

Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative

Youth Voice Guidance Framework

An approach for practitioners to implement meaningful and consistent ways for children and young people to have their voices heard across the region, in all settings.



**Clackmannanshire
Council**



Falkirk Council



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Framework vision

This document provides a framework for supporting children and young people's voice being meaningfully included within their establishments, communities, local authorities and across the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC).

It aims to aid practitioners to strategically involve children and young people's voices within decisions that affect their lives. It demonstrates how to do this in a meaningful and genuine way, ensuring that all children and young people feel their views are listened and acted upon.

This document provides guidance on the way in which children and young people are consulted with, the structures within the local authorities, the approaches to be used, policy background and recommendations.

Key Outcomes:

- More consistency will exist within the approaches used for youth voice across the region, including the implementation of a youth voice charter
- All children and young people have the entitlement to be consulted on regional and local policy and practice, including national elements that affect the region.
- All children and young people have the opportunity to contribute to planning and decision making within their establishment, group, local authority and RIC
- All children and young people will have greater opportunities to contribute their views to local issues that are relevant to them, while not being expected to contribute to those that are not.
- Information from RIC, local authorities and establishments are better explained and shared with children and young people in a clear, concise and easy to understand manner.
- All children and young people are engaged through inclusive, meaningful and non-tokenistic ways.
- Youth voice structures in local authorities will have greater levels of synergy and connection between them.
- Youth Voice practitioners will have the ability to work collaboratively in development groups and networks.

Regional Improvement and Youth Voice

The Scottish Government supports improvement through the makeup of RICs. Within this structure chief executives, senior officers and thematic leads collaborate to inform change within the education system:

“The Scottish Government, local government and Education Scotland agreed that regional improvement plans should be developed “which identify the improvement priorities within their respective regions in order to inform the design and delivery of a collective and cohesive support package shaped by local needs

It was agreed that each Collaborative should formulate a regional improvement plan, based on school improvement plans, local authority improvement plans and the National Improvement Framework” (RIC Plan 2019-2022)

With improvement and change at its heart, the importance of ensuring all children and young people are involved in shaping the direction of any approach is crucial. Furthermore, the views of children and young people and what they deem as essential areas for improvement must be considered.

Key themes which are discussed at a RIC level include, but are not limited to:

- Curriculum design
- Numeracy and Literacy
- STEM
- Health and Wellbeing
- UNCRC
- Digital
- Attendance and attainment
- Professional Development of Practitioners
- Performance & Improvement
- Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equalities
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Youth Voice

The term youth voice means when children and young people are involved in discourse and decisions that affect them. It involves gathering their views in a representative way and taking action as a result. It should be reflective of the wide range of experiences, life circumstances, characteristics and perspectives of all children and young people.

Youth voice represents children and young people of all ages and within all settings. This includes pupils attending school, to young people not in education. Youth voice is used throughout this document and it's synergies with other terms including pupil voice and learner voice are recognised.

Youth voice is an ever continuing area of development across the country with the views of all children and young people being essential in practice, policy and legislation. It's impact and necessity can be seen in a number of national initiatives and organisations:

- Free bus passes to children and young people until the age of 22 - [Young Persons' \(Under 22s\) Free Bus Travel – Young Scot](#)
- Young people over the age of 16 being given voting rights - [Votes at 16 - Scottish Youth Parliament \(syp.org.uk\)](#)
- Gender recognition reform bill - [Press Release: Gender Recognition Reform Bill | LGBT Youth Scotland | LGBT Youth Scotland](#)

Leaders and practitioners who facilitate youth voice should note the impact that it can have in delivering real and meaningful change. This document looks to provide certain knowledge and understanding to support those with this responsibility, ensuring a level of consistency and direction across the region.

Models of Youth Voice

Bringing a small group of young people together to represent the entire region would not be fully representative of the wide range of views of children and young people across Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Stirling and West Lothian. Therefore, a recommendation to engage with existing youth voice structures is suggested to support a consistent regional approach and improve representation within authorities.

Consulting with these groups of children and young people and, ensuring they have the opportunity to be heard on a range of different priorities, is key to meaningfully involving their voices.

Youth Voice Structures

Below are the types of current youth voice structures which exist in each of the four local authorities within Forth Valley and West Lothian. These structures are supported and developed by Community Learning and Development (CLD), local authority practitioners, voluntary organisations and schools. They allow children and young people to be consulted and act as advocates for other children and young people on a range of different issues.

Due to the expertise of the staff who support these structures and also the willingness of the children and young people involved, it is felt that these are best placed to represent youth voice at local and regional levels. The definition of these structures can be seen below:

MSYP (Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament)

Children and young people who become MSYPs are elected to these roles every 2 years. They are voted into these positions by children and young people within their constituency. They are elected based on a manifesto and inform strategy at the Scottish Youth Parliament around key issues that are pertinent to children and young people across the country.

Youth Forums/Committee's/Boards

Local children and young people are involved in these groups and participate to help shape the direction of local action. Similar to community forums they often have a committee structure while also being integrated into local decision making models. These groups can be made up from geographical or thematic drivers.

Pupil Council/Parliament/Voice groups

Children and young people who take part in democratic discussion within a school context typically focusing on improving elements within their own establishment

Ambassadors

Groups of children and young people who are charged with enacting on the key focus of their ambassadorship. Often working in groups these children and young people work with, support and consult children and young people directly on specific priorities ranging from mental health to social justice.

Youth Leaders

Individual children and young people who take up positions of leadership within a given setting. In these roles, children and young people are often responsible for other children/children and young people and supporting their involvement in activities and learning.

Youth Groups

Thematic and geographical youth groups open to children and young people who identify with their offering. In these groups children and young people take part in activities that support their development while also being representative body for the particular nature of a specific group

Committee Groups

These groups often have representation from children and young people and support the work conducted at local committees. They provide information, knowledge and perspectives to council officers and locally elected officials.

Children and young people from these structures would inform decisions and consultations on a local and regional level. They would also be best placed to seek the views of their peers within their settings e.g. school, community, group etc. They are also most suited to represent the views of their peers at different local and regional levels, ensuring that the wider views and perspectives are shared from all children and young people.

The approaches that children and young people from these structures use to consult their peers must work have levels of commonality, ensuring that there is a cohesive and representative range of views heard.

Snapshot overview of existing Youth Voice structures within Forth Valley and West Lothian.

Youth Participation Types/Levels	Clackmannanshire	Falkirk	Stirling	West Lothian
School	Pupil Councils/Parliaments/Voice groups Thematic Groups	Pupil Councils/Parliaments/Voice groups Thematic Groups	Pupil Councils/Parliaments/Voice groups Thematic Groups	Pupil Councils/Parliaments/Voice groups Thematic Groups
Locality Area	Youth forums Youth focus groups School based youth consultations	Rights Respecting school groups	Pupil leadership groups	Youth Club consultations COP Local Champions
Local Authority	Clacks youth voice	Champions Board Environmental Champions Mental Health Champions Children and Young People’s Education Executive Committee.	Stirling Youth Providers Forum Champions Board Social Justice, Climate Change, Mental Health Ambassadors	Anti-Poverty Champions Mental Health Working Group Thematic Steering Groups
National	Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament	Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament	Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament	Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament

How practitioners support children and young people in youth voice settings

Many practitioners support children and young people to engage with ways that allow their views to be heard and actioned upon. They are often best placed in supporting the governance of how the views of all children and young people are gathered correctly. These practitioners should be members of certain groups as detailed below.

Key Staff

Practitioners who are linked to a group/setting where youth voice activity takes place are referred to as key staff within this document. These individuals could be teachers, youth workers, educators, advocates, officers etc and should work directly with children and young people through initiatives, programmes and projects that allow them to share their views and be involved in democratic action. This framework recognises these staff as the facilitators of youth voice discourse within their individual settings.

It is recommended that these key staff are part of the wider youth voice network within their authority. A youth voice network has a number of benefits:

- Support and advice from practitioners working in similar youth voice roles
- Receive professional learning opportunities
- Access to resources and information to inform youth voice practice
- Increased opportunities to link youth voice groups to wider structures
- Represent the views of their children and young people more widely
- Contribute to local, regional and national decisions that are made which effect children and young people
- Be part of a consistent approach in regards to the way children and young people are consulted and how their views are actioned

Key staff would be expected to follow the guidance within this document to ensure consistency in their approach.

Regional Youth Voice Development Group (YVDG)

The youth voice development group comprises of practitioners who lead on the direction of youth voice within the Forth Valley and West Lothian region. It should have representation from CLD, education, local authority and third sector organisations.

These practitioners have a duty to ensure that children and young people have their opinions heard and acted upon. They empower the key staff they work with ensuring that children and young people can participate fully in the decisions that affect their lives.

They have the responsibility for cascading knowledge, information, training, support and opportunities to youth voice networks. They provide moderation for the consistency in youth voice approaches to guarantee they are inclusive, meaningful and non-tokenistic.

A development group offers the space for similarly minded and directed practitioners to collaborate on the best way to support youth voice in the region.

Some key priorities of this group are:

- Supporting a regional youth voice approach, specifically the children and young people who feed into it
- Providing a space where good practice can be shared and discussed
- Develop ways to make youth voice structures stronger and more representative
- Plan avenues for youth voice to be included within decision making locally, regionally and nationally
- Strategize how youth voice can make greatest impact within different layers of the system.
- Foster relationships within the region to further strengthen opportunities for all children and young people to collaborate with one another.
- Guide implementation of Youth Voice Charter
- Guide implementation of Empowering Youth Voice approach

Local Authority Youth Voice Network

Each local authority should have a youth voice network which is made up of all key staff who support children and young people in youth voice structures. This includes staff working in schools, youth groups, communities, organisations etc.

A local authority youth voice network should be facilitated by a member(s) of the regional YVDG. The planning, content, focus and strategy behind the network will be driven by its members.

The network will be the main platform where views on local, regional and national themes will be gathered and shared. It allows the key staff within each youth voice structure to cascade the views of their children and young people. In addition, it allows key staff to be part of the planning process when considering consultation on themes that go beyond groups or establishments.

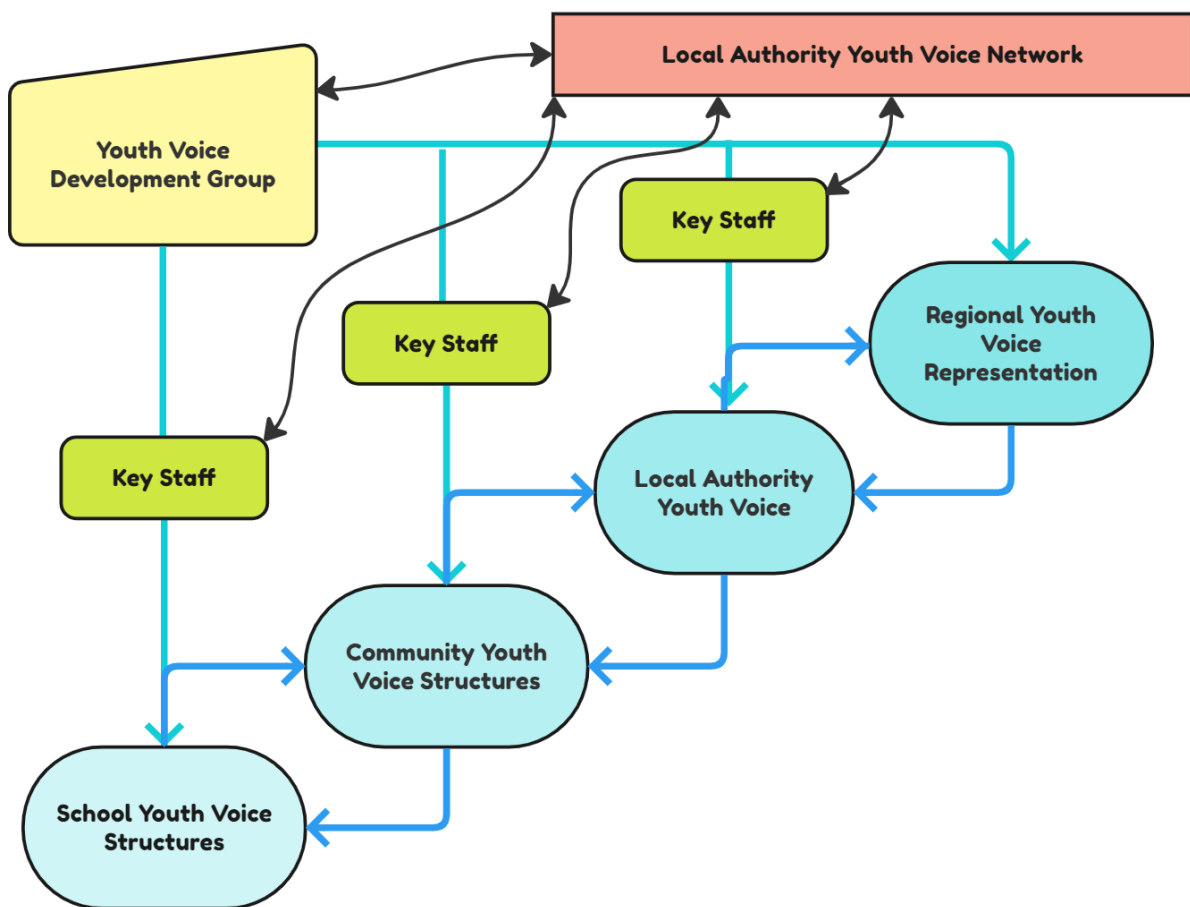
Network content should include, but not be limited to:

- Professional advice and guidance around youth voice approaches
- Practitioner networking
- Professional learning
- Practice sharing
- Overcoming challenges and barriers
- Youth Voice Charter utilisation
- Youth voice approaches (including Empowering Youth Voice resource utilisation)

Collaboration between structures

The structures which exist within the region should be allowed to function together and equally contribute their views towards regional and local improvement. To allow this to happen all children and young people should be supported by key staff to be meaningfully engaged in the consultation process while ensuring that their views can be cascaded upwards.

It is important that children and young people have the opportunity to be part of different structures and feel like they can see how their views are taken forward. Children and young people should be encouraged to be involved in a number of structures where suitable.



Practitioners within the YVDG will have the duty to support key staff linked to various youth voice structures. This approach ensures that there is consistency across the region while also guaranteeing a wide range of views on particular local, regional and national issues.

Adopting this approach

A youth voice network in each authority, a regional youth voice development group and key staff who are present in each in would allow for the following outputs:

- Children and young people from these youth voice structures are consulted via the key staff who support them in a consistent manner
- The methods to how youth voice is facilitated matches the principles within the regional Youth Voice charter.
- Children and young people who aren't often represented have the opportunity to have their views heard in decisions that affect them
- Key staff would be able to cascade views to their local youth voice network and seek what actions have been taken
- Key staff are given a support network providing them with information, resources, training etc.
- Practitioners from the YVDG would advocate for children and young people at a regional and local level while supporting those willing and able to share their views at various levels
- Networks allow the upskilling of practitioners in youth voice roles promoting improvement in overall approaches and sustainability

Logistical approaches to sharing views at local and regional level

To ensure children and young people have the ability to feed information up to regional and local levels, and also be involved in discussions, a number of approaches are encouraged. Ideally children and young people involved should act as advocates for their peers while CLD practitioners & school staff act as support and/or advocates for their children and young people.

A range of consistent resources and methods should be used by staff to allow all children and young people to participate in engaging and meaningful discussion around regional and local topics. This will allow them to understand fully the key issues being presented for consultation.

At times however there may be a requirement for the views gathered to be presented to regional/local representatives. Methods for facilitating this could include:

1. Practitioners from YVDG/network sharing on behalf of the views of children and young people gathered.
2. Practitioners from YVDG/network and nominated children and young people sharing the views that have been gathered.
3. Nominated children and young people sharing views gathered with support from YVDG/network practitioners.

Considerations must recognise that all children and young people are at different stages in life and have different levels of confidence, capacity, life circumstances etc and these should not be a barrier to them sharing their views.

Acknowledgements should be made that:

- Children and young people should be asked what their needs are, and the best way to communicate, with practitioners adjusting accordingly.
- Choices should be given on consultation and view sharing formats e.g. text, video, play, art, games, augmented communication, audio, etc
- Practitioners should create ways for children and young people to highlight when they don't understand what is being discussed
- Assumptions should not be made, and a range of ways for children and young people to articulate their opinions clearly should be provided
- Communication should be clear, equal and non-judgemental
- Practitioners may need to adapt approaches to engagement and listening to ensure meaningful participation for all children and young people
- Reasonable adjustments for accessibility are planned and provided for where required

Processes to capture Children and Young People's voices

It is recommended that a number of approaches are used collectively to allow the meaningful, consistent and inclusive incorporation of the voices of children and young people across the region. This includes theories of participation, tools, resources, logistics and methods. These should be followed to allow a non-tokenistic approach to youth voice.

Adoption of a Youth Voice Charter

Children and young people within Forth Valley and West Lothian should have the ability to share their views on a wide range of considerations/issues. In making sure that this is done in an equal fair way, the regional Youth Voice Charter should be adopted by each local authority to help them agree set principles when it comes to youth voice.

A charter has been developed with the views of children and young people from of Stirling, Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and West Lothian. These views have been collated and agreed by the main youth voice structure(s) that exist in each local authority.

Having a common agreed set of principles within the charter will support a regional youth voice model moving forward. It will also help bridge any barriers that may exist between youth voice and the wider system.

The Youth Voice Charter for Forth Valley and West Lothian can be found on the Regional Improvement Collaborative website within the Youth Voice sub section.

[Forth Valley & West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative](#)

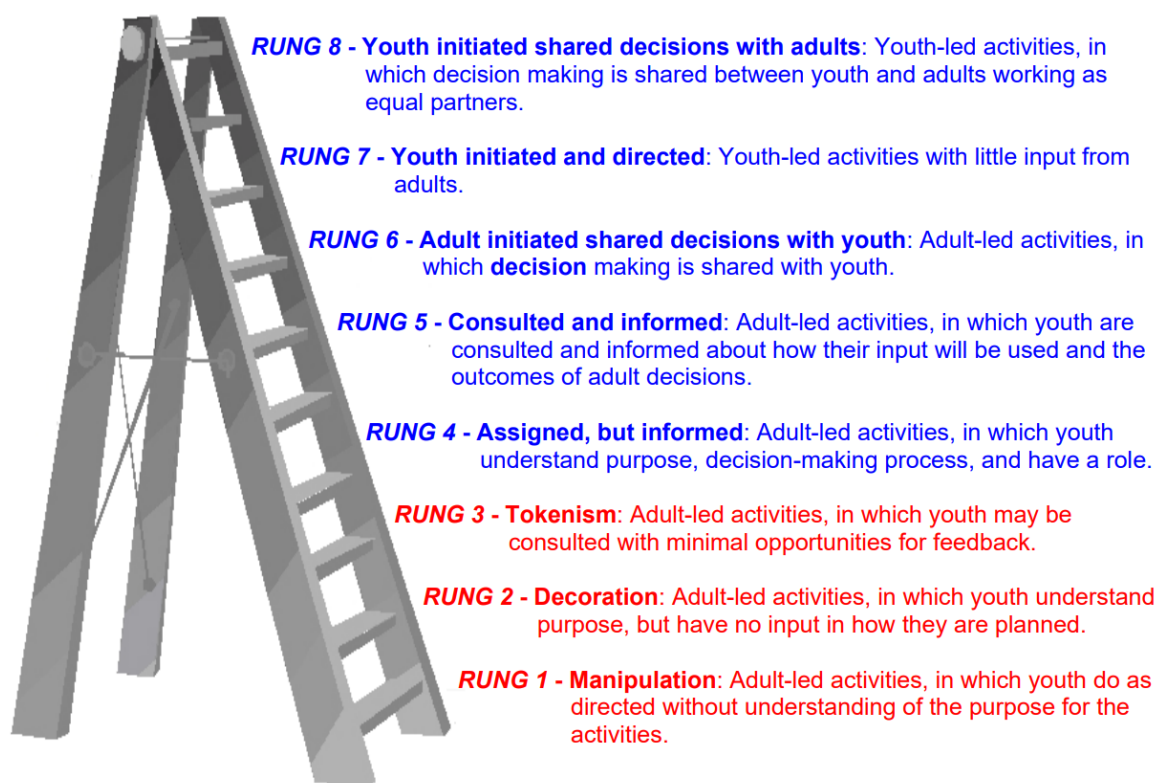
Methodology of Involvement

To ensure that the children and young people involved in any regional approach are fully incorporated and consulted, there has to be a standard agreement on the theory of engagement that is utilised. A well-recognised and understood approach is Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation which can be described as follows:

"Hart's model (1992) has eight rungs and two main zones he calls 'Non-Participation' and 'Degrees of Participation'. The top five rungs, in the 'Participation' zone all represent different but valid forms of participation while the three lowest rungs are all designated as "non-participation"."

(Source: https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf)

ROGER HART'S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION



This approach guarantees a direction of travel within how children and young people participate in a local and regional youth voice approach. There is acceptance that the upper rungs of the ladder are the ambition of any regional work and should be the main driving influence underpinning any work conducted.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Adopting a youth participation framework ensures that a number of key children's rights are being met and actioned on. The need for this is highlighted within the State of Children's Rights (2022) report:

"A recurring challenge is a gap between theory and practice for many decision makers, adults and organisations. Multiple participants identified the lack of a feedback loop – both internally and externally – meaning children did not know the impact of their engagement and could not hold decision makers to account." (State of Children's Rights, 2022, Together)

This framework looks to ensure that the following articles are met by its implementation across the region:

Article 3 (best interests of the child)

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

Article 12 (respect for the views of the child)

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

Article 13 (freedom of expression)

Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

Article 15 (freedom of association)

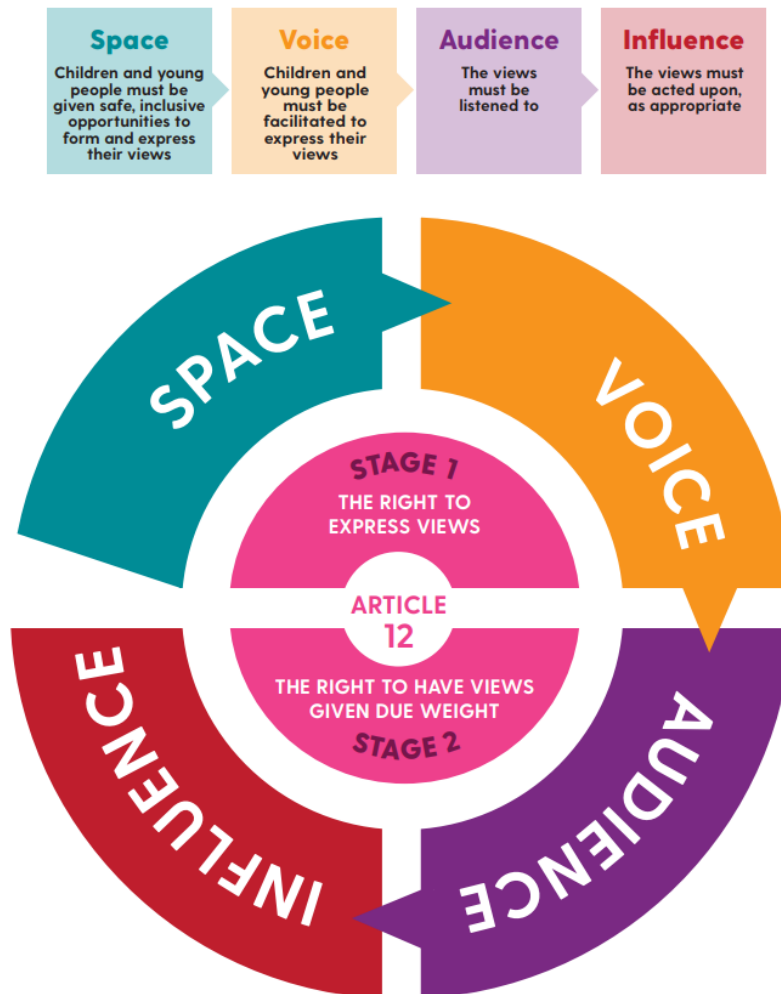
Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

Article 29 (goals of education)

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

The Lundy Model

The Lundy model is based on the child rights model of participation developed by Professor Laura Lundy at Queens University, Belfast, which provides guidance for decision-makers on the steps to take in giving children and young people a meaningful voice in decision-making. The model suggests that implementation of Article 12 of the UNCRC requires consideration of four inter-related concepts: Space, Voice, Audience and Influence.



This model has been further developed by Hub na nÓg Ireland which is the national centre of excellence on giving children and young people a voice in decision-making. More information, case studies, further reading and accompanying toolkit resources can be accessed here: <https://hubnanog.ie/participation-framework/>

This model is key in how practitioners implement youth voice structures, making it meaningful and non-tokenistic.

Engagement & Consultation

Children and young people involved in youth voice structures must be consulted in ways that allow for real and meaningful discussion. Time and planning must be allocated to allow this to happen, whilst ensuring the space for children and young people to meet is comfortable and relevant to them. This should further be strengthened by the processes used to involve children and young people in discussions, ensuring that methods are engaging.

The following recommendations for engagement and consultation methodology should be adhered to:

- Strategic plans should specify the processes and timescales used to engage, consult and collaborate with children and young people. Guaranteeing enough time is allocated to given topics is crucial to allow for fruitful and genuine discourse to take place.
- Processes should be in place to give all children and young people who represent others, the chance to consult with their peers and ascertain their opinions.
- School and community-based youth voice structures must have established connections with associated staff members and work collaboratively.
- Opportunities must be created to allow key issues that children and young people deem important to be discussed. Furthermore, their views must be cascaded up through the local authority and regional pathways.
- Fit for purpose toolkits and resources should be utilised in consulting children and young people on specific topics. This ensures that the content being discussed is being presented in such a way that makes sense to individuals and groups.
- Efforts should be made to include the opinions of all children and young people from a range of different life circumstances. An equity approach for this representation should be factored into any processes.

Empowering Youth Voice Approach

To best represent children and young people across the region, those who are currently involved in youth voice structures should also act as advocates for their peers.

This approach allows a greater collective voice to be captured when it comes to the views of all children and young people on a particular local or regional issue.

To guarantee the success of an approach such as this, key staff will be supported by YVDG practitioners and their youth voice networks on how to empower children and young people to become advocates. This would include the development in following skills:

- Research: Children and young people will understand how to research a particular subject area, uncover the various elements of that area and collate their findings.
- Consultation: Children and young people will learn how to conduct consultation approaches including how to ask bespoke questions that generate reliable qualitative and quantitative information.
- Data: Children and young people will be more confident in analysing and presenting data, highlighting the central messages and conclusions.
- Context: Children and young people will learn how to contextualise information in ways that can be shared with their peers, ensuring that it is understood regardless of age & stage.
- Planning: Children and young people will be able to plan how, when and why they consult their peers.
- Social Awareness: Children and young people will develop an awareness and understanding of the communities around them.

In incorporating these skills within youth voice structures, it guarantees that children and young people who consult their peers are fully equipped to do so. Views which are gathered will demonstrate a high degree of accuracy based on the topic being consulted. This is due to the questions being asked and topics being explained from a youth friendly perspective.

This document recommends that all establishments and settings use the Empowering Youth Voice resource found within the Youth Voice section with the Regional Improvement Collaborative website.

To aid this approach and its associated resources, professional learning will be created and provided by the practitioners within the Youth Voice Development Group and supported by Education Scotland.

Action as a result of Youth Voice approaches

In ensuring that all children and young people feel their voices have been heard, clear strategic direction should be implemented on how action is taken as a result of their views. Practitioners should adhere to a principle of “You said, We did” and present through various means that children and young people commonly engage with.

Demonstrating action and impact

The elements of this framework highlight the importance of involving children and young people in a meaningful way when it comes to regional and local decisions. Steps must be taken to ensure that actions are shared and impact is measured when the views of children and young people are sought.

This framework stipulates that practitioners have a clear approach when it comes to highlighting the action taken as a result of children and young people’s views. Approaches showing how views around specific themes have been acted upon are necessary. This information should be cascaded back to the children and young people who were consulted, promoting a “golden thread” of communication.

Key considerations on actions include:

- Actions are presented in a way that are meaningful to all children and young people
- Multiple outlets are utilised to demonstrate action taken
- Information is broken down in a contextualised way
- Routes exist for all children and young people to query action taken and the reasons behind it
- Wider outcomes of what actions will result in are explained
- Clarity is provided where actions aren’t taken and easy to understand reasons are given to support this.

All youth voice practitioners will act as a facilitator to ensure these steps are achieved and shared with all children and young people, this should be based on the level of youth voice that they represent (school, area, local, regional, national).

Finally, the impact of any action needs to be measured in a realistic and clear way for all children and young people to understand.

Key staff leading on youth voice structures within the region will support how this impact is measured or shared, alongside the gathering of any data that can be presented to youth voice structures.

Key considerations on impact include:

- Impact statements are contextualised to the circumstances and perceptions of children and young people, making it relevant to their lives
- Impact numbers are displayed in visually accessible ways that make sense to children and young people
- A mixture of quantitative and qualitative impact statements should be utilised
- Time and space should be created for practitioners to share and discuss impacts that have been made and why this is relevant
- Information should be where children and young people are and in the sources they use

This allows for a robust and non-tokenistic way of ensuring that all children and young people are given the opportunity to clearly see the action that has been taken as a result of their views and what impact it has made.

Policy Landscape around Youth Voice/Participation

A number of different forms of national guidance currently exist around youth voice and participation policy. This section provides links to that guidance and summarises their main contents. This regional framework looks to draw from this national guidance to strengthen the approach within Forth Valley and West Lothian, while also supporting areas of recommendation and improvement.

Current Guidance

Learner Participation in Educational Settings (3-18)

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/learner-participation-in-educational-settings-3-18/>

This guidance aids practitioners in school settings to define learner participation, its benefits and the distinct arenas in which it occurs. It provides a planning, self-evaluation mapping, implementation and readiness tools.

The Right Way – Scottish Youth Parliament

[AIM The Right Way — The Right Way](#)

Young people identified three themes essential to youth participation and created the AIM The Right Way resource to support officials and decision-makers in designing and delivering participation that is accessible, inclusive and meaningful.

7 Golden Rules for Participation

<https://www.cypcs.org.uk/get-help/teachers/golden-rules/>

This guidance highlights a set of principles that practitioners can use when they work with children and young people. They support UNCRC understanding and how to effectively encourage youth participation using 7 key rules as a measure of success.

An Empowered System

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/an-empowered-system/>

This guidance shows all the elements required for an empowered system, including learners. It provides challenge questions, self-evaluation framework and an evaluation strategy for these elements.

How good is our School/CLD/EL

https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/frameworks_selfevaluation/frwk2_nihedithgios/frwk2_hgios4.pdf

<https://education.gov.scot/media/ntspbuvy/hgiocld4.pdf>

https://education.gov.scot/nih/Documents/Frameworks_SelfEvaluation/FRWK1_NIHeditSelf-evaluationHGIELC/HGIOELC020316Revised.pdf

Inspection documents that highlight what youth participation should look like. HGIOS highlights this in QI 2.3, HGIOCLD showcases it across the 2.X indicators and HGIOELC has it spread across multiple indicators.

HMI Thematic Inspection of Parent and Pupil Participation

<https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/what-we-do/inspection-and-review/thematic-reports/national-thematic-inspection-empowerment-for-parent-and-pupil-participation/>

This inspection conducted in 2018 examined areas of empowerment when it came to parents and pupils. It looked in depth at how schools are ensuring children and young people's views are respected, acted upon and valued.

The report found key messages including:

- Children and young people are regularly involved in reviewing their school's vision, values and aims. This works best where schools co-produce these with pupils, leading to shared ownership.
- Overall, the voice of children and young people in schools is getting stronger using a wider range of approaches. The focus is beginning to shift from how the school operates to respecting pupils' views on the quality of their learning experience.
- Children and young people are increasingly taking responsibility for their own learning. There is also a broadening range of leadership opportunities outside the classroom and more opportunities for personal achievement.
- There is considerable scope to increase the opportunities for children and young people to lead their own learning. Meaningful personalisation and choice need to be further developed.
- Further work is needed to ensure that children and young people are actively engaged in school improvement, including designing and evaluating the curriculum.

This was subsequently followed up what areas still needed improvement and recommendations in how to do this:

Areas of Improvement:

- Build on current approaches and further develop ways for pupils and parents to participate meaningfully in the life and work of the school.
- Continue to increase children's and young people's opportunities to lead their own learning and contribute to school improvement.
- Involve pupils, parents and partners more in curriculum design and evaluating the impact of curriculum change.

Recommendations:

- Actively promote parental and pupil engagement and involvement in decision-making to ensure learners' needs are met in ways most appropriate to the school's context.
- Develop meaningful co-production of local school policy and improvement ensuring that parents, learners and partners are more actively engaged in evaluating improvement.
- Engage staff and school communities further in discussions about what authentic parent and pupil participation means within their local context.
- Ensure staff are supported to develop their skills to overcome any barriers to parental and pupil participation.

National Policy Drivers

Key national policies and programmes influence the lives of children and young people on a daily basis within their communities through themes such as education, community safety, environment etc.

With many national influences also driving improvement locally, youth voice should be considered within these national drivers and how the views of children and young people across the region can inform their direction.

As such it is important that all children and young people have the opportunity to be consulted and engage in discourse surrounding these national priorities. This framework recommends that a coordinated approach is taken to seek the views of children and young people on national themes. Youth voice networks and the Youth Voice Development group will have a more critical role in the planning on the approach utilised, how views are consolidated and timescales.

Some of these national priorities include, but are not limited to:

- Scottish Attainment Challenge
- Participatory Budgeting
- National Improvement Framework
- PSHE Review
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Learning for Sustainability Action Plan
- Education Reform

Consultation on national elements must follow similar approaches to those utilised for regional and local considerations. Further care must also be given to how information surrounding these themes is shared with children and young people, ensuring that it is easily understood and not overwhelming or limited.

Fundamentally national priorities must be explained in local contexts. In doing this children and young people can fully grasp how these overarching drivers can look at a grass roots level and how they operate within their communities of geography and interest.

Summary of Key Actions

These are the central elements that need to be implemented within this guidance to allow the voice of children and young people to be consulted correctly.

The views of children and young people can be gathered effectively and with a high measure of accuracy following the guidance detailed. It ensures they have the opportunity to have their voices heard in relation to themes that are important to them and also affect them. Implementing these principles removes barriers around tokenism, miscommunication, lack of context, ineffective discourse and exclusion.

The key considerations in applying this framework include:

- Each local authority (and individual establishments) embedding the regional Youth Charter that has been developed with the views of children and young people within the region
- Practitioners who support a youth voice structure being members of their local authority youth voice network
- Representation from all local authorities on the regional Youth Voice Development Group from CLD, education, third sector
- Stringent adoption of recommended means and methods used to consult with children and young people, specifically using Empowering Youth Voice approach
- Consistent approaches on how views are best fed up to regional and local levels, being mindful of key considerations surrounding children and young people
- Children and young people are consulted on local, regional and national issues that are important to them, while also feeding up their local and regional priorities
- Actions and impacts as a result of any consultations, must be shared with children and young people through accessible means
- All information, discussions, plans, strategies etc. must be presented and contextualised in a way that all children and young people can understand and access
- Processes and methods detailed in this document are used to drive forward effective youth voice opportunities
- Regular review of charter statements, empowering youth voice resource content and framework elements