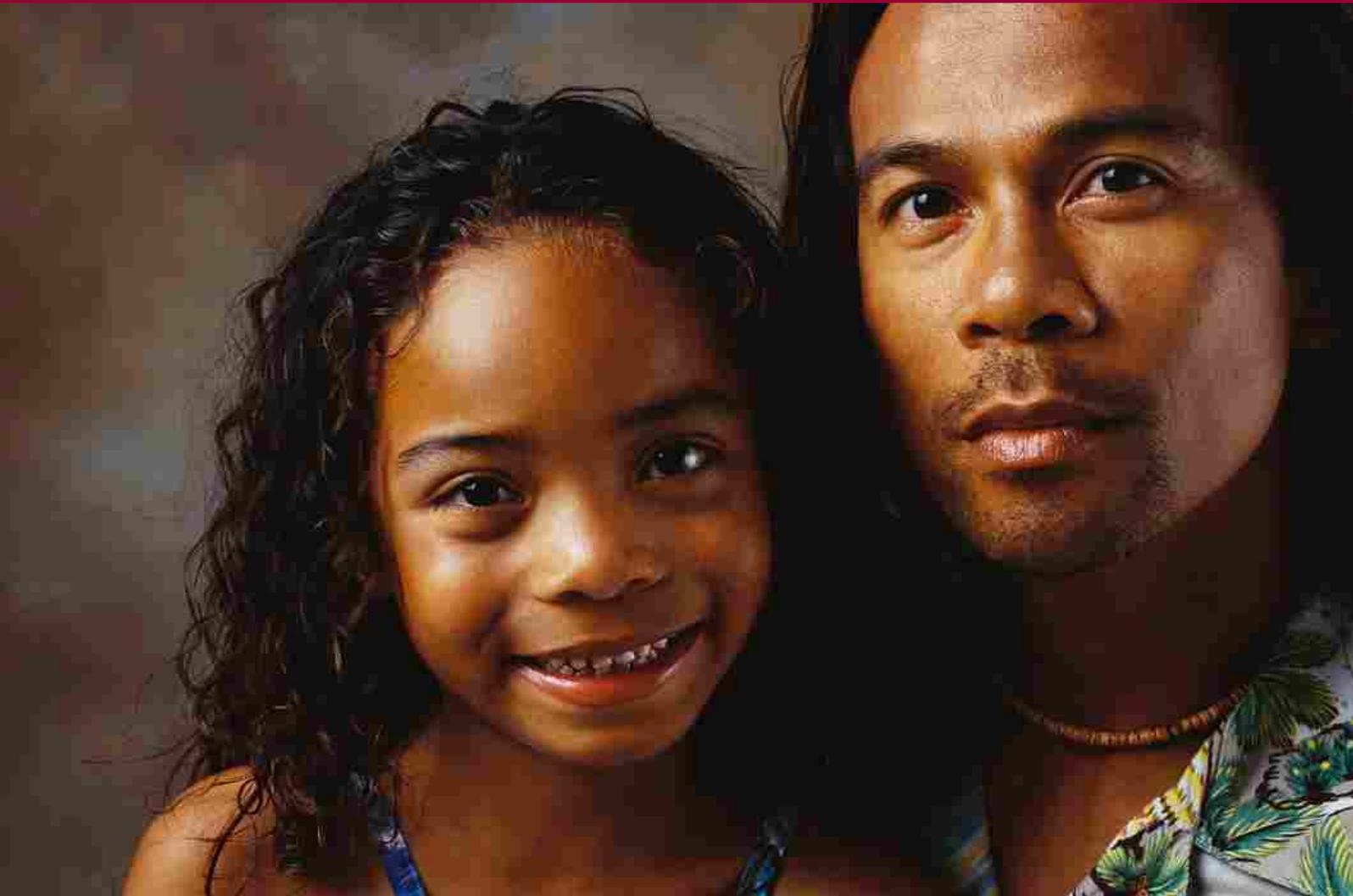


Supporting the implementation of

**Get Involved!**

# Active Involvement Guidelines



## Parent Participation

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For further information on the Active Involvement Guidelines, please contact:

**Michael Watts**

Senior Partnerships and Planning Officer | Education and Care Services  
London Borough of Bromley

Tel: 020 8461 7608 | E-mail: [michael.watts@bromley.gov.uk](mailto:michael.watts@bromley.gov.uk)

## Purpose

The effective involvement of children, young people, parents and carers has been acknowledged by Ofsted in a number of inspections of Bromley's services for children and young people over recent years.

The active involvement of parents and carers in the borough through the Active Involvement Strategy, *Get Involved!*, was endorsed by the Bromley Children and Young People Partnership in April 2008.

These guidelines aim to enable professionals to enhance their work and provide strategies to further involve parents and carers of children and young people in planning and evaluation of services to barriers to involving.

These guidelines should be considered at the planning stages of any participation project and the chosen method(s) of appreciation should be included in the project plan. All budget implications should be considered at the planning stage.



*Get Involved!* outlines the rights of participation for parents and carers and the responsibilities of all organisations and agencies within the Bromley Children and Young People Partnership to implement this

Involving parents and carers creates an environment where:

**“barriers come down, fears and ignorance flies out of the window and respect, understanding and goodwill takes place**

[A parent from a Parent Forum]

Further information on *Get Involved!* is available from:

[www.bromleypartnerships.org](http://www.bromleypartnerships.org)





# About the Guidelines

## Who can use these guidelines?

These guidelines should be used by all of the organisations and agencies that form part of the Bromley Children and Young People Partnership, alongside *Get Involved!*.

The following organisations form are members of the Bromley Children and Young People Partnership Board:

- ▶▶ Bromley Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum
- ▶▶ Bromley College of Further and Higher Education
- ▶▶ Bromley Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- ▶▶ Bromley Healthcare
- ▶▶ Bromley Primary and Special Schools
- ▶▶ Bromley Safeguarding Children Board
- ▶▶ Bromley Secondary Schools
- ▶▶ Connexions South London Sub Regional Unit
- ▶▶ Jobcentre Plus
- ▶▶ London Borough of Bromley
- ▶▶ London Probation Trust
- ▶▶ Metropolitan Police Service (Bromley)
- ▶▶ Mytime Active
- ▶▶ NHS South East London
- ▶▶ Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- ▶▶ South London Healthcare NHS Trust



# Levels of Participation

This guide is designed so that organisations can start from a point that is realistic for them and then develop participation as their collective confidence, trust and skills increase.

The participation model is often described as a ladder. *Get Involved!* illustrates the levels of participation a parent or carer can be at when contributing to activities. These include the following five levels of involvement as illustrated in Fig. 1: consulting, representing, decision making, implementing and initiating.

What is important is that managers and staff understand the differences in these stages and are truly aware when they are merely being tokenistic in their approach as opposed to providing an empowering environment in which parents and carers initiate ideas and are enabled to make decisions about the outcome in a dialogue with service providers.

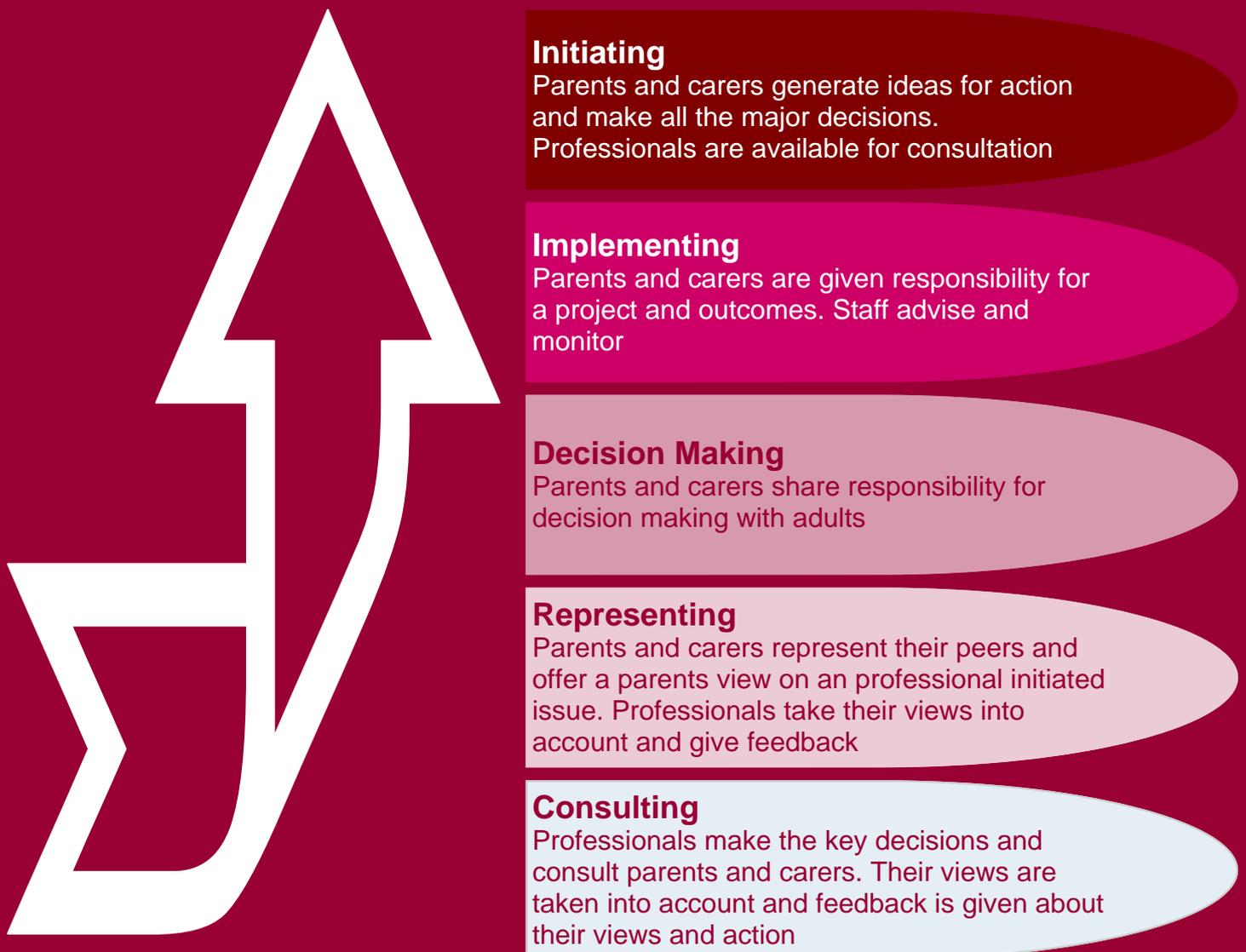


Fig. 1: five levels of involvement

# Things to Consider

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Successful models of parent participation have seen parents participate in a variety of circumstances. Thinking about the decision making processes and the existing opportunities for parents and carers to be involved or to influence decisions is important in terms of deciding what is a realistic aim for your service aims. Parent/carers can be involved in a huge range of activities.

- ▶▶ **Different groups of parents/carers and different issues will need different approaches.** It is not always going to be an easy or a quick task. It can take time and effort to ensure that parents and carers are fully able to participate
- ▶▶ **Parents and carers must feel valued in their involvement.** If parents and carers are encouraged to generate ideas themselves and feel properly involved in the creation of solutions, they are more likely to invest time and effort to ensure their successful implementation
- ▶▶ **Not all parents and carers will want to be involved at the highest level,** but it is important that those who want to do so can get involved in ways that match their current skills, interests and time commitments. This means that the service needs to provide a wide variety of opportunities for parent participation
- ▶▶ **Being honest about how much influence they might have** and how much you are able to take notice of what they say, is essential
- ▶▶ **Organisations must take a proactive approach in targeting those facing greatest barriers to getting involved** - such as parents and carers from some ethnic minority backgrounds, those living in rural areas or deprived communities, refugees, Travellers and Gypsies, disabled and other young people with special needs or special personal or family circumstances - to ensure that they are aware and take up appropriate opportunities to have their say. Working through established local community groups may be helpful in reaching 'hard-to-reach' groups
- ▶▶ **Parent and carers also have the right not to get involved** – insisting on everybody's participation goes against an ethos in which individuals are encouraged and given responsibility to make their own decisions; however, this must be through informed choice rather than a lack of creative engaging opportunities for involvement
- ▶▶ **Participation can feel unsettling at first,** as parents and carers are given increased levels of power and responsibility. However, most staff welcome participation once it has been established and will champion its development once they see the benefits. Taking small steps to build confidence and conviction among staff as well as providing effective training and support if helpful
- ▶▶ **Participation, consultation or involvement should not be seen as an add-on to the business of providing services;** it should be built in to the organisations values and be reflected in strategic planning, delivery, resourcing, communication and business improvement activities

## Practical Considerations

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- ▶▶ Wherever possible two or more parent representatives should be invited onto any planning or decision-making group as this provides parents with support and is more likely to ensure consistent parent representation
- ▶▶ Parent representatives are volunteers and have many family and or other commitments. It is important for meetings involving parents to start after 10am and finish by 2.15pm to fit in with school journeys and transport, wherever possible
- ▶▶ Parent representatives are generally unable to attend meetings taking place during school holidays
- ▶▶ Out of pocket travel and childcare expenses or crèche facilities should be offered and/or reimbursed



# What Parent Representatives expect from a Chair of a meeting

## An induction which would include:

- ▶▶ A written description of others on the group and their roles and responsibilities
- ▶▶ A chance to meet with any out-going Parent Representative
- ▶▶ A meeting with the Chair of the group beforehand where Parent Representatives' responsibilities are outlined and information is given about the current issues being raised at the group
- ▶▶ Copies of previous minutes

## For meetings:

- ▶▶ Being given the same courtesy as professionals on the group
- ▶▶ Being given the same information as professional on the group
- ▶▶ An explanation of any jargon or terminology
- ▶▶ Being given the opportunity to raise any concerns about the role or place of the Parent Representatives on the group
- ▶▶ Appreciation that Parent Representatives have other commitments and timetables



## What the Chair can expect from Parent Representatives

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- ▶▶ An awareness of other parents views
- ▶▶ An ability to represent the views of other parents when they might not be their own
- ▶▶ A willingness to contribute to discussions
- ▶▶ Regular attendance at meetings and sending apologies if unable to attend
- ▶▶ An understanding of meeting etiquette/protocols
- ▶▶ Coming prepared e.g. having read minutes and documents





The Active Involvement Guidelines for Parent Participation was developed by the **Active Involvement Strategy Group** (part of the Bromley Children and Young People Partnership)

Our thanks go to **Kay Moore**, Parent Participation Officer, for pulling the guide together

**This document was produced by:**  
Strategic and Business Support Services Division  
Education and Care Services  
**London Borough of Bromley**  
Civic Centre  
Stockwell Close  
Bromley  
BR1 3UH

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[www.bromley.gov.uk](http://www.bromley.gov.uk)

