

“To say that people have a right to something is to say that they have an urgent entitlement to it”. Martha Nussbaum (2006)

## Together State of Children’s Rights webinar

### A focus on participation

Presentation from Starcatchers, Childrens Parliament and Scottish Youth Parliament





Children's human  
rights are:

- **Universal**
- **Indivisible**
- **Inalienable**
- **Shared**

[https://youtu.be/R\\_yXvoSX6IA](https://youtu.be/R_yXvoSX6IA)





Our practice on participation: what does the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child think about how we are doing?

The UK should: **"Establish structures for the active and meaningful participation of children and give due weight to their views in designing laws, policies, programmes and services at the local and national levels, including in relation to discrimination, violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, harmful practices, alternative care, sexual and reproductive education, leisure and play. Particular attention should be paid to involving younger children and children in vulnerable situations, such as children with disabilities"** (Committee on the Rights of the Child Concluding Observation 30a 2016)

**SYP: Active and  
Meaningful  
Participation  
with Young  
People**

**Involvement from the beginning & throughout**

*'The first thing about engaging with young people is that you actually need to plan it, rather than getting to the end of a project and being like, oh my god we've not engaged with any young people'* MSYP

**Realistic expectations & honesty**

*'I wanted a clearer understanding of what their capacity was to make change, because I don't want to read over something or dedicate my time to something that's tokenistic. Young people have so much on, it's important that you give them as much information as possible so they can realistically figure out what they have the time and capacity for.'* MSYP



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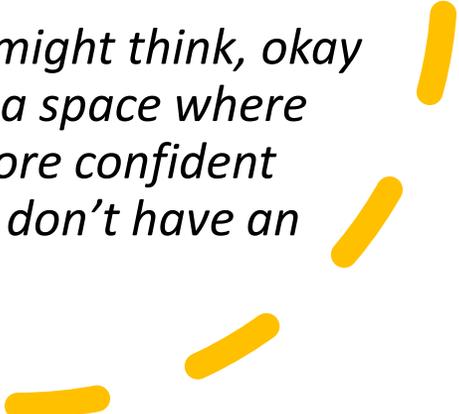
**Balance of power (aka treat young people as equals!)**

*'From the beginning, we were very much treated as equals. The adults that we work with, there's no dynamic that they make the decisions or they set the agenda, we learn from each other which is really good. It's part of what keeps that balance, where they can be like "hey we don't know what works well in school, we don't know what social media we should be using", so it kind of goes both ways.'* MSYP

**Advocate for young people and support their development**

*'Advocating for the young people you're working with. Advocating for their needs for example if they're stressed out, doing what you can to reduce workload'* MSYP

*'I've really learned self-reflection. In a meeting I might think, okay is this a space for my voice to be heard, or is this a space where other people in the group can be heard. Being more confident means that I don't mind asking questions when I don't have an experience'* MSYP



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**Small preparation tasks**

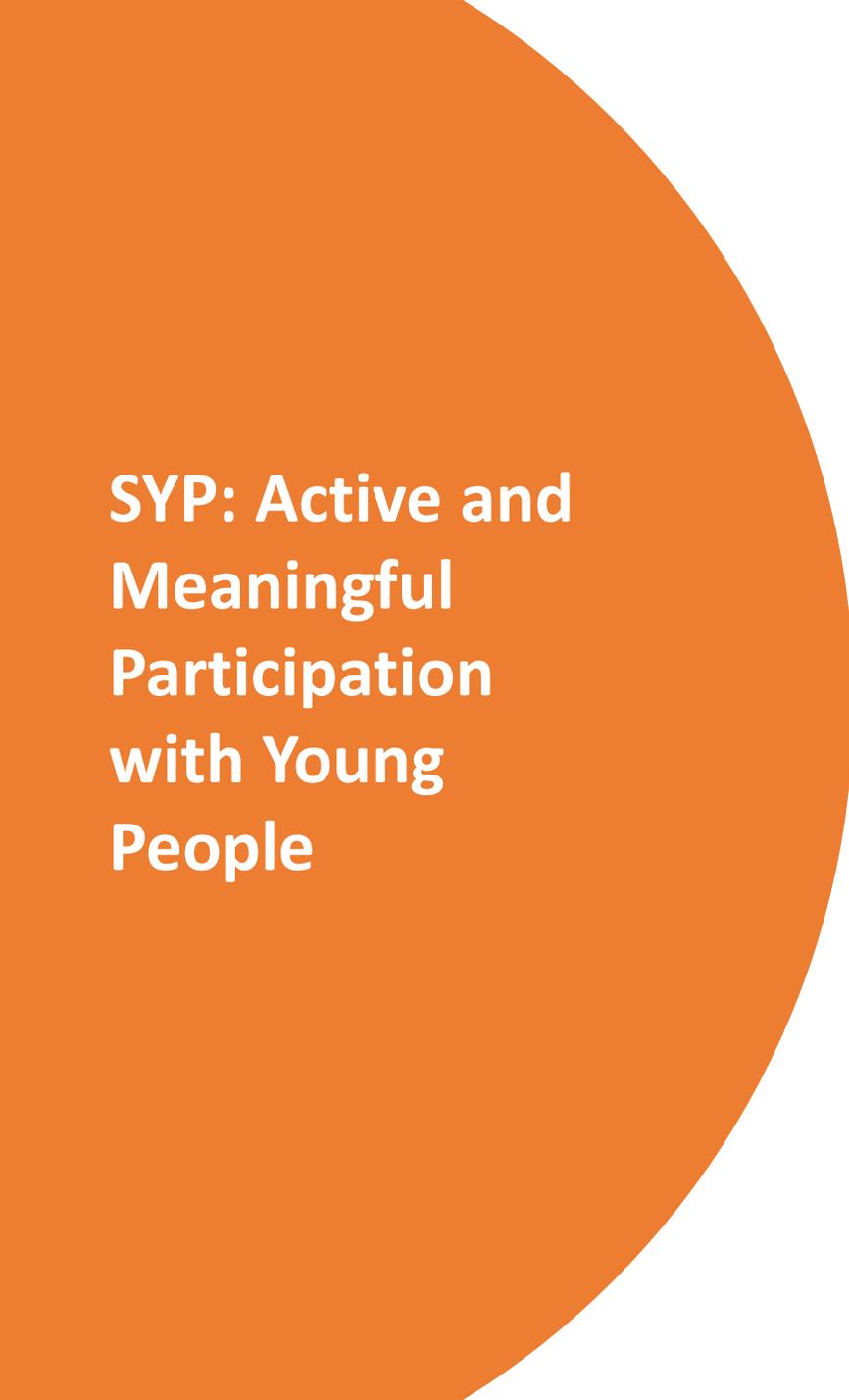
*'I find that if you give us something to think about in advance, like a paragraph to read, not a task that takes more than ten minutes, but it means that we don't come in completely blind.'* MSYP

**Make documents accessible**

*'They presented a lengthy, six-page-long document which was not youth friendly – they shared screen and said 'what do you think?'* MSYP

*'We were sent an email out of the blue, asking if we would read over and review a 174 page document.'*  
MSYP



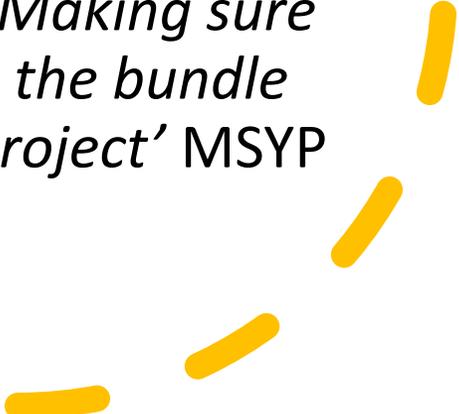


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**Don't put the weight of the world on our shoulders!**

*'Recognise that the young people you're talking to don't represent any and all young people. Sometimes our group' MSYP*

*'One of the first things we did in our project was we thought about the voices that were missing, and we thought about the voices that wouldn't be heard through our experiences. That was a really valuable thing to do because we came back to it. Making sure that your engagement doesn't stop with the bundle group of young people you have in the project' MSYP*





What might a  
children's rights  
approach look like?  
Some thoughts from  
Children's  
Parliament

- **Kindness**  
<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/childrens-parliament-investigates-kindness/>
- **Empathy**  
<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/childrens-parliament-investigates-empathy/>
- **Trust**  
<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/childrens-parliament-investigates-trust/>
- **Human Dignity**  
<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/childrens-parliament-investigates-human-dignity/>
- **Its all about relationships.**



**What does  
participation look like?  
Connecting rights-  
based approaches with  
Nurturing Approaches**

- Create a safe space/place to be.
- Eat together and share news.
- Take time.
- Play together.
- Encourage listening.
- Encourage everyone to verbalise how they feel.
- Understand that all behaviour is communication.
- Understand and pay attention to points of transition and change.
- Adults model the behaviour we seek from children: adults are caring, respectful and they listen.
- Ensure a good ratio of adult to child participation.

## Starcatchers: Active and Meaningful Participation in Early Years

Babies and young children realise their rights through lived experience.

Tune in to the way babies and young children communicate with us.

Be open to what they want to tell us, NOT just answering the questions adults want answers to.

Sprog Rock – developed in 2010, YMI Fund reimaging in 2017

- Artists worked in four settings, exploring musical styles
- Asking “what’s important to YOU?”
- Final songs toured around Scotland

Starcatchers’ Engagement Signals for very young children

- Even very young babies can show preferences and make decisions
- Working on how the voice of the child can shape every level of decision making

**Starcatchers** <https://starcatchers.org.uk/>

Starcatchers is Scotland's Arts and Early Years organisation. We create performances and creative activities for babies and children from birth to 5 years.

**Children's Parliament**

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/>

Children's Parliament is Scotland's centre of excellence for children's human rights, participation & engagement.

**Scottish Youth Parliament** <https://syp.org.uk/>

SYP is the democratic voice of Scotland's young people.

