

P-04-511 Support for children and young people participation standards – Correspondence from the Petitioner to Committee, 13.01.2014

Response from Powys Youth Forum - Response 1

From our research from our members we have found out that many school councils have been working towards the standards to make sure that the school is being as participative as possible. The award not only gives them something physical to aim for, but also provides incentive and a sense of pride for achieving greatness in participation in their school. This acts as something for every school to aim for, allowing the levels of participation to rise, and for everyone to be aware of the standards as a result.

We are pleased with the steps that the Welsh Government has taken to increase local participation but we still believe that for the kite make to have national recognition would be beneficial and currently there is no over arching organisation or team co-ordinating the young inspectors and the Participation Kite Mark.

Response from Powys Youth Forum - Response 2

Powys Youth Forum have received permission from Mike Mainwaring (Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service, Children, Young People and Families Participation Officer) to include in the response to the committee a letter which has been sent to Martin Swain. We hope that you will use this information to develop a further understanding of the challenges and issues that are being faced with the National Children and Young People Participation Standards across Wales.

Martin Swain
Director for Children, Young People and Families Division
National assembly for Wales

Dear Martin Swain,

I am writing on behalf of the North and South Wales Participation Officer's Network in the hope that we may be able to resolve a problem we have had since the loss of the Participation Unit at Save the Children.

As Participation Officers we have sold the concept of the Participation Standards and the Kite Mark on its National credentials. Groups tell us that they wouldn't have strived to meet the Standards and subsequent re-inspections if they had not had national status. The work under

taken by the Participation Unit has left us in a good position. We have a Self-Assessment Toolkit, a process for recruiting, training and accrediting the work of the Young Inspectors and a method for assessing organisations. Prior to the closing of the Participation Unit the Young Inspectors would produce their report and the Participation Unit would check it and award the Kite Mark if appropriate. Some of us now have a system whereby we peer review other counties inspection reports and confirm the awarding of the Kite Mark.

The majority of counties in Wales have operated a Young Inspector programme, some are now unfortunately on hold, and therefore have groups who have been supported to meet the Standards and young people who are trained and awaiting the experience of conducting an inspection. In Neath Port Talbot we have 18 inspectors 10 of whom have gained an OCN in participation to Level 2 and 3. There have been 8 inspections, with 6 awarded the Kite Mark. The Participation Standards are written into our Participation, Engagement and Advocacy Action Plan, which is reported to the Local Service Board as in line with the Single Integrated Plan Guidance.

Counties such as Caerphilly have a staff member grant funded to deliver against the Standards, therefore not meeting targets due to lack of national direction; they are training young people, and have already 20 young inspectors training and are trying to get their work accredited, three inspections have been passed via peer moderation and they have produced certificates at a local level. These would benefit from being signed off nationally. They have additional organisations awaiting inspection.

Conwy are developing the Participation Standards model to encompass the three themes in the UNCRC: protection, provision and participation. They are currently at the piloting stage on this.

Many of the counties are just gaining momentum with the National Participation standards but this is being hampered by a lack of national recognition. We may be in danger of losing a well-developed and tested programme if we continue without this national recognition and therefore derailing the participation and children's rights agenda. This would have a knock on affect for Welsh Government and the implementation of the Child Rights (Wales) Measure.

We are proposing that the Participation Officer's Network continue to peer review the Young Inspector's work but that Welsh Government actually award the Kite Mark. In practice, this would mean that the Young Inspectors would be recruited, trained, supported, would inspect the organisations and submit the report. The Participation Officer's Network would peer review these reports and send them to Welsh Government for the final sign off.

Myself and others would be interested in meeting with you and other officials to discuss whether this would be a viable option for Welsh Government.

Yours sincerely

Mike Mainwaring
Children, Young People
And Families Participation Officer