Youth Justice Programs Framework 2016–2019 ‘Fact Sheet D’

Participation of Young People in Program Planning and Referral

The ‘participation articles’ (12, 13 and 15) in the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC) includes the rights of children:

* To receive and impart information.
* To form associations.
* To express themselves, and
* To be involved in decision-making.

To achieve this, Youth Justice works in partnership with the Guardian for Children and Young People to provide opportunities for children and young people under supervision to provide advice, suggestions and guidance on matters that affect young people under Youth Justice supervision.

Strategies that Youth Justice employs to engage young people’s participation in individual Case Plans, Community Service Order Program Assessment and/or service development and delivery include:

* Engaging young people as part of identifying ways to address identified population needs.
* Engaging young people who have participated in programs as part of the program review process.
* Ensuring young people are directly involved in the completion of Case Plan goals / Community Service Order Program Assessments and subsequent referrals to programs and services.
* Engaging young people who may have voluntarily withdrawn from programs to gather feedback regarding their reason(s) for withdrawal.
* Consultation with youth representatives within the Adelaide Youth Training Centre Youth Advisory Council.

Where possible, Youth Justice advises program providers to offer young people with lived experience of supervision under Youth Justice the opportunity to participate in the development of interventions aimed at assisting this population.

## Benefits of young person participation[[1]](#footnote-1)

### Benefits for participating young people

* Opportunity for young people to be involved in decision-making.
* Recognises and nurtures their interests and abilities, and builds on their strengths.
* Develops skills and experience.
* Provides a greater sense of acceptance, respect and being valued.
* Deepens peer support and opportunity for positive influence upon each other.
* Greater ability for young people to identify their own priorities and influence others’ priorities.
* Opportunity for young people to demonstrate their capacity as responsible, participating members of the community.
* Opportunity for young people to contribute towards something that benefits other children and young people.

### Benefits for young people under Youth Justice supervision

* Demonstration of respecting and acknowledging the rights of young people and engaging them in influencing policy and practice.
* Improves the practice and quality of services through promoting the views of young people engaged in Youth Justice programs, services and activities.

### Benefits for the community

* Promotes community engagement and active citizenship.
* Builds an understanding of the lived experience of being under Youth Justice supervision.
* Contributes to better decision-making, informed by the voice of young people.
* Contributes to the development of more sustainable and effective programs and services.

Any efforts to engage young people’s participation in program delivery should consider:

* The experience of the staff member needed to facilitate a program or consultation to ensure the best use of resources and best outcomes.
* The need for genuine participation, that is not tokenistic. The young people’s contributions are led by them and directly influence the work.
* Any risk management concerns, when bringing young people together.
* Options and methods for participation should be responsive to the abilities of young people (i.e. verbal, written, group, individual options).
* Participation should foster a consistent, mutually rewarding relationship between Youth Justice and young people.
* Participation should be focused toward a particular outcome that young people can witness and be proud of.
* Co-facilitation with another agency or professional works well and is a good use of connections and resources and can ensure a good level of support for participants.
* Fun and interesting group activities keep up momentum and build group cohesion.
* Time limited commitments and longer projects work well.
* Youth Justice staff should be actively involved and engaged to support the process.

For more information regarding youth participation, refer to the following Office of the Guardian of Children and Young People publications:

* [GCYJ Youth Participation Policy](http://www.gcyp.sa.gov.au/about-2/youth-participation-policy/)
* [GCYP Youth Participation Strategy](http://www.gcyp.sa.gov.au/about-2/youth-participation-policy/)

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1. Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, Youth Participation Strategy [↑](#footnote-ref-1)