



Part 3: Barriers to participation for seldom- heard groups

The third part of the training looks at barriers to participation, especially those experienced by seldom-heard groups.

Before doing this, please watch the video of MSYPs introducing barriers to participation on the training page of therightway.scot.

Barriers to participation for seldom-heard groups

Info sheet 1



All young people experience barriers to participation, but they are particularly experienced by young people from seldom-heard groups.

By seldom-heard groups we mean groups which could include LGBTQ+, Black, or Person of Colour, Young person with a disability, Young Carers, Care experienced young people, Young People with experience in the criminal justice system or other groups that face barriers to participating in public life such as discrimination, poverty, lack of free time, etc. As a result, their views are not often heard by decision-makers or can be drowned out by the views of other groups.

The barriers that young people face will also vary depending on individual circumstances and the nature of the participation work. For example, if you are doing a long-term participation project with a group of young people then availability and time taken away from school, friends, family, and hobbies might be a significant barrier. And if you are looking for young people to complete a survey, then access to the internet could be a significant barrier.

Often, the most common barrier that young people face is overcoming cultural and societal norms that do not give due weight to the views of young people. Changing this culture starts with leadership from decision-makers and listening to and valuing the views of young people is critical to breaking down this barrier.

Other common, and more tangible, barriers that are faced by many young people that have been identified in mini-research projects completed by *The Right Way* project are:

- A concern that they don't think they will be listened to or taken seriously. Good communications and clearly outlining what will happen after young people have shared their views is central to breaking down this barrier.
- Young people not having the time to commit to participation work. While this barrier can be difficult to overcome, it is crucial that young people are made aware early on how long the time commitment will be and that officials consider how young people's time will be valued through options such as reward and remuneration.

Barriers to participation for seldom-heard groups

Info sheet 2



- Feeling they won't be included in the process. Creating inclusive spaces that allow all young people, especially those from seldom-heard groups, is critical to meaningful participation. While there is no single right way to do this, measures that help include: removing jargon; using engaging ice-breakers; including young people in the delivery of sessions; and providing multiple ways for young people to feed in so those that don't feel comfortable sharing verbally can still have their voices heard.
- Some young people also told us they worried about the impact on their education. To help break down this barrier, participation work should be offered at a time to suit the young people involved.

By taking the time to consider what barriers young people in Scotland face, and putting time and resource into breaking down those barriers, decision-makers will hear from more diverse groups of young people affected by the work they do. As well as being fundamental to upholding the rights of young people, this also leads to more inclusive decision-making that addresses the needs of the young people that policy decisions impact most.

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Discussion activity



At your next team meeting or meeting with colleagues who work on policy that impacts young people, take 15 minutes to discuss and write down answers to these questions. Then consider how you will implement the actions you discuss when planning your participation work.

1. What groups of young people does your work impact most? (This might be 'all young people', young people from a specific background, or young people with a specific lived experience for example).
2. What barriers do those young people face to participation in your work? If your work impacts a large group of young people, consider specifically the barriers that seldom-heard groups face.
3. What actions will you take to break down those barriers.