



Recognition Guidance

How children and young people's participation can be recognised.

This guidance should be used in conjunction with the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy.

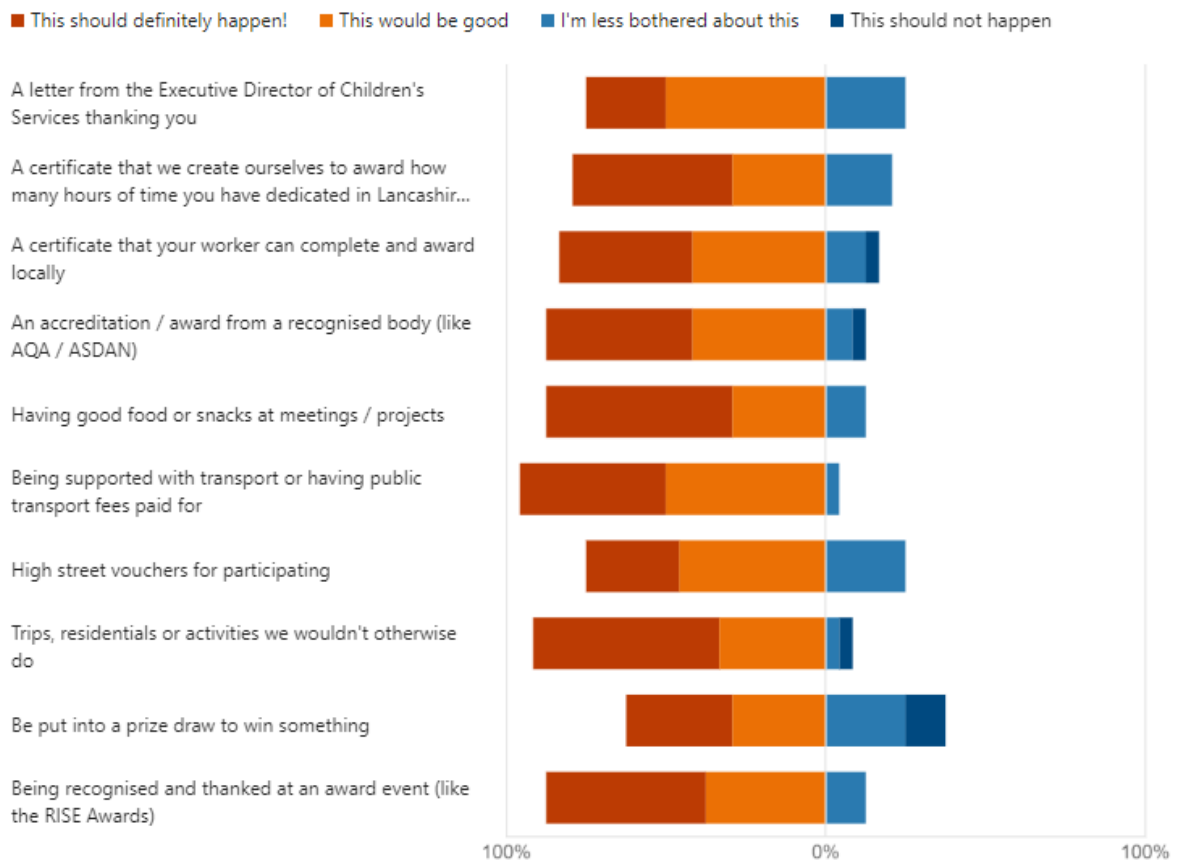


Participation of children and young people is built on a principle of **voluntary engagement, where children and young people choose to share their views and be involved.**

However, often the time, skill, knowledge and experience that children and young people commit and share is significant or extraordinary. Children or young people may be part of one of our formal participation groups but then may also support consultations, interviewing, quality assurance or work with colleagues to deliver presentations or events. Equally, children or young people may share their experience and participate in a project on a single occasion which is significant or extraordinary for them.

Whilst the best way to recognise and sustain children and young people's participation is to conduct it with integrity and **in line with the core values and principles outlined in the Participation Strategy**, as part of developing the strategy, young people and those that work with them were also consulted on what would constitute reasonable recognition. This is often a contentious issue and one that raises questions about the ethical approach to valuing the contribution children and young people can make.

Whilst both young people and staff's views were broadly in line, the response from young people to some suggestions made to how children and young people's participation should be recognised were as follows:



The feedback outlined above would indicate that young people would prefer more qualitative recognition that acknowledges their developing skills in participating. This might take the form of a personalised certificate or an accredited award they can use as evidence in their futures. Even a letter identifying the contribution they have made and thanking them can be effective. Young people also appreciated an experience or opportunity they might not otherwise do, and so if working with a group, a financial contribution towards a day out that they can plan themselves alongside their staff would perhaps be appreciated.

Finally, young people also tended to prefer more immediate recognition and support, so ensuring they can attend sessions either by providing transport directly or reimbursing public transport costs or asking them what kind of food or snacks they'd like in the meetings usually works really well and is a memorable part of the process for them!

If individual vouchers are thought to be appropriate, ensure there is choice for the young people in where they can be spent.

Young people and staff were also asked for any other ideas of how their participation could be recognised. These included public acknowledgement, like articles on our social media channels but the most common additional response was to have badges or stickers, t-shirts or hoodies that identify the child or young person as a 'child or youth voice advocate'. These are perhaps particularly relevant for those children and young people who commit a lot of their time to participation activities and perhaps work alongside our services for months or years.

These ideas are intended to give suggestions to colleagues who are seeking to involve children and young people. The priorities highlighted by young people that need a centralised response and further discussion around how they could be implemented consistently (like badges and certificates) **will be taken forward by the strategic Children's Services Participation Group**. In Lancashire there is also learning to be gained from our Culture Hacks programme within Cultural Services who already have a [clearly defined process for recognition](#) of children and young people's volunteering.

Finally, some guiding principles to consider when seeking to recognise children and young people's participation would be:

- Ensure that the resources or funding to deliver the recognition is available before sharing ideas with children and young people.
- Don't assume that children and young people expect to be 'paid' for their time and try not to use vouchers as a default position for recognition. Often other forms of recognition, though they might take adults more time to deliver, are more closely valued by children and young people.

- Ask them! Ask the children and young people themselves how they would like to be recognised, if at all. Remember that children and young people may well be happy to participate simply to share their experience, develop their own skills and influence change to benefit themselves and others. Give them options and let them choose or come up with their own ideas. Also speak to staff working closely with young people for their input.
- Ensure you are referring back to the [core values and principles within the Participation Strategy](#).
- Be mindful of how consistently you can implement recognition. For example, if you give young people vouchers for being involved in interviews, how sustainable is it to do that at the same rate for any young person who would be involved in future? Also remember that sometimes young people contribute to the work of a number of teams and so how they are recognised should be as consistent as possible across the authority.
- If you do feel individual vouchers are appropriate, consider referring to the hourly National Living Wage for young people as a guide for a suitable amount.

