Child-Driven Policy using Youth Participatory Action Research

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Background
An overview of West Cumbria

Geographically isolated
Post industrial area with Sellafield being a major employer
Polarised social demography
Pockets of very high deprivation
Limited services
Below regional and national averages of educational and employment
West Cumbria Child Poverty Forum

WCCPF is an un-constituted group of professionals from a range of sectors, who meet periodically to share information surrounding child poverty on a local, national and international level. There is representation from Allerdale and Copeland Borough Councils, Cumbria County Council Children’s Services, Howgill Family Centre, Barnardo’s Allerdale, and UCLan.

The aim of the Forum is to share information and expertise and raise the profile of child poverty in West Cumbria, keeping the issue at the forefront of the public, and the statutory services.
Connected Communities West Cumbria

Steering Groups → Identify key gatekeepers with young people → Identify groups of young people to work with → Research training

Evaluation → Co-production of interventions → Community playback → Data collection → Research Design
Connected Communities West Cumbria: Sample

**Mirehouse**
- Primary School Setting
  - Girls and boys aged 10 to 11 years old (n=24)

**Woodhouse**
- Community Setting
  - Girls aged 11 to 12 years old (n=14)

Supported by the local police service
Cultivating Citizenship through Community Capital

Engagement
- Engaging
- Informed
- Rooted in connect and action
- Youth led

Exploration
- Collective Identity
- Relationships
- Exploring Places
- Supportive Spaces

Empathy
- Understanding
- Motivation

Empowerment
- Citizenship
- Social Action
- Community Capital
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Youth Citizenship

Participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterised by mutual respect and non-violent and in accordance with human rights and democracy (Hoskins, 2006)

Youth citizenship is features in a number of UK and EU policies, such as the Civil Society Strategy (Cabinet Office, 2018) and Horizon 2020 (European Commission)

Children are excluded from much of civil society (Larkin, 2014; Moos-Mitha, 2005) Safe relational spaces are essential (Cockburn, 2007)

Children experiencing poverty are face significantly more barriers to enacting their citizenship than their more affluent counterparts (Ridge, 2011)
PAR and YPAR

- Participatory action research (PAR) is a research tool whereby community participation and action are central.
- An explicit outcome of PAR lies in questioning some form of inequality, and champions empowerment in the participants who are part of the research (Rodríguez & Brown, 2009; Fox, et al., 2010).
- Youth participatory action research (YPAR) focuses on three elements:
  - youth participation as partners, often called ‘co-researchers’;
  - projects that aim towards public impact;
  - critical perspectives on inequality (Cammarota and Fine 2008; Checkoway and Richards-Schuster 2006; Colatos and Morrell 2003; Frost 2008; Mitra, Serriere, and Kirshner 2014; Rubin and Jones 2007; Sabo Flores 2008).
- Many YPAR projects are grounded in the concept of critical consciousness (Freire, 1996), whereby young people seek to identify, understand and take actions against social inequalities.
The Magic 6
Participatory Action and Learning Experiences with Roma Youth
Training Manual

A collaborative learning resource written with Roma young people and professionals working with PEER Youth in Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, England, France, Lithuania, Ireland, Italy, Scotland, Spain and Wales.

Cath Larkins & Andy Bilson
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Figure 4: The Magic 6 Framework

1. Learn & Identify
2. Use & Choose
3. Investigate
4. Analyse & Plan
5. Action for change
6. Share & Evaluate
Methodology

Community Surveys

Community Walks

Art

Personal Testimonies

Peer interviews

Workshops
The Copeland Borough Council Children’s Charter is the Council’s pledge to listen and respond to the needs and ideas expressed by local children.

It has been written by local children from a variety of backgrounds, mainly from areas experiencing significant poverty.

The Council will be held accountable to children. Although they won’t have any powers over the Council, children will be asked to provide feedback on the Council’s fulfilment of their pledges.
Public Spaces Protection Order

Photographs and anecdotes from the children are currently being used by the Council’s solicitors who are in the process of writing a number of Public Spaces Protection Order.
Reflections

Networks Matter
- Child Poverty Task and Finish Group
- Public Spaces Protection Order Task and Finish Group

Attitudes Matter
- Receptive
- Respectful
**INDIVIDUAL IMPACT**
Improved educational performance: Attainment data and Attendance data (Quantitative)
Enhanced Community Capital (Individual Level): Teacher focus groups and interviews, parent focus group, peer interviews (Qualitative)

**COMMUNITY IMPACT**
Enhanced Community Capital (Community Level): Improved capacity: Outcomes star/ Focus groups/ Interviews (Mixed)
Improved citizenship: Outcomes star/ Focus groups/ Interviews (Mixed)
Improved well-being: Outcomes star/ Focus groups/ Interviews (Mixed)

**POLICY IMPACT**
Evidence from councillors: Statements, examples of policies impacted upon by work (Mixed)
Evidence from presentations at meetings: Photos, statements, frequency of presentations (Mixed)
Individual Impact

- Improved educational performance: Attainment data and Attendance data

- Enhanced Community Capital (Individual Level): Teacher focus groups and interviews, parent focus group, peer interviews

As much as [the police] help us, I also think of it as we’re helping them, if we’re changing the community they’re going to be more free

I have found that not everyone is proud to call their community their home but as a group we know we can change that
Community Impact

- Enhanced Community Capital (Community Level):
  Improved capacity: Outcomes star/ Focus groups/ Interviews (Mixed)

- Improved citizenship: Outcomes star/ Focus groups/ Interviews (Mixed)

- Improved well-being: Outcomes star/ Focus groups/ Interviews (Mixed)
“The Girls Gang have been integral in a Children’s Charter project we’re taking forward at the council. The charter will enshrine the commitments of the council to the children of Copeland, and we’re extremely grateful for the contribution of the Girls Gang”

Julie Betteridge, Executive Director of Operations at Copeland Borough Council

“The experiences of the children and the evidence they have gathered has been critical in creating the Children’s Charter that will be implemented at Copeland Borough Council. We are hoping to have a launch event for the charter which will be children focused rather than dignitary focused. We hope this empowers the children involved in the project to participate in the democratic process throughout their lives and show that they can have a real and tangible impact on the lives of people in their communities”

James Young, Scrutiny Officer at Copeland Borough Council
Thank you for your time. Any questions?

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