

Listening to the voices of young carers:

A checklist for involving young carers in participatory activities

This checklist has been developed to provide ideas and guidance for researchers and practitioners who would like to involve young carers in participatory activities.

It is based on the article by Daniel Phelps:

The Voices of Young Carers in Policy and Practice

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<https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/965>

Item	Note / Reference	✓
Recruitment for participation		
Safeguarding: Clear procedures and protocols are in place		
Ethical clearance is undertaken		
Informed consent from parents is obtained		
Informed consent from young people is obtained		
Risk assessment completed		
Screening for participation		
The current circumstances of both the young carer and their family are considered carefully before recruitment to participation	'Caring roles and family situations fluctuate and good judgement by professionals, made in accordance with organisational guidance is required to determine whether the involvement of a young carer and type of involvement, would be detrimental at a particular point in time.' (p 118)	
Support workers used to act as 'gatekeepers' in the recruitment of young carers	'Where support workers know	

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Item	Note / Reference	✓
	young people and their families well, they can act as gatekeepers and make informed decisions about their involvement in consultation with children and families. They can also provide additional safeguards, including acting as a trusted adult for young carers to talk to. (p 118)	
An application form is developed for young carers to apply for the role		
Useful questions for professionals to consider:		
<i>Is it in the best interests of the young carer and family?</i>		
<i>Does the young carer wish to participate and to what degree?</i>		
<i>Is the young carer and family comfortable with 'going public', if this will be an outcome of their role?</i>	'Some young carers will therefore not wish to participate at a level that involves 'going public'. Good practice should inform them that they can withdraw from taking part at any time and that they should not feel obliged to share things that they, or their family, are not comfortable sharing.' (p 118)	
Communicating participatory opportunities		
Opportunities, expectations, guidelines and potential outcomes of participation are clearly communicated early on.	Opportunities, expectations, guidelines and potential outcomes of participation should be clearly communicated early on, so that young carers can make informed decisions about their involvement.' (p 118)	
The potential benefits, outcomes and rewards of participation are clearly communicated	E.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making friends and having fun • Doing something of value • Doing something different 	
Young carers sign a 'contract' that sets out clearly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the role • the expectations and responsibilities of the role 		

Item	Note / Reference	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the guidelines for participation; the potential outcomes of engagement 		
<p>Young carers are informed that they can withdraw from taking part at any time.</p>	<p>'Good practice should inform them that they can withdraw from taking part at any time and that they should not feel obliged to share things that they, or their family, are not comfortable sharing.' (p 118)</p>	
<p>Media is used to chronicle and showcase the participative activities</p>	<p>This use of media, to chronicle and showcase the participative activities of young carers, is common practice and one with which many young people are comfortable with and consent to. Moreover, filming, interviewing, or forms of social media, such as blogging or vlogging, that yield an end product, may well for this 'social media generation', be almost a necessary requirement and one which paradoxically may help to take the focus off young carers themselves and provide what many may view as a 'legitimate vehicle' to share their personal experiences. (p 115)</p>	
<p>Opportunities are established to enable young carers to develop skills that will support them in their participatory roles</p>	<p>'Developing the skills of young carers to support their participation is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, this can be empowering for young carers and help to build confidence, something that young carers often state is an important benefit of being part of a young carer project. Secondly, it confers value on the young carer role, their contributions and on the children themselves. Thirdly, it promotes children and young people's right to participation and their ability to contribute effectively; and lastly, the skills the young people develop as a result of their participation are transferable and can be particularly valuable as they progress through education and into the workplace.' (p 117)</p>	

Item	Note / Reference	✓
Training in media, leadership skills, public speaking and interviewing techniques are offered to young carers		

Engagement of young carers		
'Appropriate times are chosen for participation that do not conflict with a young carer's education' (p 118)	Development of training films for professionals, for example, can ensure the voices of young carers are heard without young carers having to miss their schooling	
Young carers are included from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of different backgrounds • Caring situations • Age groups (including young carers who are transitioning into adulthood) 		
Children who do not identify as young carers, are not formally recognised as carers and are not accessing dedicated support services are included	Views from young people are sought not only through young carer services, but through a range of routes, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools • youth services • health and social care settings 	
Removing the barriers to participation and improving engagement		
A range of engagement opportunities is provided	'in order to support engagement, flexibility and the provision of a range of opportunities in which young carers can choose to be involved, should be offered. Not all young carers for example wish to stand up and speak in front of an audience' (p 119)	
Solution 1 Social activities are woven into participation and participative activities are creative and fun	Barrier 1 'Young carers often have greater time constraints than their peers with fewer opportunities to socialise, relax and have fun.'(e.g., Aldridge & Becker, 1993)' (p 119)	
Solution 2 Transport is provided; venues are accessible; technological	Barrier 2 'Lack of transport may also often prevent young carers' participation, so measures	

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solutions are in place to aid participation	to address this should be sought, such as providing transport, using accessible venues and technology.' (p 119)	
Feedback to young carers is provided in a timely fashion about any changes in policy or practice that may have taken place as a direct result of their participation	'Where feedback is protracted, this might well be discouraging and therefore well-designed and well implemented evaluation processes, with relatively short timescales, are likely to improve the motivation of young carers and their engagement.' (p 119)	

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Recognition of participation		
The participation of young carers is recognised		
A range of ways are used to recognise the participation of young carers	'Providing certificates of involvement, online badges, letters of recognition and other creative ways of capturing and accrediting participation and highlighting skills which have been developed are often valued. Offering rewards in the form of vouchers for example, may also be appropriate in recognition of the time committed to participatory activities, which can be particularly precious to young carers.' (p 117)	
Young carers themselves are asked about how best to recognise their participation	'What is important is that the potential benefits, outcomes and rewards, are clearly and realistically communicated and that young carers themselves are asked about how best to recognise their participation.' (p 117)	
A personal plan for participation is developed for each young carer to maximise their involvement		

Useful Tools

The Children's Society. '[Influencing Change Toolkit](#)': The Children's Society

The Children's Society and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers. (2011). '[Your Young Carers Forum: A Guide](#)': The Children's Society.

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