

# The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy

Key priorities for youth policies answers on  
**Participation**



Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy, youth research and youth work.

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## **UNITED KINGDOM, 2006**

### **1 Structures of participation at the local, regional or national level**

#### **1.1 Youth parliaments**

##### **1.1.1 Local youth parliaments**

UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) representatives generally linked into local youth councils or other representative mechanisms.

##### **1.1.2 Regional youth parliaments**

North East Regional Youth Assembly represents young people aged 12-21 in the 12 Local Authorities in the North East Region of England. <http://www.nerya.org.uk>. London Assembly has established some representative structures for young people in the region. <http://www.london.gov.uk/>. The UK Youth Parliament has a network of regional contacts - details at [www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/20418/index.html](http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/20418/index.html) nb. while organisations described as 'youth parliaments' may have a more formal structure than those called 'youth councils', there is no clear distinction.

##### **1.1.3 National youth parliament**

UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) aims to give a voice to young people aged 11 to 18 in the UK. UKYP has over 300 elected young MPs aged between 11 and 18. Each Local Education Authority (LEA) represents a UKYP constituency. Agreements are also established with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure that young people in those countries are represented by the organisation. Contact Peter Clark, company secretary, [peter.clarke@ukyouthparliament.org.uk](mailto:peter.clarke@ukyouthparliament.org.uk). Scottish Youth Parliament: <http://www.scottishyouthparliament.org.uk/> - group of nearly 200 elected young people aged between 14 and 25 years, who aim to be the collective national youth voice for all young people in Scotland. It elects and supports members of UKYP in Scotland. Funky Dragon - the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales aims to give young people up to 25 the opportunity to get their voices heard on issues that affect them. Contact [enquiries@funkydragon.org](mailto:enquiries@funkydragon.org). <http://www.funkydragon.org>. Northern Ireland Youth Forum aims to promote the views of young people to government, policy makers and others. Any young people between 14 and 25 can get involved in the youth forum. <http://niyf.org>

#### **1.2 Youth councils**

##### **1.2.1 Local youth councils**

There is no uniform structure for youth councils in the UK. They include both formal structures to which young people are elected by their peers and which have formal links to local authority



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structures, and informal youth councils or youth forums open to all young people in particular geographical areas, or specific communities of interests. Over 400 local youth councils across the UK are members of the British Youth Council.

### 1.2.2 Regional youth councils

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<http://www.london.gov.uk/> nb. while organisations described as 'youth parliaments' may have a more formal structure than those called 'youth councils', there is no clear distinction.

### 1.2.3 National youth councils

British Youth Council (BYC) is the umbrella organisation for young people's organisations concerned with giving young people (16 to 25) a voice. Its membership includes a broad coalition of youth organisations from across the UK, who work together to provide a strong collective voice for young people to policy and decision-makers at all levels. Contact Kathleen Cronin, chief executive at [mail@byc.org.uk](mailto:mail@byc.org.uk). <http://www.byc.org.uk/>

### 1.3 Others structures of participation

N/A

## 2 Percentage of young people who are members of

No answers available

## 3 Existing actions/support, of national or regional scope, to promote the participation of young people in local life and follow-up mechanisms

Children's commissioners in each country have role to ensure that young people's voices are heard in decision-making. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on first-tier local authorities in England to secure sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities to improve their well-being. The local authorities are required to consult young people about provision, and take their views into account. The Youth Opportunities and Youth Capital Funds (2006-08) allow groups of young people to give grants to young people for activities or facilities that they want. Scotland: Child Strategy Statement (2000) sets out position in relation to young people and participation. It issued a strategy for youth work in 2006 - 'Youth Work: opportunities for all' - which encourages the active participation of young people in youth projects and through the Scottish Youth Parliament. Northern Ireland: consulting children and young people as part of its 10 year strategy, based on six outcomes, including young people's positive contribution to society. Wales: youth service strategy issued in November 2006 includes stress on young people's participation and ownership of the strategy. The National Youth Agency and Local Government



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Associations have developed (non-statutory) Hear by Right standards for the active involvement of children and young people in decision-making and local democracy. Young people are also involved in decision-making in specific sectors, for instance through the National Service Framework for the Health Service.

### 3.1 Legal actions to support the structures for participation of young people in local life

UK Convention on the Rights of the Child forms the basis for some local authorities' youth strategies. Local Government Acts 1999 and 2000 (and legislation put forward for the 2006-07 parliamentary session), and other legislation and guidance require local authorities to consult local people, including young people, about the services they provide. The Education and Inspections Bill 2006 requires local authorities to consult young people about educational and recreational leisure-time activities and to take their views into account.

### 3.2 Financial actions to support the various structures for youth political and NGO participation

Department for Education and Skills funding: UK Youth Parliament (£190,000, approx 280,000 euro in 2004-05; British Youth Council (£486,430 - approx 700,000 euros for 2005-08) and other youth organisations promoting participation. Youth Opportunities and Youth Capital Funds allow young people to make funding decisions about local youth activities, through giving grants to projects led by young people. There is a total of £115m (approx 170m euro) available for 2006-08.

### 3.3 Other initiatives planned in the short term

N/A

## 4 Do some of the existing or planned actions aim at certain specific groups of young people?

yes ~~no~~

If yes, what groups?

While actions are made to involve all young people, many organisations make efforts to involve excluded young people - such as those not in education, employment or training, those from minority ethnic groups, young people in or formerly in care, disabled young people etc.

## 5 The vote

### 5.1 Obligatory?

yes no

### 5.2 Age of the right to vote



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***From 18 years old***

### **5.3 The right to vote**

Only individuals whose names appear on the electoral register are entitled to vote. To vote in UK Parliamentary elections a person must also be 18 or over on polling day; be a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Irish Republic who is resident in the UK; and not subject to any legal incapacity to vote. Those who cannot vote at general elections include members of the House of Lords, convicted prisoners (though people on remand may vote). Patients in mental health hospitals may vote unless they are detained under certain sections of the Mental Health Act 1983 or are convicted offenders.

### **5.4 Age of eligibility to be a candidate**

***From 18 years old***

### **5.5 Eligibility to be a candidate**

Candidates at national or local elections must be 18 or older and a citizen of the UK, another commonwealth country or the Republic of Ireland. Certain people are disqualified from being MPs: peers who sit in the House of Lords; bishops who sit or are entitled to sit in the Lords; undischarged bankrupts; some people holding Crown offices including judges, civil servants, members of the armed or police forces, members of the legislature of any country or territory outside the Commonwealth; some company directors; prisoners while they are serving sentences of more than 12 months, and people found guilty of certain electoral offences. Local election candidates must be registered to vote in the constituency, or have lived, worked or owned land or property there for the previous 12 months. Those disqualified from candidacy at local elections include council employees and those who have served a prison sentence of over three months in the past five years.

## **6 The elections**

No answers available

## **7 Existing actions/support, of national or regional scope, to promote the participation in the system of representative democracy and follow-up mechanisms**

The Local Government Association's Local Democracy Campaign, run in collaboration with a range of partners, aims to promote young people's understanding of and involvement in local democracy. (<http://campaigns.lga.gov.uk/localdemocracy/home>). Citizenship Education includes strand on political literacy. Range of action by the Electoral Commission (government funded), whose aims include encouraging greater participation in and understanding of, the democratic process, including dedicated website and resources, research programme, media campaign, and funding programme for pilot schemes aimed at increasing public awareness of elections and



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democratic systems, and increasing turnout. The independent charity the Hansard Society also works to promote young people's understanding of and involvement in democratic processes, particularly through its Heads Up project aimed at under-18s ([www.headsup.org.uk](http://www.headsup.org.uk)). Electoral Commission also reported on consultation on reducing the age of voting and candidacy in 2003. Government response was to retain 18 as minimum voting age, but to propose a reduced age of candidacy to 18 (from 21).

### **7.1 Actions that have been undertaken this year**

N/A

### **7.2 Other initiatives planned in the short term**

N/A

## **8 Do some of the existing or planned actions aim at specific groups of young people?**

No answers available

## **9 Learning to participate**

### **9.1 Existing actions within the systems of formal education aiming at developing and deepening learning to participate**

Citizenship education (part of the national curriculum) has three strands: Knowledge and understanding about becoming an informed citizen; Developing skills of enquiry and communication; and Developing skills of participation and responsible action. Between 2001 and 2005, the Post-16 citizenship programme piloted citizenship education with young people aged 16-19 in schools, further education colleges, training providers and youth services. A website ([www.post16citizenship.org.uk](http://www.post16citizenship.org.uk)) has been developed to support citizenship education with this age group.

#### **9.1.1 Mechanisms of participation at school**

Department for Skills and Learning issued guidance on pupil participation in 2003. The Standards in Scotland's Schools, etc. Act 2000, requires that each school's development plan shall include an account of the ways and extent to which the headteacher of the school will involve pupils in decision making, when decisions are made concerning the everyday running of the school. Many schools have school councils (with varying degrees of power and influence).

#### **9.1.2 Learning of citizenship**

Citizenship education is part of the national curriculum in England.

#### **9.1.3 Other actions within the systems of formal education aiming at**



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## **developing and deepening learning to participate**

Active citizenship in schools programme piloted by DfES - evaluation (2004) recommended national roll-out. Citizenship Education post-16 also piloted between 2001-04 in range of educational sectors.

### **9.2 Fields of actions and/or support # (national or regional scope, outside the formal education context) which aim at promoting learning to participate amongst young people**

Youth services have central role in supporting and promoting young people's participation and involvement in decision-making, within the service itself, in local publicly provided services, and in their local communities. The Local Government Association's Local Democracy Campaign, run in collaboration with a range of partners, aims to promote young people's understanding of and involvement in local democracy. (<http://campaigns.lga.gov.uk/localdemocracy/home>)

#### **9.2.1 Nature of this support**

N/A

#### **9.2.2 Concerned sector of activities: company, associations and NGOs, training bodies, municipalities, medias**

N/A

#### **9.2.3 Among these actions (question 9.2.1 and 9.2.2), actions that have been undertaken this year**

N/A

#### **9.2.4 Other initiatives planned in the short term**

N/A

### **9.3 Are there specific target groups of young people aimed at by existing or planned actions?**

yes ~~no~~

The specific target groups

While participation initiatives seek to engage all young people, particular attention is paid to involving those who would not normally have a voice about services and policies.