



Our Kids Network Youth Engagement Policy

PURPOSE:

To ensure that Our Kids Network (OKN) recognises the critical importance of meaningful youth engagement to achieve our vision '*All Children Thrive*'. Further, Our Kids Network is committed to building awareness of the issue of youth voice through youth engagement literacy and the development of Network and Committee wide activities that actively engage youth and adults along our continuum of youth engagement "*For Youth – With Youth – By Youth*". To assist Our Kids Network members and Community partners across Halton in developing integrated pathways toward embedding youth voice and engagement strategies within youth serving organisations across Halton.

APPLICATON & SCOPE:

This policy applies to all operations and procedures in all committees within Our Kids Network. The youth engagement policy will be reflected in all committees' terms of reference and work plan and in any framework agreements between partners.

DEFINITIONS:

For Youth – Opportunities are created for youth engagement by adopting mechanisms for including young people's opinions in an organisation's activities but their inclusion is passive and ad hoc.

With Youth – Opportunities are created for youth engagement by adopting a formal mechanism for gathering young people's opinions and for working with youth on an ongoing basis.

By Youth – Opportunities are created for youth engagement by making space in an organisation to adopt decisions made by youth and by recruiting them to fill authentic leadership roles.

PRINCIPLES:

Our Kids Network is committed to:

- Opportunities for youth leadership
- Unique, active involvement that inspires youth
- Inclusive youth involvement from start to finish
- An environment open to everyone's ideas and contributions
- Respectful of all participants
- Opportunities for supportive connections through mentors and peers



REQUIREMENTS:

1. Our Kids Network (OKN), under the direction of the Senior Executive Group, in conjunction with the OKN Director (in collaboration with the Collective Impact Planning Committee), will facilitate the directive of this policy.
2. Each OKN Committee will develop their own specific plan to engage youth based on the core set of youth engagement principles and the continuum. (Exception to this may be OK-EY and “Partners” Committees.)
3. The Collective Impact Planning Committee (CIPC) takes responsibility for ensuring youth voice is embedded in the Network, providing direction for the recommendation of youth engagement strategies, and ensuring that the committees’ youth engagement strategies are coherent.
4. OKN will work with partner agencies to assist them in embedding youth engagement strategies and continuous engagement of youth throughout their organization.
5. Our Kids Network, under the direction of the Research & Evaluation Committee, will commit to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the OKN youth engagement policy and the use of the youth engagement continuum across all its committees.