

A top-down photograph showing several hands of different skin tones joined together in a circle. Many of the hands are wearing beaded bracelets. Some bracelets are made of orange beads, while others have white beads with letters. One bracelet on the left has letters spelling 'WELL', and two on the right spell 'TFN'. The background is a grey, textured surface like pavement. An orange rectangle in the top left contains the text 'The Fostering Network'. A large pink rectangle at the bottom contains a quote, and a yellow rectangle at the very bottom contains the text 'Our participation strategy'.

**The
Fostering
Network**

"Participation isn't just about voices and opinions, it's about people."

Our participation strategy

What is participation?

Participation means actively and meaningfully including people with lived experience in decisions that affect their lives.

This is done through building relationships, actively listening to their views and ensuring the outcomes based on what they say are fed back to them.

It is therefore not a box to be ticked or something to do once a year. Rather, it is an ongoing learning journey and an approach that improves our work.



For The Fostering Network, this looks like involving children, young people, families, foster carers, services and communities of interest in organisational decision making, and the shaping of programmes, campaigns and services.

Participation makes a real difference and aligns directly with The Fostering Network's values and strategic goals outlined in our new strategy; ensuring relationships are the golden thread through all we do.

"Participation isn't just about voices and opinions, it's about people. It's about making sure that not only people feel heard, but listened to. It's about knowing that our experiences and how we feel, matters. It's about feeling understood, and making a difference."

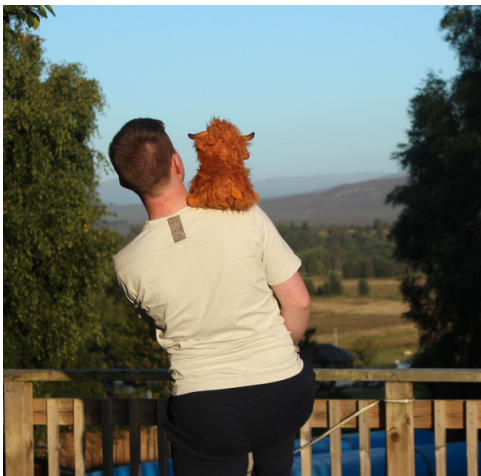
- young person on The Fostering Network's Young People's Advisory Board in Scotland

Who does The Fostering Network work with?

The Fostering Network has a unique challenge of being a champion and platform for many different groups within our fostering community.

For us, participation relates to foster carers and services (both local authority and independent providers) as well as children and young people and their families.

It is important we hear from all those we represent to ensure our work is well informed and relevant to those it impacts. We will support the fostering community to hear each other's voices, bringing balance and perspective where needed.



Why does participation matter to The Fostering Network?

At The Fostering Network, we are focused on making foster care the best it can be.

We recognise that to achieve this, we must be good listeners and work with our members and the wider foster care community. Specifically, our purpose is “to work tirelessly to ensure that the voices of children, young people and foster carers are heard and placed at the centre of government plans.”

Two of our strategic goals directly support this work:

Strategic goal 3

Increase the impact of our work

Develop our participation strategy, introducing new ways to consult and engage with children, young people, foster carers, fostering services and wider stakeholders.

Strategic goal 5

Influence transformational policy change

Develop and embed methods to ensure our policy actions continue to be informed by the views of our members.

Increase opportunity for direct interaction between our members and decision-makers across the UK.

Participation with children and young people helps The Fostering Network uphold and champion children’s rights.

Under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children and young people have the right to express their views on matters affecting them, and for those views to be given due weight. All UK governments have ratified the UNCRC, and Scotland has incorporated it into Scots law. We must therefore create spaces for children and young people to share their views on foster care and our work, because it affects their lives.

We do not give people a voice; they already have one. Our role is to provide spaces, platforms and audiences for babies, children, young people and adults to share their voices and influence change.

Our priorities for participation

In line with our organisational strategy, the Participation Working Group at The Fostering Network has four key goals for participation for 2025-2030. They are for The Fostering Network:



Who is responsible for participation?

All staff and representatives of The Fostering Network are responsible for acting in accordance with the charity's vision and values, including our commitment to building and strengthening relationships.

The internal Participation Working Group are responsible for leading the way in developing and promoting effective participation practice and supporting all colleagues along their journeys with participation.

The Participation and Engagement Lead is the organisational expert and key contact for all our participation and engagement work with care experienced children, young people and adults, foster carers and other members across the UK. This role reports to the Head of Policy and Campaigns.

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Get in touch

Any ideas or concerns relating to our Participation Strategy or any of The Fostering Network's participation work can be sent to **policy@fostering.net**

**The
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Network**