

Diocese of Lincoln

Youth Participation Policy

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Lincoln Diocese Youth Participation Policy



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Why do we need a participation policy?

The church is often called The Body of Christ. In this image of the Church, all parts of the body are valued and have a role to play. It is this valuing of all parts of The Body, be they young or old, public or private, beautiful or plain that has led Lincoln Diocese to focus very much on the PARTICIPATION of all parts of The Body in ALL aspects of church life. The focus of this document is on the recognition of young people as fully functioning, able and indispensable body 'bits'.

The church belongs to young and old(er!) alike ... at present the vast majority of the decisions and leadership positions are taken by the over 25's (over 40's in reality). If we accept that the church truly does belong to all the assumption that as adults we need to 'allow' young people a platform needs to be challenged – young people have A RIGHT to have a means to participate and it is not our choice, as adults to graciously give them it. We have to make it available and we have to make it work.

Young people (for the purposes of this document between the ages of 11 and 25) are increasingly missing from our churches, are increasingly disinterested in activities that church provides and are increasingly disillusioned with institutions considered 'establishment', their agenda and motives.

If 'church' is to re-engage with these young people it needs to take them seriously and recognise the many positive things they can and do contribute to church life. Young people are often able to offer much needed doses of lucidity, scepticism, innovation and idealism to structures and hierarchies that they perceive as stale and irrelevant.

If Lincoln Diocese is going to move forward with this new generation of young people and allow them their inheritance of a thriving, dynamic church it needs to encourage and allow them to contribute to the life of the church at all levels.

Participation Policy at a glance ...

Aims:

For the reasons outlined above Lincoln Diocese has produced a Participation Policy which is aimed at putting into place the mechanisms to ensure that we allow and encourage young people:

1. to contribute to and actively participate in church life in the areas in which they live and at a national and international level
2. to be consulted about decisions that affect them and then to participate in decision making processes
3. to understand the level of influence they will have and to actually have a real possibility of influencing what is planned
4. to make recommendations to the governing structures of the churches
5. to receive feedback that acknowledges their views and contribution and lets them know the impact they have had
6. to be seen and heard and taken seriously

**INCLUDE ME IN
Why?**



... it's the right thing to do ...

Participation Policy:

The church's governing body (at Parish, Deanery and Diocesan level) will invite and actively seek youth participation in all aspects of the daily life of the church and on issues regarding finance, structure, worship and outreach. It will also encourage and enable youth participation when particular needs are identified and in response to interest shown.

- The governing bodies (which ideally should be representative and include young people) shall make clear the nature of the decisions to be made.
- The governing body will explain in advance where issues are non-negotiable and give sound reasons.
- Young people will be informed as to their ability and limits in the decision making process.
- Young people will be provided with the resources they need in order to participate in a meaningful way.
- Processes of governance shall be planned and structured in such a way as to make it easy for young people to obtain information and provide input.
- Platforms of decision making shall use methods that are flexible, inclusive and appropriate for young people to participate in.
- Involvement of young people who may face barriers to participation should be sought out and facilitated.
- Feedback will be provided as to how a decision was reached and how the young people's contribution influenced the decision making processes.

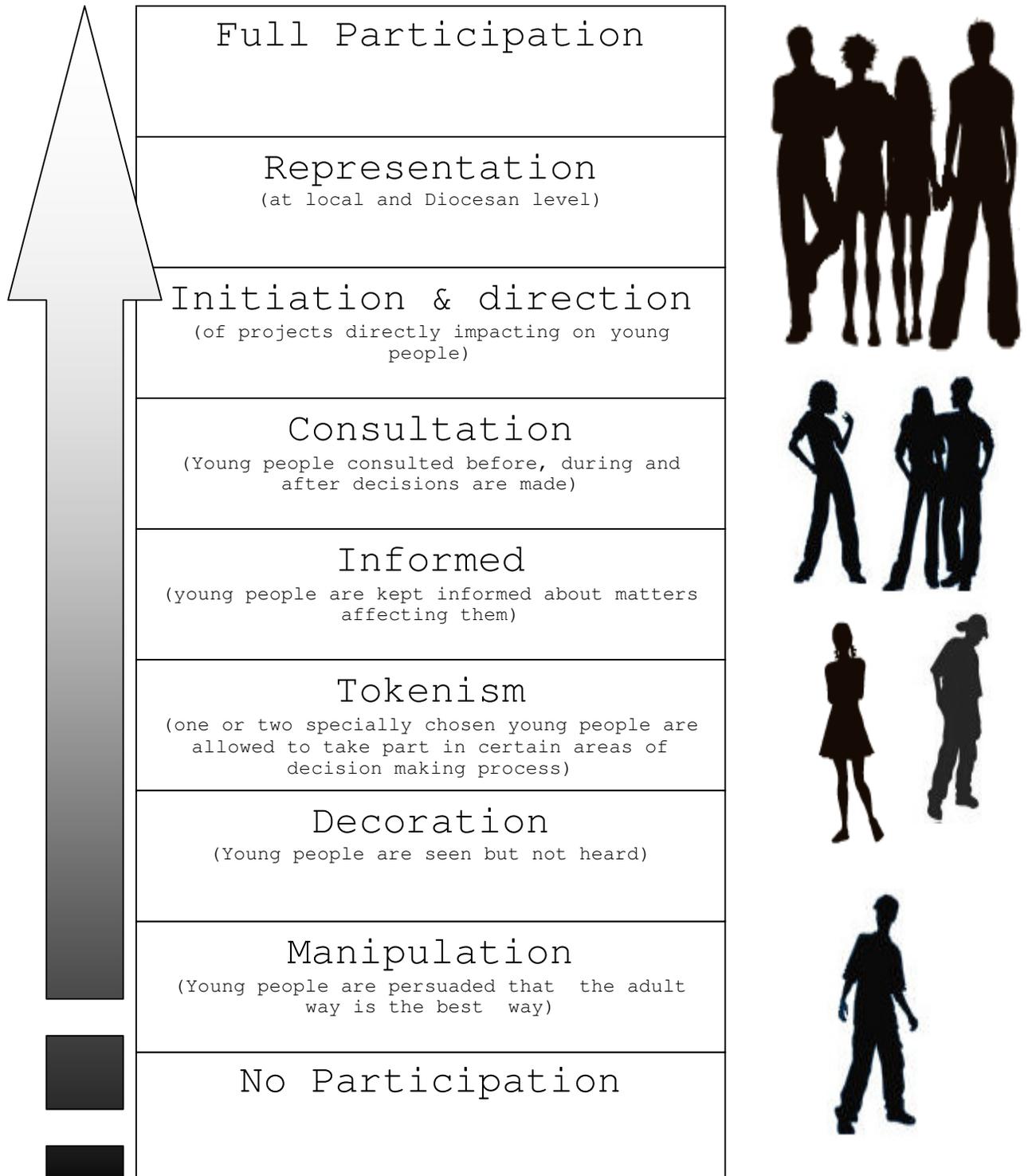
How will this Policy be Implemented ?

Lincoln Diocese will at all times maintain and circulate and implement a Youth Participation Policy and will continually seek to improve its practice of Youth Participation.

Parishes, Deaneries and Diocesan Departments will use the following guidelines and checklist to ensure that the Youth Participation Policy is implemented.

Lincoln Diocese Youth Participation Model

We are aiming for full participation!



Guidelines for Youth participation

Young People should be:

1 Contributing to church life

Young people can contribute in almost all areas of church life. They can be part of the worship and the pastoral life of the church, they can be both leaders and participants in decision making processes and they can practically get involved with the nitty gritty of running a church and the daily duties this requires.

Their contribution should be encouraged from the outset. Their contribution should not just be accepted when it is offered, but actively sought out, encouraged and facilitated in the same way as it is with adults.

Young people should be included on rotas, in newsletters, and in conversations. If we act as if they don't count, they will feel as if they don't count.

It is important that young people feel they have something to offer their local church communities and understand that through their contribution at a local level an ability to contribution at a Diocesan, national and international level is also available.

Suggestions:

- ✓ *At a local level: posters informing young people that their opinion matters and that the church wants them to contribute.*
- ✓ *Encouragement and help to contribute to newsletters and magazines. Information about church life, issues and events given out in accessible language.*
- ✓ *Talking to and listening to young people.*
- ✓ *Willingness to give them information and offer appropriate advice and training.*
- ✓ *At Diocesan level: encouragement and help to contribute to the information sharing mechanisms throughout the Diocese (E-bulletin and CrossLinCs especially).*
- ✓ *To contribute and participate in events organised for them.*

Young People should be:

2 Involved in consultation and direction of the decision making processes

It may be difficult for the existing participants in processes of decision making in church life to come to terms with the shift in power and control that comes with an active participation policy. It is no longer acceptable for young people to be 'done to' in a way that a group of adults feels is appropriate for them or in ways that they experienced youth work in the past. Young people should be consulted as to what they want when services for them are being considered, their contributions should be listened to and used to inform the decision making processes.

Young people should be involved from the outset of a project, in many ways it is better if they are the initiator of a piece of work especially if they are the main beneficiaries, as this affords the highest possible level of ownership.

Participation is a right, not a rule, and young people should be allowed NOT to participate if this is what they choose. However, in order to encourage participation churches need to ask themselves if they are adequately encouraging, supporting and equipping young people.

For example, it is important that the language used in the whole process of consultation and participation does not exclude young people from the outset. Language should appropriate to their age and terminology used may need to be expressed differently or explained. The purpose of their participation should be made clear and the real possibility of them making a difference should be explained (see 3 below). Platforms for consultation and participation should not exclude young people because they are suited for adults who know the 'ins and outs' of church life. Sitting in a dusty vestry for three hours arguing the same point is not going to particularly appeal to young people and existing decision makers need to challenge themselves to 'do things differently'.

Suggestions:

- ✓ *There should be an awareness raising campaign aimed at current decision makers in churches (at local and Diocesan level) as to the need for youth involvement, the benefits that it can bring and the changes that may need to be addressed to existing structures if it is to become a reality.*
- ✓ *An evaluation of existing decision making procedures and youth participation mechanisms is suggested as a starting point for churches and departments within the Diocese and the identification of potential barriers to young people's active involvement highlighted.*

- ✓ *Participation should become a key element in the way that church employees and volunteers work and should be included in all job descriptions.*
- ✓ *A model of participation should be used to monitor the role of young people in decision making processes. The suggested model (see above) places different forms of engagement into a hierarchy, the low end of which offers only token participation, or in the worst case manipulation of young people, and the other end of the scale offers young people a high degree of ownership over processes and decision making.*
- ✓ *Using the model churches and Diocesan Directorates should be aiming to work at the highest level of participation, which is considered ideal. However, it is recognised that at different times, different levels of participation will suit different young people in achieving different goals. Participation is a dynamic process and churches have a great deal to learn before they are able to offer the ideal. Offering relatively low levels of participation to begin with does not mean that it is impossible to develop stronger roles for young people as we progress with the policy.*
- ✓ *An initial programme of 'drop-in' or 'low threshold' participation events may be a way forward on the ground. This will allow links to be built with young people through one-off activities and short term projects and they will get a taste as to what participation involves. For example, if a church wants to start a youth group, it may be that a series of informal events offering opportunities for contribution will work better than asking young people to commit to a series of more formal meetings for a long time. It is also more likely that this sort of initial consultation will allow the inclusion of young people who would not normally get involved in more formal structures.*
- ✓ *Churches should be prepared to use a range of media when seeking to open dialogue with young people and to provide creative ways to give them a voice.*
- ✓ *Churches, Directorates and leading members of staff should be prepared to attend youth governance meetings.*

Young People should:

3 Have and be informed as to a real possibility of influence

In order for any participation policy to be credible in the eyes of young people it is vital that they see that they can have a real impact. The participation effort will fail if the opportunities for participation are tokenistic and if young people, their ideas and efforts are not taken seriously. If participation is to be credible then there will have to be negotiation, a real devolution of power and accountability on all sides of the decision making process.

Young people need to know that their voices are heard and that their views are taken into account. To this end it is important that they are shown and understand the structures to which they are contributing, are aware of the other participants and their influence and that the whole process of decision making is transparent. It is no good for promises of influence to be made when the reality is that existing structures (be they legal, structural or political) will prevent the young people's voices being heard or taken into account.

Suggestions

- ✓ *Awareness as to the mechanisations of governance need to be raised with adults and young people alike. Questions need to be asked and answered at a local and Diocesan level: How are decisions in the church made? Why are they made this way? Why are church structures different, or allowed to be different from other structures young people may encounter?*
- ✓ *At all levels of governance there should be transparency in the way that decisions are made and accountability given for decisions made. If a recommendation by a consultation group of young people (and adults) is not taken up, then there needs to be adequate explanation as to why not. Responsibility must be taken for decisions made or not made and adequate feedback (see 5 below) given.*
- ✓ *Governing bodies in churches and the Diocese need to look seriously at how they can devolve real power to young people and allow their influence to be translated into action.*
- ✓ *The establishment of new platforms for young people to express an opinion should be explored.*
- ✓ *Promises of influence should not be made that cannot be kept. Barriers to influence should be challenged.*

Young People Should:

4 Be able to make recommendations

The ability to take a consultation process to its logical conclusion and be able to make real recommendations to governing bodies is paramount. It should be possible for young people to bring their suggestions to bodies responsible for decision-making at all levels of church life. This includes PCC's, committee meetings, Deanery Synods and Diocesan Synod. Lincoln Diocese has reserved two places for young people to have their voices heard at the Diocesan Synod and through a network of Youth Council meetings is putting into place the mechanism for these representatives to be elected by young people with connections with church. These representatives will be encouraged to attend the Church of England's National Youth Council and partake in the representation of young people in the Church at an international level through this body.

Points from 1 and 2 above should be reiterated here: Young people must be encouraged, facilitated and equipped to take part in these committees and the committees must be prepared to change to meet the needs of the young people being included. Participation should be integrated into a culture of dialogue between existing governing bodies and young people, and not simply 'bolted on' to existing structures.

Suggestions

- ✓ *PCC's and Deanery Synods should allocate a number of places to young people (taking into account the need to challenge and reform existing ways of meeting!) to provide them with a platform on which to make recommendations.*
- ✓ *Deanery Synods should establish greater links with their Deanery Youth Enabler, who is tasked with helping to manage the network of young people involved in the Youth Council in their area. This network of young people should be encouraged to meet regularly with the Deanery.*
- ✓ *PCC's, Deanery Synods and Diocesan Synod should consider the structure of their meetings and highlight and tackle any potential barriers to participation of young people and if necessary new platforms in which to meet should be established.*
- ✓ *Links should be made between certain key posts and their holders and young peoples representation bodies. For instance part of the job-description of a DYU, the DDE or a Bishop could include the responsibility to attend youth council meetings.*

Young people should:**5 Receive feedback**

In order for young people to move forward in any participation process they need to receive and be prepared to receive feedback. Adults involved in the participation process need to be prepared to be accountable for any part they take in the decision making process and explain their decision to the young people directly. Feedback needs to be given in a way that makes reasons for any decisions clear and the consequences of any action to be taken should be explained. The processes of challenging any decision should be fully explained.

Suggestions:

- ✓ *Lincoln Diocese will ensure that all recommendations made through the Youth Council to Diocesan Synod will receive comprehensive and prompt feedback, both positive and negative.*
- ✓ *It is recommended that PCC's and Deanery Synods develop a system of feedback to the young people in their area, either through the young people represented on their committees or through the Diocesan Youth Animator and Deanery Youth Enablers.*
- ✓ *Feedback should be automatic and should make clear what difference the participation of young people had on the decision making process. Even if it is simply 'we had not considered X, Y and Z previously ...'. Feedback should include the views of any adults involved in the decision making process.*
- ✓ *As part of the process of accountability and 'keeping young people in the loop' information will be posted onto the Diocesan Youth Web Site regarding other matters that the Church as an institution is discussing.*

Young People Should be:

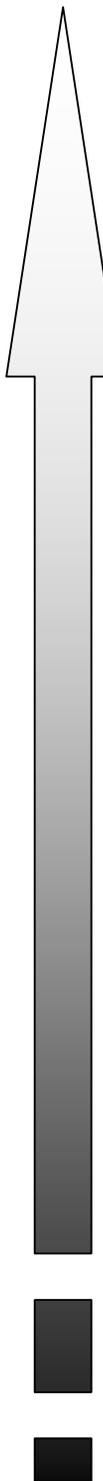
6 Seen, heard and taken seriously

Young people's participation is not free. Churches need to be prepared to take the financial impact of their contributions seriously. The planning and implementation of youth participation should include a thorough assessment of resources (human and/or financial), will of people involved and young people's interests, needs and capabilities. If the contribution of young people is to be taken seriously a value has to be attached to it. This may mean additional resources, time or the provision of compensation/incentives to the young people to be involved.

Suggestions:

- ✓ *There should be adequate resourcing of participation of young people at all levels of church life.*
- ✓ *All PCC's, Deanery and Diocesan Synods should have an item on the agenda entitled 'young people'. Even if a particular parish has no obvious links with young people the opportunity for this to be challenged and explored should be there. It also provides the opportunity for the PCC/Synod Members to be updated and made aware of activities in the area of Youth that are taking place in neighbouring parishes, within their Deanery and Diocese and Diocesan policy. Unless Youth and Young People are seen to be an important part of the churches mission and concern there is little chance that it will 'suddenly' just happen.*

Checklist for Participation in churches

	<p style="text-align: center;">Full Participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Participation Policy has been adopted by the PCC and is implemented in all governance 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Representation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(at local and Diocesan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people have a voice on the PCC, the Deanery Synod and have locally elected representatives on the Diocesan Youth Council. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Initiation & direction</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(of projects directly impacting on young people)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision makers in the church are aware of the need to consult and include young people. Imaginative ways of encouraging participation are used. There is transparency in decision making processes. Resources are allocated for 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Consultation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Young people consulted before, during and after decisions are made)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platforms are available for young people to be heard and consulted. Adults in positions of responsibility in the decision making processes of the church attend youth meetings. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Informed</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(young people are kept informed about matters affecting them)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information is available in an accessible form for young people. 'Children and Youth' is an agenda item on the PCC. Young people are aware of the decision making processes. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Tokenism</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(one or two specially chosen young people are allowed to take part in certain areas of decision making process)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some young people are listened to and engaged in conversations Young people attend meetings 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Decoration</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Young people are seen but not heard)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people are told that their opinion counts. Children and youth are invited to certain carefully planned events. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Manipulation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Young people are persuaded that the adult way is the best way)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults in the church make decisions relating to young people . Children and young people are 'done' to 	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p style="text-align: center;">No Participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no young people attached to or involved with the church community. 	<input type="checkbox"/>

Pathway for Implementation

At Diocesan level

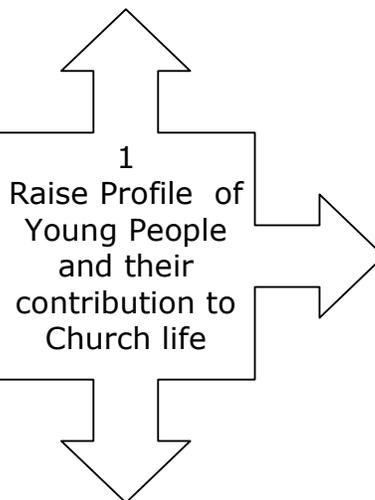
Establish means by which youth, youth leaders and children's groups can communicate on a regular basis with other members of the church in the Diocese. A 'Youth' page in CrossLincs and better links from the website to Get Connected.



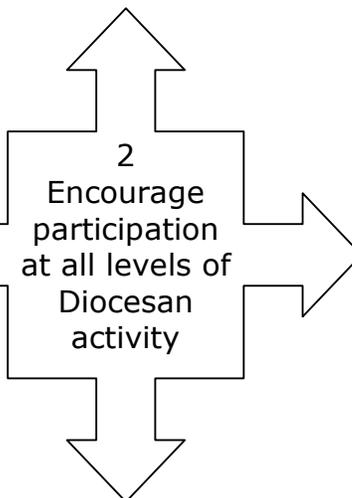
11 MILLION

Enable Young People to 'try out' key roles within the Diocese using platforms such as 11 Million Takeover Day. This is a two-way process – adults found out what young people can do!

Youth representatives contributing to Diocesan Synod



Ensure that Youth and Children is one focus of every Diocesan Synod – even before elected youth representatives are present. Ensure that Youth work across the Diocese is reported on at every Synod.

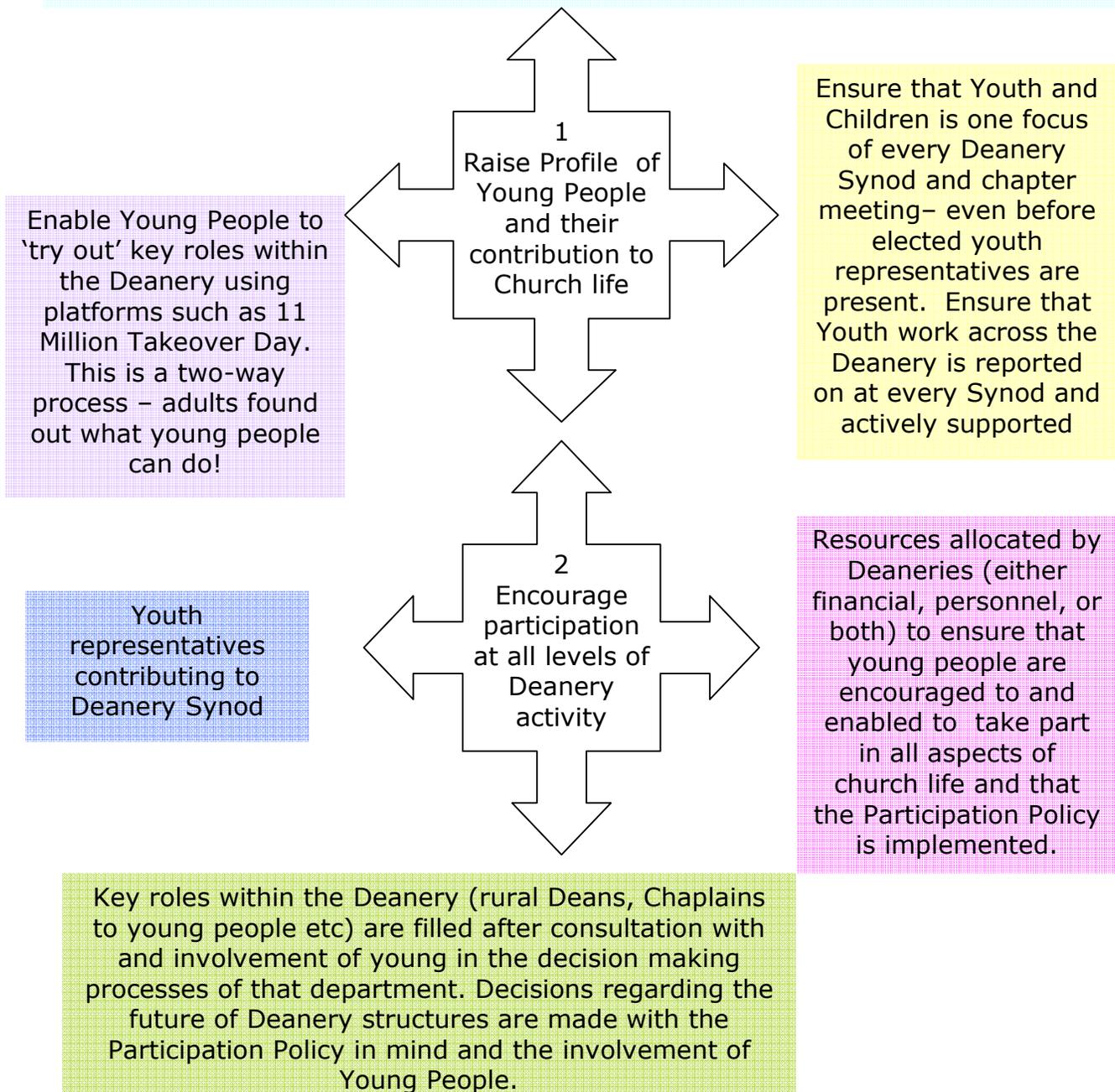


Commitment to continue to fund and recruit staff to ensure Participation Policy is implemented and Youth Council is supported.

Key departments that work alongside young people (education, youth and children) to ensure that young people are consulted and involved in the decision making processes of that department. Issues such as recruitment, budgets and direction include full participation

At Deanery level

Establish means by which youth, youth leaders and children's groups can communicate on a regular basis with other members of the church in the Deanery. Appointment of Deanery Youth Enabler as a key post that ensures young peoples groups are fully informed as to what is happening at Diocesan and Deanery level. Emphasis placed on importance of communication with Deanery Youth Enabler and their inclusion on Deanery Synods.



At PCC level

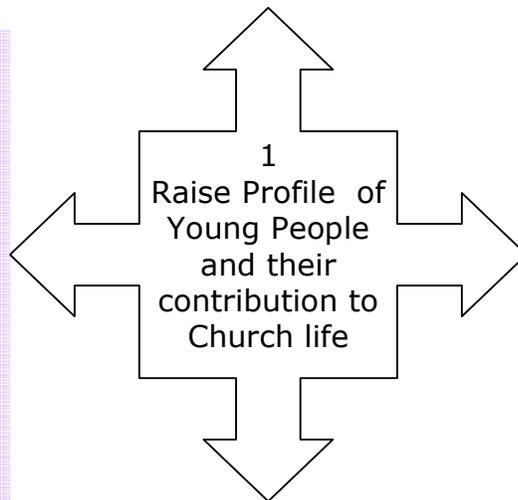
Establish means by which youth, youth leaders and children's groups can communicate on a regular basis with other members of the church in the Parish.
A conscious effort to hand over some space in any church communications to young people and their leaders.

Enable Young People to 'try out' key roles within the Diocese using platforms such as 11 Million Takeover Day. Have a Take Over Sunday every year (at least once a year) and allow young people the opportunity to input to or better still run the service.

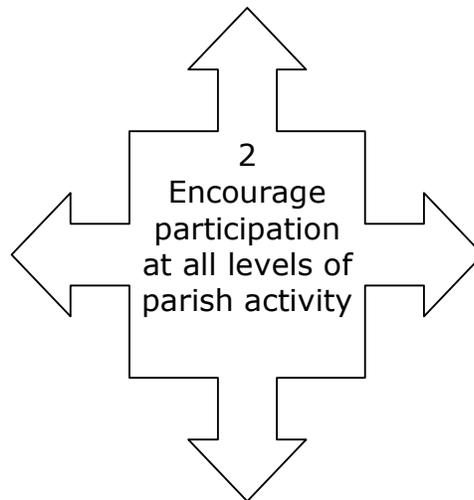
Be creative in the engagement with young people. You may not have any regularly coming to church, but you could ask a local school of local authority youth project to get involved.

Youth representatives contributing to PCC's (be creative about how the PCC meets and receives these young people.

Key roles on the PCC and incumbents, curates, youth workers etc are recruited after consultation and involvement of young people in the process.
Decisions regarding changes in use of building, in service provision and so on include the participation of young people.



Ensure that Youth and Children is on the agenda of every PCC/ministry team meeting, even before elected youth representatives are present. This should act as both a challenge and an incentive to the PCC to engage with young people and reassess their existing provision regularly



Resources allocated by Parishes (either financial, personnel, or both) to ensure that young people are encouraged to and enabled to take part in all aspects of church life and that the Participation Policy is implemented.