

Participate: Doing the groundwork

As with any programme of organisational change, creating a youth-centred library service requires careful planning. You will want to lay the groundwork for effective youth participation before you begin any actual work with your target audience.

Critical success factors

Through the HeadSpace and FtP regional projects in library services across England, we have identified critical factors for success when working with young people. By considering these factors when planning your youth strategy, you can maximise your chances of achieving your aims. Critical success factors which we have identified are:

- Involving young people in service planning and evaluation
- Using the library offer for planning and advocacy
- Staff commitment at *all* levels
- A clear business plan and effective project planning
- Effective partnerships with youth organisations
- A staff development programme
- An identified 'Focus Activity' as a first step; to test your vision and provide opportunities for staff to engage with young people
- An evaluation and future planning strategy

See below for suggestions about how you could address these factors.

a) Involve young people

Critical to the success of a youth-centred vision is involvement of young people in shaping the services they want to use. Young people should be consulted with and actively involved in running library services for them. They can be involved in assessing library services, shaping spaces and resources and in running activities for their peers. Detailed information about young people shaping services is included in the Involving Young People module of Participate. HeadSpace also demonstrates how young people can be fully involved in service development.

b) Use the Library Offer

The [Library Offer to Young People](#) shows the relevance of libraries' work to national policies and is a tool for your library service to link to integrated youth provision in your authority. It is written in a language your youth sector partners will relate to; organised under the Aiming High headings. It will help you to articulate how you support wider policy agendas and targets and also help you shape a vision and improvement plan.

c) Develop staff commitment and strategic ownership

Our experience has shown that young people's involvement cannot be embedded in library services without the commitment of staff at all levels. This commitment must begin with the involvement of the whole Senior Management Team (SMT) in shaping the youth participation strategy.

We suggest you organise a briefing seminar for your whole SMT to build their commitment and ownership. The Management Team will be key champions for supporting and influencing staff throughout the service.

An SMT briefing could include:

- Discussion about the Library Offer and going through the *Participate Improvement Framework* together.
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- Awareness-raising about the Participate Programme and the positive impact it could have on shaping a vibrant, youth-centred library service.
- Discussion about what are you hoping to change - resulting in agreement of overall objectives and success criteria for your programme
- Agreeing methods for assessing current staff skills and thinking about how you will cascade learning from the Participate training to encourage staff to work positively with young people (e.g. you could talk to your youth service/ participation workers about internal training sessions for frontline staff).
- Agreeing methods of communication with staff and creating a communication strategy.
- Agreeing a strategic lead and/ or Project Coordinator

- Agreeing who from the SMT will attend the Making Change Happen seminars: Values and Culture and Leadership and Partnership and lead on feeding information back. These sessions will give further information and guidance on strategic development around supporting national priorities, developing advocacy, developing key partners, fundraising and evaluating young people's participation.
- Formation of a Participate steering group to lead the change process, ideally with members taken from senior management, library managers and frontline staff working with young people, to ensure staff commitment. This could be mirrored by a steering group of young people in a library where the values will be tested.

d) Develop your business plan

Include the *Library Offer* and your vision for young people's involvement in your library service business plan. You could use the *Participate Improvement Framework* to help you assess your service and decide what areas to focus on in the business plan. Who else's business plan should it be included in - e.g. youth service? How do your plans fit in with the local authority's Children's Plan? Which of the locally chosen National Indicators will you concentrate on addressing and who do you need to tell?

e) Form effective partnerships with youth organisations

Work with young people is most effective when it is developed in partnership with other youth organisations. Partners have contact with your target audience and significant experience of youth participation. They will probably working with young people who don't currently use libraries and could play a key role in promotion and referral. They may also be able to help with staff training (e.g. Lancashire library staff receive Introduction to Youth Work training as part of their induction, run by Lancashire youth workers). Youth sector partners may also be able to help you with young people's accreditation (i.e. local secondary schools and youth services may already be registered accreditation centres for awards such as Duke of Edinburgh or Youth Achievement Award).

For more detailed information on working with youth services and other partners, see *Partnership Working* in the Strategic Planning section of Making Change Happen.

f) Develop your staff development programme

The development of a staff training programme is critical to the success of your participation work with young people.

In order to help you to plan and evaluate your training, we suggest that you carry out an audit of staff skills and confidence at the beginning of the Participate programme.

We have developed a template pre-training *Staff Skills Questionnaire* based on core workforce development skills list that you can adapt for your needs.

Compile the individual staff questionnaires into a single document to use as the basis for your Staff Skills Audit. Your findings should inform a series of in-house training sessions for front-line staff. They might also inform the make-up of your staff learning groups if you want to mix confident and less confident staff.

At the end of the training, ask staff to complete the same questionnaire again to work out the impact of the training and inform future planning.

g) Develop your 'Focus Activity'

Experience from regional Fulfilling their Potential (FtP) projects and from HeadSpace suggests that if you have a real, tangible focus for your work with young people (e.g. library refurbishment, stock selection or volunteering) it:

- Provides a practical first step which you can use to define, refine and demonstrate your vision for youth-centred service
- Gives staff a goal to work towards
- Creates opportunities for dialogue with young people
- Creates opportunities for talking to partners

There are several things to take into account when planning your focus activity. Previous experience tells us that activities are likely to be successful if they are:

- related to the needs of young people
- linked to your choice of Participate module(s) e.g. developing a Creative Reading project, creating a HeadSpace or developing an aspect of Involving Young People such as accredited volunteering
- based on a new service that you want to introduce (or an existing service that you want to radically improve)
- focused on one location (e.g. a local community library), one aspect of the Offer (e.g. creating web content) or one group of young people (e.g. LAC/ teenage parents)
- radical: developing new thinking and pushing the boundaries
- small, achievable, manageable, measurable
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A focus activity puts learning into action and provides you with the foundation for future work.

Participate modules can help you to create a focus for your service improvement, offering practical ideas and new services for young people.

- *Creative Reading* will help you to focus on positive activities and inspiring collections, using groupworking to create an online community of young people, developing a sustainable creative programme with young people, writers, authors, publishers, web designers, illustrators and other cultural providers and art forms such as theatre and dance.
- *Involving Young People* will give you ideas to help you focus on volunteering, community engagement and service planning through involving young people in recruiting staff, selecting stock, designing spaces, being library ambassadors.
- *HeadSpace* will give you the tools to develop your own HeadSpace in a new or refurbished library. It has a focus on space planning but is also an opportunity to put into practice the full Library Offer, with young people taking a leading role in developing and delivering services; from choosing stock to designing spaces and running activities.

h) Evaluation strategy

It is important that you decide on your intended outcomes and criteria for success at a very early stage in your planning as this will influence how your service develops young people's participation and evaluates its impact. You can use the [Library Offer](#) for young people as a vision of what you are aiming to achieve across your service. Also use the *Participate Improvement Framework* (see the Making Change Happen

Strategic Planning section of the website) to identify where you would like to focus development.

In order to set appropriate success criteria:

- Consult with young people as early as possible to establish the focus activity they would like to see in their library and find out what their criteria for success is.
- Create a list of outcomes or success criteria which you hope to meet
- Create a clear action plan through which you can achieve these outcomes
- Consider how you will collect evidence of impact, linked to intended outcomes.
- Consider how you will use the results of evaluation for advocacy, service development and future staff training.

When determining the outcomes for your service and for young people, you might consider the impact you hope to have on:

- young people in terms of skills, personal development and opportunities.
- staff in terms of confidence, skills and knowledge
- your service in terms of atmosphere, membership, issues and opportunities
- the local community

For more detailed information on evaluation, see the section of Making Change Happen: *Evaluate and review*.

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