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Launch of practice guide

Practice guide 06: The participation of children and young people in developing social care

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Introduction

- **Focus of Guide:**

‘How practitioners and managers within social care agencies can develop children and young people’s participation.’

- **The Guide draws on evidence from:**

- Research, literature and policy
- The views of practitioners and managers
- The views of young people
- Case studies
- Barnardo’s research experience

An example of the practice guide

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Ensuring managers support the development of participation

There needs to be a clear lead from management so that there is a clear direction and all staff know that it is something that they all need to be doing.

Practitioner

The development of a culture of participation can encompass a great deal of change for organisations, particularly in terms of the redistribution of power in relation to decision-making processes. Hill et al (2004) suggest that there is a common view of children's rights as

Culture

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What is Participation?

Being consulted more

Working together/
Team work

Making a
difference

Sharing thoughts

Freedom of
speech

Having more
freedom

Contributing

Decision making
in things
that affect
young people

Adults speaking to
young people instead
of assuming
what they want

Taking part
in everything
in your life

Communication

Talking to people

Learning new things

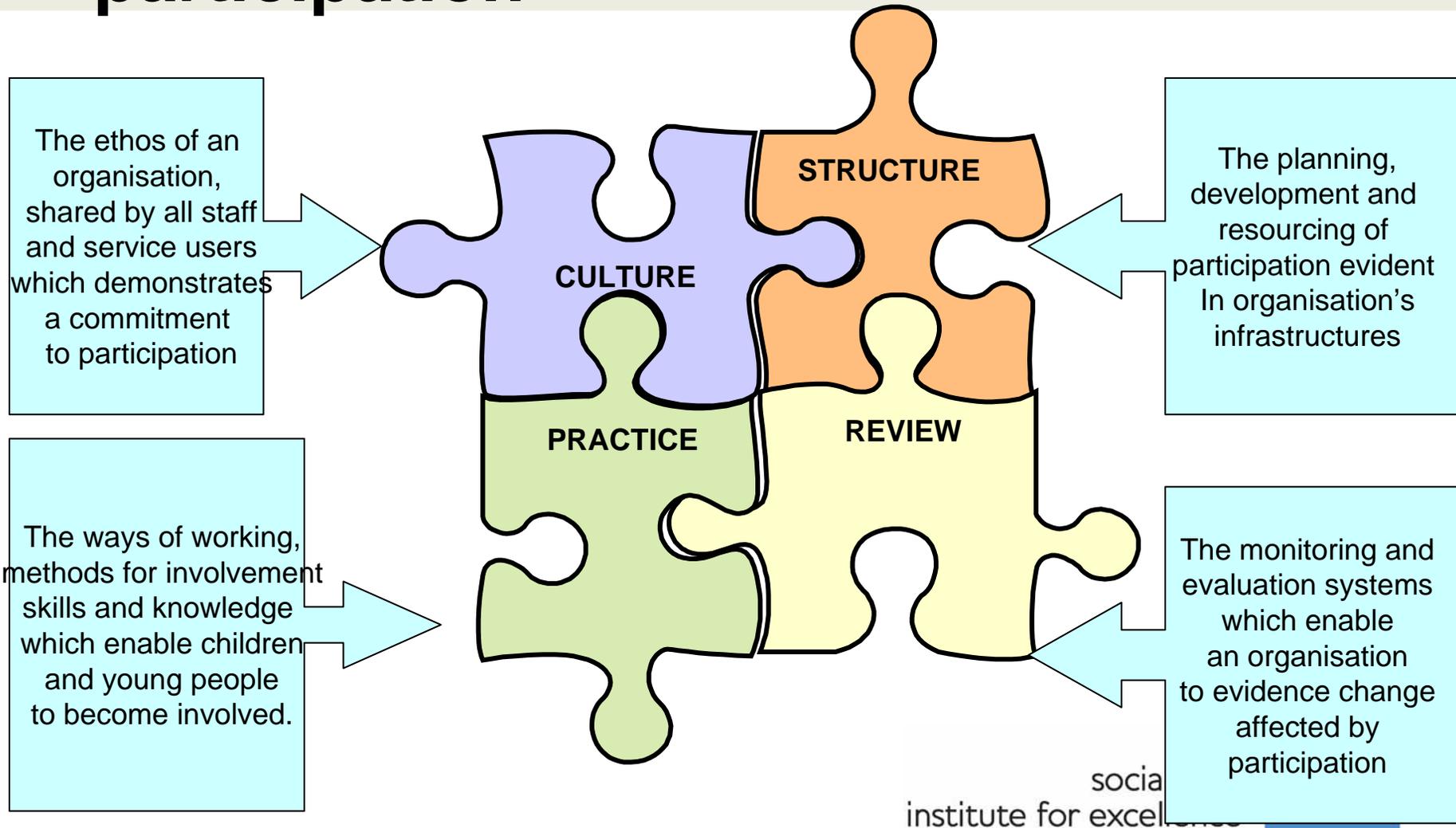
Giving it full potential



What do we mean by participation?

- Individual *and* collective participation.
- A culture of listening.
- A process NOT an isolated activity.
- Different levels of participation are valid for different stages of an organisation's development, the aim is NOT to reach the top of the 'ladder'.

Whole systems approach to participation



Developing a culture of participation

- Demonstrates a commitment to the involvement of children and young people, shared and understood by everyone.
- Culture is often identified as a barrier to participation:

There is a fear that somehow children are going to ask for terribly wrong things... on the one hand you want to give them a voice, but on the other hand you don't want them to say the wrong thing

Traditionally social workers go into social work because they want to care and feel valued and depended upon. They have a notion that a service user is a client and they are professionals, rather than that they are entering into a partnership with them.

- Need to consider the following areas of service development:
 - Establishing a shared understanding of participation
 - Ensuring managers support the development of participation
 - Developing a participation charter
 - Evidencing participation in organisational policies and documents
 - Publicising commitment to participation

Developing a structure for participation

- Essential to plan and develop the structures for participation. This includes: staff, resources, decision making and planning processes.
- Organisations need to consider the following areas of service development :
 - Development of a participation strategy
 - Partnership working
 - Identification of a participation Champion
 - Provision of adequate resources for participation.

There needs to be someone to drive the participation strategy, there needs to be teams of people who are committed to taking it forward otherwise it becomes add-on.

I don't think participation can be done on the cheap, it isn't a cheap option, but I think there is an investment in making sure that people have the skills and tools to do it.

If you are not very specific about what you want to do then it's very difficult for the young people because they don't know what to inform you on and advise you about.

It's about identifying what already exists and then identifying these pathways, rather than creating new pathways.

Developing effective practice for participation

- Practitioners need to be able to work in a way which enables participation.
- There is a great deal of positive practice already - this needs to be shared and built on.
- The following key practice points need to be considered:
 - Involvement of *all* children and young people
 - Ensuring safe participation
 - Creating an environment for participation
 - Using flexible/creative approaches
 - Understanding the different mechanisms
 - Providing opportunities for both practitioners and children and young people to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and experience.

I wanted to do some recruitment in a school and I said I was looking for a mixed group of yp: mixed gender, mixed ability. I got the Head girl, the Deputy Head girl and a representative from the student council!

Even though I have been involved in lots of things I still get nervous... but it is okay because I know that I can ask people in the project for support.

You get a sense of achievement, especially if you picked the person and they are doing a good job.

Developing effective systems to review participation

Involving young people completely changes the project. We've expanded to offices and been able to look at the reasons why young people think something doesn't work. The project doesn't conform, it's really dynamic because of the way it involves young people.

- Review is a way of recording **how children and young people have been actively involved**.
- A clear gap in evidence exists to show **how participation has helped change or improve social care services**.
- Organisations needs to consider the following elements :
 - Identification of proposed outcomes
 - Involvement of children and young people
 - Resourcing review systems
 - Establishment of systems to evidence the *outcomes* as well as the *process* of participation.

If we don't know what we are trying to do, it is difficult to measure it.

You need to know what you have got to start with, some sort of measure of organisational culture, and then introduce participation and carry on measuring and hope that things change.



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