

Increasing young people's participation within the voluntary and statutory sector can be a difficult task. Participation workers sometimes face resistance from staff, management and decision-makers and unrealistic expectations about what can be achieved in their job role. They also have to manage young people's disillusionment with not being heard. This can often lead to being isolated. In addition, participation work with young people perceived as vulnerable presents specific challenges. Within organisations, concerns about safeguarding, a lack of belief in marginalised young people's agency or that they can be trusted to make informed and healthy decisions about their own lives can create even more barriers to meaningful participation.

Despite all of these challenges, there is some incredible participation work being done with marginalised young people across the UK. The Association for Young People's Health (AYPH) coordinates a national network of participation practitioners who are either currently or formerly working with marginalised young people. We hope this will create an opportunity for peer support amongst participation practitioners across different sectors, a space to share good practice and to access concrete examples of participation successes with marginalised young people.

By practitioners, we mean anyone committed to and working to increase young people's participation, whether paid or voluntary. For the purposes of this group, marginalised is also broadly defined and includes, but is not limited to:

- young people with chronic conditions or disabilities
- LGBTQI young people
- young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
- young people with mental health issues
- BME young people, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller
- young people affected by sexual exploitation or involved in the street economy
- homeless young people
- young carers
- looked after young people
- young people in the youth justice system
- young people living in poverty
- young people facing multiple discriminations

We currently meet quarterly. We also have a dedicated mailing list where members can communicate about issues they are facing or share opportunities for young people to get involved on a variety of issues and in a variety of ways. If you would like to join the network, please email behealthy@youngpeopleshealth.org.uk so you can be added to the mailing list. Please also forward this on to any contact you think would be interested.

*Unfortunately, AYPH cannot help with any travel costs for workers who attend. We will provide light refreshments.

AYPH is a progressive charity and membership forum, creating a focus for everyone working in the field of young people's health across the UK. The [AYPH Be Healthy project](#) is an innovative participation project bringing together young people from three different cities in England to identify the unmet health needs of young people affected by sexual exploitation and design resources that present professionals and young people with strategies to better meet those needs. Be Healthy was developed as a youth-led, group work project that values young people's agency, creativity and the power of a shared, self-defined identity.