

# HEM Theory: Encouraging Engagement | Sewing young people into your organisations processes.

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This theory takes the work of Maslow to show how treating young people according to 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs' impacts levels of participation. Maslow said to achieve 'Self-actualisation' first you must achieve satisfaction in **Physiological needs, Safety needs, belongingness and love needs and esteem needs**. You must provide support and appreciation towards young people, showing you value their time and effort.

By providing young people with a secure, inviting, warm venue to meet and engage, you are achieving their **Physiological needs**. Snacks and a well-known and maintained premises will be appealing to young people.

Staff who work with young people should have appropriate safeguarding training and be appropriately DBS checked. Make sure young people know who the designated safeguarding people are. This satisfies **Safety needs**.

Putting young people together creates opportunities to build bridges and bounce ideas back and forth. They can have strong partnerships and work together more efficiently. For example, appoint two young trustees to make board meetings seem less intimidating, you can even provide them with a trustee mentor. **Belonginess** can be formed using many communications.

Giving young people a title and a purpose is the first step to achieving their **Esteem needs**. If young person led groups are given terms of reference they know that they can accomplish certain aims and objectives. If young trustees are called trustees, they feel like equals in the governance processes. This is an opportunity for young people to exercise independence.

Upon achieving these needs, young people will have reached the **Self Actualisation** element, they will feel ownership, contentment and respected. This has an impact on the way they contribute to the organisation at all levels.

From here, the top tier of the model demonstrates the impact from successfully implanting Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The top tier is about young people's contribution, using their **voice, decision making** skills and giving them, **equality** and the freedom to **accessing their rights** as they will feel **ownership**.

**Voice:** Young people will feel more comfortable in contributing to the organisations business, they will start to speak up about matters.

**Choice:** Once young people are happy to speak up and verbalise concerns or areas of focus, they will move towards making decisions and having a choice in matters at all levels of the organisation. Linking to Belongingness, young people will be able to ask other people involved in the decision to make an informed decision.

**Ownership:** Young people take what they have said and the decisions they have made and make it a reality. This is linked to the Esteem need; young people will feel accomplishment.

**Equilibrium:** Young people feel equal to the people they are working with at all levels, from grassroots to governance. Young people will be at the peak of their journey to equity.

**Rights Actualisation:** Once equity is achieved, Rights Actualisation is complete. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that “all children have the right to have their voice heard and taken seriously”, equity, fulfils this right in decision making times. This is also relevant when young people’s opinions are utilized in other service areas, for example Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Boards Youth Board, ABMyoUth, where they are also working to fulfil their right to access Healthcare (Article 24 of the UNCRC).

Ultimately, once young people are happy within an organisation, they will effectively contribute. In addition, this improves the functionality of your organisation as there will be greater diversity and more direct feedback from wider range of service users.

**Useful links to achieve ‘Rights Actualisation’:**

[www.unicef.org.uk/ChildsRights](http://www.unicef.org.uk/ChildsRights)

[www.getonboard.cymru](http://www.getonboard.cymru)

**Credit:**

Maslow's (1943, 1954) Hierarchy of Needs.

