

THE PARTICIPATION NETWORK ENGAGING/ EMPOWERING



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Junior Minister addresses delegates at Seminar for Senior Civil Service

On 25 June 2008, Junior Minister Gerry Kelly opened The Participation Network's seminar, Involving the Young Citizen: Better Policies, Better Planning, at the Stormont Hotel. The event informed senior civil servants about children and young people's participation in public decision making and how children and young people's participation improves policies and services.

Junior Minister Gerry Kelly outlined government's commitment to including children and young people in public decision making, stating:

"... the wellbeing of our children and young people is an issue which we are all determined to put at the very top of our priorities."

One of the key messages delivered by Minister Kelly was that all government departments' work impacts on children and young people:

"It is hard to think of an area of government policy making which does not impact on the lives of our young people. So this is an issue and a challenge which faces us all."

Junior Minister Kelly outlined that The Participation Network has been developed to enhance areas

where children and young people are currently participating in public decision making and support this to develop further.

He continued to emphasise the benefits to involving children and young people in public decision making, stating:

"We will all miss out if we fail to tap into the wealth of ideas that young people have. We need to listen to them."

The seminar was organised in association with CAL (Centre for Applied Learning), and with the support of OFMDFM Children and Young People's Unit, as a response to a need expressed by department officials.

The morning provided participants with a 'flavour' of training, an overview of The Participation

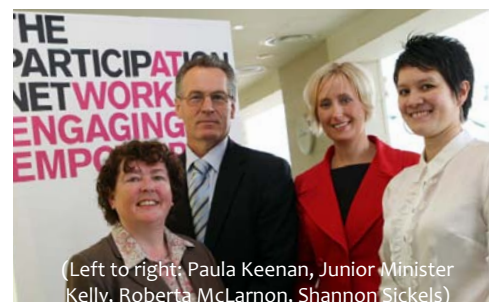
Network's role, and how The Participation Network can support public decision makers.

"Very useful in raising awareness of the need to engage with children and young people and practical signposting."
(Seminar participant)

For full report on the seminar, email participation@ci-ni.org.uk.

The Participation Network aims to support statutory agencies, local government and government departments in Northern Ireland to fulfil their duties to engage children and young people in public decision making. This is done through developing:

- Training and Consultancy Service
- Network of Organisations
- Standards of Good Practice
- Resource Materials



(Left to right: Paula Keenan, Junior Minister Kelly, Roberta McLarnon, Shannon Sickels)

Review of Training June 07 - 08

The Participation Network currently delivers two training modules on ‘Including children and young people in public decision making.’ **Module 1 explores why** children and young people should be included in public decision making. **Module 2 focuses on how** children and young people can be included.

Since its inception in 2007, The Participation Network has delivered 22 workshops to 232 participants from over 30 public authorities .

Module 1: 14 workshops delivered to 169 participants.

Module 2: 8 workshops delivered to 63 participants.



“The interactive approach makes me think about issues, problems and means of solving them and ways to include young people in decision making.”
(Department Official)

“This training was clear, well presented and very useful in enhancing my understanding and thoughts.”
(Departmental Official)

Impact of training

90% of participants attending both training Modules confirmed the course objectives were met.

“My expectations were exceeded and understanding enhanced.”
(Department Official)

Those that felt the objectives were not met requested more support in the following areas:

- After attending Module 1 (Why), some participants reported they need support on how to include children and young people. This is explored in Module 2 (How) training.
- Further support to implement the indicators of a ‘culture where the views of children and young people are routinely sought’ (OFMDFM, 2006)



Consultancy

The Participation Network offers follow up consultancy support to those that have attended, or are considering, training.

Agencies that have availed of training:

Government Departments	Statutory Agencies	Local Government
DARD	Court Service NI	Antrim Borough Council
DCAL	NI Housing Executive	Ards Borough Council
DEL	Southern Children’s Services Planning	Armagh City and District Council
DENI	Northern HSCT	Castlereagh Borough Council
DETI	Belfast HSCT	Craigavon Borough Council
DHSSPS	Health Improvement & Community Dev.	Derry City Council
DOE	Southern HSCT	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
DRD	Western HSCT	Larne Borough Council
DSD	Education & Training Inspectorate	Limavady Borough Council
OFMDFM	BASE Education Library Services	Newtownabbey Borough Council
NI Assembly	NEELB	North Down Borough Council
	SEELB	Omagh District Council
	SELB	
	Middletown Centre for Autism	

How has The Participation Network impacted on the work of Public Authorities?

83.6% of participants indicated that they would do things differently as a result of their training:

“Yes – try to create and implement an engagement plan as part of our branch processes”

“Recognise children and young people as a consulter group”

“Currently developing ‘participation model’ in Trust, this gives me a clearer idea of what’s involved and what steps are required”

“Yes, I am involved in producing leaflets and information so I will

hope to produce some for young people”

- DHSSPS have added The Participation Network’s link to their website - <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/consultations>.
- Two statutory agencies are currently exploring the feasibility of employing a Participation Officer.

Course participants frequently indicate that in order to enable them to facilitate a culture where the views of children and young people are routinely sought, there needs to be a greater

awareness and leadership from the highest level in government, departments and organisations.

Training days at Children in Northern Ireland are open to any staff from a public authority:

Module 1:	24 October 08 25 November 08
Module 2:	6 November 08 9 December 08

To book a place on the above dates or register your interest for a tailored training session, contact Claire on 028 9040 1290 or email participation@ci-ni.org.uk.

What’s New?

The Equality Commission’s Guidance for Public Authorities: ‘Let’s Talk, Let’s Listen

The Participation Network presented at the Launch of the Equality Commission’s Guidance: ‘Let’s Talk, Let’s Listen,’ profiling the support and services available. The

presentation at the event showcased a clear link between the consultation requirements enforced by the Equality Commission, and the support The Participation Network offers public authorities. Training provided by The Participation Network compliments the Equality Commission’s guidance materials.

The Participation Network’s DVD

The Participation Network has produced a DVD about how issues affecting children and young people’s impact on policy development. The DVD can be viewed on The Participation Network’s homepage: <http://participationnetwork.ci-ni.org/>.

Network Membership

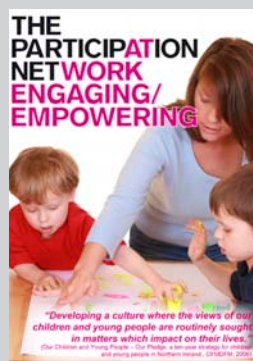
Are you an organisation in the children’s and/or youth sector and would like to offer expertise in child and/or youth participation?

Does your organisation have:

- The capacity to facilitate and support children and/or young people to express their views to decision makers?

- Staff skilled to support such a facilitation?

If so, your organisation can become a member of The Participation Network, FREE



of charge, by completing a Membership Registration Form or contacting Claire on 028 9040 1290 or email participation@ci-ni.org.uk.

Information about current members can be accessed by www.ci-ni.org.uk/theparticipationnetwork.

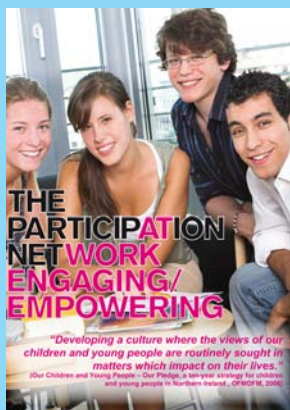
Youth Debate

The Junior Ministers, Jeffrey Donaldson and Gerry Kelly, invite young people aged 12-17 years to take part in a youth debate on 23 October 2008 in the Assembly Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The event will be a full day's activity, starting at 10 am with a facilitated pre-debate discussion, followed by lunch and the debate itself in the afternoon. The day is due to finish at 3pm.

This is the first time young people will be in the Assembly

Chamber. It is an exciting and unique opportunity for young people to get involved in the democratic process, to take on the role of an MLA, and to express their views to Junior Ministers, MLAs and others involved in government policy making that directly relates to young people. Young people that are unable to attend may submit a written response.



For further information, contact: **Eamonn. McConville@ofmdfmi.gov.uk**, T: 028 9027 7606.

What's Going On?

- DENI Priorities for Youth Consultation
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Draft Policy Statement on Children & Young People Consultation
- DENI Consultation on Review of Literacy & Numeracy Strategy

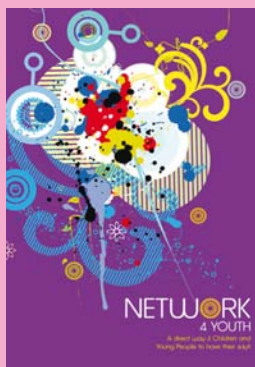
Check out the "What's Going On" and "Calendar" sections of our website for the latest information on public authorities' requests to engage directly with children and young people, as well as information on our network members' events.

Network 4 Youth

The Network 4 Youth is an initiative by the Department of Education to "strengthen the direct voice of young people in all relevant aspects of government provision" (Minister for Education, 2006).

A pre-consultation phase took place from July-September 2007 and the full consultation report has now been published and is available for consultation. 'Network 4 Youth: A direct way 4 Children and Young People to have their say!!' is available from Youth Council Northern Ireland (www.ycni.org).

In association with CiNI, The Participation Network is hosting a consultation workshop about the Network 4 Youth on **21 October 2008**, from **10 am—noon** at CiNI. This workshop is open to Network Members and is an excellent opportunity to hear more about the proposed options so they can submit an informed response independently.



Members' Meeting

Next members' meeting will be **Friday 26th September** from 2pm in CiNI.

The Team



Paula Keenan,
Chair

Roberta McLarnon,
Co-ordinator
(Children)



Shannon Sickels,
Co-ordinator
(Youth)

Claire Paterson,
Administrator

