

A BEST PRACTICE GUIDE TO:

YOUTH PACT

Bringing young people together with Police, Practitioners and Communities.





Our message to you

Children and young people in our communities are growing up in areas where they tell us they feel unsafe. Their experiences and concerns must be acknowledged and addressed with meaningful action. To create real change, we must engage with them directly, listen to their voices, and ensure they feel heard and valued. Meaningful engagement is not just about consultation—it’s about creating genuine opportunities for young people to influence the decisions that affect their lives. By fostering closer connections between young people and those who have the power to support them we can bridge the gap between their experiences and the policies designed to protect them.

This is where Youth PACT plays a vital role. It is more than just a program—it is a platform for collaboration, a space where young people can engage in real conversations with decision-makers and contribute to practical solutions.

By empowering young people to be active participants in shaping safer communities, we are not only addressing current concerns but also investing in a future where they feel secure, valued, and heard. Working alongside young people in this way is one of the most powerful approaches we can take to create safer, stronger, and more connected communities.



Sallie White
Communications and Engagement Officer
Hampshire and Isle of Wight VRU

The issues facing Children and Young People are more varied and challenging than ever before, and all too often, approaches to tackle them lack the engagement and perspectives of young people. This is no small feat – but putting young people at the heart of decision making is paramount – for it is their futures at stake.

Youth PACT does exactly that; bringing together communities and professionals, in a forum that seeks to deliver youth-led initiatives and solutions to the issues that matter most to them. Working on the Youth PACT project, it has been inspiring to see so many young people engaging creatively and purposefully – sharing ideas and perspectives that can have enormous real-world impact on their lives and communities.

Youth PACT is purposeful engagement with young people, and so much more – it is the key to ensuring communities are connected, safer, and confident – on all fronts; and that young people are set at the heart of all decisions made about them, and their communities.



Leo Burnet, M.ISRM
Youth Commission Member
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Youth Commission

What is a Youth PACT?



PACT means Police and Community Together. These are meetings that take place locally where residents and members of the community talk about things that matter to them in that community. People can bring concerns, ideas, and talk about them openly with Police and other practitioners and then agree a plan of action.

The police usually give an update on what is happening from a crime and ASB point of view, the local authority will talk about what they are doing within communities to make them safe, clean and good for residents.

A Youth PACT is exactly the same, this time for young people to discuss the things they care about.

Why are Youth PACT meetings important?

- ✓ **Empowerment:** Youth Voices are important, Involving youth helps them feel valued and capable of making a difference, boosting their confidence and sense of purpose.
- ✓ **Fresh Perspectives:** Young people bring innovative ideas and unique insights as they see them, offering fresh approaches to addressing societal challenges.
- ✓ **Prevention:** Youth-led initiatives can address root causes of issues like violence or inequality by connecting directly with those most at risk.
- ✓ **Ownership:** Young people being actively involved in the solutions - don't do anything without them.
- ✓ **Sustainability:** Engaging young people ensures long-term commitment to change, as they become the leaders and changemakers of tomorrow.
- ✓ **Representation:** Youth participation ensures that policies and programs reflect the needs and aspirations of a generation that will inherit the future.

When young voices are included, communities benefit from their energy, creativity, and authenticity.



About this guide



This guide has been developed in collaboration with young people from the Oasis Academy Sholing Youth Parliament. It provides practical advice and best practice for establishing a Youth PACT in your area.

After a successful pilot with young people in school, we explored what makes a Youth PACT meeting effective and engaging.

The school setting lends itself well as a formal setting to run a Youth PACT meeting but we are confident that the recommendations outlined here can be applied successfully in any formal environment e.g Local Authority Youth Forum or , Youth Council.

We have included information on how to effectively engage children and young people, how to set a Youth PACT meeting up, how to facilitate the meetings.

The information in this guide has been taken directly from the pilot and includes feedback and evaluation from practitioners and young people that attended.

Who should be invited?

We feel to have the most effective outcomes the following people should be invited to attend:

- Young people
- Police
- Local Authority
- Fire
- Community Representative e:g Youth worker, Participation Worker, Education
- Anyone else asked to attend as a result of issues young people have raised.

Types of things young people talked about:

Young people raised vast and various issues so being prepared to talk about these issues is important for meaningful participation.

- Safety in their community
- Safe Spaces
- Online Safety and Cyber Bullying
- Road Safety around the school
- Transport to and from school
- Things for them to do in their local area
- Finding information that can help them

I enjoyed getting the opportunity to meet with different organisations and other students within my school to hear about potential improvements in my local area and what we could do to influence this.

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Engaging and Communicating with Young People.

How to make a welcoming space

Aim: Learning and understanding effective engagement with young people

Before you start: spend time reflecting on how to effectively engage and communicate with children and young people throughout this process. Key considerations include the environment you create, the language you use, and the dynamics of the people present. Each of these elements plays a vital role in making children and young people feel welcomed, respected, and valued.

Where to begin:

A crucial aspect of working with children and young people is ensuring they feel genuinely heard. Active listening skills play a key role in engaging your audience and making them feel valued. During our evaluation session, the young participants shared that they felt respected and appreciated because the adults in the room took their views seriously.

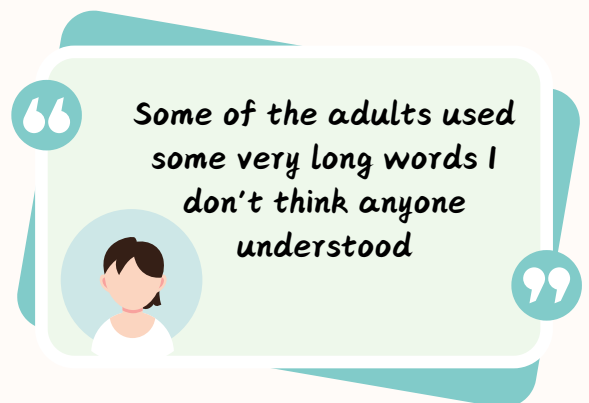
To foster this environment, everyone should prioritise creating opportunities for young people to share their thoughts freely while minimising adult input and interruptions. Not all participants will feel comfortable speaking up in a large group setting, which is entirely natural. The Youth PACT facilitator is crucial to young peoples' empowerment within the meeting, by establishing clear ground rules or expectations at the start of the session, which will help create a supportive and inclusive atmosphere.

Resources:

- What is participation? Appendix 2 / Page 13
- Trauma informed participation. Appendix 3 / Page 14
- Roger Hart's Ladder of participation. Appendix 4 / Page 15
- [How to be a good listener | Young Minds](#)

Learning and Recommendations

- ✓ • Use language that everyone will understand and avoid jargon and acronyms.
- ✓ • Have a process to allow those who don't want to talk to share their views e.g Post-it notes or a live Kahoot.
- ✓ • Allow young people to have more air time - less adult talking
- ✓ • Help the young people in the Youth PACT bring the views of other young people in their setting e.g surveys, social media, assemblies, PSHE or prefects.



The Process -

Setting up a Youth PACT meeting

Aim: Helping you plan your Youth PACT using our practical recommendations

Before you start: Identify a group of young people who would like to be involved in this process, we suggest school councils, school parliaments, Youth Parliaments. Link with the person facilitating this group, they are the key conduit between you and the young people.

Where to begin:

- **Identify a lead organisation**

In many cases the lead organisation would be the Police or the Local authority. This organisation / person will be responsible for linking with the key person in the setting, linking with the young people, all admin, including booking meetings, recording actions, follow ups and making sure promises are delivered on and working closely with the facilitator.

- **Identify an appropriate facilitator**

It is crucial the facilitator has experience of engaging and working with young people and can advocate for their best interests. The facilitator also needs to be confident in taking charge of a space.

- **Facilitator holds a scene-setting meeting with young people**

This will allow you to bring young people on the journey, explain the purpose of the PACT meeting, establish how they would like the meeting to be run and understand what their key issues might be.

- **Invite the right adults to attend**

We found having key organisations such as Police, Fire, Community representative and Local Authority was helpful at the initial meeting. Subsequent meetings were focused on topics that young people selected and adults were invited into the space as specialists on that particular topic, to discuss and create a joint plan with young people. It is important to have those people in the room who are able to agree to or make decisions that affect the community you are engaging with and are able to agree some outcomes with the young people.

Resources:

- Template agenda. Appendix 5 / Page 16
- Terms of Reference. Appendix 6 / Page 17
- [Find your Local Bobby](#).

Learning and Recommendations

- ✓ • Facilitator is an experienced youth or participation worker
- ✓ • Create the right balance of the right practitioners - not too many adults
- ✓ • Be credible - deliver what you say you will
- ✓ • Be knowledgeable about the issues young people bring
- ✓ • Take an active involvement in being there - are you the right person?



Facilitator's Guide-

What you need to think about

Aim: Guiding you to be the best facilitator considering the young people as your main audience.

Before you start: A facilitator is someone who helps a group of people work together more effectively, understand their common objectives, and plan how to achieve these goals. Being a good group facilitator involves a mix of skills and techniques to guide discussions effectively and ensure productive outcomes. Here are some key tips to help you become an excellent facilitator:

Resources:

- [Youth / Adult Partnership Toolkit](#)
- [Facilitator skills](#)

Where to begin:

- **Give young people the power**

Empowering young people to take charge in 'adult spaces' can be incredibly beneficial for both the young people and the adults involved. It is important to ensure the young people have the majority of the space and time talking, their ideas and thoughts remain the focus so that adults don't bring their own agendas. You are in charge and it is okay to redirect adult-led conversations back to focus on the young people.

- **Adopt a Facilitation Mindset:** Focus on guiding the group rather than solving their problems. Your role is to help them reach their best outcomes. Sharing ideas or things you know about is okay, but allow the young people to come up with the solutions, because they have great ideas and may think of something you have not thought of. Empower other adult participants to do the same. What adults think young people need can be different to what they actually want.

- **Create a Supportive Environment:** Ensure that the space is welcoming and supportive. Adults should be open to listening and valuing the contributions of young people.

- **Be Flexible:** Be prepared to adapt your plans based on the group's needs and the flow of the discussion. You may have a set topic to cover but topics young people may bring could differ. It is okay to allow the discussion to change direction, but ensure the topics that were agreed on the agenda are still given airtime.

- **Time Management:** Plan your sessions wisely and keep track of time to avoid overrunning
- **Recap:** End the meeting by going over any recorded actions, to ensure all participants are on the same page and know what they have to take away and complete ahead of the next meeting
- **End meeting:** Close the meeting agreeing the next time and date and thank participants for their involvement.
- **Reflect and Adjust:** After the session, reflect on what worked well and what didn't. Use this reflection to improve future sessions

Learning and Recommendations

- ✓ Guide the conversations if they go off topic or when adults take over
- ✓ Be positive and encourage information sharing that upskills young people's knowledge and awareness
- ✓ Keep the actions to a minimum e.g 2 or 3 and split them up into a 'here and now', medium and long term.
- ✓ Review progress and keep young people up to date with developments and progress
- ✓ Use documents e.g agendas to support young peoples' involvement and understanding of formal meetings
- ✓ Always keep the focus on young people

Beat Surgeries

An alternative to Youth PACT meetings

Aim: To support wider engagement with young people and consider if a beat surgery might be suitable either alongside or in place of a Youth PACT meeting in your school. Beat surgeries are a more informal form of police and community engagement and may either suit your environment better. If this would work for your setting then consider **getting in contact with your Local Bobby** or PCSO to get one set up.

Before you start: Relationships are key for all community engagement and it is important to build trusting relationships. Ensure this is in place before setting up a beat surgery, as it will support better engagement. We would suggest it is helpful that you have confidence and experience of working with young people, in order to understand them and know what will work when engaging with them.

Resources:

- [8 Steps to an effective Beat Surgery](#)
- [College of Policing - Engagement and Communications](#)

Where to begin:

- **Build Relationships**

As mentioned above positive relationships are key. Ensuring you are present and build connections with young people and parents/carers in your community will help you establish if a beat surgery will work within a school in your area. This could be attending events, being present in the areas young people hang out to be seen and having conversations.

- **Be a regular presence**

Being a regular face and getting involved in your community will support relationship building and people will get to know you. Using resources as part of your engagement such as freebies, careers information, educational literature and other colleagues will help young people build an interest in your presence and help with conversations and trust.

- **Take a genuine interest**

Young people know a fake and will spot this a mile away if you aren't genuine, relaxed and relatable. Take time to get to know them and allow them to get to know a bit about you.

- **Set up the Beat Surgery**

Once you have undertaken the work to build connections consider holding a Beat Surgery. In this case we are suggesting a school setting (any community setting would work) so approach your contact in the school and explain the benefits and purpose. Beat Surgeries are an opportunity for young people to approach you in a more relaxed environment than a PACT meeting. Ideally set yourself up in a space in the school, bring freebies and resources and ask the school to promote. Use it as an opportunity to chat to the young people, be honest, curious and always follow up!

- **After the Beat Surgery**

Hold a 'wash up' session with your designated contact within the school to share information and any concerns and plan next steps.

Learning and Recommendations

- ✓ Be a trusting face in your community
- ✓ Be relaxed and relatable
- ✓ Hold Beat Surgeries regularly and be honest and realistic with the young people



Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. We hope you have found it useful and are excited to put your first Youth PACT/ beat surgery into practice. We have really taken the time alongside the practitioners and young people to consider what a great Youth PACT looks like and we hope you agree and can use our suggestions to implement a meaningful youth engagement opportunity with young people in your community.

A few final things to consider:

- ✓ • Don't let this be a one off
- ✓ • Do it properly and regularly and make it meaningful
- ✓ • Keep reflecting and reviewing the impact and listen to the young people
- ✓ • Can you link Youth PACT with other young people's participation activity in your community?
- ✓ • How can this fit into other pathways for community safety?

We would like to say a few thank-yous to those who supported the creation of this guide;

Thank you to Hampshire and Isle of Wight Youth Commission, Southampton City Council, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary, Oasis Hub and Oasis Academy for being so positive, forthcoming and willing to participate, sharing feedback and actioning things the group discussed.

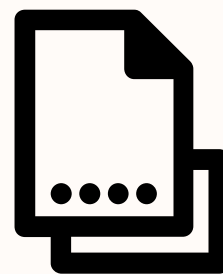
Thank you to PCSO Mel Pryer for her input around the Beat Surgeries. Mel implemented a school beat surgery on her patch engaging the students on important topics. She shared her learning to be included in this guide and is looking at ways the beat surgery can link with a Youth PACT.

Finally, the biggest thank you to the young people of Oasis Sholing Youth Parliament, who gave their time and fully involved themselves, being confident to share their views and feedback, ask questions and let the practitioners into their space. Your involvement in this will truly allow other young people to also have a meaningful say and make a difference in their community.

Don't forget to speak up loud and proud!

THANK YOU!

Appendix



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Safeguarding



In order to ensure the safeguarding of the young people taking part in the activities we ask you to consider the following:

- ✓ 1. Talk to young people about what confidentiality means and that you may need to share information onwards if there is a disclosure made.
- ✓ 2. Ensure young people understand the content of the activities and that if they wish they do not need to take part or can end their involvement if they are uncomfortable.
- ✓ 3. Consider having a trusted adult available during and after the activities for young people to talk to if they have any concerns or worries about the content of the activities
- ✓ 4. Get consent from the young people stating they are happy to take part in the activity
- ✓ 5. Familiarise yourself with the setting's safeguarding policy.

Below are details of local reporting processes and safeguarding resources that you may find helpful.

In an emergency always call 999

Hampshire

Concerns about a child

- phone [0300 555 1384](tel:03005551384) during office hours 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday
- phone [0300 555 1373](tel:03005551373) at all other times to contact the Out of Hours service

Professionals should complete the [Inter-Agency Referral Form \(IARF\) for Hampshire](#) or the [Inter-Agency Referral Form \(IARF\) for Isle of Wight](#).

Southampton

Telephone number for members of the public: 023 8083 3004

Telephone number for professionals: 023 8083 2300

Email address: childrensresourceservice@southampton.gov.uk

Make a referral to child protection & safeguarding

When it's not an emergency situation but you are worried that a child may be at risk of abuse, harm or neglect, you can make a referral to us. You can do this whether you are a member of the public or a professional.

Online referral form

Portsmouth

You can contact the MASH during office hours on either:

02392 688793 or 0845 671 0271

Email: MASH@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

If it is during out of office hours (5pm – 8am weekdays, weekends and bank holidays) the number is: 03005 551373.

Portsmouth MASH details for professionals

Professionals who work with children in the city can contact MASH by telephone 0845 671 0271

Email MASH@portsmouthcc.gov.uk.

Isle of Wight

Telephone number: 0300 300 0117. This number is for the general public and runs 24 hours per day.

Professionals should complete the [Inter-Agency Referral Form \(IARF\) for Hampshire](#) or the [Inter-Agency Referral Form \(IARF\) for Isle of Wight](#).

Be aware that IOW Children's Services works in partnership with Hampshire County Council. This includes Hampshire County Council which provides MASH for the Isle of Wight and manages the complaints process.

NSPCC

The NSPCC Helpline service, is currently available 10am–8pm Monday to Friday.

Call on 0808 800 5000

Email help@nspcc.org.uk

What is Participation?



Young people's participation refers to the active involvement of young people in decision-making processes on issues that affect them. It is a process where children and young people are listened to and able to influence decisions about their lives which brings about change and gives them the opportunity to have a say in matters that affect them. Children and young people have a right to be involved about decisions that impact their lives, and their future.

Pitting children and young people at the heart of participation gives those impacted the opportunity to shape and influence decisions that impact their lives.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child contains 52 standards that set out the Rights of a Child. Most countries including the United Kingdom have signed up to the convention. Many countries use the standards wholly or in part to promote children and young people's involvement. The standards of most relevance to the participation of children and young people are:

- Article 12: Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.
- Article 13: Children and young people have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others.
- Article 17: Children and young people have the right to receive, seek and give information.
- Article 23: Disabled children and young people have the right to active participation in their community.
- Article 2: Requires all of the rights in the convention on the Rights of the Child to be implemented for every child, without discrimination

Principles of Participation

- Ensure children and young people understand their rights
- It's their choice to be involved, don't force them to take part if they aren't comfortable and make sure they fully understand their involvement
- Make sure they fully understand how their views will be used
- Value all views
- Close the loop, how do you plan to feedback the outcomes of their views being shared.

Benefits and Barriers to participation

Benefits

- Build self confidence
- Empowerment
- Learning of new skills
- Connecting with other children and young people
- Opportunity to influence and have their voices heard

Barriers

- Lack of confidence
- Resources
- Time
- Availability

Trauma Informed Participation

Trauma-informed participation means interacting with individuals, particularly those who have experienced trauma, in a way that is sensitive to the effects of that trauma. The goal is to create a safe and supportive environment that minimises the risk of re-traumatisation and promotes healing and empowerment.

Key principles of trauma-informed engagement include:

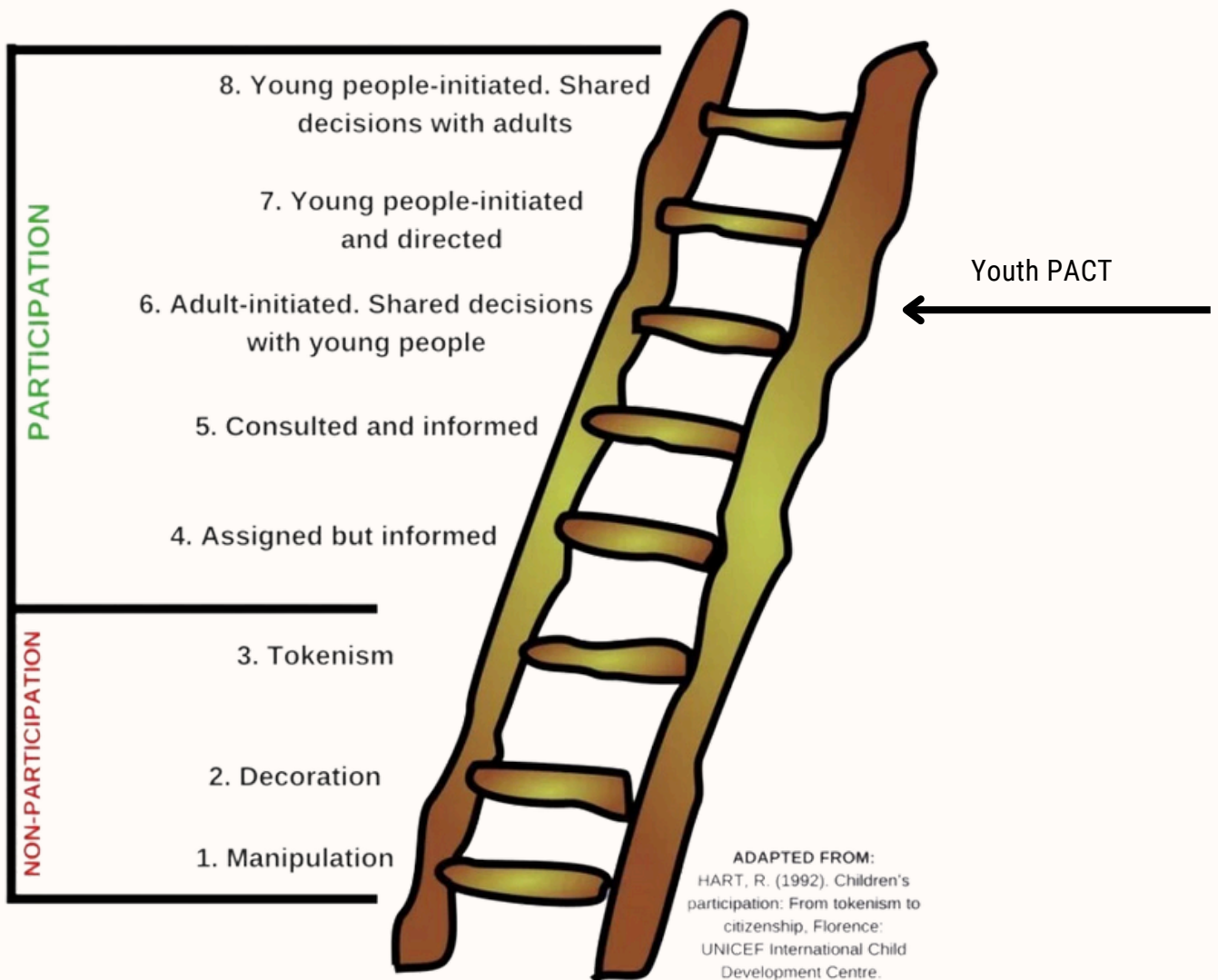
- ✓ **1. Safety:** Ensuring physical, emotional, and psychological safety for individuals is paramount. This includes creating environments where people feel secure and respected.
- ✓ **2. Trustworthiness and Transparency:** Building trust through clear communication and transparency in decision-making processes helps individuals feel secure and valued.
- ✓ **3. Peer Support:** Encouraging relationships that support healing, whether through professional support or community-based connections, recognises the importance of shared experiences in recovery.
- ✓ **4. Collaboration:** Acknowledging the importance of partnership, this principle promotes power-sharing and collaboration between service providers and individuals.
- ✓ **5. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice:** Empowering individuals by honouring their autonomy and giving them a voice in their care or engagement helps in their recovery journey. This principle emphasises the importance of recognising and building on strengths.
- ✓ **6. Cultural Considerations:** Being mindful of and responsive to cultural, historical, and gender differences is essential in understanding the unique experiences of trauma survivors and ensuring that services are equitable and inclusive.



We ask you to take a trauma informed approach when setting up a Youth PACT. Please consider your young people and how conversations and topics raised in the meetings may affect them.

Roger Hart's Ladder of Children's Participation

Hart's model (1992) has eight steps describing the levels from 'Non-Participation' and 'Degrees of Participation'. We feel Youth PACT sits at a high level which is adult initiated but decisions are shared with young people. We feel this visual is relevant to support everyone involved to understand how important active participation with young people is.



Roger Hart's ladder of children's participation is adapted from Sherry Arnstein's "ladder of citizen participation" (1969) which related to citizen involvement in planning processes in the United States.

Example Youth Police and Community Together (PACT) Meeting Agenda

Attendees:

- Fire Service
- Police
- Local Authority
- Violence Reduction Unit
- Community Rep

Agenda

- Opening statement – Explaining the purpose of the Youth PACT
- Introductions (Students and Attendees) – Opportunity for organisations reps to explain why they are here.
- Updates from organisations – What are they doing in the local area
- Questions from Students
- Discussions and planning
- Actions

Things to consult with young people on

- What does the future of a Youth PACT look like?
- Time of the meetings?
- Where should they take place?
- Who would you like to invite?
- How can we help you to broadcast the impact of Youth PACT to the wider school?

Example

Youth Police and Community Together (PACT) Meeting

Terms of Reference

Title

Date

1. **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 1.1. The primary aim of the Youth PACT meetings is to bring the Police and partners together to meet with young people to understand their needs as a community and work with them to find solutions.
- 1.2. The aim of the meeting is to ensure young people feel safe where they live/ attend school and be updated by police and partners on important information affecting them.
- 1.3. The group will act as a local forum joining organisations and agencies that support young people.
- 1.4 The group will ensure engagement with young people is meaningful, that young people feel included and listened too and tangible actions are taken and acted upon.
- 1.5. The group will update attendees on previous actions from the last meeting, listen and understand the concerns being raised and plan together what a solution might look like.
- 1.6 Sometimes this could include information / intell is passed onto the right people or organisation
- 1.7 The group will ensure young people feel and see the difference they are making
- 1.8. Regularity, venue and lead organisation of meetings to be agreed

1.7. **EXPECTATIONS:**

- All partners attending will prepare themselves with knowledge or key work from their organisation, relating to topics young people raise
- Facilitating organisation or person will link with the designated contact within the young people's setting and will will: organise agenda; follow up on actions; invite guests; and support communication with young people to help them being part of the Youth PACT.
- Partners commit to regular attendance and completing actions given to them. If not able to attend, give all information to relevant colleague who will attend in their place or update given to facilitator
- Young people are supported and empowered to share their views by every person attending the Youth PACT meeting.