

**CHILD FIRST PARTICIPATION
& CO-PRODUCTION IN YOUTH JUSTICE**

ABOUT US

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TODAY'S WEBINAR

Our intentions for this session

- **Explain & Explore** Child First participation principle and how these principles can be recognised and promoted in practice
- **Identify** key barriers and challenges to involving children in the design and delivery of youth justice services
- **Discuss** opportunities for progressive participatory practices

CHILD FIRST PRINCIPLES

Explaining & exploring 'Child First' participation

PARTICIPATION STRATEGY (YJB 2016)



A **commitment & cultural shift** in the way **children** are **responded to** within the Youth Justice System

- Work with and by children, not for them
- Enhancing service provision
- Setting standards & overcoming barriers
- Rights-based and child centred

PUTTING CHILDREN'S VOICE FIRST

"It is **a fundamental right** for children to be provided with opportunities to determine the response to problems associated with their behaviour"

(Smithson et al. 2020)

*"a system in which young people are treated
as children first and offenders second"*

(Taylor 2016: 48)

CHILD FIRST PRINCIPLES

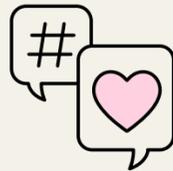
(YJB 2019)



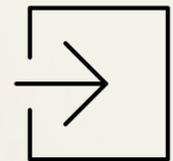
1. Seeing children as children



2. Develop pro-social identity for positive child outcomes.



3. Collaboration with children

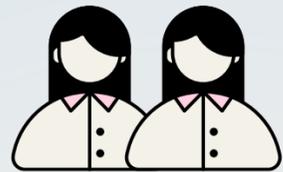


4. Promote Diversion

Definition of 'Child First Participation'

Encourage children's **active participation**, engagement and wider social inclusion. All work is **a meaningful collaboration** with children (YJB, 2019).

HOW CAN CHILD FIRST PARTICIPATION BE PROMOTED?



What does engagement and collaboration mean to you?



How can we make sure children's participation is meaningful?



What barriers and challenges might there be?

BARRIERS & CHALLENGES IN YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICES

(Creaney 2020, Burns 2020)

- Lack of funding / resources
- Confusing / contradictory understandings of participation
- Participation contingent on behaviour/risk
(not inclusive of all children)
- Inspection framework prioritised
- Power imbalances between practitioner & child
- Risk-based environments

THEORY & PRACTICE OF CO-PRODUCTION AND CO-CREATION

Share power within
relationships

Value children's
knowledge, capability
and expertise

Influence
transformation of
service delivery through
planning and design

Build **trusting, equal &
reciprocal** partnerships

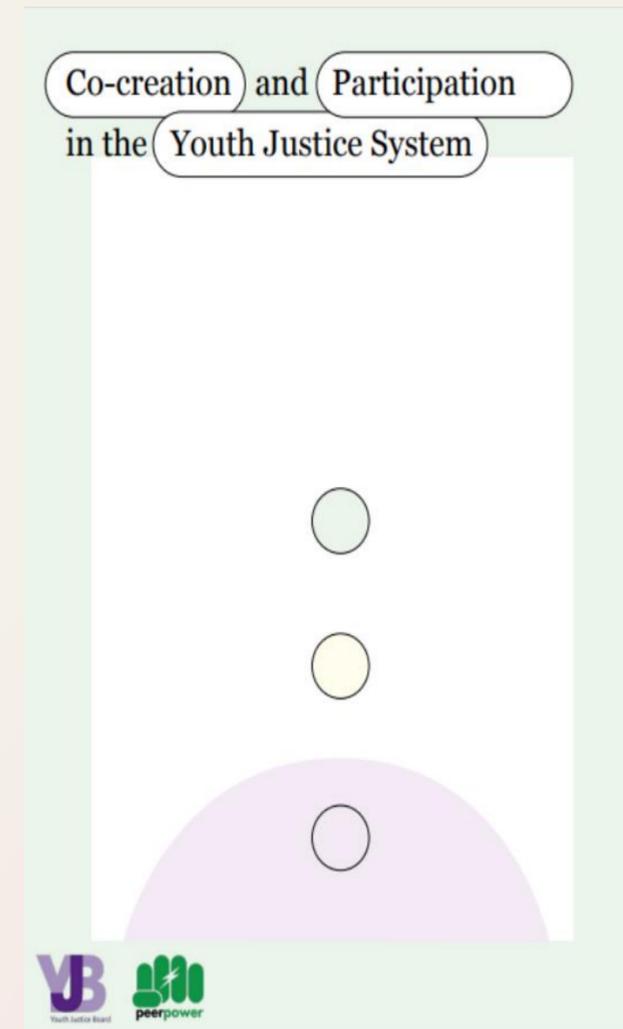
Recognise
interdependency and
shared responsibility

Practitioner role
transforms into
**'co-constructor of
knowledge'** with child

OPPORTUNITIES
FOR
PROGRESSIVE
PARTICIPATORY
PRACTICES

PARTICIPATION & CO-CREATION

PEER POWER REPORT (2021)



- Exploring service provision across England and Wales
- Recommendations for progressing practice: Quick wins first!

CO-PRODUCTION IN PRACTICE

<https://yresourcehub.uk/participation-with-children.html>



CHILDREN AS PARTNERS: PEER MENTORING.

Child Centred Pedagogy & democratic process
(Creaney 2020)

Children as peer mentors can be
'experts by experience', capable of
providing unique insights, sharing knowledge
and experiences of using justice services.



SOME CHALLENGES OF CHILD FIRST PEER MENTORING

- Power dynamics in mentoring relationships
- Risk management as a barrier to partnership working
- Engaging with a diversity of voices
- Attitudes towards unsuitability of children as positive peer influences

(Creaney 2018, Creaney and Burns, in press)

PROGRESSING CHILD FIRST PEER MENTORING

*Some of the issues can be reconciled by organisations who
adopt a co-production model and participation culture;*

***invite new peer mentors to become experts** through
training programmes which discuss how to talk to other
children about their lived experience;*

*ensuring there is a sufficient **knowledge base around
children's participation rights***

(Burns and Creaney, in press).

REFLECTIONS

- **Relationship based** and **non-hierarchical approach** is pivotal in children's participation
- **View children as capable co-producers** who can express choice and to support how services or interventions are designed, delivered, and evaluated.
- **Encourage children to co-create** a reciprocal partnership with a committed practitioner
- Engage in **more critical reflections on power**

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