Youth Participation Policy

Introduction

We are committed to ensuring access to the arts for all children and young people. We seek to engage, respond to, reflect and promote the interests of the local community. This document offers best practice guidance which supports our work towards a model of youth participation.

Definition of terms

The following terms are used in this policy:

- Participation – The process of involving children and young people in decision making by increasing levels of control and autonomy.
- Empowerment – The outcome of this participation process in terms of children and young people's increased power and influence.
- Involvement – The overall term for children and young people being included in the decision-making process at any level.
- Consultation – A process which requires the commitment to take on board young people's views and present detailed information back to them.

Principles

Norwich Theatre Royal

- Upholds the right of young people to participate in decisions about activities and services that affect them.
- Encourages and supports the involvement of young people in the planning, delivery and evaluation of NTR youth activities and services.

Commitments

Norwich Theatre Royal is committed to:

- Incorporating youth participation into its key aims and objectives.
- Providing training for staff and volunteers on youth participation and involvement.
- Resourcing youth participation work.
- Working with partner agencies and young people themselves to bring in resources, facilities and opportunities for young people in the theatre.

Key principles for good practice in the active involvement of young people

(Taken from 'Hear by Right' – national standards for the active involvement of young people in democracy).

The active involvement of young people works best when:

1 - The diversity of young people is recognised

- True participation is based on the needs and aspirations of all young people – rooted in equality of access and equal opportunities, and taking account of diverse community interests and needs.
- A broad range of activities allows individual young people to engage in ways and at levels appropriate to their capacities and wants, and a proactive approach ensures hard-to-reach

groups are aware of and encouraged to take advantage of appropriate opportunities.

- Their involvement is underpinned by formal and informal capacity building and training, both individually and collectively.
- Active involvement is taken at the right pace both for the individual young person and for the organisation.

2 - Young people are valued
- They are listened to and actively engaged in the development of policies and services.
- They are given swift and clear feedback about the impact of their involvement and the value of their contribution.
- A genuine partnership exists between staff and young people, which recognises young people's competence and potential, and helps young people to become a resource to their own development and to that of their peers and the community.
- There is honest and open communication and care is taken to avoid raising unreal expectations for service delivery

3 - Involvement is underpinned by adequate resources of expertise, time, money and organisational systems and processes, including:
- Clear, widely communicated policy statements.
- Staff development policies aimed at building the qualities, attitudes and skills required to involve young people.
- Clear boundaries around what is and is not possible in the area of involvement and service delivery.
- A transparent and accessible procedure for suggestions, complaints, compliments and appeals procedures.
- Clear policy on confidentiality and data collection/storage/dissemination.

4 There are systems and processes for reviewing, evaluating and continuously improving young people's involvement.
- Monitoring and evaluation should be undertaken involving young people with lessons fed back into future planning

Summary – The nature of active involvement
Actions include:
- Planning and organising
- Doing and developing
- Checking, reviewing and learning

Techniques include:
- Decision making groups
- Parallel decision/informing
- Action taking
- Small discussion groups
- Creative consultation
- Being canvassed
- Open communication channels