?
- What do you think [girl's name] liked the best?
- What do you think she wished was different?
- At the end of the Sunday School they all had a drink and a biscuit [you may also want to have a drink and a biscuit as a group at the same time].
- Then the Sunday School went back into church and [girl's name] sat back with her mum and dad until the service ended.
- On the way home, [girl's name] felt...

The facilitator should now ask the group how they felt telling the story and what they thought the story was about. This is also an opportunity to go over some of the main points made and find out if anyone in the group wants to discuss anything further. During this discussion, groups of younger children might also like to draw a picture of the story.

Variation: developing the story

The young people could go on to develop the story in any number of creative ways: a drama or sketch, poem, song, rap, picture etc.

For more like this:

This activity obviously ties in quite well with

- Forum theatre (Section 4.15).

Also, for another activity that uses projection to inspire confidence to speak out, see

- Bob (Section 4.31).

4.18 Values continuum

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- a fairly large, open floor space.

Approximate time required for activity:

10 to 15 minutes

Two points at either end of the room are identified by the facilitator. One represents 'Positively agree' and the other represents 'Positively disagree'. The space represents everywhere between these two extremes of opinion. The facilitator reads out different statements; in response, the participants choose where they will stand on the 'continuum' to represent how strongly they agree or disagree with what was said.

The facilitator can then take time to ask a select number of people at different points on the continuum to explain why they chose to stand where they are.

To break the ice, it might be best to start with some more trivial statements such as, "Marmite is the best thing to spread on bread" or, "Cadbury's Dairy Milk is better than Galaxy". After these, you can move on to the more serious questions.

This is not only a great way of gathering opinions from a group; it's also a good way of making people aware of their own values, beliefs and even prejudices. The facilitator may want to have pre-planned methods for managing the more heated discussions. It might also be interesting to repeat the same statement after discussion to see if opinion has changed.

Variation 1: using pictures

To make the continuum a little easier to visualise, you may want to use pictures to represent the different extremes (eg a smiley face or plus sign for 'Positively agree' and a frowning face or minus sign for 'Positively disagree').

Variation 2: in pairs

Participants could work in pairs and discuss their response to a statement before one of them finds a position on the continuum representing their shared consensus.

For more like this:

Other ways of encouraging young people to reflect on their opinions include

- Line-ups (Section 4.19)
- Vote with your feet (Section 4.20).

4.19 Line-ups

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☒
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- a fairly large, open floor space.

Approximate time required for activity:

10 to 15 minutes

Very similar to the values continuum (section 4.18) but requires more communication amongst participants.

The facilitator asks a question and the whole group have to line themselves up from 'most' to 'least' in response. This could be an extremely simple question used as an ice breaker, such as:

- How old are you?
- How many pets do you have?
- How many cousins do you have?

Alternatively, it could be a question that involves more thought/discussion to establish which order the participants line up in. For instance:

- Who uses Facebook the most?
- Who enjoyed tonight's session the most?
- Who reads their Bible the most?

The interesting thing about the group's response to the latter, more complex questions, will be how they quantify it - how do you measure enjoyment? Hopefully this will lead them to talk about what they enjoyed.

Variation: assessing priorities

This activity can also be used as a human version of the participation pyramid (section 4.3). The facilitator chooses participants to represent different options - indicated on a piece of paper that person then holds. The whole group decide the order of priority they would give these options. This could be done in either a line or a pyramid!

For more like this:

As well as the participation pyramid (4.3) mentioned above, similar activities include:

- Values continuum (Section 4.18)
- Vote with your feet (Section 4.20).

4.20 Vote with your feet

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- a fairly large, open floor space that people can move around in
- materials (paper and marker pens/computer & printer) to make corner signs.

Approximate time required for activity:

10 minutes

The facilitator asks a question or makes a statement and the participants have to

walk to a corner of the room where the response best matching their own thoughts on the subject is displayed.

At a very basic level, this could be played as an alternative game to a basic quiz, with the four corners of the room simply representing A, B, C and D in a multiple choice. From a consultation point of view, this activity could be used as an alternative to the Values continuum, with four corners representing 'Agree', 'Disagree', 'Don't know' or 'Need more information'.

Another option is to use pictures or text, along similar lines to the trigger material (section 4.13) and ask people to stand by the image that best sums up their response to a statement. These images could be very straightforward and have obvious meanings (for instance using emoticons or simple words such as 'sad', 'angry', 'happy') or they could be more random and open to interpretation by the participants. For example, a rainbow could represent a promise (God's promise to Noah in the Bible), hope (that sunshine will come after rain) or happiness (lots of bright colours), as well as many other things.

The activity doesn't have to be restricted to four corners and therefore four options. In a large enough space, there could be several stations around the room that people can choose to stand by.

For more like this:

Similar activities that help explore participants' response to certain issues include

- Headline! (Section 4.5)
- Trigger material (Section 4.13)
- Field of words (Section 4.14)
- Freeze frame (Section 4.16)
- Values continuum (Section 4.18).

4.21 Wishing tree

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- a tree - a real one, a model one or a tree drawn on a large sheet of paper
- paper 'leaves' and pens
- a way of attaching the leaves to the tree (string, blu-tack etc. depending on what's appropriate for the tree you have).

Approximate time required for activity:

> 10 minutes (if you are able to leave the wishing tree in one location, this could be an ongoing exercise).

This idea is a very simple one and is essentially a more exciting and evolved version of the suggestion box.

As stated above, a group could use either a real tree (outside or a smaller, potted one inside), a model tree or simply a picture of a tree drawn on a large sheet of paper and tacked up on a wall or pin board. A real or model tree will potentially have more longevity if you want to keep the wish tree as an ongoing feature of a youth group.

The idea is that young people are able to write their suggestions/hopes for a youth club, Sunday school or church on paper leaves and attach these to the tree - using whatever means are deemed appropriate. These could be left on the tree for posterity and, where appropriate, as prayers from the young people, or a youth leader or other nominated adult could regularly clear the tree of 'wishes' and make a record of the young people's suggestions.

Some key things to remember:

- Someone will have to act as 'moderator' for the wishing tree - removing any material that is offensive or inappropriate.
- If the wishing tree is being used as an alternative to a suggestion box, then there needs to be a way of regularly feeding back to the young people regarding what has happened to their suggestions.
- If the wishing tree is to be a permanent fixture at a youth club or church, someone needs to be responsible for replenishing the supply of 'leaves'.

It doesn't have to be leaves that are attached to the wishing tree. If a group is using a real tree, ribbons can look extremely pretty and (if outside) last a little longer than paper. Another alternative would be to use paper apples to write suggestions on.

Variations: the possibilities are endless...

There are no limits to the many different creative alternatives that could be adopted by a group in place of a suggestion box. Instead of placing leaves on a tree, why not try:

- bricks in a building (particularly good if you're designing a new youth centre)
- flowers in a meadow
- fish in a pond ('Wish Fish'!)
- spots on a leopard!

As a group, be as creative or as silly as you like when creating your version of the 'Wishing Tree'.

For more like this:

There are many different activities within this pack that can be used to encourage young people to share their ideas and suggestions. These include

- Post-it ideas storm and affinity diagram (Section 4.7)
- Hopes and fears in a hat (Section 4.12)
- Graffiti wall (Section 4.26)
- Collage boards (Section 4.30).

4.22 'Whooh!' rating

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☒

Approximate time required for activity:

5 minutes

This is a very easy - and very noisy - method of gauging the popularity of a number of different options.

The facilitator lists a number of options (for example possible destinations for the next youth group outing) and asks the group to respond to each option with a 'Whooh!' sound. The loudness and enthusiasm of their 'Whooh!' should indicate how positive their response is and it should be clear which the more popular choice is.

This is also an extremely useful tool for evaluating an event. For example, you could ask how much they liked the venue, food, activities, etc and gauge the success of these different elements by the noise made.

If you're feeling arty, your group could also develop its own 'Whooh!-ometer' as a means of measuring the volume and enthusiasm of each 'Whooh!'

Variation 1: Mexican 'Whooh!'

The group waves their arms, 'Mexican wave' style. The height of the wave indicates the enthusiasm for that particular option; the higher the arms, the more they like it!

Variation 2: change sounds

Get the group to help you be inventive and come up with different responses/noises

they can make. If you're not feeling ready for a 'Whooh!' you could always simply opt for clapping.

For more like this:

Other ways of gauging the popularity of a number of options, include

- Dot voting (Section 4.9)
- "Our survey says…" (Section 4.10)
- Values continuum (Section 4.18)
- Line-ups (Section 4.19).

4.23 More trees!

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☒

You will need:

- an 'issue tree' outline on a large piece of paper (see example below).
- marker pens.

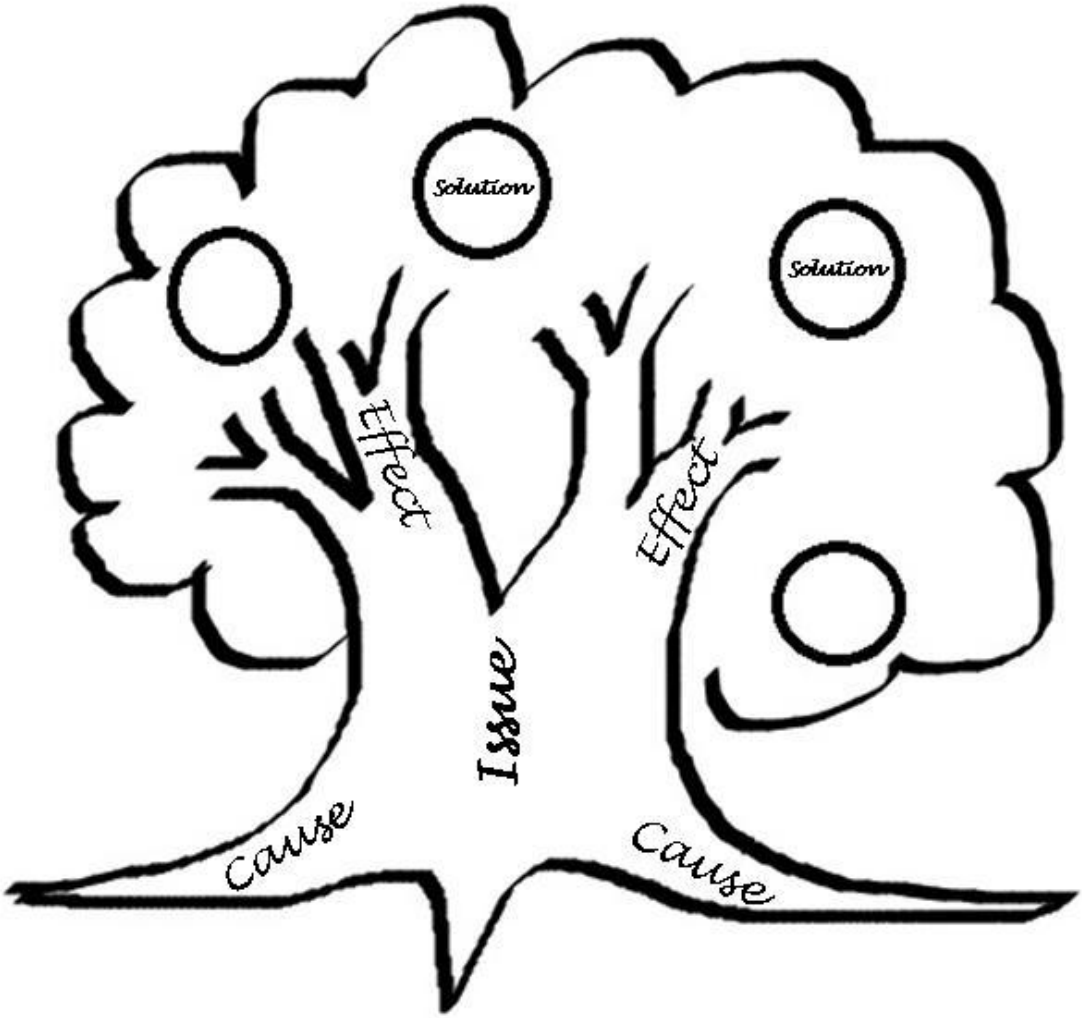
Approximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

This is a very simple way of exploring an issue or problem facing a group. Following this basic explanation of the issue tree, there are lots of creative alternatives listed below.

The outline of a tree (see the example below) is drawn on a large sheet of paper and placed where everyone in the group can see it. The facilitator labels the trunk of the tree with a chosen issue and then invites the group to call out suggestions to fill in the rest of the tree:

- The roots should be labelled with the possible causes of the issue.
- The branches are labelled with the effects of the issue.
- The fruit is labelled with the possible solutions of the issue.



When the issue tree has been filled in, the facilitator then leads the group in a discussion with the following questions:

- How useful is the tree for understanding the issue?
- Are some solutions more important than others?
- Can you contribute to any of these solutions?

Variation 1: trees for younger groups

Again use the outline of a tree (or, if you are feeling very creative, cut-outs of trees that stand up). Using red and green card, cut out several apple shapes - these will represent the good things in a church/Sunday school/youth group. Then, using brown card, cut out more apple shapes (this time with worms in!) and brown leaves - these will represent the bad things. Ask the group to write their suggestions on the apples and leaves and then stick these on to the trees.

Variation 2: the river

Again this exercise is aimed mainly at younger children as it is extremely visual and fairly active. Using material, a roll of craft/wallpaper or simply just masking tape, create a 'river of opportunity' - either on a floor or on a tabletop, depending on how much space you have available. Add stepping stones to the river (real or made of paper/card) and, if you can get hold of one, a toy crocodile. One bank of the 'river' represents a shared group aim that you would all like to reach. The participants are given post-it notes and asked to write down the things that might prevent them from reaching that goal. These are then stuck to the crocodile. The participants also write down the things that will help them reach the goal and these are stuck to the stepping stones.

Variation 3: hot air balloon

Draw a large picture of a hot air balloon (or find a suitable clip art image) and position where everyone can see it (needs to be big enough for the group to write on). The facilitator tells the group that this balloon represents their project/idea/group. Using the balloon template the group need to consider:

- **What are you aiming for?** In the 'sky' around the balloon, write your hopes and dreams for the project. How will you know when it's a real success?
- **Who needs to be on board to make this a success?** On the basket write the names of the people/organisations who need to support the venture.
- **What needs to be in place for the project to take off?** On the balloon itself, write down the issues that need to be dealt with and the equipment and other things that need to be acquired before the group's idea can take flight.
- **What might hold the project back?** On the sandbags/tether ropes, write the things that might hold the project back or act as obstacles.

This activity can be done as a larger group, or in smaller groups with time to share afterwards.

More variations

Once again, you can be as creative as you like and come up with your own image, working along the same principles - forms of transport are always useful: train, ship, rocket ship... the possibilities are endless!

For more like this:

Other activities that assist with more involved project planning are

- 'How?' and 'Why?' chains (Section 4.2)
- SWOT analysis (Section 4.6)
- Today, Heaven and Hell (Section 4.11).

4.24 Sharing circle

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- an object to be used as a 'talking stick'
- space to sit in a large circle (chairs are optional).

Approximate time required for activity:

20 to 30 minutes (depends on the size of the group)

The idea behind this activity is that everyone gets an opportunity to speak and, most importantly, be heard.

The group sits in a large circle and the facilitator introduces an object that will be used as a 'talking stick'. This could be absolutely anything that can be passed around the group - a stick, a toy, a teddy bear, a pencil, a rock, a toy microphone, a hat for people to wear... as long as the group recognises that you are only allowed to talk if you are holding the 'talking stick'.

The facilitator then asks a question or raises a topic for discussion and opens it up to the group. The group could take it in turns - passing the 'talking stick' around the circle to indicate when the next person is allowed to talk - or they could simply raise their hand if they have something to say, and wait for the 'talking stick' to be passed to them. If you do take it in turns, moving around the circle, it needs to be made clear that participants are not obliged to speak when it is their turn. If they feel they have nothing to say - they simply pass the 'talking stick' on to the next person.

Instead of passing the 'stick' on, an alternative would be to return it to a central point each time a person has finished talking, ready for someone else to pick up.

You could introduce a time limit (or a word limit) for people's contributions - as long as you felt this didn't hinder the discussion.

Variation 1: 'pass the parcel'

As an alternative, you could play a game of pass the parcel. But instead of forfeits, whoever has the parcel when the music stops has to tell the rest of the group something they know/feel about a particular topic/issue. Again, you have to make sure that this will not put undue pressure on the more timid members of the group.

Variation 2: cotton bud debate

This could be used in conjunction with the 'talking stick' or it could be an alternative method of managing a discussion and ensuring everyone has a say.

The facilitator gives everyone three cotton buds (or other tokens such as beads, counters, toy coins etc.) and then sets up a subject for debate. Before anyone can speak (including to each other), they must hand over one of their cotton buds as payment. This will hopefully give everyone equal opportunity to speak and encourage the more vocal members of a group to consider what they are going to say carefully. If someone isn't confident enough to speak, they could simply pay a token to show they agree with something being said, or pass their cotton bud to somebody they trust to make their point for them.

For more like this:

Here are some other activities that might help the less vocal members of your group get their voice heard:

- Discussion carousel (Section 4.4)
- Post-it ideas storm and affinity diagram (Section 4.7)
- Hopes and fears in a hat (Section 4.12)
- Vote with your feet (Section 4.20)
- Graffiti wall (Section 4.26).

4.25 World's worst, world's best

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☒
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- paper and pens (might be useful for notes).

Approximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

Anyone who has seen the 'World's worst' round in the old TV show *Whose Line is It Anyway?* or the 'Scenes we'd like to see' round in the current show *Mock the Week* will understand the basic principle behind this activity (if you haven't seen either show, plenty of clips of both can be found on YouTube - but be careful; some clips could cause offence!). This is an activity that will suit the more outgoing members of

the group, but there are alternatives for those who don't fancy themselves as the next Russell Howard.

The facilitator introduces a topic, for instance 'youth workers' and asks the groups to briefly act out their idea of either the 'World's worst youth worker' or, if you want to put a positive spin on it, the 'World's best youth worker'. These should literally be one or two lines in a very short (and, if possible, funny) sketch to put their ideas across. Taking a cue from the two TV programmes mentioned above, you could introduce a 'World's worst' step, which is where the participants stand whilst waiting to take their turn. You could also use a bell or a buzzer of some kind, which the facilitator sounds when they have heard enough/feel that the punch line has been delivered.

As your group are unlikely to be professional comedians, you might want to give them thinking/preparation time before launching into the activity. It might also be a good idea for participants to work in pairs or teams.

If your group are unlikely to want to act out short sketches, they could write down their ideas on a piece of paper and drop them into a box. When everyone has submitted their suggestions, the facilitator or a more confident member of the group could read/act them out.

For more like this:

Other ideas that ask participants to sum up thoughts succinctly, dramatically or both:

- Headline! (Section 4.5)
- Hopes and fears in a hat (Section 4.12)
- Forum theatre (Section 4.15)
- Freeze frame (Section 4.16)
- Graffiti wall (Section 4.26 - particularly the Variation 2: using templates).

4.26 Graffiti wall

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- a large sheet of paper, canvas or material
- paints, markers, pens, glitter etc
- newspapers/bin bags to use as protection for floor/surfaces.

Approximate time required for activity:

30 minutes

Essentially this activity is simply about letting participants have free reign to creatively express their thoughts on a particular topic or issue.

The large piece of paper or material should be laid out on the floor, a table or stuck to the wall (with appropriate protection for floor etc in place).

The participants are given a topic and asked to artistically display their opinions or feelings about this issue. This could be done through pictures or words.

If you have a particularly large group, you might need to run small groups with a graffiti wall each - or ask people to take it in turns to make their contribution to the wall. While participants are waiting to take their turn, they could be sketching rough drafts of what they would like to add.

Variation 1: draw and write

Each participant is given a blank sheet of paper and access to art materials and is asked to draw a picture (with some explanatory notes) in response to an open-ended question or scenario. The picture could represent the individual's opinion of something, or demonstrate what they know about a particular topic.

Variation 2: using templates

For instance, if your group was being asked what makes a good church - you could draw a large outline of a church and ask them to write/draw their responses within the outline.

If the group was discussing what makes a good youth leader, you could find a large enough piece of paper and draw around a leader or one of the people in the group and then label different parts of the body with the qualities required, for example 'ears for listening', 'shoulders to cry on', 'heart for young people' etc.

Variation 3: Mural

Similar to the graffiti wall, but instead of a wall filled with lots of separate pieces of art, the group work together to create one large picture that demonstrates their shared feelings in response to a particular issue or question.

For more like this:

Other activities that encourage young people to express their opinions through

creative means include:

- Wishing tree (Section 4.21)
- Photography (Section 4.29)
- Collage boards (Section 4.30)
- Bob (Section 4.31).

4.27 Mnemonics

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- paper and pens.

Approximate time required for activity:

15 minutes

Mnemonics are a fun way to try and sum up everything that has been discussed when exploring a particular issue. A mnemonic (pronounced *ni-mon-ik*) is a device, such as a formula or rhyme, that can help improve memory - particularly when remembering lists. One of the most common forms of mnemonic would be an acronym.

For instance, if you had been discussing ground rules for a group, they could be encouraged to then come up with a mnemonic to help remember them, like so:

G ive each other encouragement
R emember to say please and thank you
O pen minded is a good thing to be
U sing mobile phones in sessions is rude
N o swearing
D o not say things that might upset people

R espect each other
U nderstand and care for each other
L isten when others are talking
E veryone is equal
S ecrets should be kept

Variation: Wallet-sized

If a group agrees on a mnemonic, they could be printed out business card or bookmark size and given to each person to put in their purse/bag/wallet/diary/Bible.

4.28 Wall of participation

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☒
Over 18	☒

You will need:

- Lego or other building bricks in four different colours
- several sheets of paper and a pen.

Approximate time required for activity:

20 minutes

This activity is a great one to use instead of a straightforward questionnaire when trying to gauge what a group of young people know about a particular subject, for instance children's rights or the decision-making structures of the Methodist Church.

On the sheets of paper, the facilitator writes a list of items that the young people should be aware of - one on each sheet of paper. For instance, if you were looking at the structure of the Methodist Church, one sheet could say 'Church Council', another could say 'Circuit Council', 'District Synod' on another, 'Methodist Conference' on another, '3Generate Children's and Youth Assembly' on yet another and so on... These sheets are then laid out on the floor or on a table.

For each sheet of paper, the facilitator then asks the young people if they have:

- vaguely heard of it? = red Lego brick
- never heard of it? = yellow Lego brick
- know all about it? = green Lego brick
- had some kind of personal involvement with it? = blue Lego brick

The young people decide which colour brick best represents what they know about that particular item and they place this on the piece of paper - built on to the bricks already there but placed however they want.

After every participant has visited every sheet of paper, you then have a very visual indication of what the young people do and do not know and use this information to start to help them fill in the gaps.

Variation 1: opinion gauging

The different colours could be used to represent a variety of opinions the young people might have regarding a selection of options (for example youth group activities). Therefore a red brick might represent, 'really like this idea'; yellow, 'it's okay I guess'; green, 'not to keen' and blue, 'really hate this idea'.

Variation 2: tumbling tower of participation

Going back to the idea of finding a fun way to help young people fill in their knowledge gaps...

Using a game of Jenga (or other tumbling tower game - preferably a wooden one), on each of the bricks write one of the things you would like young people to be aware of. Then gather the whole group together to play a regular game of Jenga (other tumbling tower games are available). The only twist is that each time a player removes a brick, they must read out the item on the brick and the rest of the group have to guess/try to explain what that item is and why it's important.

4.29 Photography

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☒
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- cameras - disposable or, if something done regularly, digital (alternately, most older youth will now have access to cameras on their mobile phones)
- paper and glue for mounting photos (or a digital alternative, such as PowerPoint)
- a means of developing/printing the photos out.

Approximate time required for activity:

60 minutes +

There are many ways in which photography can be used as a participation tool. For instance, you may want to find out what a group thinks about a space, building, community or group. Ask the participants to take photographs of the things they think are important; the things they like or don't like in a particular area.

An activity like this could take place over the length of one youth group session, or

could be something that people work on for a week or even two.

An alternative way to use photography would be to ask participants to take a photograph that captures their response to, or their feelings about, a particular issue. The picture could be as creative or as abstract as they like. This is very similar to the trigger material exercise (section 4.13) - the difference being that, instead of the participants having to choose from a static selection of pictures, they can go out and take their own!

The facilitator of this kind of activity must remember to label cameras/film/memory sticks etc. clearly when collecting the young people's work in, so that there is a record of who used which camera/took which pictures. It might also be helpful to supply participants with a basic form to fill in as they take their pictures - so they can remember what they have 'snapped'.

Participants must also understand the importance of asking for permission when taking photographs of people - especially if the photograph shows a clear shot of that person's face, or if the subject is a child. You may want to provide the young people with a stock of photo permission forms, or make it a rule that the photos should not contain images of people.

For more like this:

Similar creative ideas include...

- Trigger material (Section 4.13)
- Graffiti wall (Section 4.26)
- Collage boards (Section 4.30).

4.30 Collage boards

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑
11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☑

You will need:

- lots of age appropriate magazines, comics, catalogues, newspapers etc
- a large sheet of card or a board (or several for individual projects)
- scissors and glue
- optional extras: glitter, paint, marker pens, stickers etc.

Approximate time required for activity:

45 minutes

Another extremely flexible method of exploring different issues in a creative way. This could be done individually or as a group.

The facilitator sets the topic for discussion and asks the participants to create a collage that reflects their thoughts on, or response to, the issue/question – for example, 'How do you think society sees teenagers?' or 'How do you feel when you go to church?' or 'What issues matter to you?'

Simply by providing artistic free reign and plenty of source material, you will be surprised at how creative the young people can be.

Variation: take your pick

This is a great tool to use when you want to involve young people in choosing new materials/equipment for a youth group or other project. Instead of the magazines, newspapers etc listed as equipment needed above, all you need are the relevant catalogues. You should also have an easy to use calculator.

The facilitator starts by explaining the need for new materials/equipment and the money available, then writes this amount at the top of the sheet of card/board being used. The group then works together to look through the catalogues and cut out pictures of what they would like. Stickers could be used to indicate what they'd like (one sticker) and what they'd really, really like (two stickers). Once the catalogues have been gone through, there then needs to be a discussion about what everyone likes and why, followed by a vote to choose the items the group likes the most. The pictures of the chosen items are then stuck to the card/board and, as each item is added, the facilitator helps the group to work out how much money they have spent and how much is left, keeping a tally alongside the pictures.

If working with younger children, they may need extra help to keep track of the money spent. The facilitator could use beads or other tokens to represent the money available. For instance, one bead could represent £5. As the children decide what to spend the money on, the beads are taken away.

For more like this:

Other creative activities that help young people express their views:

- Wishing tree (Section 4.21)
- Graffiti wall (Section 4.26)
- Photography (Section 4.29).

4.31 Bob

Suitable for the following age groups:

0 to 6 years	☑
7 to 10 years	☑

11 to 14 years	☑
15 to 18 years	☑
Over 18	☒

You will need:

- large pieces of paper and marker pens.

Approximate time required for activity:

20 to 30 minutes

The same principle applies here as with the storytelling activity (section 4.17). Young people's confidence to speak their mind is increased if they can project their thoughts and opinions onto a fictional character.

The facilitator asks participants to split into smaller groups and gives each group a sheet of paper. On the paper the groups are asked to draw the outline of a young person (the facilitator may want to give the groups a specific age group and/or gender to work with). They are then asked to give their young person a name (Bob is not obligatory!).

The young people can then start to describe their character and discuss what things might be going on in the young person's life - building up their picture as they go along. Each group could (if age appropriate) consider the following:

- emotions, thoughts, feelings
- friends, peers, family and school
- likes and dislikes
- interests, influences etc
- physical changes
- sex, sexuality and relationships.

The facilitator could also ask the group to direct specific questions at their character, such as, 'What does Bob think about Church?' or, 'What youth group activities does Bob enjoy?'

Variation: it's a puppet!

Instead of using a drawn outline, young people could create their own hand or finger puppets to use as their 'avatars'.

For more like this:

Similar activities include

- Storytelling (Section 4.17)
- Graffiti wall (Section 4.26).

Section 5: Formal processes

We've covered a lot so far! Now it's time to put some of the theory, ideas and techniques we have shared with you into practice. We are sure that, by now, you have a variety of questions swirling around in your head, along the lines of, "What if?" or "How about when?"... Hopefully this next section will provide answers to some of those questions, and possibly answers to some you haven't even thought about yet!

We've included a lot of information below but every situation is different and policy changes all the time. We would therefore encourage you to explore some of the additional resources we've signposted you to at the end of this section, to keep your finger on the pulse and your thinking up-to-date and relevant to your setting.

Involvement in decision making

Children and young people can be involved in a number of ways. Before you do anything you will need to allow time to consult with them as to how they want to get involved. It is important not to assume that our 'adult' models of making decisions are the best methods, for either children and young people or adults! Equally, it is just as important not to assume that all young people dislike structured meetings.

Some of the methods you can use to get young people involved are:

- A youth council*, feeding into 'adult' council. Ideally when the young people meet together they should be supported by someone from either the 'adult' council or other people with knowledge/expertise, as appropriate, to help them to make informed decisions.
- Young people attending and participating in a pre-existing 'adult' council.
- A cross-generational council, where planning and discussion is carried out with everyone as equal partners.
- Young people asked to facilitate a one-off council, to introduce new ways of making decisions.
- Generating discussion on social media. For example, the UK Methodists Facebook Group attracts posts from people of all generations, and the Methodist South East District is looking to set up a Facebook group for young

- people to engage with the District Development Plan in creative and relevant ways.

* Although the word ‘council’ is often used by churches and other formal settings, such as schools, the word ‘forum’ could be substituted for council here and elsewhere in this list.

Suggested activity: how do your children and young people want to participate?

Using the session plan in Appendix 3.1, facilitate a discussion with your children and/or young people on how they would like to be consulted by/engage more with your church council and other decision-making processes.

What children and young people (and adults) need before getting involved

Before the meeting:

- Involve young people in decisions about the meeting’s format. When and where will it be held? Who should attend? What outcomes would they like to see as a result of the meeting? How does their feedback sit with your intended outcomes?

- Clearly communicate all of the above information, including purpose for the meeting, to all attendees. Make sure there is clarity about what you are trying to achieve from the start, the amount of commitment you are asking for (you might even consider putting together some volunteer role descriptions) and the impact their involvement will have. Participants should be envisioned and inspired about what the meeting is trying to achieve and the part they will play.

- Have everyone on board with the idea of children’s and youth participation from the start, in particular we are talking here about the adults who are going to be involved in the meeting. You could perhaps deliver some brief training, with the wider church/project, on the importance of participation (see ‘10 Arguments for youth participation’ in Appendix 1.1 if you want a summary of the arguments in favour of participative practice).

- Consider the accessibility for children and young people. Cost, transport, time and venue should all be considered, as some of these factors may prevent children or young people attending. Do any of the children and young people need to be accompanied or require additional support because of, for example, age or disability? Often children and young people are criticised for not participating when an evaluation of the accessibility of the meeting format has not been done.

- It is also important to consider race, gender, sexuality and ability, in accordance with your church/project equal opportunities policy. Ensure that

everyone involved is given permission to share their views and opinions without judgement from others.

- The involvement of children and young people should be well planned, in creative and empowering ways (see section 4: Creative facilitation). A well-chosen discussion starter will help to ensure that everyone is heard, no matter how confident, and the meeting is a positive experience for all.

- Provide children and young people with emotional support to explore and articulate their feelings about the meeting (both the topics to be discussed and any fears/concerns about the process itself). This is as important as helping them with practical preparation. This might involve helping them to think about the meeting beforehand - what they might find challenging and how they will communicate their views.

- Remember that children and young people must always retain the right not to participate. However, they should also feel able to invite themselves back and re-engage, without being judged.

- Ensure you have the permission of the children and young people, and of their parent/guardian, for their involvement in the meeting. There may be other people to consider, such as a support worker, teacher or children's/youth worker. If you are planning to publish anything taken from the event in the public domain (such as photos, videos or minutes of the meeting), take care to have the right permissions in writing.

- Think about the risks for children and young people and how these can be reduced. Have you done a risk assessment and do you have the right insurance? Do you have a clear safeguarding policy and have all those involved been briefed about it? Is the venue safe and has transport to and from the venue been arranged? If using the internet, does access need to be supervised, or is the site secure?

- Are all involved clear about confidentiality, ground rules and boundaries? What support is in place should there be a discussion around potentially sensitive issues? You may want to set some ground rules with everyone, including your children and young people, as a starting point to a meeting.

- Consider the language you will be using and the language commonly used in meetings and churches. Make sure you and the other people involved in the meeting are aware of and, wherever possible, avoid jargon. At the start of the meeting give people permission to ask if they do not understand a particular word, phrase or abbreviation. Later on in this section there is information on producing child friendly documents, which will include a lot of transferrable learning with regards to child/youth-friendly language.

- Make sure everyone involved knows how decisions are made in your church/project and who has the final say. What limitations might be placed on certain individual's involvement? Inform participants about their own and others' rights, including their rights regarding voting (see later in this section).

- Would anyone who will be attending benefit from extra support/training in confidence and written/verbal presentation skills, ahead of the meeting? Is this something that could be delivered as a workshop at a regular youth group meeting or similar? Similarly, would there be benefit in offering training in listening, empathy, assertiveness and communication skills (see Appendix 3.2 for a session plan to help with this). Finally, how about some training in negotiation and understanding the perspective of others (see Appendix 3.3)?

- Consider what support and advice you or others might need from other organisations and bodies. How will you access this and/or signpost to it?

During the meeting:

- Participants need to be taken seriously and everyone's views should be given credibility. The unique perspective, knowledge and experience that children and young people bring should be given equal value – try not to be either tokenistic or patronising. Avoid judging one opinion as 'not as well-informed' as others. When in the meeting, all participants need to be aware of how they interact with others and how they react to a diversity of opinions, particularly when those opinions are different to their own.

- You will need to be aware of how much each person is contributing and who might need encouragement or extra support to offer their opinion. As mentioned above, planning ahead and going to the meeting armed with a variety of creative facilitation techniques could help with this. Try to be flexible in your approach and in how you engage people in conversation. See Appendix 3.4 for a session plan that contains some practical ideas for helping young people to articulate their concerns and passions (based on creative facilitation techniques found in Section 4).

- In section 2 there is information on group theory and group dynamics. You may find this a helpful resource when preparing for and chairing meetings.

Following the meeting:

- Provide support to ensure that all participants have understood the meeting and clarify whether any further help is needed.

- Ensure that people have the opportunity to evaluate the experience and to be involved in improving future meetings.

- Thank the young people and feedback to them with regards to how their participation has led to influence, action and change. Be prepared to discuss any next steps that might result from this conversation.

- Agree training that people might need in order to take actions forward, eg how to campaign/make change happen, or project planning/management skills.

The participation checklist in Appendix 2.1can be used to check that your church or project is on track for participation in formal processes to be as effective as possible.

Case study: 3Generate, Methodist Children's and Youth Assembly

This national Methodist event has taken place each year since 2009. 3Generate developed out of the previous Methodist Youth Conference and is on an evolutionary journey, each year becoming an increasingly more participative and collaborative event that enables a wide range of children and young people (aged 8 to 23) to be part of it.

There are many different ways in which children and young people can be part of 3Generate.

- They are able to influence how the event evolves through feedback and evaluation.
- Through consultation they can make suggestions of issues to be discussed.
- They can be part of 'shaper' groups throughout the year, helping to develop the event programme.
- They can volunteer as a workshop facilitator, working alongside other children and young people or adults to enable discussions on different topics.
- They are able to volunteer in other roles at the event, helping it to run smoothly and acting as a 'friendly face'.
- The event's Facebook page, Twitter feed and hashtags help children and young people to engage with 3Generate through social media, promoting the event and keeping the conversations going during the actual event and throughout the year.
- Children and young people attending the weekend are invited to join many different forms of discussion, debate and decision making.
- Young people are also able to stand for election as Methodist Youth President or as 3Generate Elected Representatives to various bodies (including Methodist Council, Methodist Conference and the British Youth Council). Delegates at 3Generate vote for the person they want to represent them (and all children and young people) in these roles.

A primary aim of 3Generate is to enable children and young people to be part of the decision making processes of the Methodist Church. A key aspect of this is providing space so that their voice can be heard. This includes making sure children and young people are really listened to and are meaningfully engaged in the discussions taking place and the decisions being made. This is achieved through the use of creative techniques, which take account of varying age ranges, personal characteristics and learning styles.

It is considered very important to work together with young people in the planning and delivery of the event and, usually, a peer facilitator and an 'expert' facilitator (it is important to note that the 'expert' can also be a young person) are identified for each

workshop in the older two age streams (11s to 18s and 18s to 23s). This ensures that each workshop is grounded in a sound knowledge of the relevant subject, but also remains accessible to the young people it is trying to engage. All facilitators attend specific training in creative facilitation, participation and active listening. This not only helps to develop workshops that are creative and fun, but it also provides facilitators with the necessary skills and techniques to enable everyone to take part – rather than just a small number of voices dominating. The pair then plan their workshop, being sure to think about how the voices and learning can be shared effectively afterwards.

Planning and delivering age appropriate spaces and sessions has been a difficult task and one that isn't mastered yet! There is a balance to be struck between achieving this whilst also, simultaneously, fostering a sense of being part of one body with the wider Methodist Church. Linked to this, in recent times it has become obvious that it is important to help those aged over 18 to engage with opportunities now available to them as an 'adult' in the Church and also wider society. At the same time it is important to not cut these 'emerging adults' off from their identity as young people. The concepts of 'young person' and 'adult' are often seen as two separate, exclusive stages of life but it's important to remember that young people will move through a time of gradual transition, as opposed to a 'step-change' into full adulthood. **It may be worth thinking about how this affects your work in a local setting and how you need to respond to better support young adults you engage with.**

At 3Generate several ways of collecting ballots – including a digital voting system with a separate electronic keypad for each delegate – have been used. It is crucial that these methods allow children and young people to cast their vote anonymously and without pressure. The digital voting also means that the results, and the spread of votes from the whole assembly, can be seen in a short space of time.

3Generate is, and probably always should be, a work in progress. This level of intense participation takes time and calls for a high level of commitment from all involved, with an openness to ongoing change and development. As with everything, evaluation and debrief – with the delegates as well as the delivery team – is an important part of the work around this event. There is no doubt that children and young people are increasingly planning, resourcing and driving the direction the event is taking. This journey, and the places being visited on the way, is increasingly being valued and appreciated, not only by those involved, but by those who are learning from it in the wider Church and community. It can be a risky and perilous road to travel but one that can't be avoided if the Methodist Church is serious about working with children and young people.

For more information on 3Generate and its outcomes, why not visit www.methodistconference.org.uk and search for the most recent Methodist Children and Youth Assembly Report?

Producing child and youth friendly documents

What is a child/youth friendly document?

- A child/youth friendly document is either a modified version of an adult document or it is a document created specifically for children and young people.
- It should be attractive to children and young people, easy to understand and engage with children and young people on their level.
- Child and youth friendly documents are not about taking information, replicating it and putting a coloured border round the edges! Documents should be thought through, properly translated and hopefully have children and young people involved in the creation process.

Why should I produce child/youth friendly documents?

- As mentioned in several other places throughout this resource, children and young people have the right to have a say in matters that affect them (UNCRC Article 12). In order to exercise this right, children need access to the relevant information, as do adults, in order to inform their decisions.
- Complicated/long documents can act as a barrier to children and young people (and indeed adults!) participating in decision making.
- Many organisations now develop documents specifically for children and young people so that they can engage properly.

How do I do it?

Here are some pointers to help with the planning and delivery of your document:

- Put yourself in the position of a child/young person. What would you need to know in order to make an informed decision or form an informed opinion?
- You have a choice. You can either duplicate all the information from an 'adult' document in a child/youth friendly format, or you can produce a summary document that focuses only on the information that affects children and young people specifically.
- Consider the age and also the learning and developmental needs of the people you are producing the document for.
- As you go through this process, constantly reflect on how the document will be received by your intended audience. Is it relevant? Are there words, phrases, abbreviations or even metaphors that they might not understand? Is this how you would speak to a child/young person if you were face to face?
- Children and young people have the best insight into what they and their peers will understand. Work with people from within your intended audience to

produce the document or, if you can, equip them to write it for you. At the very least use a 'test group' from within your intended audience to read a draft of your document before publishing.

- As with a lot of things, short and simple is best!
- Be creative in how you lay the document out and how you break up large chunks of text to make it less daunting and easier to read.
- Have a look at the magazine stand in your local news agent and take note of how magazines targeting different age groups vary. A document written for an eight year old is very different to one produced for a sixteen year old. If your audience has a wide age range you may need to think about producing more than one version of your document, or at least give plenty of time to thinking about how you can pitch it to suit everyone.
- Do your research! Take your time to read a few children's books, switch on a TV or radio channel aimed at your target audience or pick up magazines written specifically for them. Caution! Don't overdo it and try too hard to use the language of young people.
- Think about creative ways of presenting your information (eg DVDs, pictures, song, drama, leaflets/posters, podcasts).

Examples of child/youth friendly documents:

- The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) have produced great resources for use with children involved in family court matters and divorce: www.cafcass.gov.uk
- The office of the Children's Commissioner for England regularly produces leaflets, posters and web pages, translating government information for children and young people: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

What sort of documents can/should be translated in the Methodist Church?

- **Local safeguarding guidelines.** Can children and young people understand what is in place to keep them safe and do they know who they can talk to if there is a problem? See Section 6 for more advice on getting to grips with safeguarding.
- **Information regarding your Church Council/Project Management Team.** Are children and young people aware of and do they understand the kinds of things you do/discuss? Would they be able to access any information, published following your meetings, that affects them?
- **Church welcome pack/information.** Does this include something specifically that welcomes children and young people and explains about the life of the church?

- **Church newsletters.** Is there a section for children and young people? Would children and young people be interested in reading it? How often do major articles, letters and journals address children and young people directly? After all, the church newsletter should be a letter for the *whole* church. What formats is the church newsletter available in? Is it just available as a paper copy or could you produce it electronically as well, thereby expanding its reach?

Questions for thought or discussion

1. What documents do you have in your church that children and young people may find difficult to understand or engage with? Is it possible to summarise or create a new version?
2. What books/TV programmes/toys do children in your church like? How could these be incorporated into information and documents used in your church?
3. If you could change any book, information, leaflet or document so that you could understand it better, what would it be?

Young people, trustees, voting and governance in the Methodist Church

We have already discussed good practice when involving young people in formal decision-making meetings. When it comes to youth participation in the Church, one of the most commonly asked questions relates to the issue of involving young people specifically in governing bodies, for example church councils. In particular, at what age can they become trustees and how does this work in practice?

In Methodist Standing Orders it is worth noting that a church council is required, "to ensure that all areas of the church's life are adequately represented and in particular that, wherever possible, young people are included in its membership."[1]

This means that, in the case of your church councils and circuit meetings, young people can function as all other members except to the point of making initial proposals on which to vote and taking part in the actual vote itself.

Further to this, Methodist Standing Orders also state that, "There is no lower age limit for membership of the Church Council or other such bodies, but persons under the age of 18 (16 in Scotland) cannot legally become managing trustees of model trust property."[2]

This is because individuals have to have reached the age of majority to be able to be a trustee. So members of the Church Council under 18 (16 in Scotland) are not eligible to vote on managing trustee business. But, as mentioned earlier, they can attend the Council during such business and speak to it – they just cannot vote. Another important thing to note is that a lot of Church Council business is not

Managing Trustee business and therefore young people who *are* members of church council will be able to vote on all other items.

While the above applies in most cases in the Methodist situation, the rules are slightly different for organisations that are *incorporated* charities (ie not-for-profit companies with charitable status). The Companies Act (2006) introduces a minimum age (16) by which an individual can become a Director of a company. Section 158 of the Act also allows the Secretary of State to lower this age even further.

There is lots of advice and help available from the website of the Charity Commission, including further guidelines and advice regarding involving children and young people as trustees and advisers: www.charitycommission.gov.uk

Other resources:

- NCVO Trustee and Governance Information Centre: www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/governance
- British Youth Council Governance and Decision Making Guides: www.byc.org.uk/resources/how-to-guides
- Participation Works Partnership's *How to involve children and young people in governance*, as well as case studies and research: www.participationworks.org.uk

Case study: Interview with Abby Watterson

Abby is 16 years old (at the time of interviewing) and has been involved with her local Methodist Church Council as a Youth Rep for several months.

Q. How has your church council tried to make the way they work more accessible for young people?

A. When the church council meets we [the young people] are given time to say what the young people want or even how the youth group are doing with things such as our fundraising for attending events such as Greenbelt, The Big Sleepover and 3Generate. We are given all the paperwork other members of the church council are given and other members offer help and support to explain things we do not understand or do not know about. This helps us become more involved in things. As well as keeping us involved as individuals, it helps us keep the other younger people involved and to know what is happening within their church.

Q. How have you been included in the process of decision-making? How are your views, opinions, thoughts and ideas asked for, received and discussed?

A. We can give our opinions and thoughts like everyone else by getting up and speaking, we have as much opportunity to do this as any other member of the church council. Sometimes, if I don't get up, the minister will ask if I have an

opinion, thought, view or idea on the topic as they feel we need to be involved in that. The only thing about decision-making that isn't so good is that we cannot vote, which I feel should be looked at*. Even though we are under 18 I feel we should get the right to vote as we are 16 and show maturity. We have chosen to be members of the church council and we take it all seriously and put a lot of thought into it.

* Young people who are members of a church council are legally allowed to vote on certain matters, details are included later in this section.

Q. Have you and the other youth reps seen positive change as a result of your involvement, both in yourselves and in the church?

A. I feel I can now go and say what we would like as young people. For example, we wanted our youth group to meet more than once a month and I asked for this and I explained to the church council how the youth group helps us learn more about our faith and the church, which made them agree to us using the church more often. I receive feedback and updates through emails from my minister and a weekly update from the church that keeps me informed.

Q. In what ways has your involvement with the church council helped you to gain a sense of ownership of or connection with the vision and aims of the church?

A. A lot of the older members of the church now take me more seriously and treat me more as an adult than a young child now. I can show them that I am serious about the decisions made within the church. This has helped me with other events within the church as I now take on more responsibility. It has also taught me more about the way my church does things and I feel more involved within my church because of this.

Involving children and young people in recruitment and selection

Why bother?

- Yes, you've guessed it! Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies here. Children and young people have a right to a say in decisions that affect them[3], and this includes recruitment of people whose role will impact on their lives.

- Involving children and young people right from the start ensures that the job description and person specification are designed in response to the *real* needs of children, young people and families, as opposed to *perceived* needs. Through the valuable insight gained, you will ultimately save time, money and the worker's sanity!

- Participation in recruitment and selection is an important part of involving children and young people in, and giving them ownership of, the overall vision

for children's and youth work. It helps to build a more inclusive community and better bonds between the generations.

- Involving young people will develop active citizenship and help children and young people to balance their rights with responsibilities.
- This will provide valuable skills and experience, and will deepen children and young people's understanding of the church's/project's priorities and decision-making processes.

Key factors to consider

You should involve children and young people at every stage of the recruitment and selection process. If you need to provide a briefing or training at any stage then you should ensure that *everyone* involved is present, not just the young people. If you are asking children and young people to comment on any information, ensure that they receive it well in advance and that they are given the appropriate support to access and understand it.

Ensure that children and young people have opportunity to give their input regarding:

- the creation of the job description and person specification, making sure they have received information regarding the vision and aims that the church/project has for the development of this role (see suggested activity below).
- the creation and dissemination of the job advert and the design of the application pack. It may well be that the format of these is largely determined by your recruitment policy. Ensure that children and young people are aware of this and involve them as appropriate for their age.
- shortlisting/interviewing. Children and young people should be involved in deciding who will be on the selection panel, the age-balance of the panel and the format that the interview day should take. Children and young people on selection panels should have the same level of involvement in shortlisting for interview as everyone else. They should therefore receive copies of all applications (with confidential information removed) and all necessary paperwork, such as shortlisting score sheets and a copy of the final job description and person specification. You will need to clearly explain to them the process for scoring and they may need additional support with the task of adding up their final figures (this can apply to 'adult' members of selection panels too). Once the scoring is done they should also be involved in all discussions that take place regarding compiling the final list for interview.
- the formation of interview questions/presentation briefs/written exercises, the weighting/scoring system that will be used and the structure of day. Discuss who, on the actual interview day, will make introductions, who will explain the role, how the space will be set out and what will need doing practically, such as providing water for candidates.

- the final decision. Decide beforehand how this will be done on the day. Will it be a simple matter of adding together the scores or will there be discussion/ negotiation afterwards? How will this discussion be facilitated and how will you reach the final decision?

Further information:

- Participation Works Partnership's *How to involve children and young people in recruitment and selection* can be downloaded for free from www.participationworks.org.uk

Suggested activity: design a worker

This is an example of how you can use the 'Bob' exercise (creative facilitation technique in section 4.31) to explore with children and young people what makes a good worker.

You will need:

- a large sheet of paper
- marker pens.

What to do:

1. On a large sheet of paper, draw the outline of a person (you can make this as large as you want – you could even go life-size and draw around a volunteer lying on a roll of craft/wall paper). Try to keep the outline gender-free. This is your new worker.
2. Invite the children/young people to start to build up a picture of the ideal new worker by adding to this picture. For instance, next to the ear on the outline they could write, "Must be a good listener." Where the heart would be they could write, "Must care about young people."
3. Start to ask the children/young people further questions about the worker, to expand on their ideas. What sort of person or character would they be? What kinds of beliefs, attitudes and values should they have? Do they need to have any particular life experience, work background or knowledge?
4. You could also ask the group to direct specific questions to their worker, such as, 'What do you like about young people?' or, 'Why do you want to work with children?'
5. You may want to run this exercise with other 'adult' stakeholders, either as part of the same session or as a separate group.
6. Use the results of this exercise to inform your person specification and job description. Make sure you also tell children and young people about any attributes that are required by the church/project and allow opportunity to

discuss these.

Case study: One Programme Participant recruitment at Nutgrove School

The One Programme, the Methodist Church's paid 'year on' for 16 to 23 year olds, has used several different methods for involving children and young people in the recruitment and selection process. These include:

- A formal interview that includes at least one young person as part of the selection panel. The interview day might also involve a presentation to the panel.
- A formal interview panel and a separate presentation/gathering to meet people involved in the church/project/organisation, with children/young people involved with both.
- Two separate panels, with a specific children/young people's panel, that they design*.

* If you plan to use a separate children and young people's panel, it is important that its role is neither tokenistic, nor perceived to be covering the 'less important' part of the recruitment process. Scoring must be carefully weighted to ensure that each panel and each part of the process is representative of its importance.

Here's a specific example of how a couple of these methods have been used in One Programme recruitment...

Nutgrove Methodist-Aided Primary School is located in St. Helen's in the Liverpool District. It was recruiting a One Programme Participant (OPP), to work in creative ways with pupils during lunchtimes and alongside classes.

The school had an active student council and so it wanted to include members as much as possible in recruitment of the OPP. One member of this council operated alongside the adults as an equal partner during recruitment and selection. It had been explained to him in great detail how the process would work and he had been provided with contextual support throughout.

It was important, however, to hear the voice of more than just one of the pupils. Therefore, as part of the interview day, candidates were asked to plan and deliver a session suitable for one of the school's lunch clubs. At the end of the session a teacher facilitated a discussion in which the pupils scored the candidates on what they had produced and how well they had engaged. This meant that, not only were a wider range of young people consulted during the selection process, but the panel also had an effective way of measuring the candidate's ability to connect with students. The whole process provided extremely useful insight, with the student council member offering some great observations during the formal interview.

[1] Standing Order 610 (1) (xi)
[2] Standing Order 610 (2A)(b)
[3] *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, www2.0hchr.org/English/law/crc.htm, 1989.

Section 6: Safeguarding

In this section we provide a general overview of safeguarding and also look at ways that you can involve children and young people in developing good safeguarding policies and practice.

Defining safeguarding

Safeguarding is a word that is regularly used but often misunderstood. When it comes to the world of participation, it is crucially important and a foundational priority in all that we do. With this in mind, we will first start with a definition. We commonly use safeguarding and child protection as interchangeable words, yet the differences are important to recognise.

One of the first things that could spring to mind when you think about safeguarding might be recognising the various signs of abuse or neglect. Whilst this is hugely important, this falls within the bounds of child protection. Safeguarding is a wider issue. It is about creating safe space for children and young people, recognising that the potential for harm can come from anywhere. Safeguarding is about identifying and implementing preventative measures, not focusing simply on reactionary processes.

So what would this look like in the work that is happening locally? Imagine you are running a youth group and you are looking at the issue of safeguarding. From a child protection point of view, your volunteers have been trained up (we'll mention more on that later!) to recognise the various signs of abuse and neglect. But volunteers have raised concerns that some young people's behaviour has been leading to injuries during sports activities and there have been a few near misses as far as more serious harm is concerned. From a safeguarding point of view, the behaviour of your group is a risk that needs managing. So you may meet with your team and provide them with training on dealing with challenging behaviour (which is a valuable piece of training for many of our youth and children's groups) and then, from that, put processes in place for encouraging an environment of positive behaviour, whilst having clearly set out how to respond to challenging behaviour within your group. This is just one

example of how to create a safe space to encourage meaningful engagement with children and young people.

The right to a safe environment

At several points in this resource we have mentioned participation being defined as a priority as expressed in Article 42 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child[1]. This same document defines the right of children to grow up in a safe environment.

Combine this with the Christian call to create a safe, welcoming space for children and we see that we cannot lag behind the rest of the world in ensuring that we have done our very best – through recruitment (both of paid and voluntary staff), training, equipping, planning and implementation – to create a safe space for children and young people – both within the walls of the church families, and also in the community around us. So, as we engage with this important mandate for children's and youth participation, our safeguarding processes should be a beacon for all those who look in.

How do we practice good safeguarding?

The delivery of good quality children's and youth participation, which should be at the very heart of what we do, should also have clear policies and processes set out in order to create this safe environment that we have already spoken about.

Create a safeguarding policy involving young people

The thinking behind the creation of good, quality safeguarding policies and procedures could fill a whole other resource in itself and it is also something that is in constant development. With this in mind, please visit the safeguarding section of the Methodist website, where you can download a copy of the most recent guidance. At the time of writing, this resource can be found at:

www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/safeguarding

It is hoped that, by signposting you to this section, you can find many of the policy templates that will help you with this process.

Once you have visited the Methodist website, downloaded all your templates and you are ready to begin developing your own policies and procedures, it is important to involve young people in the process. Using their unique insight, they can work with you as co-creators in developing a policy that recognises what creates a safe environment, not only from the perspective of those providing the activity and space, but also those who will be using it as well. It is important to realise that there may be times when the young people involved may not be aware of some of the risks, and

that is why it is important to function as co-creators. The adults and professionals connected with this work have a responsibility to ensure that all aspects of how to create a safe environment are considered.

Suggested activity: safe space

Below is an activity you can run with a variety of groups of children and young people. It is a great way to work with them to identify different risks in one of your regular sessions. This could be a Sunday School, a youth club, a discipleship group, etc. This technique is adaptable and we encourage you to take the idea and shape it for your context.

You will need:

- copies of the young person safeguarding template found in Appendix 2.9.
- three different coloured post-it notes (preferably red, yellow and green)
- pens
- large sheets of paper (ideally flipchart paper).

What to do:

1. Gather your young people in the space where you would normally meet and explain that you want to work with them on identifying different things that might pose a risk to their safety.
2. Give each young person a copy of the young person template copied from Appendix 2.9.
3. Explain to the group that they can either draw or write things that can cause children and young people to be unsafe.
4. Give them five minutes to do this; they can work together or individually.
5. Come together as a group and invite them to talk about what they've produced.
6. Explain that you now want them to think about a normal session that you would run with them.
7. Give them some post-it notes, a few of each colour.
8. Ask them to spend ten minutes imagining you are running a regular session. Get them to identify things that are low, medium and high risk. They do this by writing the risk on a post-it note (red = high, yellow= medium, green = low) and placing the note on the item or space that poses said risk.
9. Give them an example that will apply to your context. For example in a youth club, you may place a yellow post-it note marked 'injury' in the place where

you play a sporting activity. They may identify something you could fall from (eg a stage) and place a red post-it note marked 'falling'. Give them some examples, but also give them space for their own insight.

10. After they have finished, ask the group to gather the post-it notes and group them by colour. Place them on three different sheets of flipchart paper and label the sheets high, medium and low.

11. There may be similar risks. Group those together and then ask the group to think about how they can reduce the risk. As a group, write ideas next to each post-it note.

12. Once you have finished this consultation, you will have identified risks and also worked with the children and/or young people to develop some risk control measures. You can then use this in developing your wider safeguarding policy including your risk assessments.

Social media and safeguarding

In the Methodist Church's guidelines for safe use of social media[2], the rationale for applying good practice and engaging this in the use of social media is explained thus:

> As a children or youth worker in the Methodist Church we recognise that using the internet (and other forms of technology) is an important part of the lives of the children and young people we work with.
>
> - We understand that for many children and young people, using the internet is a regular part of their lives and has a significant impact on their social development.
> - In accordance with The Methodist Church Safe guarding policy, we recognise that we must take all possible steps to protect young people from significant harm or risk when using the internet or any other form of technology.
> - We also recognise the importance of establishing and updating procedures to ensure Workers are protected whilst they work with children and young people.
> - All Workers are responsible for reading any polices produced regarding safeguarding and communication matters and are expected to adhere to the guidelines in the current policies.

As with an overall safeguarding policy, these policies and ways of working are constantly adapting to suit the rapid change in the world of social media. So for the most up to date policies, we recommend going to the Methodist Children and Youth Website (www.childrenandyouth.org.uk). At the time of writing this resource, the

latest guidelines for social media can be found at www.childrenandyouth.org.uk/worker/best-practice/new-social-media-guidelines

As we use different forms of social media (eg Facebook or Twitter) to interact with, consult and inform young people, it is important that we are as dedicated to safeguarding in the virtual space of social media as we are to providing safety in the real space of everyday life. For example, we wouldn't allow strangers open door access to our young people in real space, so why would we leave them an open door to interact with young people in virtual space? As we have already mentioned, young people can provide a wealth of insight in this are to what the risks may be.

CEOP (the Child Exploitation and Online Protection) team write on their website:

> The internet has changed all of our lives, and your child has grown up during this change. Many of the things that confuse, baffle or even scare us, are part of the everyday for them. For many of us, this can all be a bit too much. [3]

We encourage you to co-create an environment where you generate space for children and young people to talk about their experiences online. To talk about what risks might exist and also to explore how general policies apply to your specific contexts, so that what is produced is much more than a piece of paper but a real resource that ensures safety when using social media to encourage participation amongst the children and young people you work with.

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[1] *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx, 1989.
[2] *Internet, email, texting Communication Guidelines for Workers*, www.childrenandyouth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/StaffPolicy.pdf
[3] www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Section 7: Developing young leaders

Young people are worth investing in. Commitment to their personal growth will lead to benefits on all sides. For young people, it could lead to increased confidence, skills development, a greater awareness of the wider church and community... and so much more. For your project, you get to watch a young individual go on a journey of discovery. Through a process of mutual, shared learning a child or young person can teach you as much as you can teach them and your project stands to benefit from the involvement of someone that has the potential to bring fresh ideas and a new energy.

We used the word 'commitment' in the introduction to this section for a reason. Developing young people and young leaders takes time, it takes energy and this, most of all, takes commitment. But it is a very important aspect of embedding true participation in your work. There is a lot of information already out there on this subject, so we are using this brief section to signpost you to some of the resources that may benefit your ministry with children and young people. We encourage you to remember that developing leadership skills actually starts at a very young age and, if you look for it, you will see children starting to work that out. We hope the Church can increasingly embrace this idea as it develops young leaders from childhood.

Recommended resources

Participate!, produced by the Methodist Children & Youth Team, enables nine to fourteen year olds to make an initial exploration of their own identity – gaining the understanding and skills they need to live out their Christian lives within the local church and community. As part of the process, the whole church is also encouraged to think about their shared responsibility in helping young people find their place. The material includes seven sessions exploring discipleship and faith and, alongside this, each young person is encouraged to undertake a voluntary placement to explore what it means to serve God and other people. The accompanying *My Participate! Journal* is designed to help course members to reflect on the *Participate!* experience.[1]

More Core Skills for Churches, is the second of two books in a training scheme written specifically for those wanting to fully equip their ministry with children and young people. Both books are excellent resources – and you may find there is training running in your local circuit or district

based on the *Core* material – but we are signposting you to *More Core* in particular because it contains an excellent section on Young Leaders, which you will find extremely useful.[2]

The Church Pastoral Aid Society (CPAS) produces lots of excellent resources and delivers useful training under the heading 'Mentoring Matters' (www.cpas.org.uk/church-resources/mentoring-matters). This includes a youth stream, which looks at mentoring teens and developing young leaders. For a good introduction to these topics, you can purchase *Ready to Lead: Growing Leaders – Youth Edition* and *Growing young leaders – a practical guide to mentoring teens*, both by Ruth Hassall.[3]

www.churchleaders.com contains lots of very interesting and useful articles on the subject of identifying and developing young leaders from an early age – simply type 'young leaders' into the on-site search engine and you're away! We recommend the articles *Identifying Young Influencers* and *Developing Kid Leaders in Your Ministry*, both by Alan Nelson, as good starting points.

Remember!

The way we release young people into leadership must be carefully considered – sort of like a delicate balancing act. It's not always good to throw them in at the deep end, sending them out along the 'tightrope' of leading their peers, without safety nets to catch them if something goes wrong due to failure or missed opportunity. Equally, it isn't good to put so many 'safety nets' in place that your youth are forced to wonder if they will ever get to actually walk down the tightrope at all (this tends to be the greater problem in most youth ministries). Suggested safety nets include:

- mentoring and coaching
- accountability and debriefing
- clear expectations – written down is best (eg role description or volunteer agreement)
- encouraging reflective practice – don't talk in terms of failure or success, instead discuss strengths, weaknesses and learning points for next time
- training and other opportunities for personal development
- gathering young leaders together (mutual support)
- role models (eg other, more experienced leaders)
- training parents to raise leaders

[1] Meg Prowting, Penny Fuller and Mike Seaton, *Participate! Helping young people explore discipleship and vocation*, London, Bible Reading Fellowship, 2012.
[2] The Consultancy Group on Ministry Among Children, *Core Skills for Children's Work*, Oxford, Bible Reading Fellowship, 2006.
[3] Ruth Hassall, *Ready to Lead.Growing Leaders – Youth Edition*, London, Bible Reading Fellowship, 2009 and *Growing young leaders – a practical guide to mentoring teens*, London Bible Reading Fellowship, 2009.

10 arguments for youth participation

1. **Declining statistics of church attendance and aging membership profile.**
    - We need something to stem the tide of young people leaving Church.
    - Youth participation is a central feature of successful youth programming and effective policy making.

2. **Youth participation leads to better decisions and increased efficiency.**
    - Get it right the first time and avoid wasting time and money!
    - In any situation, policies and programmes that are designed *after* consultation with users are more likely to be effective.
    - Participation means our work meets real needs, not perceived needs.

3. **Youth participation strengthens community capacity.**
    - It is democratic and means a broader base of members' involvement – the whole Church membership involved, not just a select few (surely a founding feature of Methodism?).
    - It builds stronger and more inclusive communities.
    - It develops active citizenship – young people have a stake in the life of the church.
    - It helps young people to balance rights with responsibilities.

4. **Youth Participation contributes to positive youth development.**
    - Participation gives young people the chance to 'learn by doing'.
    - It is a fact that young people who are supported to take part in decision making are more likely to see an increase in confidence and self-belief.
    - This can lead to them exercising positive career and life choices.
    - It also means they will have greater involvement in church and wider society in the future – taking on roles of responsibility.

5. **Participation enhances your organisation's relationship with young people.**
    - Seeing young people engaging with the Church and the world around them in this way challenges negative stereotypes of 'youth'.
    - Encouraging participation and young people working alongside other members of the Church breaks down barriers between adults and young people.
    - It increases inter-generational understanding and improves attitudes of and towards young people.
    - An organisation has greater awareness of issues surrounding youth as a result.
    - Young people start to understand the decision-making process and the reasons why some difficult decisions have to be made.

6. **Youth participation is a right.**
    - Article 12 of the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees every child aged 17 and under has the right to express their views on all matters that affect them.

7. **Young people can bring new insight.**
    - Young people bring with them new ways of thinking and acting that can add value to the work of any organisation.
    - Adults, as well as young people, can learn through the process of youth participation.

8. **Youth participation improves the credibility and reputation of a project.**
    - If you listen to what young people want, young people will come!
    - Engaging effectively and openly with young people contributes to a positive image of your organisation with the community, young people, stakeholders and funders. This of course leads to positive news for...

9. **The Bottom Line.**
    - Participation is part of the culture today – it is the focus of much of the Government's agenda regarding young people – and, as such, it is an aspect of work that many funders will look for.

10. **Participation is God-shaped!**
    - It's how Jesus was with people. He had disciples and spoke *with* people, not just *to* them
    - It's how God treats us, as co-creators in God's creation.
    - It's how the Holy Spirit works: the one who comes alongside.

60 ideas for youth participation

Source: workers who attended participation workshop, Connecting Disciples 2012

1. Develop a manifesto for participation.
2. Run inter-generational social media training.
3. Organise an inter-generational football tournament, working with young people.
4. Run your church AGM 'café style'.
5. Deliver the Young Leaders training module from 'More Core Skills'.
6. Create a magazine/newsletter produced by or with children and young people.
7. Set up a Facebook page to discuss issues.
8. Carry out some community profiling/research into local youth issues.
9. Run a worship leaders course for young people.
10. Worship planned, delivered and evaluated by an inter-generational group.
11. Work with children and young people to devise a weekly devotional via email/ text/Facebook/Twitter.
12. Plan a fundraising event with children and young people.
13. Run a Methodist Children and Youth Big SleepOver (find the resource on www.childrenandyouth.org.uk).
14. Enable/encourage children and young people from your church/project/circuit/ district to attend 3Generate Children's and Youth Assembly.

15. Enable/encourage children and young people from your church/project/circuit/district to volunteer for 3Generate Children's and Youth Assembly.
16. Organise a sports consultation.
17. Make a training film with children and young people.
18. Organise a weekend away with children and young people.
19. Set up a drama group to deal with relevant youth issues.
20. Devise a poster to promote positive images and actions of young people.
21. Organise a church team building day/event.
22. Deliver a participation workshop for your church council.
23. Hold a church, circuit or district children and youth forum.
24. Provide training with and for children, young people, workers and volunteers involved in a forum.
25. Employ a young person in your church/project.
26. Involve children and young people in the recruitment of your minister/volunteers/other roles or jobs.
27. Create a pot of money for children and young people to use/distribute for youth-led or youth work projects.
28. Apply to host a One Programme Participant (OPP) in your church/circuit/project for a year.
29. Apply for a grant involving children and young people in all aspects of the application (including spending it if successful).
30. Develop volunteering opportunities for children and young people, with appropriate training and support.
31. Develop a mentoring or apprenticeship scheme.
32. Write action postcards with your group after a session.
33. Start a YouTube TV channel with children and young people.
34. Take and put up photos of work with children and young people (with the proper permissions).
35. Ask children and young people to design a logo for your group/church/project.

36. Run some ‘extreme’ bible study sessions with a strong participative element (eg on a rollercoaster, on a boat).

37. Get a book of participative activities and use it!

38. Produce a learning resource on the situation in the Holy Land, or another topical political issue, with children and young people for children and young people.

39. Take some of the worksheets/sections from *Voice Activated* to church council or discuss with young people.

40. Get participation on to your church council and/or circuit meeting agenda.

41. Get participation on to the children’s and youth leaders’ meeting agenda.

42. Run a participation ideas session with junior church/Sunday school leaders.

43. Develop a participative model for collecting for JMA (Junior Mission for All, see www.methodist.org.uk/mission/wold-church for more details).

44. Get posters from Participation Works (www.participationworks.org.uk) and put up in church/project – use as a discussion starter.

45. Get leaflets from Participation Works (www.participationworks.org.uk) on different themes for developing participation.

46. Write a bible study on participation with an inter-generational group.

47. Invite the Methodist Youth President or the Youth Reps to your group or church.

48. Invite local One Programme Participants (OPPs) or ex-OPPs to visit and share their experience of the One Programme.

49. Ask OPPs/ex-OPPs/the MethodistYouth President/Youth Reps to lead a training session for young leaders.

50. Get children and youth leaders to email the Youth President their opinions about church and youth issues.

51. Buy a copy of *Benefits on Both Sides* (DVD) and work with a small working group to consider the development of effective children and youth work projects and employing a children’s or youth worker.

52. Working with children and young people, produce a PowerPoint or similar with music for use in worship or to provoke discussion at church council or other meeting.

53. Organise a celebration event for the achievements of children and young people.

54. Put together a participation resource box/bag for use in sessions (Post-it notes, pens, sticky dots, sweets, balls, etc).

55. Collect useful resources – books, DVDs, internet links, newspaper articles, photographs, pictures, anything!

56. Use the National Youth Agency *Glimpses* (DVD) as a resource for developing and reflecting upon spirituality with children and young people.

57. Run a session exploring the potential topics children and young people would like to see discussed at 3Generate Children's and Youth Assembly.

58. Invest in a small digital camera (such as a Flip Camera) for easy recording and uploading of short films.

59. Participation games using Jenga (or other tumbling tower game).

60. Photography – devise activities around taking photographs to research community or comment on life issues.

Participation checklist

Our church/project/organisation...	Not at all	-			Absolutely
…has a policy outlining how young people will be involved and supported in decision-making opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
… provides the appropriate staff with training and resources on facilitating youth participation as needed	1	2	3	4	5
… ensures that young people who will be affected by a decision are given the chance to contribute to the decision-making process	1	2	3	4	5
… makes sure young people know how they can participate (they do not have to participate if they do not wish to)	1	2	3	4	5
… is committed to making opportunities accessible to those with diverse life, family, educational and other experiences	1	2	3	4	5
… helps young people to attend meetings and arranges meetings at times that suit them	1	2	3	4	5
… is flexible and understands that young people have different schedules compared to adults	1	2	3	4	5
… involves young people from different cultural backgrounds and ethnic minorities	1	2	3	4	5
… provides training and/or information to young people to help them participate fully in decision-making	1	2	3	4	5
… brings key decision-makers in our organisation to talk directly with young people	1	2	3	4	5
… ensures young people are informed on the decision-making process; how decisions are made; their implications and the reasoning behind them	1	2	3	4	5
… acknowledges the contribution of young people to the organisation	1	2	3	4	5
… is willing to support and release young people to implement their own projects, ideas and activities	1	2	3	4	5
… has youth reps at church and circuit decision-making meetings	1	2	3	4	5

Our church/project/organisation...	Not at all - Absolutely				
… gives young people the opportunity to share their knowledge and experience about youth culture and the needs of young people both in and outside the church	1	2	3	4	5
… is willing to adapt and change, if necessary, the way things are done in the light of this knowledge and experience to ensure that the needs of young people are met	1	2	3	4	5
… acknowledges the contribution that young people make to the church	1	2	3	4	5
… wants to connect with and engage with young people as equal partners	1	2	3	4	5
TOTAL	/90				

45 or less

Your organisation has a huge opportunity to build a solid foundation for involving young people in decision-making processes. Acknowledge that you're starting from scratch or close to it. Setting up good youth participation processes, whether you are running a consultation or establishing a youth advisory group, can often feel like hard work. It doesn't need to be overly complicated, and there are lots of things that can help the process run smoothly.

Our advice is to:

- take stock of where your organisation does involve young people in decision-making
- consider where your organisation is on Shier's Pathways to Participation model (see page 14) and where you think it should be
- check out the participation and non-participation parts of Hart's Ladder (see page 12 and how they relate to your organisation
- network with other organisations that have undertaken something similar to what you are thinking
- connect with young people who are stakeholders in your organisation and see what they think you should be doing
- set some realistic objectives in consultation with others in your organisation
- address the relevant points of the checklist for your particular project
- look for local training – particularly youth participation workshops you could attend – and tap into any online resources or other literature you can find.
- contact your regional Methodist Church and Community team for advice and support.

46 – 70

You're off to a good start! Your organisation has great strengths to build on and some areas in which to improve.

Our advice is to:

- highlight areas where you scored 4 or more to identify your organisation's strengths
- highlight areas where you scored 3 or less to identify opportunities for improvement
- develop an action plan to strengthen the youth participation work you are undertaking
- share your organisation's experiences and best practices with others
- look for local training – particularly youth participation workshops you could attend and tap into any online resources or other literature you can find
- consider where your organisation is and where you want to be on Shier's Pathways to Participation model (see page14)
- if you are working on a particular youth participation project, check where your project is on Hart's Ladder model (see page 12).

70 +

Fabulous! You have a good foundation in youth participation. Be proud of what you have achieved.

Our suggestions:

- take opportunities to share your organisation's experiences, lessons and best practice
- present your youth participation processes at appropriate conferences to spread great examples of youth participation in action
- contact the Church and Community Team (through your regional team) to talk about showcasing your organisation's youth participation activities
- map where your organisation is on Shier's Pathways to Participation model (see page 14) and share your journey through the levels with other organisations
- if you are working on a particular youth participation project, check where your project is on Hart's Ladder (see page 12). Share project success examples that correlate with participation levels on Hart's Ladder with others
- use this checklist to identify areas for continual improvement.

Participation project action plan

These checklist headings may help guide you in your youth participation project.

Project name:
Brief description of the project *(a whole organisation approach, a policy project, research, a new or existing youth programme, service or event, a youth-focused resource).*
Describe the purpose and objective for involving young people *(reasons why young people are being involved).*

Describe the methods to be used to involve young people *(including regular on-going involvement with a core group and/or consultation with a wider group or a consultation event to set up a regular group)***.**

Consider youth participation methods (regular involvement in a meaningful way throughout the process) including:
- *same process as adult involvement*
- *separate parallel process*
- *a combination of the above.*

Consider consultation methods (usually one-off events seeking views at specific points), including:
- *face-to-face methods – focus groups, hui, fono, talk-back radio*
- *written methods – surveys, submissions, web-based or email feedback.*

Describe the range of young people to be involved in the method(s) to be used and how they will be recruited

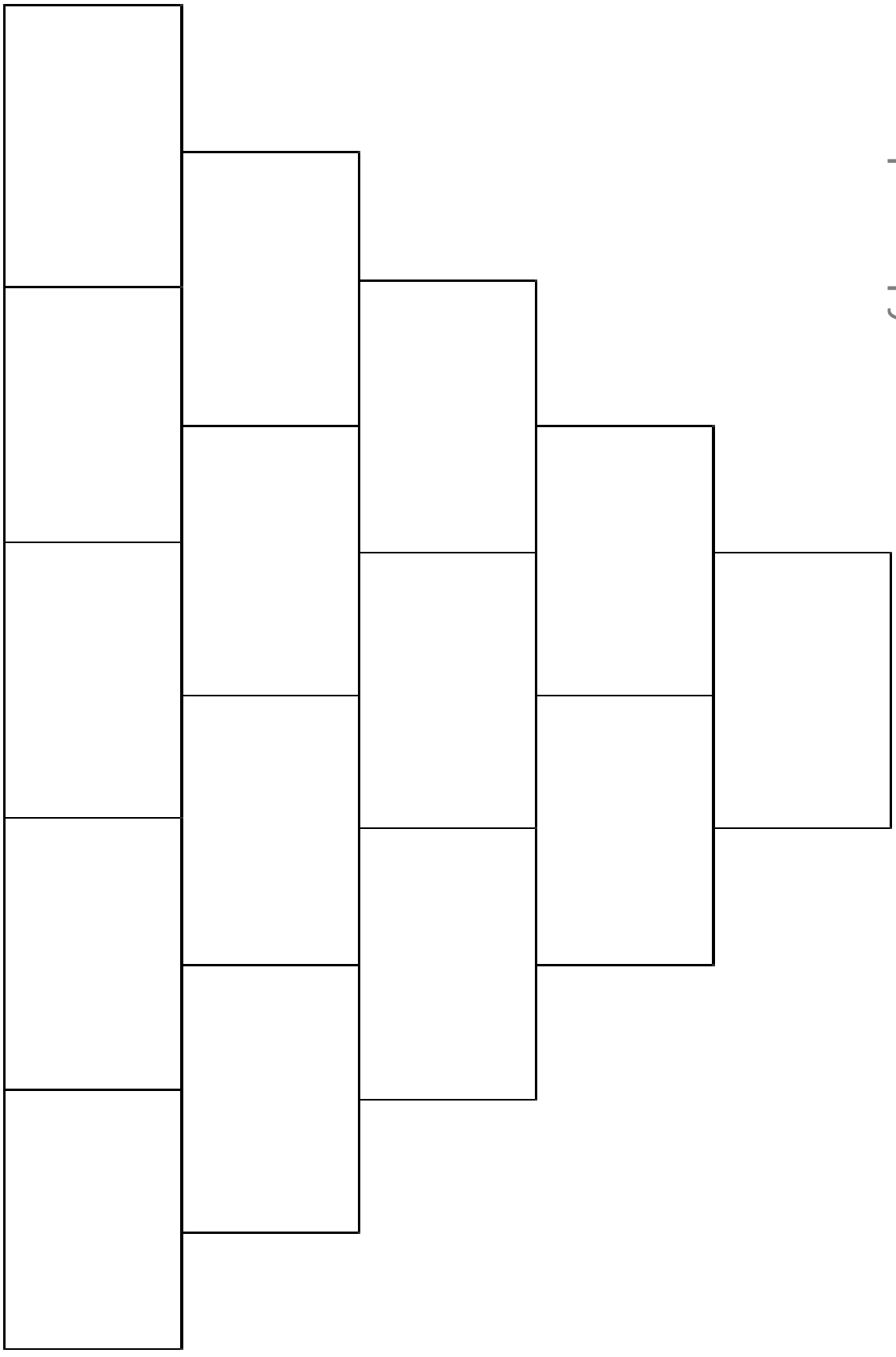
Consider:
• target group of the project
• the diversity of young people
• how you are going to recruit.

Describe the practicalities of involving young people

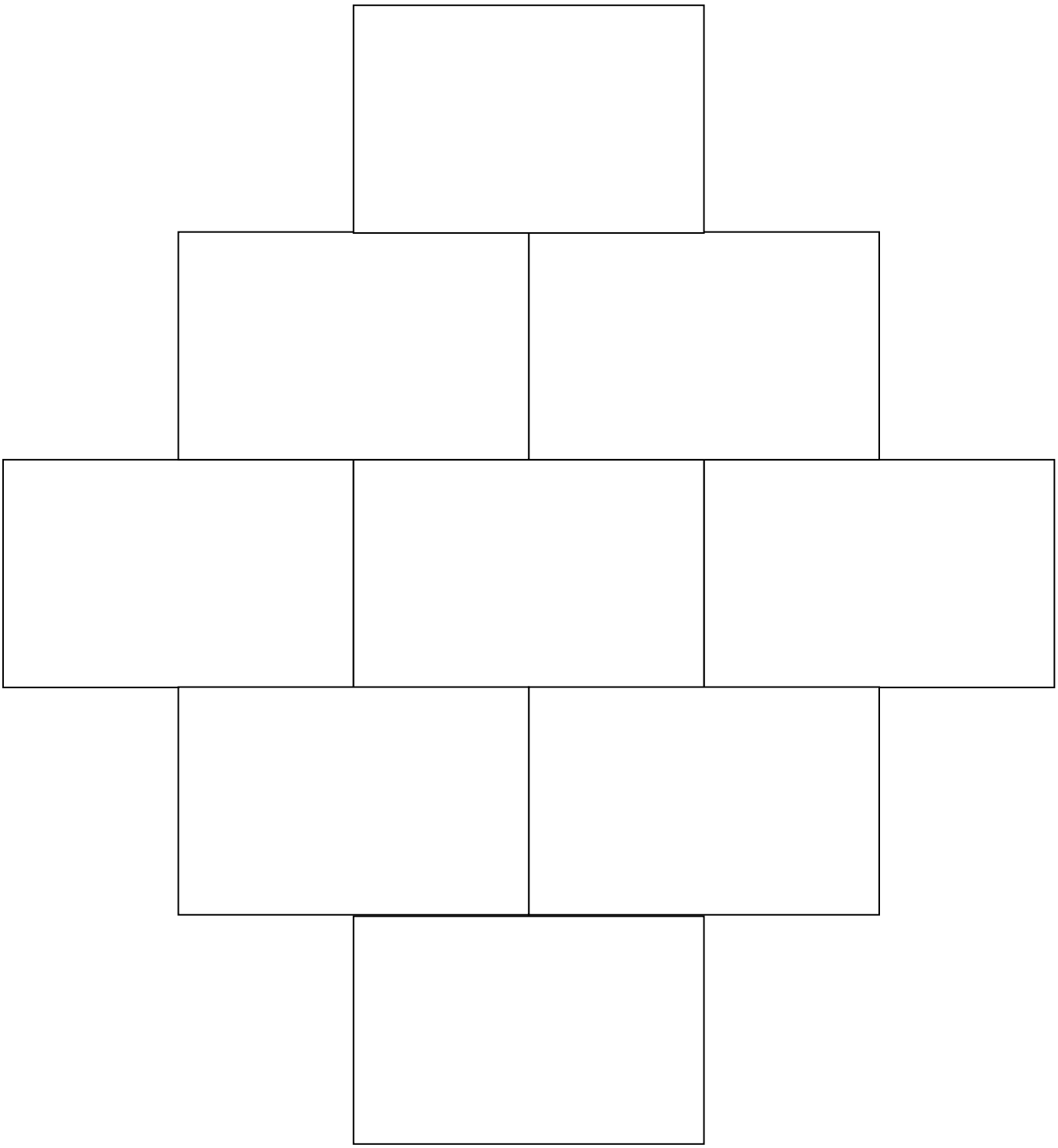
Consider:
• the process and timeframe
• where (youth-appropriate venue), when and how often
• the resources required – people and financial
• who will facilitate meetings and how
• who will be the main contact with the young people
• how young people will be supported to make the most of their involvement and develop their skills
• the content of what is to be discussed or consulted on
• whether specific youth-appropriate consultation resources are needed.

Describe how information received will be recorded, analysed and fed back to young people
Describe how the youth participation and consultation processes will be evaluated *(including how young people will be involved in evaluation).*

Participation pyramid



Diamond nine



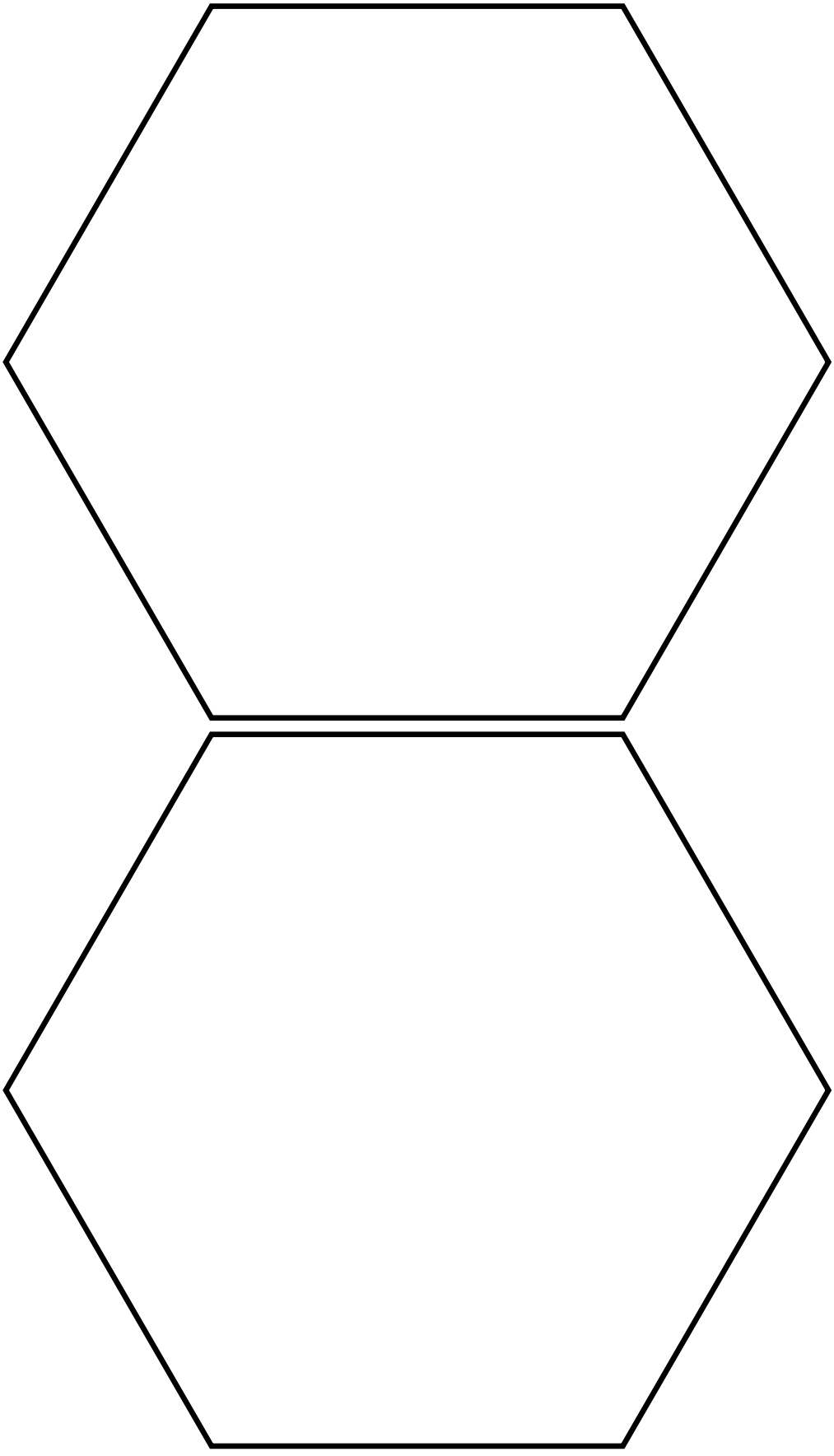
Target

See variation 2 in section 4.3 for suggestions of how to use the target to gauge a group's priorities or as an evaluation tool.

Our survey says...

STATEMENT:		
AGREE STRONGLY		
AGREE		
NO OPINION		
DISAGREE		
DISAGREE STRONGLY		
COMMENTS:		

Hexagons for today, heaven and hell



Voice Activated

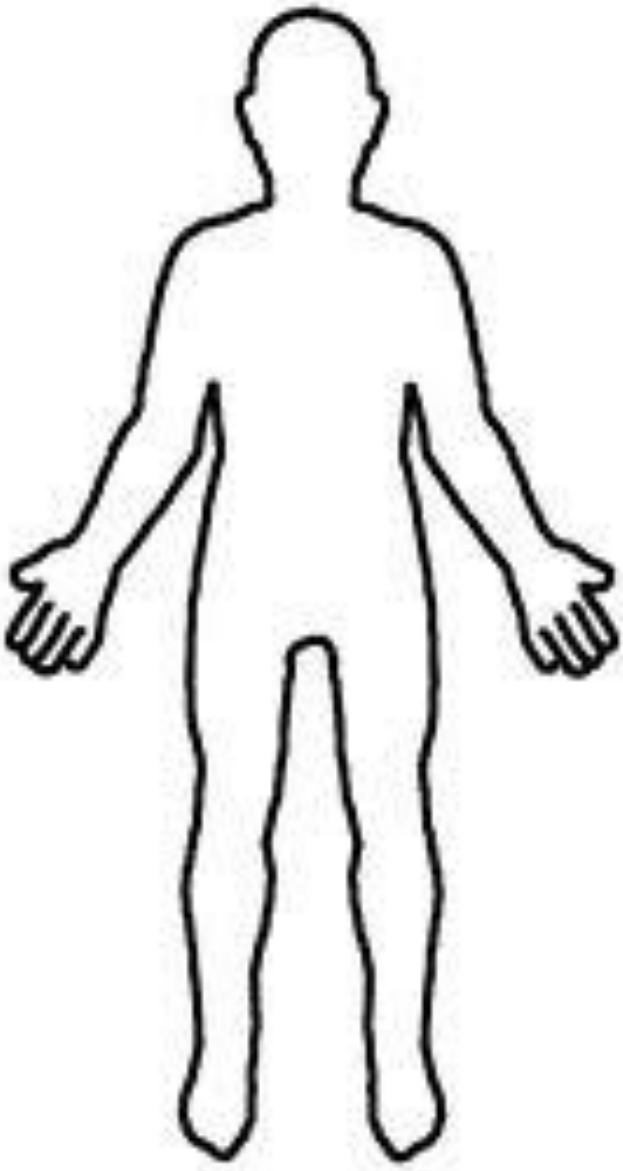
Appendix 2.8: templates

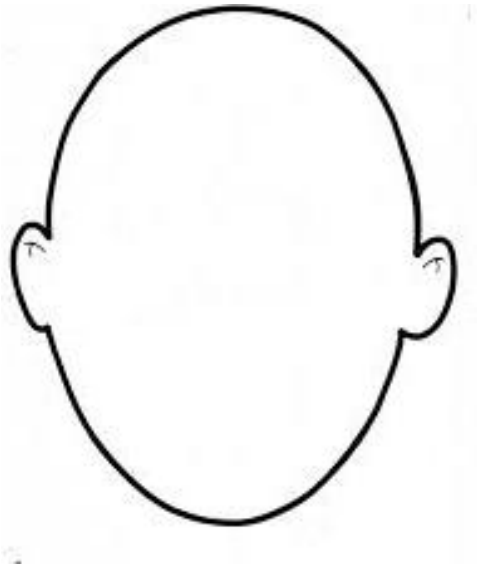
the well
THE NETWORK FOR METHODIST CHILDREN & YOUTH WORKERS

Field of words

children&youth METHODIST

Young person safeguarding template





How do your children and young people want to participate?

The following plan helps you to run a session with your children and young people, asking them how they can and should be involved in decision-making (this is based on a discussion about participation within a circuit context, but could be adapted to an individual church/project context). It aims to draw out what gets young people involved, and what might inspire them to get involved in the future.

Before the session, encourage groups (or individuals) from the circuit to come to the event ready to share stories of activities they have enjoyed, and what made them get involved.

1. Set out three very large sheets of paper (flipchart, back of wallpaper, craft paper etc) around the room. On one write, "What makes youth activities enjoyable?" On another write, "What aims should activities have?" On the third write, "What might inspire young people to get involved?" As the participants share their stories, fill these sheets in with suggested answers to the questions.

2. Use one of the activities from appendix 3.4 to draw out the issues that concern or affect children/young people. As you discuss, add to the three sheets of paper.

3. Get participants into small groups (about four per group). Ask them to answer the following question, 'What is participation?" Perhaps they could give their reply as an 'elevator statement' (see variation 2 in section 4.5 on page 40).

Here's a creative way of getting people into groups:

i. Print a question/task on to different coloured pieces of paper or card.
ii. Cut these pieces of paper/card into jigsaw pieces (four pieces, if you want four per group).
iii. Scatter the jigsaw pieces face down or put them into envelopes and hand out randomly to participants.
iv. Ask everyone to take their jigsaw piece and then find the other people who have the same colour.
v. Once they have found the rest of their group, ask them to complete the jigsaw and then answer the question/complete the task.

4. Give each group a copy of the participation checklist from appendix 2.1. If you feel there is too much information for the participants, perhaps just focus on some of the key questions. Ask the groups to select four or five items that they think are the most important. Ask them to add them to the sheet of paper with the title, “What might inspire young people to get involved?”

5. In the room set out two boxes – one labelled CIRCUIT and one labelled CHURCH/PROJECT.

    i. Ask the participants to brainstorm ideas as to how they could be more involved/participate more in their church/project. If appropriate, ask them to brainstorm ideas for the circuit separately. You use the discussion carousel technique (see section 4.4 on page 37) for this.

    ii. Give a brief presentation on the structures, the key people/roles and how decisions are made in the church/project and circuit. Make this interactive and creative if you can (perhaps asking the young people what they know already) and definitely informative!

    iii. Ask the young people to add to the Brainstorm they did in 5.i.

6. On a sheet of paper that everyone can see, write the following ‘prompts’.

    - What would you like to know more about in your church/project?
    - What would you like to know more about in the circuit?
    - How do you think young people should be involved in making youth activities more enjoyable?
    - How do you think young people should be involved in making decisions?
    - How do you think young people should be involved in making sure that church/project/circuit activities are in line young people’s needs and ideas?

    Participants may want to refer back to the original exercise on the large sheets of paper:

    i. Give participants a pile of small pieces of paper and asked them to write down as many responses as possible to these questions – one per piece of paper – and place it in the relevant box from the previous activity (CIRCUIT or CHURCH/PROJECT).

    ii. Split participants into two groups. One is given the box dealing with the church/project statements. The other is given the box dealing with the circuit statements. They are asked to group the paper together based on similarity and make a final list of demands/questions for the churches/projects and a final list of demands/questions for the circuit.

iii. Present the final lists back to the wider group and, as a group, discuss which are the most important. You could use a participation pyramid (section 4.3 on page 35) or dot voting exercise (section 4.9 on page 47) to help prioritise.

Listening, empathy, assertiveness and communication

The following plan helps you to develop these skills for your youth group. Ideally training should be attended by everyone involved, not just young people.

Part 1: listening skills (50 minutes)

1. Introduction (15 minutes)

    i. In smaller groups, brainstorm the things that can stop someone feeling listened to and then feedback.

    ii. A good listening skill is saying as little as possible! Our natural tendency is to make a judgement on what others are saying, or interrupt, or chatter on about our own view or knowledge, rather than trying to really get to the bottom of what someone is saying. A golden rule is to never assume someone else will feel the same way as you would in a similar situation.

    iii. Proper listening is really draining and tiring. It involves really understanding what that person is thinking and feeling – stepping into their shoes. This is called empathy (whereas sympathy is *imagining* how the other person must feel).

    iv. Proper listening takes time and should never be rushed. It is difficult to manage in a group, especially when you have a time limit, or there are decisions and outcomes that need to happen!

2. Listening skills 1 (10 minutes).

    i. When listening to someone, it might be helpful to use:

    - head nodding
    - smiling
    - saying ‘right’, ‘okay’ or ‘go on’
    - repeating a word or two from their last sentence
    - silence – don’t feel like you need to fill it, some people need silence to reflect and will carry on talking unprompted – this will come with experience
    - stillness – don’t fidget

- the right amount of eye contact – try to gauge what this is, remember, people are different!

ii. Ask participants to practise in pairs. They should take turns talking about a recent holiday they have been on, or their ideal holiday destination. Ask them to swap over after three minutes.

3. Listening skills 2: open questions (10 minutes).

   i. It might be helpful to think about using open questions, which generally begin with:

   - why? (explores motives, reasons, explanations)
   - how? (explores feelings and emotions)
   - might? (explores other/future options)
   - what? (elicits facts/information)
   - could or would? (explores potential of an idea/opinion)

   ii. Ask the participants to practice in pairs. They should take turns answering open questions on the topic of talking something that happened recently that made them feel happy or energised. Ask them to swap over after three minutes.

4. Listening skills 3: reflective/active listening (15 minutes).

   i. Active Listening is when the listener tries to:

   - summarise/reflect what the speaker has said, trying to interpret and reword it (eg, “So you’re saying that...”)
   - evaluate what the impact has been on the speaker; how it has made them feel (eg, “It sounds like you...”).

   It demonstrates that you are actually listening, and it makes you do so in a way that is without making a judgement – you are not necessarily agreeing with what they have said.

   It allows the person speaking space to pick up where they left off (a reminder, if they have lost their thread).

   It allows you and the person that you correctly understanding them (don’t be afraid to get it wrong, they will tell you, and it will help you (and them) to clarify what they are saying and feeling)

   For example, the speaker may say, “I simply don’t have time to do all of the coursework that I’ve got at the moment. It all takes so long and I’ve a lot of other things going on at the moment, what with drama rehearsals for the school play and going to church and youth group every week.”
   The active listener might respond, “It sounds like you’re worried about trying to juggle the demands of your coursework with everything else.”

ii. Ask participants to practice in pairs. They should take turns talking about what they enjoy about their church/project and what they find difficult (feel free to adapt questions to be more appropriate to your setting). Ask them to swap over after three minutes.

Part 2: assertiveness skills – getting your opinion across in the right way (60 mins)

1. Cinema scenario (5 minutes).

   Ask participants, in silence, to close their eyes. Read out the following scenario:

   You're sitting in the cinema, watching a film you've been wanting to see for ages. The people behind you keep talking really loudly, munching crisps, laughing and playing on their phones. You cannot enjoy the film. What do the people look like? Picture them in your mind. How do you feel towards them? You cannot move seats because it is too busy. Think about what you would like to do in this situation. Imagine yourself doing it. How do the people behind you react? Picture them in your mind, imagine you can see their faces. Look at their faces. What are they feeling?

2. Submissive, aggressive and assertive responses (20 minutes)

   i. Explain that you are going to talk about how we express what we are feeling to other people. Sometimes people say things or do things that make us feel angry or upset, like the cinema situation, during a conversation, or during a meeting when people have a lot of different opinions, and different ways of expressing them.

   ii. There are three ways we can deal with a situation:

   - One of them is called *submissive*. This is when you avoid saying what you think ("I'll put up with anything.").
   - Another way is called *aggressive*. This is when we say something, but we say it in a way that is rude or insulting, (we overpower the other person and treat them in a way that says "I'm more important than you").
   - The third way is called *assertive*. This is when you stand up for what you think, when you are honest, but say something without being aggressive.

   iii. Use a paper carousel (variation 1 in section 4.1 on page 33) or discussion carousel (section 4.4 on page 37) to discuss the following:

   - What are the advantages/disadvantages of being aggressive? What are the consequences for you/others?

- What are the advantages/disadvantages of being submissive? What are the consequences for you/others?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of being assertive? What are the consequences for you/others?

Some of possible consequences for each are:

- Aggressive – stressful discussions and relationships, alienating others, treating others with disrespect, feeling guilty…
- Submissive - building up anger that can come out in unhelpful ways, relationships are less deep, you might end up trying to spoil other people's ideas, you don't learn to express yourself...
- Assertive – more healthy discussions and relationships, standing up for yourself and learning how to communicate your feelings without getting stressed.

3. Three steps to an assertive response in a situation (5-10 minutes).

   i. Explain that the three steps are:

   - Stating what is happening/what someone is doing.
   - Saying how it makes you feel.
   - Saying what the effect is on you. What are the consequences for you?

   With the first stage, it's really important to be clear, accurate and non-personal (eg do not call someone selfish). Don't use the words ‘always’, ‘constantly’ or ‘never’ (so do not say, “You are constantly talking” or, “You never shut up.”). Don't swear. Be careful with the words you use. For instance, you might want to say, “When you use your phone' rather than, “When you're mucking around on your phone”. Another example, you might want to say, “You’re talking a lot” rather than, “You're dominating the conversation.”

   ii. Give the example of a mum, who is fed up with her two teenage children not clearing up after themselves whenever they make a snack in the kitchen...

   - When you don't clean up the kitchen
   - I feel annoyed
   - because it makes more work for me.

4. Putting it into practice (25 minutes).

   i. Depending on the group, you may need to do a short session around the subject of ‘feeling words’ (emotional literacy). For example, as an introduction to this section, you could provide pictures of people with different expressions, and see how many different ‘feelings’ people come up with. You could even provide a list of feeling words.

ii. In pairs, ask participants to work on an assertive response to the situation in the cinema, based on the three stages:

- When you… (what are the people behind you doing?)
- I feel… (how does it make you feel?)
- because... (what's the consequence of their behaviour for you?).

Ask participants to feedback.

iii. Read out the following scenario about being assertive in a conversation at church (you may want to adapt this scenario to reflect a conversation that is likely to happen in your own context).

A young person is having a conversation with another member of their church about worship. They are telling them about their involvement in the family service that Sunday. The youth group are facilitating the prayer for the service. Their focus is going to be on praying for their community and for the world. The congregation will be asked to go around the room, visiting as many or as few of several prayer stations as they wish, spending the time in the way they feel is right for them,

The church member replies that they're not sure that this will be very suitable or appropriate, as the congregation aren't used to this kind of prayer, they are used to being led from the front. He doesn't think it will work, and asks whether the youth group have checked with the minister that this is okay?

Ask participants to write down what they think an assertive response might be:

- When you… (what did the person do/say?)
- I feel… (how did it make you feel?)
- because... (what's the consequence of their behaviour for you?)

Ask participants to feedback and discuss. How do you think the church member might react? What might be good way to react in turn?

Negotiation and seeing other people's perspective

This session works best if done with a mix of generations. You might want to pick and choose different sections.

1. Introduction.
    i. Find a picture/photo and give the same picture to everyone in the group. Ask them to describe it. They could work in small groups if that's easier for your participants.
    ii. Ask participants, "What different things did people/groups pick up on? How did you feel when you heard a description that was different from your own?"
    iii. This session is about learning to appreciate, understand and interact with the perspectives of others – especially when it comes to issues that we really care about or that affect us and others.
2. Understanding one another
    i. Ask the adults in the group to draw a young person. And ask the young people in the group to draw an adult. They can choose the gender and age, what they are wearing, their hair style etc. Then ask them to think about how they would describe the person they have drawn – and to add these ideas on to the drawing. They might want to think about interests, education, friendships/ relationships, family/home life, hopes and fears, what makes the person angry, what makes them happy, and their identity, culture, values and beliefs.
    ii. Swap pieces of paper. Ask the groups to add to the sheet of paper anything that they think is missing, or perhaps needs changing. Feedback what you think of what the other group has drawn and written, sensitively and respectfully!
    iii. Adapt this exercise to fit with your group, eg you might want to do drawings of young people, volunteers and leaders.
    iv. Ask the wider group, "Why is it important to understand one another's world? How can we make sure this happens within our church/project?"

3. Appreciating one another

    i. Ask participants to stay in the groups that they were in for exercise 2 (adults and young people). Give each group a piece of flip chart paper and ask each group to create two columns. In one they list the things that they can offer – their unique strengths, experiences, knowledge and abilities. In the other column they list their needs, limitations and gaps in knowledge etc.

    ii. After five to ten minutes, swap the pieces of paper, and ask groups to add anything that they think the other group didn't think of when describing themselves. Feedback on what is written on the pieces of paper.

4. Seeing issues from different points of view.

    i. Read out the following scenario:

    The church runs a local youth club on their premises. Some of the young people have started going outside the hall to smoke and hang out. The group is often quite noisy. There are quite often a lot of cigarette butts and empty crisp/chocolate bar wrappers left lying around. The church is next to a home for the elderly, who have made a complaint about the noise. A meeting is held between members of the church, young people from the youth group, some of the youth leaders/volunteers, and staff from the home.

    ii. Put people into groups, representing each of the four interest groups mentioned in the scenario (members of the church, young people, youth leaders and staff). Ask each group to talk about the issues and concerns their characters would have in relation to the scenario. Also, ask them what they would like to see happen, and why? You can ask each group to feedback, or you might want to consider doing a role play of the meeting, with each group playing their characters within the meeting, seeing how it plays out.

Note: what about those who don't like role-play?
Before you start, ask people to place themselves according to how comfortable they feel with drama and role play! Ask those who can't get enough role-play to stand in one corner of the room, those who are okay with role-play in a second corner and those who can't stand role-play in a third corner. Form groups with at a mix of preferences for role play. Hopefully, this way, those who don't want to participate in the drama won't have to!

    iii. Draw two columns on a piece of flip-chart paper, one entitled 'similarities' and the other 'differences'. Ask everyone to write down, on post-it notes, any similarities or differences that they observed between opinions of characters. Perhaps write the similarities on one colour of post-it note and differences on another colour. Add them to the flip-chart paper. One observation per post-it!

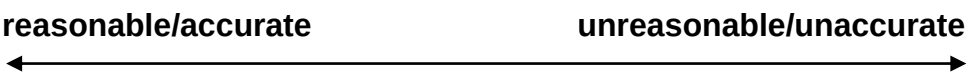
iv. Look at the column with the differences. How good was the meeting at sorting these out? What could they have done better?

5. Reframing.

   i. Split the group into smaller groups, eg young people and youth leaders. You may want to get them to put themselves into groups of people who are 'similar' and see what categories they come up with themselves (it may not just be to do with age).

   ii. Get each group to think about the words that might be used to describe them, as a group. Ask them to think about the words that society, your community or other people might use. Put these on to post-its.

   iii. On a large piece of paper, arrange the post-its according to where they lie on the spectrum below:



   iv. Ask participants, "What effects can the words on the right-hand side have on the people they are used to describe?" Write these on the paper.

   v. Then ask, "For any of the words on the right-hand side, are there alternative words that people could use to describe you, that would be more helpful?" For example, the word 'unreliable' could be more reasonably or accurately replaced with the word 'busy' or, for the word 'loud', a better word might be 'outgoing'.

   vi. Ask participants, "What assumptions/stereotypes are made about your group, which might not be true for anyone? What assumptions made about your group are negative, but are reasonable?"

   vii. Finally, ask, "What might change in the way you reacted in the role play, or in the way you fed-back?"

6. A note on power, influence and equality.

   i. Power can be seen in two ways. There is the more obvious way of seeing it – we see certain people in society as having a lot of power, such as politicians, teachers and the police force. However, some power is less obvious. We have just looked at the way in which we describe others. Using certain words can have power over others. For example, if someone describes a person as 'useless', then that person will feel less confident and less able to influence their own lives. Just by using that word, someone has had power and influence over that person. Some power is also about

the standing or status we have within a group, and we have to be careful that everyone has an equal amount of power, for everyone to feel that their perspective is valid and important.

ii. Offer the group some things to think about. There may be some people might need to "handover" or "share" power with others, particularly those who:

- have a position of authority
- are seen as having more expertise and knowledge
- have more standing and respect within society
- have control over resources: money, recruitment of staff/volunteers, equipment
- are more flexible with availability due to life circumstances.

iii. Ask the group, "Are any of the following things currently controlled by certain people,

- the vision of the church/project
- the things that the church/project do, and the way it is run/organised
- the way in which decisions are made?"

iv. Then ask, "Are our activities, events and meetings excluding anyone or restricting access, even though we might not have realised it?"

v. You may want to run a values continuum exercise (section 4.18 on page 61) and ask people to place themselves along a spectrum of agreement, in response to some of these questions:

- Others ask me for my opinions, beliefs and ideas, and are interested in them.
- I have the confidence and freedom to express my views and beliefs.
- I have control over the way in which I can be involved in activities/events.
- I have an equal say when it comes to making decisions about direction, ideas and options.
- I am involved in activities that I or my peers have helped to develop.
- I am confident that I have influence when it comes to deciding things.
- My church/project is ready for positive change.
- My church/project embraces the idea of sharing power and influence.
- I feel that people want to learn from me and I want to learn from others.
- I am encouraged to be an active participant in my church/project.
- I do not feel obliged or forced to participate.
- I feel that opportunities to get involved and be part of things are easy to access.

Helping young people to articulate their concerns and passions

This session can also be used to help adults articulate their concerns and passions as well!

1. Drawing out the issues that affect or concern children and young people.

   i. Ask the participants to draw someone their age on a piece of paper and add some details, such as age, their family life, friendships, beliefs, faith, home and family life, school life, social life, music taste... everything you can think of (this is based on the 'Bob' activity in section 4.31 on page 78).

   ii. Using different coloured post-its and using magazines and newspapers for inspiration/decoration/explanation, get them to write down or draw:

   - the young person's hopes and dreams (on yellow post-its around their head)
   - the things that make the young person worry (on pink post-its and stuck on their shoulders)
   - some of the things that the young person is passionate about and some of the things that make him/her angry – maybe in the world, the community or in his/her own life (on red post-its, on their heart)
   - some things that would make life better for that young person (in green and on their feet)
   - some things that would make church better for that young person (also in green).

   iii. Ask the young people to organise all of the post-its so they are grouped into similar themes. Make a list of what the themes are, ie what are the main issues and concerns for young people?

   iv. If there are too many themes, you might like to use the participation pyramid exercise (see section 4.3 on page 35) to help prioritise.

   v. You might want to follow up these discussions, to draw out how things could begin to change, using:

- ‘How?’ and ‘Why?’ chains (section 4.2 on page 34)
- SWOT analysis (section 4.6 on page 41)
- Force-field analysis (variation 2 of section 4.6 on page 43)
- Today, heaven and hell (section 4.11 on page 51)
- More trees! (section 4.23 on page 67).

2. A focus on some specific issues.

    i. You will need four sheets of flipchart/wallpaper/craft roll. Write one of these uncompleted statements (or create your own) on each sheet:

    - Something I’ve heard about this week that really upset me is...
    - Something I’ve seen recently that has inspired me is...
    - A current issue the church should be talking about is...
    - Anything else...

    ii. Attach these sheets to the wall in different corners/parts of the room and leave a pile of newspapers/scissors/pens/glue/felt-tips/markers/post-its next to each sheet.

    iii. Ask the young people to ‘mill around’ the room, looking at each sheet and completing the statements in their own words, using the pens/newspapers – they can write, draw, or cut out words/articles from the papers... they can also write answers on post-it notes and stick these on.

    iv. Divide the young people into three or four small groups and ask each group to choose one of the sheets of paper. Ask them to come up with a list of common themes from their sheets.

    v. Follow steps 1.iv and 1.v above!

3. Similarities and differences

    i. Get the participants into groups of about four to six. Ask the groups one question at a time and get them to shout back their answers – prizes/points for the quickest.

    - Two food items that everyone in the group likes.
    - A local place that you have all visited.
    - A game that you everyone enjoys playing.
    - A toy/DVD/game one person owns that no-one else in the group owns.
    - A place that one person has been to that no-one else has visited.

    ii. Then move on to these questions:

- Two things that you know everyone enjoys doing at church (you may want to refer to the activity they attend, if they do not know it as church).
- One thing that none of the group enjoy doing at the church/activity.
- One thing about the world that makes everyone in the group sad/happy/angry.
- One thing about your town/village/area/school that you know makes everyone in the group sad/happy/angry.

iii. Again, you could use steps 1.iv and 1.v to determine priorities and/or actions.

4. Identifying the things that children and young people enjoy and the things they would like to improve/change in their church (or youth club, messy church, locality... anything really!).

i. Ask the children/young people to create an arty mural (variation 3 of section 4.26 on page 73) of the church/project. Ask them to include the people that they know, young and old, and to include themselves. You might want to ask them some of the following questions about their picture:

- What are the people thinking?
- Who are they?
- What are they enjoying?
- If you could ask a question to the adults in the picture, what would it be?
- What would you like to add to the picture that you think should be there (maybe think of your favourite thing to do outside of church)?
- Is there anything you would like to see less/more of?
- What is your favourite thing in the picture?
- If there was one thing you could change about the picture what would it be?
- Where are you in the picture?
- Would you like to be in a different place in the picture? What could you do to get there, can anyone help you?

ii. Make a list of the different aspects of the church's/project's activities (eg venue, staff, food, activities, involvement in deciding things etc). Ask the participants how they feel about these. Give them a range of emoticons or a field of words (see section 4.14 on page 56) to choose from to illustrate these feelings, or ask them to draw/write their own words and pictures and then hold them up as you ask each question. Alternatively, stick emoticons up around the room and ask the children/young people to stand by the one that best represents their feelings... Make sure you follow-up by asking them why they chose to stand where they did.

iii. Pretend that your church/youth work is under threat or you are entering a competition:

Split the participants into groups and ask them to create a presentation about what makes the children's and youth work in your church so good OR what makes your church so good! Ask them to think about why they come and what they most enjoy. Is it the people or the activities?Is there anything deeper than that? Be creative!

iv. Other techniques you could use to draw out their feelings about their church or project:

- sharing circle (section 4.24 on page 70)
- cotton bud debate (variation 2 of section 4.24 on page 71)
- World's worst, world's best (section 4.25 on page 71).

Organisations and websites

- Methodist Children and Youth: www.childrenandyouth.org.uk
- Participation Works: a partnership of six agencies that aims to enable organisations to engage children and young people in the development, delivery and evaluation of services that affect their lives.
  www.participationworks.org.uk
- National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS): the national, independent body representing voluntary and community youth services in England. NCVYS produce a Strategic Information Service (SIS) bulletin for members, which contains good short updates on Government policy for children and young people.
  www.ncvys.org.uk
- Children Matter!: a network for equipping children's ministry. It produced the *You're losing us!* DVD.
  www.childrenmatter.net
  www.childrenmatter.ning.com ('groups' website)
- Dynamix Ltd: provide training, facilitation and consultation in a bid to create a fairer society by developing people's skills for participation, co-operation, inclusion, play and enterprise.
  www.dynamix.ltd.uk
- National Youth Agency: working to support and improve services for young people. Developed Hear by Right – a framework to help organisations provide evidence of the participation that is already happening and plan for improvement where there are gaps.
  www.nya.org.uk
- Children's Rights Alliance for England: a membership body for organisations and individuals campaigning for children's rights to be recognised and realised.
  www.crae.org.uk

- National Children's Bureau: a charity dedicated to improving the lives of children and young people, especially those most vulnerable. www.ncb.org.uk
- British Youth Council: Supporting young people to get involved in their communities and democracy locally, nationally and internationally, making a difference as volunteers, campaigners, decision-makers and leaders. www.byc.org.uk
- UK Youth Parliament: Run by young people, the UK Youth Parliament provides opportunities for 11-18 year-olds to use their voice in creative ways to bring about social change. www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk

Further reading

- *Never Too Young – how young children can take responsibility and make decisions* by Judy Miller, Save the Children 2003
- *Core Skills for Children's Work: Developing and Extending Key Skills for Children's Ministry* by Consultative Group on Ministry Among Children, Bible Reading Fellowship 2006
- *More Core Skills for Children's Work: Extended learning skills for church-based children's ministry* by Consultative Group on Ministry Among Children, Bible Reading Fellowship 2010
- *Through the Eyes of a Child* by Anne Richards and Peter Privett, Church House Publishing 2009
- *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice* by Barry Percy-Smith and Nigel Thomas, Routledge 2009
- *The Buskers Guide to Participation* by Philip Waters, Common Threads Publications Ltd. 2009
- *Empowering Children and Young People: Promoting Involvement in Decision-Making* by Phil Treseder, Save the Children 2004