I n v o l v I n g Y o u n g P e o p l e

Allowing young people to contribute their opinions in shaping basketball activity gives us the opportunity to create a better, all-round basketball experience. All too often, decisions which affect young people are taken, with no opportunity for them to be involved in the decision-making process. By engaging young people with your club, league or region, this gives us an opportunity to develop young leaders and volunteers for the future.

In legal terms a child is someone younger than 18 years. However, in this context we extend this definition to include young adults (up to 25 years old) whose views and recent experiences as young people are still relevant. Young people can be involved in basketball in various ways; as players or in other roles such as coaches, team managers and officials.

**BENEFITS OF INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE**

* Actively involving young people can promote the organisation as a safe space for them to air their opinions, ideas and concerns. Subsequently, young people may feel more confident to report any concerns they have.
* Involving young people’s views, experiences and worries can inform, influence and contribute to appropriate decision-making and help to involve and engage young people in the organisation’s work.
* Failing to consult young people and the absence of young persons’ perspectives can result in wasted resources, time and effort.
* Young people can provide ideas and opinions from a unique point of view.
* Organisations become more child-focused and are more likely to retain their participation within the sport long-term.
* By allowing young people to contribute their ideas/opinions, this can develop their skills, experience, and confidence.
* Young people are more effective in connecting with other young people when discussing ideas and sharing information. In some instances, they can also be more effective in encouraging more young people to play basketball.

**BEST APPROACHES WHEN INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE**

Face-to-face consultation with small groups of young people is often more effective than asking them to fill out surveys and questionnaires.

**BE GENUINE AND MEANINGFUL**

* There needs to be genuine openness to listening to young people’s views and a commitment to taking their views onboard. Without this, the act can feel tokenistic and can risk alienating young people, as well as missing out on the benefits of the ideas, skills and experience they can contribute.

**BE HONEST, OPEN AND RESPECTFUL**

* Use open, easy-to-understand questions to make sure the participants can say exactly what they think.
* The organisation should be prepared to hear, consider and where appropriate act on information, views and feedback that may challenge existing practices.
* Those involved need to be open about the extent of the young people’s influence. For example, to what degree the organisation can or will be open to feedback or suggestions on a particular subject.
* Consulting young people does not require the organisation to accept or act on all feedback. However, respect does involve ensuring that feedback is heard, seriously considered and, where appropriate, built into the organisation’s actions.

**BE FOCUSED**

* Avoid over-complicating the consultation, just dive straight in.
* The young people’s role within the group should be made clear.
* Focus the discussion on the unique perspective that young people can provide in relation to the topic and embrace the value they can bring.
* Make clear how their contributions will be recorded and presented.

**BE INCLUSIVE**

* Ensure there is a balance of boys, girls, different ages and abilities etc. involved in the consultation.
* Creating accessible opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds is key. Any obstacles to participation by certain individuals or groups must be identified and addressed.
	+ These can relate to expenses for travel to events or meetings or making it possible to join meetings remotely.
	+ Meetings and opportunities can also be scheduled to fit it around work or education commitments.

**BE ADEQUATELY RESOURCED**

* There needs to be enough staff/volunteer time to consult effectively.
* A budget for factors such as venue, travel and refreshments.
* Administration for records/reports and practical arrangements such as booking venues and travel.
* Rewards and/or acknowledgment of young people’s involvement.

**PROVIDE FEEDBACK**

* Young people appreciate being asked what they think and often come up with innovative ideas and suggestions.
* Plans should be put in place to ensure that young people are updated on how their contributions have been used and received, as well as informing them of any changes or decisions made by the organisations as a result of their involvement.

For examples of how other clubs, leagues and organisations are involving young people in decision making, visit the Welfare Officer page of the Hive Learning platform.