



Developing a Youth Participation Strategy

with BARCA-Leeds

Context

Bramley and Rodley Community Action, or BARCA, delivers a range of health, education and personal development services to young people and adults in West Leeds.

In November 2004 their Youth Work Manager asked ICA:UK for some help in developing a youth participation strategy for the organisation. Although they had some young people involved in running individual clubs and programmes, they felt that not all of their staff were on the same page as to what youth participation actually meant and entailed.



Learning about Roger Hart's 'Ladder of Young People's Participation'

Process

After several meetings and phone calls, ICA:UK facilitated an Away Day for BARCA in February 2005, designed to get their young people, staff and volunteers talking about youth participation and what it meant. During the day, BARCA's people:

- discussed the benefits and dangers of their young people participating in the organisation
- looked at the needs that young people had in order for them to participate, and the resources the organisation had to encourage that involvement
- learnt about Roger Hart's 'Ladder of Young People's Participation' see and ranked their own activities against that ladder

- created their own vision for young people's participation within the organisation
- identified some next steps that each participant would take to make that vision happen.

Outcomes

BARCA has recently conducted an evaluation with the young people who attended the Away Day, to see what has changed within the organisation from their perspective.

Amongst other activities, young people have now had the opportunity to: plan an event to recruit new members to one of their groups; interview new staff; train adults on how young people want to be trained; and evaluate their After School Club.

Overall, the young people said that they were happy that workers listen and respond to their ideas and suggestions, and with their own current level of involvement.

"Thank you for facilitating our Away Day and assisting us to create our vision to take Youth Participation forward in both our business plan and, more importantly, within the delivery of our work. ... One important thing we learned that day was that we should never underestimate the ability of young people to deal with complex issues and, equally, to never underestimate adults' ability to undermine young people's participation." - Diane Law, Youth Work Manager, BARCA-Leeds