

Child Participation Policy



The Management Committee

Ensuring that young people are involved in the running of our charity at all levels is an important part of our development. The management committee is committed to this Participation strategy and will work closely with the staff to ensure its implementation. As a charity aimed at creating positive diversionary activities through play for young people, we have a duty fully involve them in that process. We believe that we cannot deliver effective services without their active participation. We understand:

“Participation is a political process about shifting power and changing relationships. This operates on a number of levels within organisation’s and the wider community.” (Developing a culture of Participation in Organisation’s)

“Participation is the key stone of the arch that is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.” Liverpool Participation Standards.

“Every child and young person has rights, no matter who they are or where they live”. Eglantyne Jebb founder of Save the Children 1923. http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/31_57.htm.

About Speke Adventure Playground

Speke Adventure Playground is an open access play provision for children aged 8-16 years, providing positive diversionary activities regardless of ability, ethnicity cultural and social economic status, and has been in operation since 1974. The adventure playground operates with two fully qualified play leaders, who are both first aiders. The Adventure Playground is fully inclusive and works closely with agencies such as Fusion to support disabled children.

Mission Statement

Speke Children’s Environment committee is committed to utilising its skills, knowledge and experience in making provision for children’s play, leisure and recreational needs.

S.C.E.C will establish, promote and support children’s play through the adventure playground environment (namely, Speke Adventure playground). The Adventure Playground is an Open Access play facility, providing positive diversionary activities for children and young people aged 6-16 years regardless of ability, ethnicity cultural and social economic status. We aim to raise the self-esteem and independence of the children and young people who use the Adventure Playground by providing an environment in which they can take risks and challenge themselves. The Adventure Playground is fully staffed by experienced Play workers who facilitate play opportunities such as art and crafts, sports, games, music and drama. We regularly consult our users and include their ideas in our Play Programme.

S.C.E.C will work with other agencies in pursuit of a quality play experience for all children. Working alongside Fusion to support children with disabilities play and socialise with their mainstream peers. This helps to break down preconceived ideas, which often surround disability thus making a truly inclusive accepting society.



S.C.E.C aims to meet the Every Child Matters standards, which are:

- Stay safe
- Be healthy
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

Policy Context References

Speke Adventure Playground recognises that the Children and Young Peoples Participation is constantly evolving and Speke Adventure Playground is committed to keeping abreast of these developments at International, National, Local and Organisational levels. Speke Adventure Playground makes reference to the following policies when working with children and young people:

International

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child -

http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/F1B3FBF728B196018E9616C71D0BF592.pdf

Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 -

<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

National

- Children's Act 1989 and other relevant acts
- Children's Act 2004 Every Child Matters – Change for Children
- National Service Frameworks for children young people and maternity and services
- Children and Young Peoples Plan
- Children's Workforce Strategy
- Children's Workforce Strategy: Developing the Children's Workforce for 2020
- Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce
- Every Youth Matters
- Building A Culture of Participation
- Learning to Listen to Core Principles (CYPU 2001)
- Education Act 2002
- Health and Social Care Act 2001

Local

- Children and Young Peoples Plan Liverpool
- Liverpool Participation Standards
- Liverpool Youth Service Participation Strategy
- Children's Participation Strategy Liverpool, Sefton and Knowsley



Strengthening the Culture of Participation across Speke Adventure Playground

Speke Adventure Playground is a child/youth-centered organization and as such, participation is central to all practice with children and young people across the association. We are continuing to establish a culture in which it is assumed that all children and young people will be listened to about all decisions – both personal and public that affect their lives.

Aims and Objectives for Strengthening the Culture of Participation through Learning and Development Opportunities:

Speke Adventure Playground is constantly developing opportunities for children and young people to engage with the process of Participation – whereby children and young people take a more active part within a project or process, influence decisions and actions as a key contributor, therefore having a share of the power to shape the direction of Speke Adventure Playground and its projects.

Speke Adventure Playground has been committed to Participation for many years as it has been at the forefront of service provision for young people on Merseyside, and participation is an integral aspect of play work. The aims and objectives of developing a culture of participation are across the board at Speke Adventure Playground and for the young people it supports.

“Strategic aim 1: Enabling young people’s access and participation “

Improvement in Speke Adventure Playground and its projects: Projects will be constantly reviewed and improved upon with services and practices placing participation as an integral aspect of the work. Shared decision making enables greater levels of support encouraging greater accessibility and engagement with services as young people feel they are co-creators of the projects they engage with and therefore owing it.

This will be monitored and supported by various processes within MYA such as:

- Supervision
- Team Meetings
- Extended Team Meetings
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- Management Committee meetings

Improvements for young people who engage with Speke Adventure Playground through the strengthening of Citizenship and Social Inclusion.

The evidence base taken from many of the policy documents listed above illustrate that by applying the principles of participation encourages various strengthening practices such as:

- **Children’s rights** involving children helping fulfill their rights under Article 12 of the UNCRC, and awareness of other rights.
- **Empowerment** increased belief in their ability to create change and levels of control over elements of their lives.
- **Citizenship and Political Education** increased political and social knowledge and awareness of rights for children and young people
- **Responsibility** increased levels of responsibility
- **Relationships** improvement of relationships and the perception of young people amongst communities, professionals and peers



Personal and Social Development

- Increased confidence and self-belief
- Developing group skills
- Promoting pro-social behavior
- Positive career choices (including for those considered at risk)
- Improve education and employment opportunities.
- Increase knowledge, understanding and change attitudes
- Future active involvement and greater responsibility
- Gaining practical skills
- Heighten aspirations and plans.
- Increase opportunities to have fun and meet new people.
- Increase opportunities to help their communities.

Citizenship and social inclusion

- Provide inclusive practice that draws in those often excluded (e.g. young children, carers, asylum seekers and disabled young people).
- Meet UNCRC expectations for the right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Help ensure the right to be treated with respect, to be safe and protected from harm.
- Empower through being included; develop skills and knowledge to get heard and deeper self-belief in ability to create change.
- Enhance citizenship and political education, including knowledge of children's rights, structures, services, etc.
- Increase independence and responsibility for actions.
- Increase ownership and care for services.
- Develop more positive community relationships between young peers and between children and adults.
- Improve sense of community and belonging.



Participation is a right

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that any child or young person has a right to express their views and have them given due weight in decisions affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity. Participation is not a privilege and it does not have to be earned; rather, it values children and young people as citizens in their own right. The UK has ratified the convention, and increasingly public services are required by law to take seriously the wishes and feelings of children.

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

Below pertinent articles from the UNCRC, which MYA believes all Children and young people, should enjoy, alongside of Rights go Responsibilities, which MYA is equally as keen to promote.

- Article 2** Requires all the rights of the Convention to be implemented for every child and young person without discrimination.
- Article 3** The best interests of the child shall be primary consideration
- Article 12** Grants every young person the right to express their views and to have these views given due weight in all matters which affect them.
- Article 13** Children have the right to get and share information
- Article 14** Gives every child and young person the right to freedom of expression – so long as they respect the rights of others.
- Article 15** Children and young people have right to meet with other children and young people...
- Article 17** Gives children and young people the right to receive, seek and to give information.
- Article 23** Gives disabled children and young people the right to active participation in their community.
- Article 29** States education should develop a child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to the full
- Article 31** children have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities
- Article 39** States if children have been neglected or abused, they should receive special help to restore their self-respect

Children and young people are the best authorities on their own lives

Only children and young people themselves can communicate what they like and dislike, what works for them and what doesn't. Services that involve them meaningfully in individual decision making and in planning, delivery and evaluation will be better able to meet their needs and be better used by them.

Participation depends on respect and honesty

Honesty, mutual trust and respect are essential for effective participation. Children and young people's contributions must be taken seriously, treating each child as an individual and avoiding assumptions or



stereotypes. It requires honesty about how children’s contributions are going to be used and exactly how much power and influence they can really have. Children and young people must feel free to say what they really think, without the possibility of negative consequences.

Participation must be accessible and inclusive

Children, who are very young, disabled, or who have special educational needs have the same right to participate as other children. Services and organisations should be proactive in engaging them, as well as those who are socially or economically disadvantaged, excluded or discriminated against on any basis. Participation also requires a safe, child-friendly environment to be effective.

Participation is a dialogue to influence change

It involves listening and responding constructively to what children and young people say or want to do. Children and young people value the experience and knowledge that adults can contribute to help them participate. Prompt and honest feedback by adults is one way of letting children and young people know that their views are valued.

Participation is built in

For participation to be meaningful, services and organisation’s have to build this into their values, structures and procedures. Different levels of participation will be appropriate according to the circumstances, goals, type of organisation and the children and young people involved. It can range from individual decision making to inclusion in democratic processes or involvement in organisation’s’ planning, evaluation, decision-making or governance structures. Meaningful participation never stops; it is not a project or task with a beginning and an end, and it requires commitment, time, effort and resources.

Participation is everyone’s responsibility

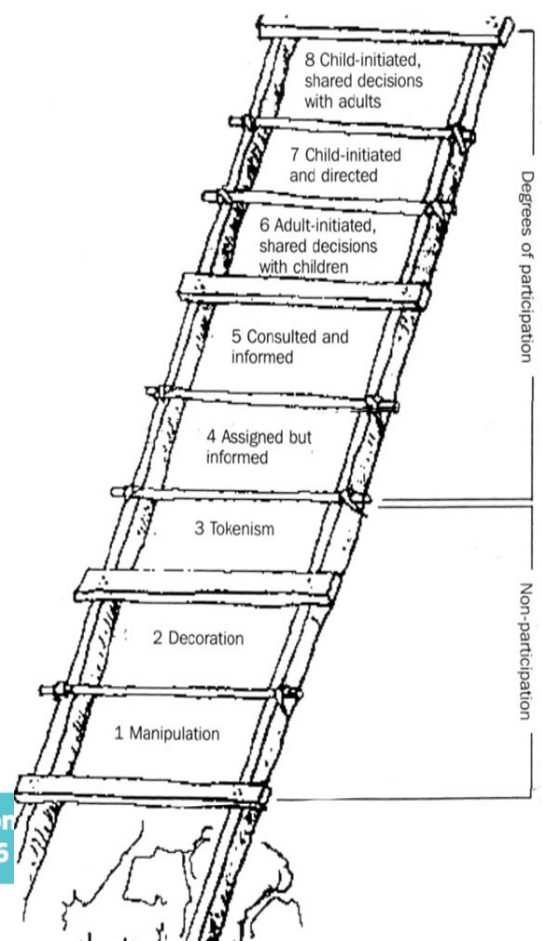
Every person or organisation whose activity affects children and young people directly or indirectly has a responsibility to ensure their views are listened to and acted upon.

Participation benefits everybody

Effective participation improves decisions affecting children and young people and helps them to develop confidence and skills, and to build valuable social bonds. It develops children and young people’s sense of their own rights and responsibilities as citizens, helping to counter anti-social behavior and promote a commitment to society and its institutions. Successful participation can also benefit communities, promoting social cohesion and a more positive view of children and young people. For services, it is one of the keys to ensuring they meet the needs of children and young people, are well used by them, and so are able to demonstrate improved outcomes.

DIFFERING LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Speke Adventure Playground policy is also underpinned by Roger Hart’s ‘Ladder of Participation’ (1997) which is based on the principle



that young people get involved at different levels, defined by 3 categories of adult / young person interaction:

- Adult led
- Young person-led
- Shared decisions

Adapted from "Children's Participation - from Tokenism to Citizenship" Author: Roger A. Hart, Publisher: UNICEF

What the Different Levels Mean:

- 8) **Youth-initiated, shared decisions with adults** are when projects or programs are initiated by youth and decision-making is shared among young people and adults. These projects empower young people while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.
- 7) **Youth-initiated and directed** is when young people initiate and direct a project or program. Adults are involved only in a supportive role.
- 6) **Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people** are when adults initiate projects or programs but the decision-making is shared with the young people.
- 5) **Consulted and informed** is when young people give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The young people are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults.
- 4) **Assigned but informed** is where young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved.
- 3) **Tokenism** is where young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.
- 2) **Decoration** is where young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people.
- 1) **Manipulation** is where adults use young people to support causes and pretend that young people inspire the causes.

Kids Council

Young people often think traditional ways to get involved in governance are unattractive. Speke Adventure Playground has established the need to listen to young people's ideas and be creative in our response.

The kid's council will aim to:

- Train and support children and young people to run their own governance groups and to enable meaningful engagement in adult ones.
- Speke Adventure Playground staff will need to be very clear on the level of influence and power young people have from the outset to avoid raising false expectations.



- Adults will need to be aware of the jargon they use and the formality and appropriateness of timings for 'meetings'. Young people can feel excluded and disempowered if adults don't make allowances for their individual commitments.



PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Speke Adventure Playground planning monitoring and evaluation documentation requires the involvement of young people in these processes and staff are requested to record exactly how this has been achieved.

Expected good practice includes:

- Needs assessment – analysing need in preparation for planning is essential and involving young people in discussions surrounding their own needs is an integral part of the planning process.
- Sessional/project/ event feedback and evaluation – this is about the young person's ability to freely give their views on the services they receive. Examples could include a 'Comments, Complaints and Suggestions' scheme, a graffiti wall/flip chart exercise or evaluation questionnaire.
- The involvement of young people in all planning processes
- If young people are invited to comment, staff must commit to providing a response that outlines what action will take place as a result of their input.

