

How Children & Young People Shape XenZone



XenZone

FUTURE THINKING FOR MENTAL HEALTH



Zoe Blake
CEO, XenZone

“Participation is written into the DNA of our organisation and the Code of our technology. Every day we are listening to the children and young people we serve and taking action to change the way we do things based upon what we hear.

We are fortunate to have many different ways for children and young people to voice their views and that many chose to do so – be it through our site, in the schools and the community settings we visit, or in more formal consultations.

Young people often sit on decision making panels when a Kooth service is commissioned and are involved in the hiring of new staff.

In this document we lay down our commitment to keep Participation central to decision making at XenZone, so that everyone in the organisation feels supported in bringing children and young people into relevant decision making processes.

Contents

Foreword.....	2
Participation at XenZone.....	4
Why do we do it?.....	5
For young people:.....	5
For XenZone:.....	5
For the community:.....	5
Our goal.....	7
Getting Involved.....	8
Online.....	8
In person.....	8
References.....	9

Participation at XenZone

Participation is how we involve young people* who use or might use our Kooth service to look for ways to improve. Doing this as a rule rather than as an exception.

It is about having a culture of respect and ensuring that wherever possible, young people are consulted in the planning, delivery and evaluation of our service.

Participation is about meaningful involvement that leads to measurable change in XenZone.

There are many best practice tools available on Participation. Here are four core principles we have adopted as our own.

1. We will listen to young people uninhibited by our own or their age.
2. Participation as a process not an event or series of events. To be effective, participative practices need to be embedded within the culture of our organisation.
3. Wherever we can we will measure the effectiveness and impact of participation, reporting back to young people and those people involved and influenced by what we do to prove its value in a demonstrable way.
4. In recognition of the role young people play in driving our organisational success, participation will become a key performance indicator regularly monitored at a senior management team meeting.

*For the purposes of this document we have used 'young people' to include both children and young people



Why we do it?

It is essential to our ongoing success and popularity that young people have a say in the way services they use are run.

Additionally, we believe participation will help us achieve our core purpose of making it easy and safe for all generations to access the best emotional and mental health services as and when they need them.

There are many benefits for the organisation and the young people who take part as well as having a positive impact on communities:

For young people

- A sense of ownership and pride in seeing their involvement make an impact
- A greater sense of agency, ownership and control of their own mental health and wellbeing
- Gaining a greater understanding of our service, how it works, why it works in particular ways, its aims and expected outcomes etc
- Increased competencies, self-esteem, skills and knowledge
- Enhanced individual development
- Increased status and stature in the community
- Increased self-discipline and time management
- Insight into the multiple roles of adults and broader career choices
- Enhanced sense of connectedness, belonging and feeling of being valued

For XenZone

- Fresh ideas and new perspectives to drive innovation
- Improved service design based upon an understanding of the wants and needs of service users instead of assumptions
- Better staff engagement and motivation
- Commercial gains associated with winning and retaining contracts

For the community

- Raising aspirations for young people, especially our Ambassadors, who feel listened to and valued
- Better quality mental health and emotional wellbeing services for young people
- Helping remove stigma around mental health through engagement and education of young people
- Providing social added value of community engaged young people who can utilise their skills and abilities in other socially minded endeavours.



"I got a tremendously fulfilling experience working alongside some great people with similar aspirations to myself. I learnt a great deal about mental health disorders, and how they affect people, and more importantly, how people can be supported. But overall, it was the high end experience which added to my already growing enthusiasm about being employed in the field of mental health, and really gave me the opportunity to help people that are suffering." **Kooth Ambassador**

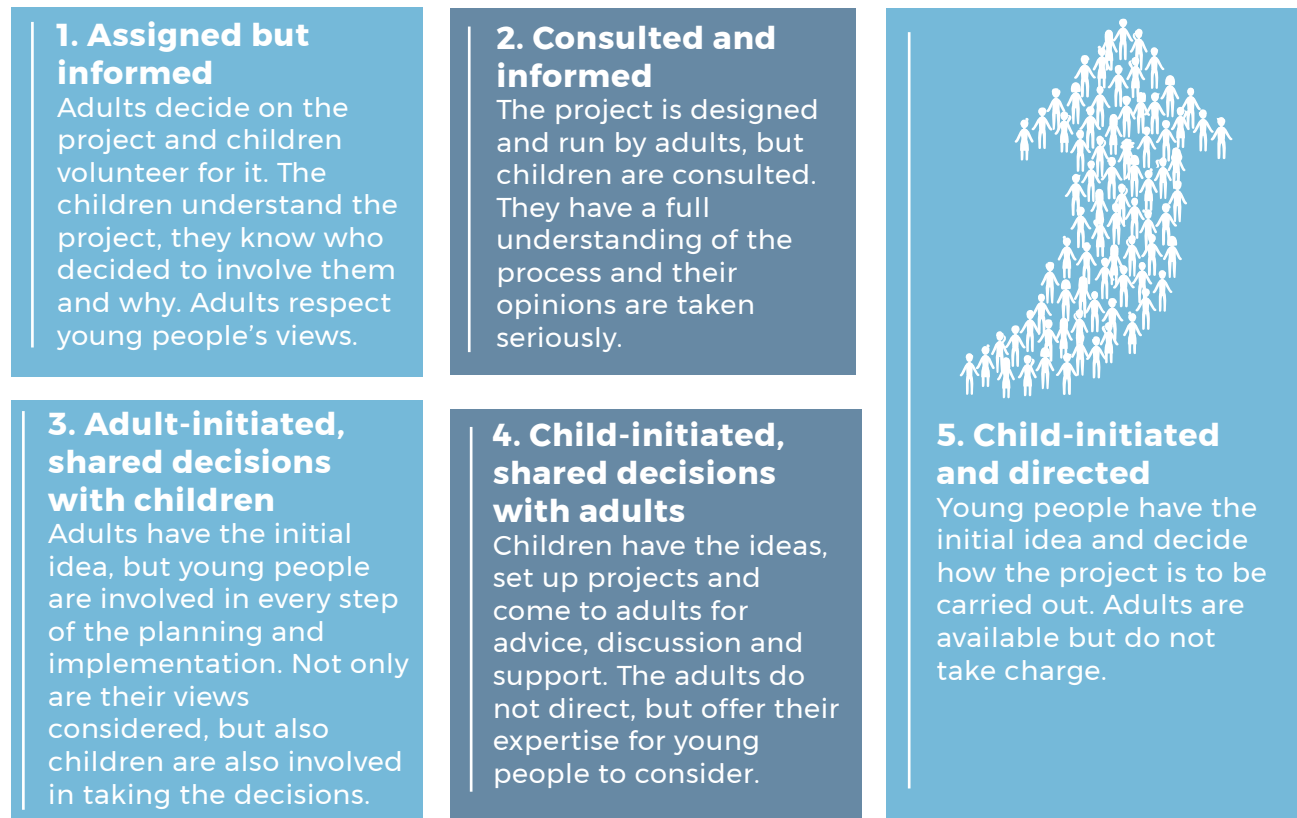
Our goal

We aim to be gold standard in our Participation practices, as determined by the young people who we serve, the commissioners we work with and the sector we operate within.

We will judge whether we have been successful in this ambition through regular formal and informal evaluation and successful award entries.

We like Treseder's model of Participation (below) and wherever possible look to achieve 4 or 5 Degrees of Participation.

Degrees of Participation



Treseder's (1997) degrees of participation

Getting involved

Young people can participate in the operations of XenZone in various ways.

Online

The Kooth site is open 24 hours a day 365 days a year. We use the site to poll opinions of young people, to hold online consultations and to publish our responses.

We have multiple channels on the site, including messaging, forums and chat, which allow young people to informally express their opinions and give us their ideas on all aspects of the service and our organisation.

This participation has so far been enabled in a number of focus groups, interviews and user shadowing sessions in which young people feedback about their impressions of the site and any suggestions they have for its improvement. They have also feedback on ideas and wireframes for future developments, such as the Kooth presentation, video content and new feature developments.

To maintain and grow participation we will commit to running focus groups every two months with young people from different backgrounds. Online questionnaires are being regularly sent out to gather qualitative and quantitative feedback on upcoming development.

In person

We hold formal discussion groups around our service design and delivery. The outputs of these groups is highly valued and frequently acted upon to develop new features and enhancements to the Kooth site.

Our Ambassador Programme equips young people with the skills and confidence to become virtual team members. Over 12-weeks young people receive first level mental health training; learn how to create great content through media projects; experience our community engagement activities and take part in interview panel training.

Equipped with these new skills young people are able to take a wider role in XenZone expanding their experience of what we do as an organisation, giving them the confidence to contribute ideas across all departments.

Each day our team of Integration and Participation workers are in schools and in community settings where young people are. This is a team dedicated to hearing the voice of young people, pushing this insight back into the organisation and seeing it is acted upon. Participation is not the sole responsibility of this team, but they are a catalyst to driving the organisation toward excellence in participative practice.

Each year we open our doors to young people through the National Takeover Challenge*. We continue to participate in this fun and exciting day expanding the range of activities young people can experience within our organisation.

* <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/takeover-challenge/>

Our commitment for 2018/19:

Beyond this ongoing participation work we are currently developing and committing to achieve the following in the next year:

- Set up a Shadow YP Advisory Board that reflects our Senior Management Team meetings and provides a structure for our overall participation strategy across different themes and practices including:
 - YP presence on interview panels and involvement in recruitment (professional development)
 - YP work placements in many areas of the business including business development, evaluation, training and development, marketing and promotion; Technology development (professional development)
 - Playing active roles working with SMT in developing strategy for service development (empowerment)
 - Co-presenting and running workshops at conferences (voice being heard)
 - Developing autonomous projects co-produced with XenZone staff (empowerment)

“The service is clearly valued by children and young people in Lincolnshire and quarterly case studies evidence the excellent outcomes for those interacting with the service.”

Catherine Southcott, Senior Commissioning Officer, Children’s Services, Lincolnshire County Council

References

Here are some of the documents and organisations we considered when writing our participation strategy:

- Association for Young People’s Health <http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/ayph-participation-statement>
- A voice and a choice for young people’s mental health <https://www.phf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/voice-and-choice.pdf>
- The British Youth Council <https://www.byc.org.uk/uk/nhs-youth-forum>
- Participation Works <http://www.participationworks.org.uk/>
- You’re Welcome Pilot 2017 <http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/yourewelcome/standards/>



kooth

www.kooth.com

"When I began to hear about great Kooth experiences, and so much great feedback, I thought I should probably give it a go. When I discovered you can write an article, that was the thing I warmed to straight away as a person with a love for writing. Kooth gives excellent advice and is perfect for young ones who need to talk to someone anonymously." **Kooth User**

Get in touch

If you are interested in joining our Ambassador Programme please contact koothambassadors@xenzone.com

To tell us what you think of this document email our Integration and Participation Strategic Lead, Meleni Parkin at mel@xenzone.com

Ideas on Kooth should be sent to our Product lead, Lucie Boyle at lboyle@xenzone.com

To reach our CEO, Zoe Blake email zoe@xenzone.com



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