

## Network Ryde's Young People's Participation Policy

At Network Ryde, the voice of young people lies at the heart of everything we do. It is important for those who use our service that this is the case; that they should have the space to express themselves, feel actively involved, be listened to and be able to influence the decisions that affect them must lie firmly alongside that aspiration. We want to recognise the contribution you make to our Island, now and in years to come. One way to do this is for you to share your experiences of our provision and for us to listen. We hope this strategy will move us forward in our ultimate vision – that young people are safe, healthy and achieve your full potential.

### The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Our participation strategy is led by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - **Article 12** which states that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them and to have their views considered and taken seriously.

**Article 23** states that a child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in their community.

### Our commitment to participation

Article 12 recognises your entitlement and ability to influence actions and decisions that affect you. When you take part and express yourself in decisions that affect you, are listened to, understood and your view is taken into account, this is often called participation. If participation is to be effective, meaningful and longlasting, it needs to be an ongoing process that we should develop together, rather than a one-off activity. It requires an ongoing commitment in terms of your contributions, staff time and funding. We want to embed and champion participation at Network Ryde, creating a culture of participation which in turn, makes our service more young person centred.

## **Our core values**

At Network Ryde, we have four core values that are important for how we work. These principles, and our commitment to how we will help you participate, are:

### *Supportive*

- We will be clear and informative and communicate with you in a way you understand.
- We will involve you as early as possible. We will be clear about what can and can't change and the timescale for change. We will explain different options to you and give you time to think through your ideas.
- We will share as much information as we can with you and make our ways of working with you accessible, creative, age appropriate and fun!
- We will support all of our staff to understand what Participation is and develop the necessary skills and knowledge so that they feel confident to involve you in decision making.

### *Innovative (working in different ways)*

- We will ensure opportunities to participate are relevant to you and have a clear purpose.
- We will create space for you to have ideas yourselves about how we could work differently or how you could change things that matter to you.
- We will recognise the contribution you make to how we work and celebrate your achievements.
- We will learn about and reduce barriers to you participating and help make it as easy as possible.
- We will continue to learn, challenge ourselves and develop our approaches and opportunities for you to participate.

### *Collaborative (working together)*

- We will explain to you that Participation is voluntary (you choose to be involved) and you will not be forced to. You can decide to stop participating if you wish.

- We will keep trying to involve all of you, even if that takes extra time or different approaches.
- We will not make assumptions about what you can and cannot do.
- We will find opportunities for you to take the lead, learn new skills, and develop your confidence.
- We want you to tell us when we do something well as well as helping us improve.

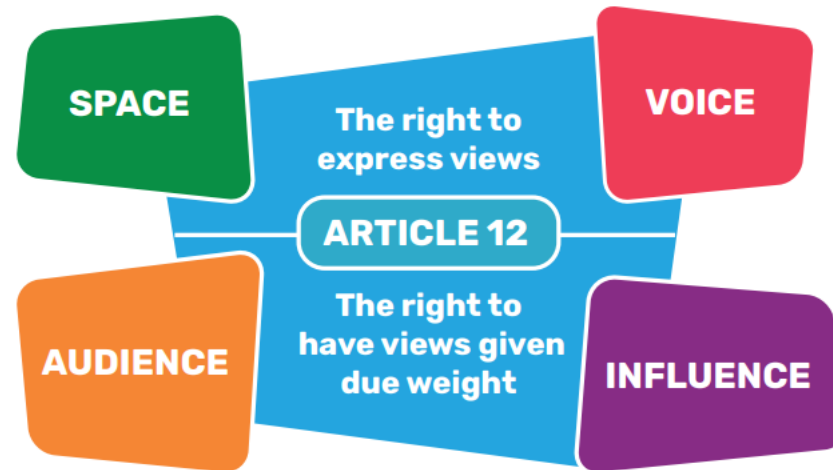
### *Respectful*

- We will ensure you are treated with respect and take time to build a relationship with you first.
- We will help you feel safe to express your views clearly and honestly. We will not judge you if your view is different from ours. We will respect your privacy and not share your information without your permission unless we legally must do so.
- We will be accountable for the decisions we involve you in and will always seek to let you know the outcome. We will let you know how your participation has influenced the outcome.

### **Models of participation**

Sometimes, participation is explained using a ladder, where young people are making the important decisions at the top and working together with adults to influence change. We want to avoid being near the bottom of the ladder where you are not involved in decisions that affect your life and have no real understanding of what that means for you.

We need to be careful that we are supporting you to participate meaningfully and not saying one thing and doing something different (which can be called tokenism). The model we have chosen to implement at Network Ryde was devised by Professor Laura Lundy. Lundy's model is a way of explaining Article 12 and is what's called a rights-based model of participation.



The model breaks Article 12 down into 4 elements which follow each other in order:

- SPACE:** Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view.
- VOICE:** Children must be facilitated to express their view.
- AUDIENCE:** The view must be listened to.
- INFLUENCE:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

What is important to remember is that adults recognise the importance of being able to capture the impact of influence that young people have had and let them know what difference their involvement has made. Sometimes that difference might be seen straight away but sometimes, participation can affect how adults understand young people's lives which might only make changes in the future. We need to ensure we are finding ways to capture, feedback and celebrate that impact and influence over time.

## Checklist for the Lundy Model of Participation

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### Key language and definitions:

Some other key language and terms you might hear when you participate:

Consultative practices – this is where adults seek your views, then work with what you say to shape the outcome. It may be that some of your ideas are taken on board and others not, but this should be explained at the beginning of the process.

Co-production or Collaborative practices – this is where adults work with you in partnership. Usually, adults have the initial idea or issue, then involve you in what needs to change, what needs to be done and how. This approach recognises that you have strengths, skills and experience that are just as valuable as those of adults or professionals.

Child-led practices – this is where you have the ideas or raise an issue important to you. Adults will then support you to develop your own projects, activities or support you to make changes you think are important. Ideally we want to be moving towards more child-led practices and greater decision making involving you!

### **Hearing young people individually, operationally and strategically**

We think it's important for you to understand that you can participate in different ways.

#### *Individual*

- Decisions relate directly to the young peoples' own lives.
- Decisions are made about day to day activities.
- Outcomes primarily impact the individual young person.

#### *Operational*

- Decisions relate to planning, delivery and evaluation.
- The activity aims to improve the quality of service provision.
- Outcomes affect the individual and other young people.

#### *Strategic*

- Decisions relate to long term planning.
- The activity includes meaningful roles in priority setting, monitoring and designing services.

- Outcomes influence policy and practice.

### **Areas that you can influence**

We want to think creatively about the areas of our work where you can participate and influence how we work. These might include:

- How Network Ryde works, how we evaluate what we do and how we measure our progress
- How we communicate with you
- How we recruit, train and supervise the staff that work with you
- The policies that we write and work by
- Our long-term strategic planning

### **Benefits of participation**

#### *Benefits for you*

- Build your confidence and self-esteem through being valued and appreciated
- Learn and develop your skills in problem-solving, communication and planning that will help you in the future
- Help keep you safe, as it increases trust and confidence that your voice matters and adults will listen to you
- Make new friends and meet different people
- See the difference you make in the community

#### *Benefits for us*

- We create a better provision that is better at meeting your needs
- It challenges us to make how we work more inclusive
- Strengthens accountability and being clear about what can and can't be achieved