PARTICIPATION STANDARDS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Action for Children’s Participation Standards provide a framework for the continued development of participation across all Action for Children services.

We believe participation is the active involvement of children and young people in experiences, opportunities and decisions that affect their lives and their ability to fulfil their potential.

Participation Standards help us plan, deliver and evaluate our participation practice and activities, ensuring participation is encouraged, supported and celebrated, and is fully accessible and inclusive.

Participation Standards also ensure we meet our commitments set out in the Action for Children Equality Scheme 2015–19, fulfil our endorsement of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and continue to develop good practice that can be celebrated and shared across both internal and external audiences.

For more information about this guide or participation across Action for Children, please contact Mark Benson, Inclusion Officer mark.benson@actionforchildren.org.uk

**FOREWORD**

“Welcome to the Participation Standards for children and young people. The idea for this guide is to demonstrate the value of including children and young people in the decisions made by Action for Children at both a local and national level. Young people and children are the best people to consult when making the decisions surrounding issues that will affect their lives – they’re our lives and so we provide a unique insight to these issues and can increase understanding around these issues.

I would recommend using these standards as they will show a real commitment to including young people’s points of view in decision making and will make children and young people feel valued, welcome and respected.

As a Young Ambassador, I was given the opportunity to interview and provide feedback when Action for Children last recruited a new member to the board of trustees. It was great to be given a voice and to be involved in such an important decision. My opinion was valued and I felt extremely included in the process.”

Holly, Young Ambassador July 2016

**OUTCOME:**

All Action for Children services routinely involve children and young people in matters that affect them, and continually develop opportunities to increase and embed participation.

**STANDARD: 01**

**PARTICIPATION IS KEY**

S1.1 Children and young people understand the purpose of their service and the aims of the work that is being done with them, according to their level of understanding.

S1.2 Children and young people are routinely involved in decision making about the services they receive from Action for Children. This includes plans, reviews and day-to-day choices regarding themselves and their service.

S1.3 Staff respect and encourage children’s and young people’s right to participate, working in partnership with colleagues and service users to create opportunities for positive engagement which maximise involvement and influence.

S1.4 Staff have access to information, resources and training to develop their participation practice, knowledge and skills.

S1.5 Services identify an Inclusion Champion at their service, whose role is to ensure that staff’s understanding, knowledge and commitment to participation is at the heart of day-to-day practice.
OUTCOME:
Children’s and young people’s views and ideas are valued and respected, and there is clarity and honesty about their involvement.

S2.1 Engagement is designed so that children and young people can genuinely participate in decision making at a level, and in ways, that are suitable and appropriate.

S2.2 Children and young people understand how their views will be taken into account and what influence they have.

S2.3 Children and young people are involved early in the design of participation processes where possible, and given choices about how they will be involved and the methods that will be used.

S2.4 Everyone is clear about how far children and young people can be involved in any activity or decision, with the aim being to maximise inclusion, involvement and influence.

S2.5 Children and young people are told the outcomes of the process they have been involved in, and what the impact of their participation has been, within an agreed timescale that is meaningful and accessible to them.

OUTCOME:
Children’s and young people’s participation is built into daily activities, and is developed by practical plans and targets.

S3.1 Action for Children services have a participation plan for their service. Each plan sets out key items and targets for the year ahead, as well as how participation will be developed and embedded.

S3.2 Planning is done with children and young people where possible, and is led by their interests, understanding and abilities.

S3.3 Planning includes risk assessments where appropriate and, where possible, service users are involved in this process at an early stage.

S3.4 Permission/consent is obtained from parents/carers where necessary, as well as emergency contact details and personal risk information.

S3.5 Evaluation is built into all participation planning, and learning is used to help shape future developments and ways of working.
**OUTCOME:**
All children and young people have opportunities to be involved and listened to.

S4.1 A variety of ways of working are used to make sure that children and young people have opportunities to respond and get involved, using ways and methods that are engaging and appropriate.

S4.2 Consideration is given to language and communication; the age, understanding, interest and ability of those involved; and the suitability of the environment.

S4.3 Participation and engagement aims to reflect the diversity of children and young people who use the service and, where appropriate, that of Action for Children.

S4.4 Practical barriers to participation are considered, for example: transport, child care, physical access requirements, special equipment or facilities, and the timing and cost of involvement.

S4.5 Children and young people are encouraged to respect and include each other, as well as the staff who support them.

**OUTCOME:**
Children’s and young people’s participation is championed, celebrated and acknowledged, and it’s clear what difference their involvement has made.

S5.1 Children’s and young people’s views and ideas are included in the outcomes of any activity in which they have taken part, and this can be evidenced.

S5.2 Children’s and young people’s contributions are acknowledged, including feedback of what has or hasn’t changed as a result of their involvement, and why.

S5.3 Involvement is rewarded where appropriate, and done so in line with service- and local- norms.

S5.4 Action for Children celebrates and promotes the value of participation, both internally with services users, staff and parents/carers, and to wider external audiences.
**Guidance/Notes:**
- What participation means to us
- Equality Scheme 2015-19
- Informed Consent policy & guidance
- Stay Safe standards

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Action for Children supports and protects disadvantaged children as they grow up. We make their lives better: now, tomorrow and every day.

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