

## Young People's Participation, Rewards & Recognition Policy

**Last updated: 25th June 2026**

**Next review: 25th June 2027**

### 1. Our commitment

Participation People believes children and young people are experts in their own lives. Their lived experience, ideas, time and expertise have real value and deserve to be recognised appropriately.

Meaningful participation is built on respect, trust and reciprocity. When children and young people are asked to share their experiences or influence decisions, they should understand how their contribution is valued. Without meaningful recognition, participation can become tokenistic rather than genuinely collaborative.

We are committed to creating participation opportunities that are ethical, inclusive and accessible. This means removing barriers wherever possible, recognising contributions in meaningful ways and ensuring young people understand the difference their involvement has made.

Our approach is informed by the **Lundy Model of Participation**, which supports Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We believe meaningful participation is about more than asking for young people's views; it is about creating the right opportunities for them to take part, ensuring they are listened to, and demonstrating how their voices influence decisions.

This policy explains why Participation People values young people's participation, how we recognise and reward different types of contribution, and the principles we use to support ethical, meaningful participation. We hope it also provides a practical framework that other organisations can adapt to strengthen their own participation practice.

## **2. Purpose**

This policy sets out Participation People's approach to recognising, rewarding and valuing young people's participation.

It demonstrates our commitment to:

- valuing lived experience as expertise
- removing barriers that prevent participation
- recognising contributions fairly and transparently
- supporting ethical and meaningful participation
- promoting equitable opportunities for involvement
- modelling good participation practice for partner organisations and commissioners.

## **3. Scope**

This policy applies to all participation activities delivered by Participation People involving children and young people.

It provides guidance for employees, Young Consultants, volunteers, commissioners, partners and organisations working alongside Participation People, and reflects the principles we encourage others to adopt when involving children and young people in decision-making.

## **4. Why valuing participation matters**

Participation should never be viewed as something young people simply "give" to organisations.

When children and young people contribute their experiences, ideas and perspectives, they are sharing valuable expertise. Recognising that contribution demonstrates respect, builds trust and helps create meaningful relationships.

Valuing participation also encourages continued engagement. When young people understand that their time, knowledge and lived experience are appreciated, and that their voices have influenced decisions, they are more likely to remain involved and feel confident that their contribution matters.

Participation that fails to recognise young people's contribution risks becoming tokenistic rather than meaningful.

## **5. Our principles**

Participation People's approach is guided by the following principles.

**Participation should never create barriers**

Children and young people should not be prevented from participating because of financial, practical or accessibility barriers.

Where appropriate, we will work to remove barriers by providing or reimbursing reasonable expenses and considering individual support needs.

This may include travel, refreshments, digital access, accessibility requirements or other practical support that enables participation.

## Recognition should be meaningful

Recognition should reflect the nature of the contribution and the preferences of the young people involved.

Recognition may include:

- vouchers or gift cards
- certificates or awards
- references
- accredited learning
- mentoring
- professional development opportunities
- celebration events
- personalised thank-you messages
- opportunities to influence future work.

We recognise that meaningful recognition is not always financial.

## Young people help shape recognition

Wherever possible, children and young people should be involved in deciding how participation is recognised.

Different groups, communities and individuals value different forms of recognition, and we seek to understand what feels meaningful to them rather than making assumptions.

## Equity matters

We recognise that different young people experience different barriers to participation.

Providing identical opportunities is not always enough. We are committed to considering individual circumstances and making reasonable adjustments to enable meaningful participation for everyone.

## Transparency and trust

Young people should understand:

- why they are being invited to participate

- how their contributions will be used
- whether recognition or payment is available
- what they can expect from Participation People and partners if applicable
- how their involvement has influenced decisions.

Closing the feedback loop is an essential part of meaningful participation.

## 6. Recognising different types of involvement

Participation People works with children and young people in different ways, and we recognise that not every opportunity requires the same level of commitment or responsibility.

For this reason, we have two participation pathways.

The first supports children and young people who take part in individual activities, projects or engagement opportunities. The second recognises Young Consultants who are recruited as members of the Participation People team.

Each pathway reflects the nature of the role, ensuring that recognition, reward and responsibilities are appropriate, transparent and fair.

### Young participants

Most children and young people take part in Participation People through individual participation opportunities, such as consultations, workshops, events, research, youth panels or short-term projects.

These opportunities are usually time-limited and focus on sharing ideas, experiences and perspectives to help shape services, decisions and communities.

Depending on the nature of the opportunity, recognition may include:

- reimbursement of reasonable expenses
- incentives or vouchers
- refreshments or meals
- certificates
- learning and development opportunities
- recognition of achievements
- other forms of appreciation agreed with young people.

The type of recognition offered will always be proportionate to the activity and communicated clearly before participation begins.

### Young Consultants

Young Consultants are members of the Participation People team.

Unlike participation opportunities, Young Consultant roles are employment opportunities. Young Consultants are recruited through an appropriate recruitment process and receive contracts, payment, holiday entitlement and other employment rights in accordance with relevant legislation and organisational policies.

Young Consultant roles recognise that, where young people take on ongoing responsibilities as members of our team, their contribution should be recognised through appropriate employment arrangements rather than participation incentives or rewards.

## **7. Governance**

Participation People is committed to continually developing and improving our participation practice.

We work alongside children and young people to co-design, review and strengthen our approaches to participation, ensuring our policies, practices and opportunities continue to reflect their experiences, priorities and aspirations.

By embedding co-production into the way we work, we aim to ensure our participation practice remains ethical, inclusive and responsive to the people it is designed to serve.

## **8. Relevant legislation and guidance**

This policy is informed by:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly Article 12
- The Lundy Model of Participation
- Equality Act 2010
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Participation People's Safeguarding Policy
- Participation People's Equality, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy.

## **9. Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where legislation, organisational learning or emerging participation practice requires it.