Youth participation in policy-making processes in the United Kingdom: a scoping review of the literature

T Macauley, H.B. Rolker, M Scherer, J Brock, N Savona, A Helleve & C Knai

Published online: 17 May 2022.

Submit your article to this journal ↗

Article views: 896

View related articles ↗

View Crossmark data ↗

Citing articles: 1 View citing articles ↗

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Youth participation in policy-making processes in the United Kingdom: a scoping review of the literature

T Macauley[a], H.B. Rolker[a,b,c], M Scherer[a], J Brock[d], N Savona [ID][a], A Helleve[a], and C Knai [ID][e]

[a]Faculty of Public Health and Policy, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK; [b]Health Sciences Faculty, University of Bristol, Bristol Veterinary School, Langford; [c]Sustainable Agriculture Sciences, Rothamsted Research, Harpenden, UK; [d]Centre for Food Policy, City, University of London, London, UK; [e]Centre for Evaluation of Public Health Measures, Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Oslo, Norway

ABSTRACT

Young people's voices remain underrepresented in health policy processes. This scoping review focuses on the United Kingdom (UK) and investigates how and to what degree young people have participated in policy-making processes. We adapt an established framework categorizing how young people are involved in policy-related processes, ranging from advisory roles to communicating findings. We report a spectrum of practical examples, highlighting opportunities for successful policymaking with youth, in relation to key factors, such as type of involvement, role of facilitators, and the integration of young people in different stages of the process.

Introduction

There is increasing recognition in policy-making and program development, and the research that informs it, of the need to amplify the participation and views of the young people for whom policies and programs are designed. Yet their voice remains underrepresented, as does their importance as researchers, practitioners, activists, community organizers, decision-makers and policy advocates. Collaboration with young people and including them as equitable partners, rather than as the objects of policy or programmes, not only yields a more contextualized and practical approach to the problem but is also an empowering process for the participants involved (Horwath et al., 2012; Kataria & Fagan, 2019; Krenichyn et al., 2007).

Many frameworks, models and tooklits have been developed to describe various forms and degrees of youth engagement, often outlining youth engagement on a spectrum from minor input through consultation, to developing youth-led initiatives (Funders Collaborative on Youth Organising, 2003; Wong et al., 2010). Putting youth engagement on a spectrum often implies that

there is an optimal strategy, or "best practice" for youth engagement (Wong et al., 2010): A 2017 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) toolkit on policy making for youth wellbeing acknowledges that the lowest level of youth participation is to passively inform, as opposed to empowering young people to take initiatives and lead projects, the highest level, and provides examples of such (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017). This is also demonstrated in the 2020 European Commission report on Good Practices of Youth Participation which collates country-specific examples of good practice; these include entrusting young people to develop ownership over initiatives, to make youth participation a priority, and embedding it in institutional and policy-making structures (Borkowska-Waszak et al., 2020).

In order to inform the integration of young people UK-wide in policy processes, there is a need to map out the existing UK evidence of youth participation. There is precedence in the literature for geographically focused scoping reviews (Evans et al., 2020). This paper therefore reports the findings of a scoping review of published studies on youth participation in policy-making processes in the UK, with implications for international practices.

Methods

Capturing the experience of how young people are engaged in policymaking requires an exploration of studies that goes beyond only examining policy outcome or effectiveness of an approach. A scoping review allows for this broader, deeper approach (Peters et al., 2015), to make use of and synthesize knowledge from a range of study designs (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods; Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), and to account for the far-reaching nature of policy research and policy-related activity, and the varied modes of youth participation. This scoping review explores practices of participation where young people actively contribute to policy and decision making as valued key stakeholders in processes that empower and build the capacity of young people (Checkoway, 2011; Dickson-Hoyle et al., 2018) while also exploring the feedback and experiences of this participation from young people themselves.

We conducted a scoping review, a process to rapidly outline key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available, often undertaken as a stand-alone project to inform future research (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). This is especially useful where an area is complex or has not been reviewed comprehensively before (Mays et al., 2001) such as with youth participation in policy-making.

Arksey and O'Malley's 5-stage scoping review framework (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) was used: 1) identifying the research question; 2) identifying relevant studies; 3) study selection; 4) charting the data; 5) collating,

summarizing and reporting the results. Stage 1 was supported by Peters et al. (2015) guidance to develop a concise research question that reflects the "population" (young people), "concept" (youth participation) and "context" (policy and policy-related activity in the UK; Peters et al., 2015): What is known about the approaches used to engage young people in policy and policy-related activity in the UK, and what are the views of young people on the process of participation?

Search strategy

The following scientific literature databases were searched: MEDLINE, IBSS, Scopus, PsychInfo, Web of Science, Social Policy & Practice, Global Health using specific search terms and subject headings. Search terms were guided by Peters et al. (2015) emphasis on "population" (young people, youth, adolescent*, teen*), "concept" (policy-making, policy*, decision-making, social change, political activism) and "context" (engagement, participation, engage*, involve*). The terms "U.K.," "Great Britain," "United Kingdom," "England," "Scotland," "Wales," "Northern Ireland" were added as a filter.

Selection criteria

Articles were included for their relevance to the research question rather than by quality: peer-reviewed publications, between 2000 and 2019, on UK research, with participants aged 15–24, on policy or policy-related activity. This age range is based on the United Nations definition of "youth" (United Nations, 1995). Studies with children aged <15 were included only if the study also involved young people between 15 and 24. Articles were excluded if they did not report participation methods used or were conceptual commentaries on youth participation, without an accompanying example.

Three coauthors (TM, CK, and NS) screened titles and abstracts of the resulting papers to select potentially relevant papers, followed by full-text screening using the inclusion criteria. The PRISMA chart in Figure 1 shows the selection process.

Data extraction

Data extraction was completed using an approach adapted from the Joanna Briggs Institute (Peters et al., 2015), aligned with a "narrative review" to guide data charting and analysis (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Data was extracted on: authors, date, title, aim, characteristics of study participants, participation context, participation aim, participation methods and design, participation outcomes and young people's views on their participation.
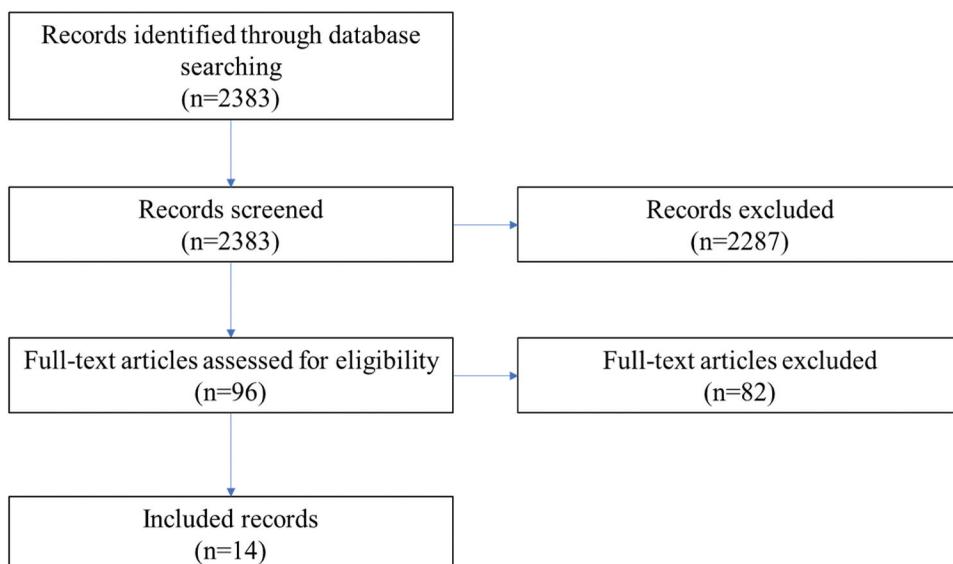
Figure 1. Prisma flow diagram.

To investigate how and to what degree young people participated in a policy-making process, we employed an approach developed by Israel and colleagues to gauge community-based participatory research for health (Israel et al., 2005) and further adapted by Jacquez et al. (2013), to categorize how children and adolescents are involved in community-based participatory research (Jacquez et al., 2013). The approach consists of using five, non-mutually exclusive categories to describe youth involvement in different steps or phases of a research process, here adapted for our purposes. Youth involvement in policy processes is organized in terms of: (1) *an advisory role*: youth could actively give input into the research through a Youth Advisory Board or other formal group/council mechanism; (2) *identifying research goals*: youth could be involved in identifying priorities, goals, and research questions through a needs assessment or similar process; (3) *designing and/or conducting an activity*: youth could be involved in designing and conducting the research; (4) *synthesizing a process or findings*: youth could participate in data analysis, summarizing the data, and/or interpreting and understanding research findings; and (5) *disseminating and translating findings*: youth could participate in communicating the research findings to different audiences.

We selected this approach as it allowed for an exploration of involvement strategies across all – or any – key stages of research or project planning.

Collating and summarizing the results

Following Arksey and O'Malley (2005), we first made a descriptive summary of the nature and distribution of studies. The narrative review focused on two main aspects, participation methods and design, and young people's views of the participation process. Results were summarized (Table 1) and further tabulated by study characteristics (Table 2) and levels of youth involvement (Table 3).

Results

Study characteristics

The preliminary literature search returned 2383 results. After removal of duplicates and the application of inclusion criteria to titles and abstracts by three reviewers (TM, CK, and NS), 96 articles remained for full-text screening. At this stage, 23 articles were further excluded as out of scope; an additional 19 articles could not be accessed by reviewers, leaving 53 articles remaining. During data extraction, 39 articles were further excluded as they were ultimately found out of scope, thus including 14 articles in this scoping review. (Table 1)

As detailed in Table 2, the 14 included studies were published between 2003 and 2019, with the majority (9) published in or prior to 2010. All used a qualitative study design. Seven studies were conducted in England, four in Scotland, two in Wales and one focused on the UK as a whole. The policy focus of the studies ranged from youth participation in decision making (Badham, 2004; Charles & Haines, 2019; Faulkner, 2009; Horwath et al., 2012); health services (Coad et al., 2008; Jackson, 2003; Percy-Smith, 2007); education (Aranda et al., 2018; Fyfe, 2004; Warwick, 2008), as well as local service provision (for example, to tackle deprivation; Arches & Fleming, 2006; Kilmurry, 2017), road safety engineering (Kimberlee, 2008) and a national DNA database (Anderson et al., 2011).

Types of youth participation

Table 3 shows that the ways in which young people were involved in the 14 reviewed studies varied considerably, based on the the Jacquez et al. framework (Jacquez et al., 2013). Young people were most commonly (13/14 studies) involved in providing input via a specific advisory mechanism. Only two of the 14 studies reported involving young people in the identification of priorities and goals. Just over half of the studies reported having young people involved in the designing and conducting of an activity, and just under half reported involving young people in synthesizing the outputs of the activity. Finally, just over half of studies reported young people participating in dissemination of the outputs.

Table 1. Summary of study aims, methods, participants, and policy focus.

Included publications	Study aims as stated in publication	Methods	Reported youth involvement approaches	Participants	Policy focus	Reported outcomes or findings
(Anderson et al., 2011)	To describe an engagement activity developed in South Wales to engage young offenders with ethical and social issues surrounding the NDNAD – a Mock Trial – and how the authors facilitated the presentation of their views to policy makers.	Narrative report of the engagement activity	1) Recruitment of participants using focus groups 2) pre-trial preparation 3) the Trial, 4) dissemination of the verdict by the young people to policy makers	84 young offenders aged 12–19 year 25 secondary school students	ethical and social issues surrounding the NDNAD (National DNA database)	the Mock Trial format can be used to facilitate young people's understanding of complex issues
(Aranda et al., 2018)	To explore the experiences, views and preferences of young people aged 11–19 years regarding school-based sexual health and school nursing to inform commissioning and delivery for one local authority area in England during 2015.	Report of findings from a local authority funded research study	-Qualitative, participatory design. -Focus groups -Research steering group (incl. young people)	74 young people aged 11–19 years	school-based sexual health and school nursing to inform commissioning and service delivery	-Resultant themes of visibility in relation to sexual health education and school nursing revealed both the complex tensions in designing and delivering acceptable and appropriate sexual health services for young people and the significance of participatory approaches. -the study shows young people clearly know what issues and concerns are important to them. They know what they would like to see happen to improve current school-based sexual health provision.

Table 1. (Continued).

Included publications	Study aims as stated in publication	Methods	Reported youth involvement approaches	Participants	Policy focus	Reported outcomes or findings
(Arches & Fleming, 2006)	- Discuss the state of youth participation in the UK - Understand the challenges and tasks of using the social action framework to inspire youth leadership and healthy development	?	-Social action five-part process -(Focus) group sessions -Peer consultation	Low income community, mostly white, aged 8–15	Government strategy to tackle multiple deprivation through resource allocation	-social action as a youth engagement strategy can enable young people to identify the issues that are important to them, determine why they exist, and consider a plan for change.
(Badham, 2004)	Explore the constraints and limitations of the drive to involve children and young people in public policy and service delivery in England. - By looking at one specific example, consider elements of practice to enable participation to be effective as a catalyst for change. - Propose a framework that sets out an agenda for social inclusion that is itself influenced by CYP.	?	1) National consultation 2) Evaluation a). questionnaires b) interviews	200 disabled CYP from across England	Improved involvement and services for young disabled children and their families	- shows their research as the catalyst for change, not dead-end Consultation - pointers about how to move beyond participation as an adult driven end in itself, to influencing change with significant implications for the lives of particular groups of children and young people
(Charles & Haines, 2019)	- Present a new template for researching with young people as partners for change in the specific context of research dissemination - Demonstrate how research process can provide a tool to achieve the meaningful participation of young people	Narrative report of a research project engaging youth	1) Youth led research steering group 2) school consultation 3) city-wide survey 4) city-wide youth conference 5) multi-agency youth conference	14 young people 11–16 years old on a steering committee 485 survey respondents 100 youth conference attendees	Young people's views on aspects of participation in decision making (specifically around research dissemination)	- demonstrated how young people, as leaders and determiners of decisions could raise awareness of their right to participate in decision making, and to have their views heard and acted upon. -the reported participation process offers an example of a model which can be developed to enable young people, adults and agencies to work together to realize the importance of spaces, voices, listening and acting in the context of participation, and not simply in terms of a formal, policy-aligned discourse.

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Included publications	Study aims as stated in publication	Methods	Reported youth involvement approaches	Participants	Policy focus	Reported outcomes or findings
(Coad et al., 2008)	-Reflect on how an acute hospital trust involved a youth council to improve children's service delivery in one NHS trust in the UK - evaluate the impact of involving young people in children's services and include an evaluation by the young people about the collaborative process of taking part in a youth council	Report and evaluation of the engagement activity	1) Evaluation workshop 2) youth council	15 children and young people aged 11–18 years old	hospital trust service planning and development and policy forming	-describes the setting up of a youth council -discusses the potential barriers and how to overcome them to promote young people's involvement in hospital trust service planning and development. - The results of the evaluation highlight that, to understand what users want, attention needs to be paid to the process of user involvement. It was clear from developing this youth council that for young people's involvement to have a real impact they need to have meaningful opportunities to be involved in all phases of service development as well as being given the chance to evaluate any changes ?
(Faulkner, 2009)	Addresses the issue of representation and presentation of young people in ongoing youth participation projects by applying insights from the literature on political interest groups to a single case study	Strategic case study participant observations literature review	1) Youth Action group 2) Youth members of Advisory Panel on council long-term youth strategy 3) Interviews 4) Focus groups	young people between the ages of 14 and 21	public decision-making within a Scottish local authority	

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Included publications	Study aims as stated in publication	Methods	Reported youth involvement approaches	Participants	Policy focus	Reported outcomes or findings
(Fyfe, 2004)	Explore social action as a model of education for citizenship through a critical analysis of the theoretical ideas underpinning and informing the approach.	? Paper on social action as a process Case study	1) Group sessions informed by the social action framework 2) observations, 3) evaluation a) structured interviews b) questionnaire	secondary school students aged 13–17	Special education programming within schools	-The findings of the work point toward the possibilities for the development of a complementary curriculum approach based upon the lived experiences of young people themselves. - The social action process provides a vehicle for the active involvement of young people in a critical analysis of issues affecting their own lives leading toward the planning, implementation and evaluation of agreed collective action –The engagement project provided young people with an arena for both collective political expression and exploration of their role as active citizens
(Horwath et al., 2012)	- Explore participation by young people who have experienced violence, in policy and practice development. -Consider the promoters and inhibitors to high level participation identified by young people who contributed to a qualitative study completed in four European countries - Propose a conceptual framework that builds on the strengths of previous models and seeks to address the weaknesses from the young people's perspective	Narrative report of the engagement activity	1) literature review analysis 2) Consultation using a visual imagery exercise	90 young people between 10–21 years old who had experienced violence; in the UK 25 young people 12–18 years old	develop good practices in relation to promoting the participation of young people who have experienced violence	- The participation exercise found that the key components that appear to inter-act to inform the type of participation that operates are: The context, the facilitator, group dynamics, and the young person -Suggested questions to assist policy and decision makers in achieving a high level of participation form young people

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (Continued).

Included publications	Study aims as stated in publication	Methods	Reported youth involvement approaches	Participants	Policy focus	Reported outcomes or findings
(Jackson, 2003)	-Describe "Follow the Fish" project and demonstrate that drama can be an effective tool for involving young people, and potentially other groups of patients and the public, in health issues.	Report of an engagement project	1) drama workshop sessions 2) peer interviews 3) focus groups	20 young people aged 12–16 years	Health services policy	-the project's application of drama as a tool for public involvement differs from existing documented examples of the use of drama in health initiatives, and demonstrates that drama can be an effective tool for involving young people, and potentially other groups of patients and the public, in health issues. Recommendations for practitioners are made.
(Kilmurry, 2017)	-describe the multi-agency approach adopted in Liberton/Gilmerton, Edinburgh in Scotland to positively involve young people in shaping local service provision and to tackle rising anti-social behavior - Described the approach and methodology of the engagement process used in order to enable other authorities and services to learn from established practice		1) youth steering board to lead design 2) consultation: a) mobile library/ video bus b) interviews c) opinion polls d) urban art workshops e) community mapping sessions	11 to 18, (whose numbers ranged between 8 and 20 members over the project)	Local service provision	- summarizes the positive outcomes delivered as a result of the work which has transformed the way that partners plan, design and deliver their services locally - includes implications for the development of library and other services to work in an integrated way to positively engage with young people in order for them to be included in decision-making processes.
(Kimberlee, 2008)	- Report on Birmingham City Council's Streets Ahead on Safety project	Narrative report of an engagement project	1) guided environmental audit (using cameras and question sheets) 2) citizenship training 3) Q & A open forum with young people and engineers	405 young people aged 9–11 years	Road safety engineering	-Highlights the potential dynamics of participation and the dilemmas it poses for relationships between service users and providers, and outlines some of the barriers confronted by young people in learning to be active participants

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (Continued).

Included publications	Study aims as stated in publication	Methods	Reported youth involvement approaches	Participants	Policy focus	Reported outcomes or findings
(Percy-Smith, 2007)	draws on research in the United Kingdom which set out to explore young people's understandings and experiences of health as experienced in their everyday lives and according to their own terms of reference, rather than in response to policy priorities	Narrative report of an engagement activity	1) peer research process 2) research methods training 3) Community/ stakeholder dissemination and dialogue event	11 youth peer leaders, aged 14–19 years	Local health service provision as they affect young people's health and lived experience – social action	-documents an 'alternative' 'participative action research' approach to involving young people in research and developing responses to issues and problems that affect them -highlights the value of a dialogical and enquiry-based approach supported by the useof visuals for engaging professionals in collaboration with young people in a process of learning for change -draws attention to the 'policy gap' between professional understandings of young people's health needs and young people's lived realities and how this is reflected in differences in what young people and professionals consider appropriate responses to stress
(Warwick, 2008)	Explores connections between Citizenship Education and the young people's voice agenda by presenting key findings from a citizenship consultation exercise.	Narrative report of findings from an engagement activity	1) Citizenship consultation methodology a) focus groups b) written reflection activities	415 young people aged between 12 and 18	School curriculum provision of citizenship education	-reveals the potential benefits of educators adopting a consultative approach to the implementation of Citizenship Education

Advisory role

Though Jacquez et al. (2013) define the advisory role as young people actively giving input through a Youth Advisory Board or other *formal* group/council mechanism (Jacquez et al., 2013), the approaches categorized in this Advisory Role phase include any mechanism, which collects and considers the views of young people where they are explicitly asked to share their views – even if not in a "formal" advisory body. In the reviewed papers, the most common participation approaches used in this phase were consultation and formal youth advisory bodies (e.g., research steering team; youth council). Seven studies (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Badham, 2004; Horwath et al., 2012; Kilmurry, 2017; Kimberlee, 2008; Percy-Smith, 2007; Warwick, 2008) included some form of consultation as a way to engage young people. Types of consultation across these seven studies varied from opinion polls and e-surveys (Kilmurry, 2017) to incorporating visual materials and activities to engage young people to depict their views (Horwath et al., 2012).

Four studies (Aranda et al., 2018; Charles & Haines, 2019; Coad et al., 2008; Faulkner, 2009) used a form of oversight or advisory group as a method of youth participation with two (Aranda et al., 2018; Charles & Haines, 2019) including young people as part of a steering group to manage and oversee the research processes. Young people participated as members of a youth council (Coad et al., 2008) and Action Group (Faulkner, 2009) where they were consulted to share their views in helping to shape youth forward strategies on different areas of service delivery.

Identifying priorities and goals

Only two studies (Fyfe, 2004; Percy-Smith, 2007) included young people in the process of identifying priorities and goals. Percy-Smith involved young people as part of a peer project where they were given the task of exploring what they felt were the main issues affecting their lives to identify any unmet health needs. The participation project described by Fyfe (2004) was based on the social action model, which aims to empower groups to take action and achieve collectively identified goals. This article reports how young people negotiated a learning programme on "active citizenship" that reflected their own interests and needs as participants, while also taking into consideration the project's aims.

Designing and/or conducting research/activities

Of the nine studies that included young people in designing and/or conducting activities, five (Aranda et al., 2018; Charles & Haines, 2019; Fyfe, 2004; Kilmurry, 2017; Percy-Smith, 2007) had young people participating in both. Four studies (Aranda et al., 2018; Charles & Haines, 2019; Fyfe, 2004; Percy-Smith, 2007) involved young people throughout the engagement activity, in the design and implementation process. This included young people helping

Table 2. Study characteristics.

Study characteristics	Count	Records
Year of publication		
2003–2010	9	(Arches & Fleming, 2006; Badham, 2004; Coad et al., 2008; Faulkner, 2009; Fyfe, 2004; Jackson, 2003; Kimberlee, 2008; Percy-Smith, 2007; Warwick, 2008)
2011–2019	5	(Anderson et al., 2011; Aranda et al., 2018; Charles & Haines, 2019; Horwath et al., 2012; Kilmurry, 2017)
Country		
UK	1	(Horwath et al., 2012)
England	7	(Aranda et al., 2018; Arches & Fleming, 2006; Badham, 2004; Coad et al., 2008; Kimberlee, 2008; Percy-Smith, 2007; Warwick, 2008)
Scotland	4	(Faulkner, 2009)
Wales	2	(Anderson et al., 2011; Charles & Haines, 2019)
Involvement methods		
Consultation	8	(Badham, 2004; Charles & Haines, 2019; Coad et al., 2008; Faulkner, 2009; Horwath et al., 2012; Kilmurry, 2017; Kimberlee, 2008; Warwick, 2008)
Collaboration on research design and process	6	(Aranda et al., 2018; Horwath et al., 2012; Percy-Smith, 2007)
Dialogue/conference with stakeholders	5	(Anderson et al., 2011; Charles & Haines, 2019; Kilmurry, 2017; Kimberlee, 2008; Percy-Smith, 2007)
Focus group	4	(Anderson et al., 2011; Aranda et al., 2018; Jackson, 2003; Warwick, 2008)
Research steering committee	3	(Aranda et al., 2018; Charles & Haines, 2019; Kilmurry, 2017)
Social action	2	(Arches & Fleming, 2006; Fyfe, 2004)
Peer Interviews	1	(Jackson, 2003)
Drama workshop	1	(Jackson, 2003)
Environmental audit (w/ photo)	1	(Kimberlee, 2008)
Citizenship training	1	(Kimberlee, 2008)
Mock trial	1	(Anderson et al., 2011)
Policy focus		
Youth participation & inclusion in decision making	4	(Badham, 2004; Charles & Haines, 2019; Faulkner, 2009; Horwath et al., 2012)
Health services	3	(Coad et al., 2008; Jackson, 2003; Percy-Smith, 2007)
Education	3	(Aranda et al., 2018; Fyfe, 2004; Warwick, 2008)
Local service provision	2	(Arches & Fleming, 2006; Kilmurry, 2017)
Road safety	1	(Kimberlee, 2008)
National DNA database	1	(Anderson et al., 2011)

to inform recruitment materials and data collection methods (Aranda et al., 2018), designing an ethical framework and dissemination strategy, and conducting consultations with stakeholders via e-surveys and youth conferences (Charles & Haines, 2019). Young people in the Kilmurry study participated as members of a "sounding board" that helped design and shape the approach of the participation process, while also carrying out some of the engagement activities themselves, for example, a youth-led review of facilities and activities to determine issues associated with negative perceptions of local youth services (Kilmurry, 2017).

Participation of young people in the remaining four studies varied, from preparing for a mock trial (Anderson et al., 2011), to taking part in an environmental audit using photographic data (Kimberlee, 2008), and conducting consultations and interviews with their peers (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Jackson, 2003).

Table 3. Levels of youth involvement.

Included records	Phases of involvement*					Overall (out of 5 potential phases)
	(1) Advisory role	(2) Identified research goals	(3) Designed/ conducted research	(4) Participated in data analysis	(5) Participated in dissemination	
(Percy-Smith, 2007)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
(Aranda et al., 2018)	✓		✓	✓	✓	4
(Charles & Haines, 2019)	✓		✓	✓	✓	4
(Kilmurry, 2017)	✓		✓	✓	✓	4
(Fyfe, 2004)		✓	✓	✓		3
(Anderson et al., 2011)	✓		✓		✓	3
(Jackson, 2003)	✓		✓		✓	3
(Arches & Fleming, 2006)	✓		✓		✓	3
(Badham, 2004)	✓				✓	2
(Horwath et al., 2012)	✓			✓		2
(Kimberlee, 2008)	✓		✓			2
(Faulkner, 2009)	✓					1
(Coad et al., 2008)	✓					1
(Warwick, 2008)	✓					1

* Adapted from (Jacquez et al., 2013)

Synthesizing the outputs

Young people in four studies worked jointly with the researchers to analyze findings and summarize the key messages for presentation (Aranda et al., 2018; Charles & Haines, 2019; Fyfe, 2004; Percy-Smith, 2007). Horwath et al. (2012) validated their findings with young people to establish significance of the results and determine if anything had been left out, based on their views and experience (Horwath et al., 2012).

Disseminating findings

Eight studies involved young people in the dissemination process in some way. The most common means of young people participating in dissemination was through an organized meeting or formal event between young people and other stakeholders (Anderson et al., 2011; Charles & Haines, 2019; Jackson, 2003; Kilmurry, 2017; Percy-Smith, 2007). The format of these meetings differed across the five studies with some young people organizing multi-

agency and youth conferences (Charles & Haines, 2019; Kilmurry, 2017; Percy-Smith, 2007) and others putting on a mock trial (Anderson et al., 2011) or a play (Jackson, 2003) to present their views to relevant stakeholders and decision-makers. Youth participants in two studies used mixed media to present their findings to local government through created songs, photos, and posters (Arches & Fleming, 2006) and a summary CD-ROM of key findings to disseminate to local and national government (Badham, 2004).

Views expressed by young people regarding their participation

The majority of studies included assessed young people's views on the participation process, though three did not collect feedback from the young people (Aranda et al., 2018; Badham, 2004; Kilmurry, 2017).

Making their own decisions and having ownership of the process
Young people reported that making their own choices concerning their participation was important to them. This included having a say on whether they wanted to participate (Charles & Haines, 2019; Horwath et al., 2012) or quit (Charles & Haines, 2019) and how inclusive the group would be to others (Arches & Fleming, 2006). During the process, young people wanted to have a say on the topics of discussion and the activities they would engage in (Arches & Fleming, 2006). Ownership over the presentation of findings (Arches & Fleming, 2006) and the use of the research results (Charles & Haines, 2019) was mentioned by young people in two studies as important aspects of their participation. Afterward, young people reported that their participation exceeded their expectations (Coad et al., 2008), others reported that it had been "worthwhile," a valuable experience (Percy-Smith, 2007), fun (Kimberlee, 2008) and that they enjoyed it (Anderson et al., 2011).

Supportive facilitators
The facilitator or educator involved in the project was mentioned by young people as a factor that influenced their participation experience (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Horwath et al., 2012; Warwick, 2008). For example, young people indicated that the effectiveness of youth engagement in policy and service delivery processes was reliant upon the facilitator's principles and convictions, their willingness to share power, and their attitudes toward young people (Horwath et al., 2012).

Warwick (2008) summarized a set of key facilitator characteristics in conducting consultations with young people based on feedback from students and teacher participants (Warwick, 2008): thus, facilitators needed to be able to establish a trusting environment for young people, show the ability to listen actively and have good communication skills overall. Young people described the ideal facilitator to be empathetic, genuinely interested and showing young

people that they are taken seriously, and that they have influence (Warwick, 2008). Similarly, others reported young people wanting to feel accepted by the facilitator (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Horwath et al., 2012). Young people also said they wanted to have the space to express themselves openly and feel supported in their decision making. They saw it as the role of the facilitator to adapt to the group to ensure that all group members felt safe and secure (Horwath et al., 2012).

Young people's views on collaboration or co-creation

Several studies explored young people's opinions on co-creating policy. Young people described the "ideal facilitator" as using a "democratic approach" (Horwath et al., 2012). In an attempt to create a road map on how to involve young people in a community research project, Charles and Haines (2019) collected a set of principles from young people deemed essential for an ethical collaboration. Young people perceived the research as a "partnership" where "each party can get their voices heard." The authors defined key principles for an "ethical framework to ensure basic protection during the research process" with a group of young people giving them agency of the process and ownership of the research output (Charles & Haines, 2019). In contrast, an unsatisfactory, unequal, or superficial type of participation meant for young people that they would "feel used" (Faulkner, 2009) or be "tokenistic" (Horwath et al., 2012).

Benefits and skills reported by young people

Most studies stated that young people reported to have developed various skills, as a result of their participation: that is, political literacy (Badham, 2004; Charles & Haines, 2019; Fyfe, 2004; Warwick, 2008), confidence (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Badham, 2004; Coad et al., 2008; Faulkner, 2009; Fyfe, 2004; Jackson, 2003; Kimberlee, 2008), communication and group skills (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Coad et al., 2008; Faulkner, 2009; Jackson, 2003; Kimberlee, 2008).

Young people in four studies reported to have gained greater self-confidence as a result of the participation process (Anderson et al., 2011; Arches & Fleming, 2006; Coad et al., 2008; Jackson, 2003). They felt more comfortable expressing their views with adults (Anderson et al., 2011), they felt respected (Coad et al., 2008), and empowered to have gained perspective (Arches & Fleming, 2006). Also, they felt they had increased their knowledge of the political process, for example, (Fyfe, 2004) or had developed a new interest in health (Jackson, 2003) or road safety (Kimberlee, 2008). They also mentioned having learnt skills that would help them in their lives going forward (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Coad et al., 2008). Among these were the ability to communicate (Arches & Fleming, 2006) and collaborate (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Jackson, 2003).

A range of studies reported on the insights young people gained during the process (Anderson et al., 2011; Arches & Fleming, 2006; Coad et al., 2008; Fyfe, 2004). Young people understood that their opinion was valuable and that they had the ability to speak and be heard (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Coad et al., 2008). They increased their awareness of their rights as young citizens (Fyfe, 2004) and learnt about the importance of the group setting (Arches & Fleming, 2006). Young people felt they made a difference (Arches & Fleming, 2006; Coad et al., 2008; Jackson, 2003) and contributed to their community (Arches & Fleming, 2006). Young people also reflected on the barriers to participation: the lack of skills to express themselves or lack of confidence, for example. In a group of young people affected by violence, some reported that shame was a barrier to participating in the project (Horwath et al., 2012). Others reported feeling constrained by time (Anderson et al., 2011; Percy-Smith, 2007).

Discussion

This scoping review examined research on t approaches and degrees of involvement of young people in policy and policy-related activity in the UK. Although the study has a UK focus, lessons learnt will be of international interest, given that countries all over the world are engaged in similar efforts to engage young people in policy processes (Wigle et al., 2020). Structuring our findings within the Jacquez et al. (2013) framework of categories of youth involvement, we found that there is a diverse set of literature reporting various degrees of participation in addition to mixed and limited feedback from young people on the benefits of participation in the policy-making process. Given the increasing recognition of the importance of youth participation in policies that affect them (Patton et al., 2016), this review represents a useful summary of research on such participation to date.

The typology utilized to categorize our data by the phases of involvement (Jacquez et al., 2013) helped to concisely demonstrate how young people can be and have been included in policy and policy-related activity. This provides a useful framework for future research with and about young people, and complements evidence from previous scoping reviews that have used other youth engagement frameworks to categorize participation of children and young people in developing interventions in health and well-being (Larsson et al., 2018), and in obesity prevention research more specifically (Mandoh et al., 2021). It was not possible, however, to draw any definitive conclusions about whether one approach is more "successful" in terms of policy outcome. Though there have been concerns that co-production with involvement of a range of stakeholders in research and policy-making is not always meaningful or effective (Oliver et al., 2019), the papers reviewed here report a range of outcomes and demonstrate that there may be multiple pathways to meaningful participation. A recent framework for embedding young people's

participation in decision-making processes, based on youth engagement examples within the NHS and other UK services, suggests that there is no "one size fits all" when it comes to "optimal" youth engagement, and suggests a framework that places youth at the center of participation whilst (Brady, 2021) considering various interconnected dimensions including process, structure, inclusion, power, and control.

Several studies reported positive experience (sometimes phrased as "successes") as a result of engaging young people in policy. Reported examples included improved services for young disabled children, long-term participation of young people in public decision-making, children and young people's rights scheme, improved local service provision, and implemented action responses from young people regarding citizen issues (Badham, 2004; Charles & Haines, 2019; Faulkner, 2009; Jackson, 2003; Warwick, 2008). In one study by Badham (2004) young people were reported to have improved involvement and services for young disabled children and their families through a national consultation, which led to the government implementing specific changes, that is, improved play resources locally and, through national policy development, accessible play provision across England (Badham, 2004). In another study in Swansea, Wales (Charles & Haines, 2019), young people were reported to have accomplished greater partnership working, developed a participation-policy alongside Swansea's Youth Offending Service, the first Welsh child-rights smartphone app, and influenced the development of a motion to Cabinet and Council, which incorporated the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into the authority's policy framework (Charles & Haines, 2019).

Other studies reported mixed findings, with ideas being generated, but without reporting concrete change, for example, on hospital services planning (Coad et al., 2008), on creation of physical spaces for young people (Kimberlee, 2008) on change in organizations that regularly engage with young people who have experienced violence (Horwath et al., 2012).

Some of the studies we reviewed demonstrated that despite participation of youth in the consultation process, their views were not represented in the design and delivery of services, such as in a study on school-based sexual health and school nursing (Aranda et al., 2018). Similarly, young people's involvement did not appear to inform specific changes in studies on ethical and social issues surrounding National DNA database (Anderson et al., 2011), governmental strategies for tackling multiple deprivations (Arches & Fleming, 2006) or local health service provision (Percy-Smith, 2007). Despite this, some young people participating in these studies reported feeling empowered as a result of their contribution (Arches & Fleming, 2006), and more able to understand complex political issues, through knowledge exchange with practitioners (Anderson et al., 2011). This is in line with broader reports of best practice, which cite empowerment of, and trust in, young people, as crucial

criteria for achieving meaningful youth participation. (Borkowska-Waszak et al., 2020; Horwath et al., 2012; Kataria & Fagan, 2019; Krenichyn et al., 2007; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017). Likewise, researchers reported being able to uncover issues with the help of young people's input, such as inadequate sexual health provision in schools (Aranda et al., 2018). Again, these findings demonstrate that measures of "success" are variable and contingent on contextual benchmarking. Indeed, the aims of participation in the reviewed literature were not always to achieve a specific outcome such as policy action; rather, some projects aimed to involve young people meaningfully. As such, the evaluation of any given project must be considered in relation to the terms and goals of participation and aims of the project. This review has several limitations, including the fact that young people's views as reported here are restricted to what is reported in primary studies, often with missing context or explanations of why a certain action or initiative may have worked or not. A search of the gray literature may have revealed further relevant studies. Another key challenge has been how to compare, contrast, and categorize the different modes of participation and the aims of such projects, and their differing contexts, especially in relation to the reported outcomes. A final limitation of our review is that the included studies contained incomplete feedback from young people themselves on the process of their participation and its value.

Conclusion

Participatory methods of engagement in policy-making are increasingly gaining traction in the United Kingdom and further afield; this is evident in the growing number of research publications on participation and co-creation. It has been useful to take stock of the ways in which young people have hitherto been involved in the policy-making process, and the value in doing so. As we have shown, how to define whether the engagement of young people has been successful or not is a moving target; it should therefore be defined prospectively and evaluated thoroughly throughout and after the participation process. Young people in the United Kingdom have been involved in policy-making processes in a variety of ways and at a range of stages in the process. The more stages of involvement, does not, however appear to translate to more "successful" outcomes. Rather, the type of involvement, the nature of the facilitators and the integration of the young people into the process appear to provide better determinants of "success".

Disclosure statement

ORCID

N Savona 🆔 http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3006-3681
C Knai 🆔 http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6663-7379

References

Anderson, C., Stackhouse, R., Shaw, A., & Iredale, R. (2011). The national DNA database on trial: Engaging young people in South Wales with genetics. *Public Understanding of Science*, *20*(2), 146–162. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662510375793

Aranda, K., Coleman, L., Sherriff, N. S., Cocking, C., Zeeman, L., & Cunningham, L. (2018). Listening for commissioning: A participatory study exploring young people's experiences, views and preferences of school-based sexual health and school nursing. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, *27*(1–2), 375–385. https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.13936

Arches, J., & Fleming, J. (2006). Young people and social action: Youth participation in the United Kingdom and United States. *New Directions for Youth Development*, *2006*(111), 81–90, 10. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.184

Arksey, H., & O'Malley, L. (2005). Scoping studies: Towards a methodological framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *8*(1), 19–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616

Badham, B. (2004). Participation - for a change: Disabled young people lead the way. *Children & Society*, *18*(2), 143–154. https://doi.org/10.1002/chi.821

Borkowska-Waszak, S., Diamantopoulos, S. E., Lavelle, P., & Martinello, O. (2020). *Good practices of youth participation: Mid-term deliverable report of the project 'Youth for a Just Transition' realised for DG REGIO within the Junior Professionals Programme*. Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO). https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/eu_regional_and_urban_development/topics/documents/youth_for_a_just_transition_mid-term_deliverable_report_final.pdf

Brady, L.-M. (2021). Chapter 10. Rhetoric to reality: The need for a new approach. In L.-M. Brady (Ed.), *Embedding young people's participation in health services: New approaches* (pp. 249–266). Bristol University Press. https://doi.org/10.46692/9781447351214

Charles, A., & Haines, K. (2019). Engaging young people as partners for change: The UR community project. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, *27*(1), 140–175. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718182-02701007

Checkoway, B. (2011). What is youth participation? *Children and Youth Services Review*, *33*(), 340–345. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.09.017

Coad, J., Flay, J., Aspinall, M., Bilverstone, B., Coxhead, E., & Hones, B. (2008). Evaluating the impact of involving young people in developing children's services in an acute hospital trust. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, *17*(23), 3115–3122. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2008.02634.x

Dickson-Hoyle, S., Kovacevic, M., Cherbonnier, M., Nicholas, K. A., Iles, A., Locke, K., & Frumhoff, P. C. (2018). Towards meaningful youth participation in science-policy processes: A case study of the youth in landscapes initiative *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, *6* (67). https://doi.org/10.1525/elementa.327

Evans, C., Poku, B., Pearce, R., Eldridge, J., Hendrick, P., Knaggs, R., McLuskey, J., Tomcsak, P., Thow, R., Harris, P., Conway, J., & Collier, R. (2020). Characterising the evidence base for advanced clinical practice in the UK: A scoping review protocol. *BMJ Open*, *10*(5), e036192. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-036192

Faulkner, K. M. (2009). Presentation and representation: Youth participation in ongoing public decision-making projects. *Childhood-a Global Journal of Child Research*, *16*(1), 89–104. https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568208101692

Funders Collaborative on Youth Organising. (2003). *An emerging model for working with youth: Community organizing + youth development = youth organizing* (Occasional Papers Series on Youth Organizing No. 1). https://fcyo.org/uploads/resources/8141_Papers_no1_v4.qxd.pdf

Fyfe, I. (2004). Social action and education for citizenship in Scotland. *Groupwork*, *14*(2), 42–63. https://doi.org/10.1921/0951-824X.14.2.42

Horwath, J., Kalyva, E., & Spyru, S. (2012). "I want my experiences to make a difference": Promoting participation in policy-making and service development by young people who have experienced violence. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *34*(1), 155–162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.09.012

Israel, B. A., Eng, E., Schulz, A. J., & Parker, E. A. (2005). *Methods in community-based participatory research for health*. Jossey-Bass.

Jackson, A. M. (2003). "Follow the fish": Involving young people in primary care in Midlothian. *Health Expectations*, *6*(4), 342–351. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1369-7625.2003.00233.x

Jacquez, F., Vaughn, L. M., & Wagner, E. (2013). Youth as partners, participants or passive recipients: A review of children and adolescents in community-based participatory research (CBPR). *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *51*(1–2), 176–189. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-012-9533-7

Kataria, I., & Fagan, L. (2019). Securing a constituency-based approach for youth engagement in NCDs. *Lancet*, *393*(10183), 1788–1789. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)30285-5

Kilmurry, E. (2017). "YouthTalk": Positively engaging young people in Edinburgh. *Library Management*, *38*(4–5), 203–207. https://doi.org/10.1108/Lm-12-2016-0090

Kimberlee, R. (2008). Streets ahead on safety: Young people's participation in decision-making to address the European road injury 'epidemic.' *Health & Social Care in the Community*, *16*(3), 322–328. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2524.2008.00762.x

Krenichyn, K., Schaefer-McDaniel, N., Clark, H., & Zeller-Berkman, S. (2007). Where are young people in youth program evaluation research? *Children, Youth and Environments*, *17*(2), (594–615). https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.17.2.0594

Larsson, I., Staland-Nyman, C., Svedberg, P., Nygren, J. M., & Carlsson, I. M. (2018). Children and young people's participation in developing interventions in health and well-being: A scoping review. *BMC Health Services Research*, *18*(1), 507. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-3219-2

Mandoh, M., Redfern, J., Mihrshahi, S., Cheng, H. L., Phongsavan, P., & Partridge, S. R. (2021). Shifting From tokenism to meaningful adolescent participation in research for obesity prevention: A systematic scoping review. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *9*, 789535. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.789535

Mays, N., Roberts, E., & Popay, J. (2001). Synthesising research evidence. In P. Allen, N. Fulop, A. Clarke, & N. Black (Eds.), *Methods for studying the delivery and organisation of health services* (pp. 200–232). Routledge.

Oliver, K., Kothari, A., & Mays, N. (2019). The dark side of coproduction: Do the costs outweigh the benefits for health research? *Health Research Policy and Systems*, *17*(1), 33. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-019-0432-3

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2017). Engaging youth in policy-making processes (Module 6). In *Evidence-based policy making for youth well-being: A toolkit* (pp. 147–160). OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264283923-en

Patton, G. C., Sawyer, S. M., Santelli, J. S., Ross, D. A., Afifi, R., Allen, N. B., Arora, M., Azzopardi, P., Baldwin, W., Bonell, C., Kakuma, R., Kennedy, E., Mahon, J., McGovern, T., Mokdad, A. H., Patel, V., Petroni, S., Reavley, N., Taiwo, K., . . . Viner, R. M. (2016). Our future: A Lancet commission on adolescent health and wellbeing. *Lancet*, *387*(10036), 2423–2478. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)00579-1

Percy-Smith, B. (2007). "You think you know? . . . You have no idea": Youth participation in health policy development. *Health Education Research*, *22*(6), 879–894. https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cym032

Peters, M. D., Godfrey, C. M., Khalil, H., McInerney, P., Parker, D., & Soares, C. B. (2015). Guidance for conducting systematic scoping reviews. *International Journal of Evidence Based Healthcare*, *13*(3), 141–146. https://doi.org/10.1097/XEB.0000000000000050

United Nations. (1995). *The World Programme of Action for Youth*. https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpay_text_final.pdf

Warwick, P. (2008). The development of apt citizenship education through listening to young people's voices. *Educational Action Research*, *16*(3), 321–333. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790802260232

Wigle, J., Paul, S., Birn, A. E., Gladstone, B., & Braitstein, P. (2020). Youth participation in sexual and reproductive health: Policy, practice, and progress in Malawi. *International Journal of Public Health*, *65*(4), 379–389. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-020-01357-8

Wong, N. T., Zimmerman, M. A., & Parker, E. A. (2010). A typology of youth participation and empowerment for child and adolescent health promotion. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *46*(1–2), 100–114. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-010-9330-0