




Comhairle na nÓg
Young Voices. Local Issues.

Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit

SECOND EDITION



Copyright © Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, 2016
Department of Children and Youth Affairs
43–49 Mespil Road
Dublin 4
D04 YP52
Tel: +353 (0)1 647 3000
Fax: +353 (0)1 667 0826
Email: contact@dcya.gov.ie
Web: www.dcy.a.ie

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs should be acknowledged
in all references to this publication.

For rights of translation or reproduction please contact the Department
of Children and Youth Affairs.



CONTENTS

About the Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit	v
How to use this Toolkit	vi
About the author	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Guide to running Comhairle na nÓg	
1. Overview	1
2. Support structures: Who's who in Comhairle na nÓg	9
3. Comhairle na nÓg Work Programme	25
4. Working arrangements of Comhairle na nÓg	53
Appendices	73
Running an effective Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meeting	93
1. Overview	97
2. Before the AGM	101
3. At the AGM	119
4. After the AGM	153
Appendices	157



About the Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit

The Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit has been developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) Citizen Participation Unit to support the work of those who organise and run the 31 Comhairlí na nÓg throughout the country. Comhairlí na nÓg are part-funded by the DCYA Comhairle Development Fund, which is managed by Pobal in cooperation with the DCYA. In addition, the DCYA Child and Youth Participation Officers provide training, advice and support to organisers of Comhairle na nÓg and work on other DCYA child participation initiatives.



The role of the DCYA Citizen Participation Unit is to ensure that children will have a voice on matters that affect their lives and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. This is contextualised in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020*, a cross-government strategy aiming to ensure that children and young people have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives. While the strategy recognises that children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives, it focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect them. In light of this, the strategy prioritises having a voice in decisions made in their local communities.

The first edition of the Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit was published in 2011. This second edition consists of the following sections:





1. a Guide to running Comhairle na nÓg (particularly for new staff);
2. a guide to Running an effective Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meeting.

How to use this Toolkit

The Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit is divided into two sections in the following order:

-  a Guide to running Comhairle na nÓg, particularly for new staff and;
-  a guide to Running an effective Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meeting.

The Guide to running Comhairle na nÓg and the guide to Running an effective Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meeting are divided into a number of relevant chapters, each of which is presented in a different colour. The 'tab' on the page will also help you find the exact chapter you are looking for. Both guides also contain a number of distinguishable coloured boxes, which are uniform throughout the toolkit, under the following headings:

-  Best Practice: presented in a purple box;
-  Case Study: presented in a white box;
-  Key Advice: presented in a blue 'cloud-shaped' box;
-  What Young People Say: presented in a pink box.



This icon is used to indicate activities that are suitable for wheelchair users.



This icon is used to indicate an activity suitable for use where there are low literacy rates.

The Toolkit also has a number of Appendices, many of which can be 'individualised' or used as templates by each Comhairle na nÓg. These appendices are also available to download in soft copy from the 'Coordinators Corner' of the Comhairle na nÓg website, www.comhairlenanog.ie.

About the author

Olivia McEvoy is the founder of Cnag ar an Doras which provides independent consultancy to Government and NGOs in the area of stakeholder engagement through inclusive participative practice, especially for children and young people. She has 15 years' experience in the design and delivery of programmes and consultation processes, independent evaluation, project management as well as the development of resource materials for both adults and children/young people. She has worked with the DCYA and the Office of the President of Ireland as well as other government departments and NGOs such as Barnardos, Belong To, Foróige, Irish Youth Foundation, National Youth Council of Ireland and Youth Work Ireland.

Acknowledgements

The DCYA and the author, Olivia McEvoy, would like to acknowledge the valued support and input of the Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit Development Committee (listed below) who informed the revision of the Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit.

Development Committee

MEMBER	ORGANISATION
Andy Smith	Kerry County Council
Anne O'Donnell	Head of Citizen Participation, Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)
Bríd Hynes	Kilkenny County Council
Cathy Martin	Meath County Council
Edel McGrath	Child and Youth Participation Officer, Foróige
Elaine Masterson	Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)
Karyn Farrell	Participation Coordinator
Martin Donohoe	Child and Youth Participation Officer, Foróige
Martin Keaney	Donegal Youth Service
Mike Farrell	Kildare Youth Services
Olivia McEvoy	Cnag ar an Doras
Suzanne Byrne	Child and Youth Participation Officer, Youth Work Ireland



Comhairle na nÓg
Young Voices. Local Issues.

Guide to running Comhairle na nÓg

CONTENTS

1. Overview	1
What is Comhairle na nÓg?	2
How does it all work?	2
What is the cycle of Comhairle na nÓg?	3
How long do people stay involved for?	3
Keeping children and young people safe and getting informed consent	3
Policy context for Comhairle na nÓg	4
Rationale	4
Principles of participation	5
Definition of participation	6
Model of participation	6
Voice Model checklist	7
Funding for Comhairle na nÓg	7
2. Support structures: Who's who in Comhairle na nÓg	9
Local authorities	10
Personnel	11
Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator	13
Steering Committee	14
Background	14
Remit	14
How to establish a Steering Committee	14
Membership	15
Benefits for Steering Committee members	15
Training for Steering Committee members	15
Training for Comhairle na nÓg Committee members on Steering Committee	16
Child and Youth Participation Support Team	20
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	21
Children and Young People's Services Committees	22
3. Comhairle na nÓg Work Programme	25
Overview of work programme	26
The Comhairle na nÓg lifecycle	28
Local cycle	28
National cycle	29
Working on topics that are important to young people	30
Case Studies of how to progress a topic from beginning to end	36
Comhairle na nÓg as a consultative forum	44
Participating in consultations	44
Making submissions	44
Sitting on adult committees/decision-making bodies	45
Supporting the work of other youth participation structures	46
Key agencies presenting to Comhairle na nÓg	46
Coordinator's membership of key agencies	46
Participating in other initiatives	46
Linking with elected officials	47
National cycle of Comhairle na nÓg	49
Funding and reporting	49
National events	50
Requirements of coordinators	50

4. Working arrangements of Comhairle na nÓg	53
Selection of young people for Comhairle na nÓg Committee and membership profile	54
Background	54
Strategies to achieve a balanced membership profile	54
Training for Comhairle na nÓg Committee members	61
Background	61
Induction training	61
Committee skills training	61
Preparing young people for adult committees	62
Preparing adults for having young people on adult committees	62
Other training	62
Running a Comhairle na nÓg Committee meeting	63
Background	63
Youth-led meetings	64
Including young people in budgeting and expenditure	65
Promotion and branding	68
Raising the profile of Comhairle na nÓg	69
Promotional tools	70
Balancing promotion and child protection	70
Useful training	71
Branding	71
Closing the Comhairle na nÓg experience for members	72
Appendices	73
Appendix 1: Sample Letter of Invitation to potential Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee members	74
Appendix 2: Steering Committee – Sample Terms of Reference	75
Appendix 3: Tools to develop an Action Plan	77
Appendix 4: Sample Survey	80
Appendix 5: Committee Skills Workshop for Comhairle	83
Appendix 6: Preparation of adult members for Comhairle Steering Committee	85
Appendix 7: Template for Certificate of Participation	89
Appendix 8: Sample Agenda and Minutes from a Comhairle na nÓg meeting	90

Chapter 1

Overview





What is Comhairle na nÓg?

Comhairle na nÓg (www.comhairlenanog.ie) are local councils for children and young people, aged 12–17, that give them a voice on the development of local policies and services. They are the recognised key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 local authorities of the country. Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) are required to engage with Comhairle na nÓg. The first *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020* reiterates the fact that Comhairle na nÓg is the nationally recognised structure that enables children and young people to have a voice in local decision-making.

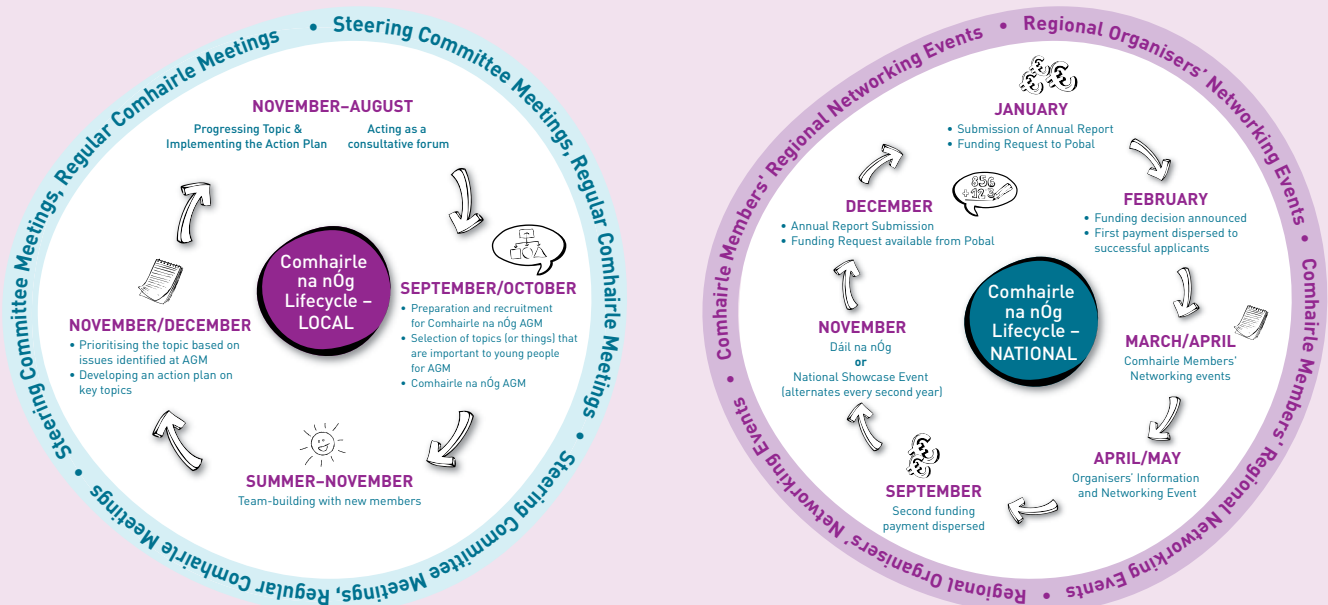
How does it all work?

Comhairle na nÓg allows young people's voices to be heard in two ways:

-  **WORKING ON TOPICS OF IMPORTANCE TO YOUNG PEOPLE: Identifying what is important to young people and working on that to achieve a targeted outcome or impact** is the first way that young people can have a voice through Comhairle na nÓg. It is central to the core programme of Comhairle na nÓg that **young people are facilitated to select and work on their own topic(s) or things of importance to pursue and progress**. Examples of the topics selected by young people in Comhairlí to date include: mental health awareness and services for young people, facilities for young people, how young people are treated by the adult world and homophobic bullying. The work of the Comhairle na nÓg on these topics includes: getting the views of other young people, doing background research, meeting with local decision-makers, developing surveys, organising meetings, making videos, producing leaflets or posters, developing online materials and other activities. **This work culminates in the Comhairle na nÓg members seeking to make an impact or change to improve the lives of young people.**
-  **ACTING AS A CONSULTATIVE FORUM FOR ADULT DECISION-MAKERS IN THE LOCALITY:** This can include **participation in consultations** where Comhairle na nÓg members are asked for their opinion, input and feedback on new and existing services, policies and decisions that affect young people. The input may be on the process itself; for example, helping to design or giving feedback on a youth-friendly questionnaire to be distributed in schools on 'facilities in the area'. The input can also be on the actual content of the policy or the service itself; for example, a local Sports Partnership may consult with the Comhairle na nÓg to get members' opinions on the location or type of new sports facility to be established in the area. Comhairlí na nÓg are also often asked for (or volunteer) **formal submissions** on local policies or to take part in public consultation processes. Acting as a consultative forum also means that representatives from Comhairlí na nÓg often **sit on adult committees** where they input the views of young people on such committees and also report information and decisions back to the wider Comhairle na nÓg group. In addition, Comhairle na nÓg may **join the Public Participation Network (PPN)** in each local authority area or be involved in the **development of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)**.

What is the cycle of Comhairle na nÓg?

There is both a national-based cycle and a local-based cycle of Comhairle na nÓg, as illustrated below. The local cycle outlines all of the stages necessary to make progress on a topic to achieve a desired outcome or impact. The national cycle outlines the stages of the funding process as well as national events.



How long do young people stay involved for?

The standard 'term of office' for a Comhairle na nÓg member is two years. The two-year process allows time for:

- a wider group of young people to select a topic of importance at the Comhairle na nÓg AGM;
- narrowing down the topics selected;
- picking one (or two) key topic(s) to work on;
- developing a work plan or action plan on the topic(s) selected;
- making progress on the topic through research, consultation, meeting decision-makers and getting support from key stakeholders;
- achieving an outcome, impact or change on the topic;
- reporting on progress to the Comhairle na nÓg AGM in Year 2;
- choosing to build on progress on the existing topic or selecting new topic(s) to pursue at the AGM in Year 2.

Keeping children and young people safe and getting informed consent

Please ensure that all activities of Comhairle na nÓg are carried out in accordance with national child welfare and protection guidelines and legislation. The consent of parents or guardians and assent of children and young people must be obtained for all activities of the Comhairle na nÓg.

Policy context for Comhairle na nÓg

There is both a national and international policy context for the participation of children and young people in decision-making. Most notable is the:



UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

With the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, Ireland, like almost all other countries in the world, committed to ensuring that **the voices of children and young people would be heard in matters that affect them**. (UN, 1989)



NATIONAL STRATEGY ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING 2015–2020

The *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020* (DCYA, 2015) is a cross-government strategy which aims to ensure that children and young people will have a voice in their individual and collective everyday lives. The strategy focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives and identifies the following priority areas for action:

- children and young people will have a voice in decisions made in their local communities;
- children and young people will have a voice in decision-making in early education, schools and the wider formal and non-formal education systems;
- children and young people will have a voice in decisions that affect their health and well-being, including on the health and social services delivered to them;
- children and young people will have a voice in the courts and legal system.

The strategy contains a series of additional objectives, which include:

- promoting effective leadership to champion and promote participation of children and young people;
- development of education and training for professionals working with and on behalf of children and young people;
- mainstreaming the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation and research.

Underlying all objectives in the strategy are the following key fundamentals:

- recognition that children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives;
- ensuring the protection and welfare of children and young people in accordance with national child welfare and protection guidelines and legislation;
- improving and establishing mechanisms to ensure the participation of seldom-heard and vulnerable children and young people in decision-making;
- collection of data, monitoring and evaluation of children and young people's participation initiatives.

The *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020* can be found on www.dcy.gov.ie and in the Coordinators Corner of www.comhairlenanog.ie.

Rationale

Children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

With the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, Ireland, like almost all other countries in the world, committed to ensuring that the voices of children and young people are heard in matters that affect them.

There is a growing body of evidence on the benefits of participation by children and young people in decision-making across a range of measures, including improved services, policies, research, active citizenship and, most importantly, improvements for children themselves and for society generally (Kilkelly et al, 2014). Inclusion of children and young people in decision-making can promote children's protection, and improve their confidence, communication skills and ability to negotiate, network and make judgements (Franklin and Sinclair, 2000).

Principles of participation

The principles of participation outlined below are adapted from the Council of Europe (2012) Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on participation in decision-making of children and young people under the age of 18. The principles refer to both the context for participation and the process of participation.

1. There is no age limit on the right of the child or young person to express her or his views freely. **All children and young people have a right to be heard in all matters affecting them**, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
2. The right of children and young people to participate applies **without discrimination on any grounds** such as race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, disability, birth, sexual orientation or other status.
3. As children and young people acquire more capacities, adults should encourage them to enjoy, to an increasing degree, their right to influence matters affecting them.
4. **Particular efforts** should be made **to enable participation of children and young people with fewer opportunities**, including those who are vulnerable or affected by discrimination.
5. **Parents and carers play a fundamental role** in affirming and nurturing the child's right to participate.
6. Children and young people should be **provided with all relevant information** and offered adequate **support for self-advocacy**.
7. If participation is to be effective, meaningful and sustainable, it needs to be understood as **a process and not a one-off event** and requires ongoing commitment in terms of time and resources.
8. Children and young people who exercise their right to freely express their views must be **protected from harm**, including intimidation, reprisals, victimisation and violation of their right to privacy.
9. Children and young people should always be **fully informed of the scope of their participation, including the limitations** on their involvement, the expected and actual outcomes of their participation and how their views were ultimately considered.
10. All processes in which children and young people are heard should be transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant to children's lives, in child-friendly environments, inclusive (non-discriminatory), supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable.

Definition of participation

Children and young people’s participation in decision-making is defined as the process by which children and young people have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly.

(Checkoway, 2011; Couch and Francis, 2006; Council of Europe, 2008; Save the Children, 2005)

This definition is consistent with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

There are obviously a multitude of definitions of ‘participation’. Whatever the definition, participation should ensure that children and young people are:

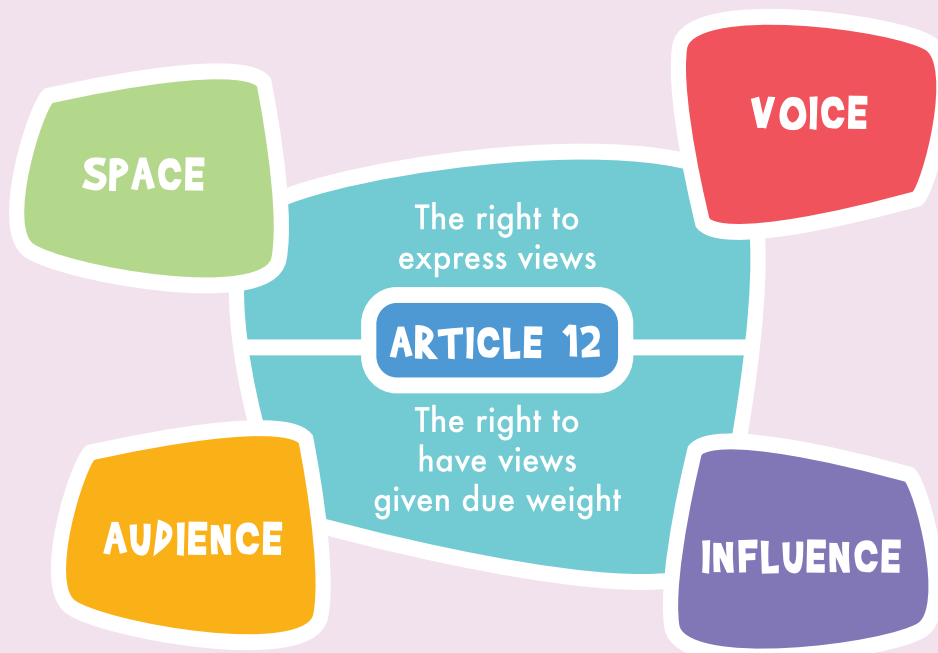
- ✍ empowered;
- ✍ enabled;
- ✍ have active involvement in decisions about their own lives;
- ✍ have real influence on matters that affect them.

Model of participation

There are a range of models of participation on the ways in which participation can be achieved. The best-known models include Hart’s Ladder of Participation (1992), first developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969; Treseder’s Degrees of Participation (1997); Shier’s Pathways to Participation (2001); Kirby et al’s Model of Participation (2003); and Lundy’s Model of Participation (2007).

The *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020* is underpinned by Lundy’s Model of Participation.

Source: Based on ‘Voice Is Not Enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’ (Lundy, 2007)



Voice Model checklist

As an expert involved in the development of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020*, Professor Lundy developed a checklist in consultation with a Strategy Subgroup, comprising representatives of government departments and agencies.

This checklist aims to help organisations working with and for children and young people to comply with Article 12 of the UNCRC and ensure that children have the **SPACE** to express their views; their **VOICE** is enabled; they have an **AUDIENCE** for their views; and their views will have **INFLUENCE**.



Funding for Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg are part-funded by the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund, which is managed by Pobal in cooperation with the DCYA. The objectives of the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund are to support the development and improvement of Comhairle na nÓg as:

- ✍ a firmly embedded structure and key consultative/participative forum for children and young people;
- ✍ an effective mechanism for children and young people to improve their own lives in partnership with adult stakeholders.

In collaboration with DCYA, Pobal administers the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund. Pobal manages the transfer of payments and the annual reporting and funding request process. A percentage of verification visits are conducted annually. The purpose of the verification visit is to verify that the administration of approved funding is in accordance with the Fund criteria. In many cases, local authorities also provide funding and resources for Comhairle na nÓg.



Chapter 2

Support structures: Who's who in Comhairle na nÓg



There are a number of support structures in place that facilitate the delivery of Comhairle na nÓg. Details of the key support structures are included below.

Local authorities

Comhairlí na nÓg (youth councils) were established in 2002. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 established new structures that **ensure the involvement and participation by Comhairle na nÓg in all relevant local authority structures**, in particular:

- *LCDCs – Comhairle na nÓg should be involved in, or consulted by, the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC):*

The participation by relevant local structures and committees in the work of the LCDCs is set out on p. 33 of the LCDC Operating Guidelines with Comhairle na nÓg listed as one such structure. LCDCs are reminded to consider inviting officials from these bodies to attend and participate in specific LCDC meetings where it facilitates input and expertise in matters of direct relevance to the LCDCs' work.
- *The Public Participation Network (PPN):*

PPNs are being set up in all local authority areas as a framework for public engagement and participation. The purpose of these PPNs is to enable the public to take an active formal role in the policymaking and oversight activities of the local authorities' areas of responsibility. The aim of the new structures and processes is to enable community organisations to articulate a diverse range of views and interests within the local government system, and to allow a diversity of voices and interests to be facilitated and involved in the decision-making processes of the local authority.

Where community representation is required on appropriate committees of the local authority, such as SPCs/LCDCs, etc., it must be sourced through the PPN. It is open to all community and voluntary groups to join the local PPN and this includes local branches of Comhairle na nÓg. The opportunity to align Comhairle na nÓg and PPN is one that should be pursued as a priority in order to ensure a strong community voice for all age groups.
- *LECP – Comhairle na nÓg should be involved in the development of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) and be named as the key consultative structure for children and young people:*

The general approach to consultation by LCDCs with communities, organisations and stakeholders in relation to the development of the LECP is set out in part 3 (p. 2) of the LECP Guidelines and states that the community elements of the LECP should be developed in a collaborative, consultative and participative way, affording key stakeholders the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way. Given the composition and role of local youth councils they should be considered as a 'key stakeholder' for the purposes of highlighting young people's needs and priorities for inclusion in the LECP. LCDCs should consider establishing and formalising engagement arrangements with their local Comhairle to assist in this process.

All local authorities will also be obliged to report on implementation of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020*, under *Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014–2020)*. There are a number of actions required of local authorities and LCDCs under this Policy Framework, and fostering close liaison between the LCDC and Comhairle na nÓg will ensure maximum benefit from *Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures* for communities in the local authority area.

Personnel

In some instances, the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator is a direct employee of the local authority (see below for details of Coordinator's role). However, even if the Comhairle na nÓg is organised by an external agency, it is vital that the local authorities maintain a firm sense of ownership of and connection to their local Comhairle na nÓg. To this end, a formal structure to link Comhairle na nÓg and the local authority must be maintained. This might be achieved by appointing a key member of staff to formally liaise with and take responsibility for Comhairle na nÓg. In addition, relevant staff members must also be appointed to the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee. The role and support of senior local authority personnel is also critical in ensuring that all sections of the local authority are aware of the work of Comhairle na nÓg and, more importantly, that the views of Comhairle na nÓg are sought and considered in the development of any relevant policies or services.

CASE STUDY

Kerry County Council formally recognises the importance of the Kerry Comhairle na nÓg as a consultative forum in the *County Development Plan 2015–2021* and it is also a policy of the Council to 'consult with and support Kerry Comhairle na nÓg in the development of local services and policies that may impact on the lives of young people'. Kerry Comhairle na nÓg is also fully registered with Kerry **PPN**. In line with this commitment, Kerry Comhairle na nÓg was consulted specifically as a statutory structure in the development of the *Kerry Local Economic and Community Plan*, resulting in the inclusion of a high-level goal to 'secure improved outcomes for children and young people including more effective service delivery and better opportunities, by working with them and the appropriate agencies'. Comhairle na nÓg is also specifically mentioned in a number of actions in the draft Local Economic and Community Plan:

- Ensure that all young people including seldom-heard are facilitated to participate in decision-making through the implementation of the Comhairle na nÓg's work programme and through engagement with other youth consultative mechanisms.
- Implement objective SC-6 of the *Kerry County Development Plan* which promotes active support and engagement with Kerry Comhairle na nÓg in the development of local services and policies that may impact on the lives of young people.
- The work of Comhairle na nÓg should be highlighted and the agreed work plan supported.

continued

Kerry Comhairle na nÓg also has a representative sitting on the Kerry **Children and Young People’s Services Committee** (CYPSC) as well as two representatives sitting on the Youth Participation Subcommittee. In addition, Comhairle na nÓg is specifically outlined as a ‘Priority Area’ in the 2014–2017 Work Plan:

Priority Area	Comhairle na nÓg
Objective	Continue to engage with Kerry Comhairle na nÓg Promote an awareness of the importance of hearing the voice of the child across all agencies that work with children and young people (including the voice of marginalised groups)
Indicators	Comhairle na nÓg representatives on CYPSC to support the work of Kerry Comhairle na nÓg
Target	Relationship with Kerry Comhairle na nÓg is strengthened Comhairle na nÓg works with Kerry CYPSC on actions as appropriate
Activities	Comhairle na nÓg reps to attend alternate CYPSC meetings CYPSC members and Coordinator to attend Comhairle na nÓg meetings and events as appropriate CYPSC Coordinator to be a member of the Kerry Comhairle na nÓg Steering Group Consult with and work with Comhairle na nÓg on CYPSC actions as appropriate
Timeframe	Ongoing
Lead Responsibility	Youth Participation Working Group

KEY ADVICE

- While the majority of local authorities contract the organisation and running of Comhairle na nÓg to youth services, it is vital that the local authorities maintain a firm sense of ownership of and connection to their local Comhairle na nÓg;
- A formal structure to link an assigned local authority staff member to liaise with Comhairle must be implemented. This includes the appointment of relevant staff members to the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee. The support of senior local authority personnel is also critical;
- Comhairlí na nÓg should be formally involved in all key local decision-making structures and committees including the LCDC, PPN and LECP. This formal interaction is essential to ensure that the views of young people are included in shaping policies and services;
- The Comhairle na nÓg should be a registered member of the PPN;
- The Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator and PPN worker should liaise closely to ensure both parties are well informed of the other’s work;
- The local authority also needs to help create wider awareness of Comhairle na nÓg and the topics that are being worked on.

Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator

The Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator is obviously a driving force in the delivery of Comhairle na nÓg. The Coordinator's position is full-time in some areas and part-time in others. Similarly, in some areas, the Coordinator is employed within the local authority, while in others he or she is employed by the external agency that has been contracted to deliver Comhairle na nÓg.

The role of the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator can vary from area to area and is dependent on the number of hours dedicated to the role, the service level agreement between the delivering agencies and a host of other local conditions. What is most important to remember is that the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator is a professional role that requires skills in working with young people. Some of the tasks involved include the following:

- supporting, enabling and empowering young people in Comhairle na nÓg to engage fully in the implementation of the Comhairle na nÓg agenda and annual cycle;
- providing additional support to seldom-heard young people and the organisations that work on their behalf;
- facilitating the involvement of young people in local decision-making;
- organising and attending the Comhairle na nÓg AGM in partnership with members of Comhairle na nÓg and the Steering Committee;
- organising key events, workshops, the annual conference and other meetings as appropriate;
- having a commitment to youth participation and to work within the values, policies and procedures of the overseeing organisation and in the context of current legislation and regulations;
- working in partnership with the DCYA and various appropriate bodies and partner organisations;
- liaising with all secondary schools, youth organisations, Youthreach centres and training centres in the city/county in order to ensure maximum participation in Comhairle na nÓg;
- attending Steering Committee meetings;
- setting standards for Comhairle na nÓg in partnership with Steering Committee members and young people;
- promoting and attending Dáil na nÓg;
- maintaining a public relations profile for the Comhairle na nÓg project, to include press releases, newsletters and radio interviews;
- promoting Comhairle na nÓg to key local agencies and ensuring it is listed as a key consultative forum when conducting consultation processes or seeking submissions;
- availing of opportunities to promote Comhairle na nÓg by contributing to publications and reports;
- actively participating in training and consultation processes in connection with the further development of Comhairle na nÓg;
- reporting to and agreeing the annual work programme and outputs with the Administrative Officer within the Community and Enterprise Directorate (if appropriate);
- attending and reporting to various Council bodies as required;
- taking responsibility for the administration of all finances and reporting required in relation to the Comhairle na nÓg project;
- adhering to best practice in child welfare and protection guidelines and legislation;
- being vigilant about health, safety and welfare risks in the workplace;
- showing flexibility in relation to timing of meetings;
- undertaking the role in a manner that is friendly, flexible and professional.

Steering Committee

Background

Under the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund, it is a qualification criterion that a Steering Committee, made up of key stakeholders and decision-makers, is in place to oversee Comhairle na nÓg.

Remit

The Steering Committee is designed to advise and assist the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator in organising the Comhairle na nÓg throughout the year. Most notably, the role of the Steering Committee includes ensuring that:

- ✍ the Comhairle na nÓg is formally connected to local decision-makers and key stakeholders in the area, particularly in relation to the topic(s) being worked on in any given year;
- ✍ the Comhairle na nÓg has an opportunity to influence the decision-making and service development that will affect young people in the city/county;
- ✍ organisations representing seldom-heard young people are engaged in the process and can contribute to all aspects of the Comhairle na nÓg;
- ✍ the Comhairle na nÓg is promoted and championed in every key local agency in the area.

How to establish a Steering Committee

If a Steering Committee is not already in place, it should be established at the earliest opportunity. There are some simple steps to facilitate this process, including:

- ✍ send a formal letter of invitation to the key agencies in the area (*see sample letter in Appendix 1*);
- ✍ follow up the letter with a telephone call to establish the attendance list;
- ✍ call the first meeting of the Steering Committee at a convenient time and location;
- ✍ the first meeting might include:
 - a presentation from Comhairle na nÓg members and/or the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator on:
 - What is Comhairle na nÓg?
 - How is it structured?
 - What are the core functions?
 - What topics are currently being worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg members?
 - information on the role of the Steering Committee;
 - a discussion on the draft Terms of Reference (*see sample 'Terms of Reference' in Appendix 2*).
- ✍ organise the follow-up meeting at a time convenient for the Steering Committee members.

The majority of Steering Committees meet once a quarter. Others meet more regularly at busier times of the year.

Membership

Membership of the Steering Committee is specific to each Comhairle. The membership in any one year may differ depending on what agencies are most relevant for the topic(s) that is being pursued by the Comhairle na nÓg. For example, if the topic being pursued is 'safety in the local area', it would be very helpful to have representation from An Garda Síochána and any local resident committees, whereas if the topic being pursued is 'mental health', it would be essential to have representation from the Health Service Executive (HSE) and any organisations involved locally in mental health, such as Headstrong.

Core members of the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee should include:

- ✎ members of the Comhairle na nÓg Committee;
- ✎ a representative from the local authority;
- ✎ the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator;
- ✎ youth services.

Other members of the Steering Committee might be drawn from key local agencies, such as:

- ✎ An Garda Síochána, Garda SAFE Projects, Garda Youth Diversion Projects, Joint Policing Committee;
- ✎ Children and Young People Services Committees (CYPSC);
- ✎ community support groups;
- ✎ CSPE teachers from local schools;
- ✎ elected representatives;
- ✎ Family Resource Centres;
- ✎ Garda Youth Liaison Officers;
- ✎ Health Service Executive (HSE);
- ✎ Local Partnership Committees, including Sports Partnership Committees;
- ✎ organisations representing children and young people who are seldom-heard;
- ✎ schools and Youthreach;
- ✎ Student Council representatives;
- ✎ Tusla – Child and Family Agency;
- ✎ Youth Officer from the Education Training Board (where possible).

Benefits for Steering Committee members

To help attract members, it may be useful to outline some of the benefits of membership of the Steering Committee, which include:

- ✎ networking with key decision-makers in the local area;
- ✎ fulfilling the responsibility to include young people in decision-making processes;
- ✎ engaging with young people in a meaningful way, which is likely to benefit their own agency or organisation.

Training for Steering Committee members

Since the needs of each Steering Committee are different, the best advice is to talk to your Child and Youth Participation Officer about the needs of the Comhairle na nÓg in your area.

Most Steering Committee members would welcome an initial induction on Comhairle na nÓg. This could form the basis of the introductory presentation at the first meeting and include information on:

- What is Comhairle na nÓg?
- How is it structured?
- What are the core functions?
- What topics are currently being worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg members?

Training for Comhairle na nÓg Committee members on Steering Committee

The most important training is the briefing and training given to the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members who sit on the Steering Committee. Sitting on the Steering Committee is one of the biggest opportunities that Comhairle na nÓg members will have to interact with and influence key local stakeholders. To this end, the selected Comhairle na nÓg members need to:

- be fully briefed before each Steering Committee meeting;
- be able to present the position and views of the wider Comhairle na nÓg Committee to the Steering Committee;
- be able to negotiate and exert influence on members of the Steering Committee;
- realise the importance of reporting back to the wider Comhairle na nÓg Committee.

In addition, it is vital that the meetings are organised in such a way that young people are able to attend the meeting and, most importantly, that they can engage in the meeting. To this end, the meetings should be conducted using youth-friendly language and materials, and the young people should be facilitated and encouraged to contribute their views and opinions.

CASE STUDY

At the start of the council term, Waterford Comhairle requests that five elected representatives who span membership of SPCs and other various Council boards and committees are nominated to the Comhairle Steering Committee. Steering Committee members are required to play an active and meaningful role. Each Steering Committee member is tasked with a particular assignment at the end of each meeting, e.g. information sharing or providing connections for the Coordinator/Comhairle, partnering on a local project, facilitating a trip to Dáil Éireann/EU Parliament, applying for grants or creating a platform for consultation. Steering Committee members are also expected to be involved in Comhairle activities outside of meetings. This has resulted in a very engaged and active Steering Committee, providing relevant connections and links, e.g. Comhairle is the designated consultative forum for the CYPSC, presenting twice a year and sitting on two subcommittees because the CYPSC Coordinator joined the Steering Committee.

CASE STUDY

The Steering Committee in Cork City is comprised of both statutory and local agency members as well as members with expertise on a specific topic being worked on over a two-year period. While they emphasise that the continuity of key statutory and local agency representatives is vital, the presence of temporary 'experts' as committee members is also very beneficial, bringing very relevant knowledge to the work of the Comhairle. Attracting these specific topic experts has proved easy as members are invited to join for a specific time period (two-year period meeting four times a year) and they feel useful to the project. Steering Committee members also benefit through the enhancement of knowledge, support network and reputation.

CASE STUDY

Kilkenny has a Steering Committee of 11 people, with the following member organisations:

- ✍ Kilkenny County Council x 3 (2 elected representatives and 1 executive);
- ✍ Kilkenny Education and Training Board – Youth Officer;
- ✍ Health Services Executive – Health Promotion Officer;
- ✍ Two local youth organisations, Ossory Youth and Foróige, each has a seat;
- ✍ The Local Development Company, CKLP – SICAP Youth Worker;
- ✍ Children's and Young People's Services Committee – Coordinator;
- ✍ Comhairle na nÓg x 2 young people (nominated and agreed by the young people themselves);
- ✍ The Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator also attends all meetings and the Participation Officer attends most meetings.

On average, the committee meets six times a year but meets more frequently as required.

All members when joining the committee are given a briefing on the role and functions of the Steering Committee. An Induction Pack and Terms of Reference are provided to all members. The membership is explored each year in light of the action plan and new members invited on as required, e.g. one year the HSE Health Promotion Officer joined the committee in light of experience relating to the Mental Health School Flag Project while another year the CYPSC Coordinator joined the committee to ensure a link between Comhairle and the CYPSC.

Over the past two years the group has:

- ✍ Provided support to Kilkenny County Council in procuring the work of Comhairle na nÓg to a third party and were involved in the interview process for identification of the successful third party;

continued

- Approved the Comhairle na nÓg annual work plans as identified by the young people;
- Developed a work plan for the Steering Committee;
- Developed a Seldom-heard Strategy;
- Developed a PR Strategy;
- Informed the Service Outcomes of the Service Level Agreement between Kilkenny County Council and Programme Implementer;
- Supported the Coordinator/implementation of the Comhairle Annual Action Plan through:
 - advice and guidance in discussions at Steering Committee meetings;
 - Steering Committee members volunteering to partake in different subgroups of the Steering Committee to progress different projects;
 - facilitating at different consultation events organised and held by Comhairle na nÓg;
 - undertaking an end-of-year evaluation of the Comhairle operations;
 - participating in an independent evaluation of the Comhairle na nÓg over a two-year period.

A video resource on how to make the Steering Committee meaningful and what members should sit on the Steering Committee based on good practice examples from Carlow, Donegal and Roscommon Comhairlí is available in the Videos section of the Coordinators Corner – www.comhairlenanog.ie

Further information on Steering Committees can also be found at:
<http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Discussion-on-Steering-Committees.pdf>

KEY ADVICE

- It is essential to have a Steering Committee, made up of key stakeholders and decision-makers, in place to oversee Comhairle na nÓg;
- Talk to your Child and Youth Participation Officer about the particular training needs of your Steering Committee;
- Ensure that the young people on the Steering Committee are well briefed and enabled to contribute effectively at meetings;
- Organise the meetings so that young people feel able to engage with the content of the meeting and their Steering Committee colleagues.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK

- Young people need to be fully informed about what each person's role is on the Steering Committee and in their organisation;
- Comhairle na nÓg members to be fully informed about the Steering Committee, e.g. purpose, what's involved and how to get involved;
- More young people should sit on the Steering Committee so that it is a more balanced ratio;
- Young people attending could include two core members and two additional members that could change at each meeting;
- Consider having core members plus additional members from adult organisations as well;
- Ensure adults do not look down on young people and listen to them;
- Include ice-breakers that everyone takes part in to make it a fun and youth-friendly environment. This should make all feel equal;
- Make sure the timing of meetings is accommodating for young people.

Child and Youth Participation Support Team

In 2009, the DCYA established a Children and Young People's Participation Support Team.

This team includes a senior Participation Officer, two additional Participation Officers and a Participation Coordinator.

The role of the **Participation Officers** is to:

- ✍ provide support for the effective development of all 31 Comhairle na nÓg;
- ✍ support the operation and development of national events and the National Executive;
- ✍ support other children and young people's participation initiatives.

In supporting the development of effective Comhairlí na nÓg, the Participation Officers provide advice, support, training and resources. Examples of such support are described below.

Training

- ✍ Training for adult Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators;
- ✍ Preparation for Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase and Dáil na nÓg event;
- ✍ Occasional training of Comhairle na nÓg members.

Support of Comhairle na nÓg structures

- ✍ Guidance and insight on the development of a Steering Committee;
- ✍ Provision of information on AGMs and recruiting seldom-heard young people;
- ✍ Advice and assistance on the preparation for the National Showcase event;
- ✍ Advice on development of working structures and examples from other Comhairlí na nÓg.

Practical support

- ✍ Provide an immediate link between the Comhairle na nÓg and the DCYA;
- ✍ Attendance at Comhairle na nÓg meetings from time to time, where appropriate;
- ✍ Assistance with facilitation;
- ✍ Telephone support;
- ✍ Advice on plans and ideas;
- ✍ Advice on what works and what does not work;
- ✍ Information on the availability of resources;
- ✍ Promotion of Comhairle na nÓg;
- ✍ Providing a national view and sharing ideas from other Comhairlí na nÓg;
- ✍ Provision of resources;
- ✍ Guidance on completion of DCYA funding application forms;
- ✍ Funding and budgeting;
- ✍ Providing templates.

The Child and Youth Participation Officers are specifically in place to support the delivery and development of Comhairle na nÓg. In addition to availing of the training and resources that they make available (see *above*), they are very keen that you contact them whenever you need advice and support. One of the three Child and Youth Participation Officers has been appointed to cover each Comhairle na nÓg.

The **Participation Coordinator** is the dedicated support worker for the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and is responsible for supporting them in the development of their topic throughout their term. This includes preparing them for presentations with appropriate Ministers, policy-makers, Oireachtas Committees and other decision-makers including the Your Comhairle Needs You presentation. The Participation Coordinator also promotes the work of the National Executive on the website and social media.

In addition, the Participation Coordinator is responsible for the coordination of all national consultations and the Young People's Annual Networking Events as well as being part of the coordination team for the two national Comhairle na nÓg events: Dáil na nÓg and the National Comhairle na nÓg Showcase event.

Contact details for the Participation Coordinator and the three regional Child and Youth Participation Officers, including details for who covers your area, can be found at <http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/participation-officers-assigned-per-comhairle/>

KEY ADVICE



The Child and Youth Participation Team is an invaluable source of advice and support, dedicated to the development of Comhairle na nÓg. Never hesitate to get in touch!

Department of Children and Youth Affairs

The role of the DCYA is to ensure that children will have a voice on matters that affect their lives and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. This includes the development of effective participation structures such as Comhairle na nÓg which it part-funds through the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund, which is managed by Pobal in cooperation with the DCYA.

The DCYA also employs the Child and Youth Participation Support team who support the effective development of all 31 Comhairlí na nÓg. The Child and Youth Participation Officers are usually the first port of call in relation to direct support and advice for Comhairle na nÓg. However, if you need to contact the DCYA directly, contact can be made through:

Citizen Participation Unit
Department of Children and Youth Affairs
43–49 Mespil Road
Dublin 4
Tel: +353 (0)1 647 3000
Email: citizenparticipation@dca.gov.ie

Children and Young People's Services Committees

Comhairle na nÓg work with the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) to input on the development of broad-ranging services, policies and initiatives, such as the Children and Young People's Plans (CYPP), recreation facilities, education services, youth services, mental health services and other child and youth-related initiatives. CYPSC must report on their engagement with Comhairle na nÓg in the three-year Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and in the CYPSC Annual Programme of Work. Similarly, local authorities must report on the level of engagement between the Comhairle na nÓg and the local CYPSC in the Annual Report of the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund. The information below explains how CYPSC should specifically engage with Comhairlí na nÓg.

All Children and Young People's Services Committees will build effective engagement with their local Comhairle na nÓg in:

- planning and delivery of appropriate policies, services and initiatives and;
- supporting the work and initiatives of Comhairle na nÓg.

Children and Young People's Services Committees are a key structure identified by Government to plan and coordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. The overall purpose is to improve outcomes for children and young people through local and national interagency working.

At local level, the CYPSC is a county-level committee that brings together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people. It provides a forum for joint planning and coordination of activity and for oversight of local policy and provision, to ensure that children, young people and their families receive optimum services. Its role is to enhance interagency cooperation and to realise the five national outcomes set out in *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014–2020*, namely: to be active and healthy; to be achieving in all areas of learning and development; to be safe and protected from harm; to enjoy economic security and opportunity; and to be connected, respected and contributing. One of the six 'transformational goals' highlighted by *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* is to 'listen to and involve children and young people'.

Funding and reporting requirements related to CYPSC

Comhairle na nÓg (supported by the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund, which is managed by Pobal in cooperation with the DCYA)

One of the criteria for funding is proof of engagement with the local Children and Young People's Services Committee.

Comhairle na nÓg (funded through local authorities)

Local authorities must report on the level of engagement between the Comhairle na nÓg and the local Children and Young People's Services Committee in the Annual Report of the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund.

Children and Young People's Services Committees

Children and Young People's Services Committees must report on their engagement with Comhairle na nÓg in the development and implementation of their three-year Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and in their CYPSC Annual Programme of Work.

Responsibilities of Children and Young People's Services Committees

- All Children and Young People's Services Committees will involve Comhairle na nÓg in the development of their three-year Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).
- The Children and Young People's Services Committee will report on engagement with the local Comhairle na nÓg in the CYPSC Annual Programme of Work.
- A member of the Children and Young People's Services Committee will attend the Comhairle na nÓg AGM each year and where appropriate use the event to inform its work.
- An appropriate representative from the Children and Young People's Services Committee will develop a relationship with the Comhairle na nÓg or become a member of the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee.
- The Children and Young People's Services Committee will seek support or information from the Comhairle na nÓg on relevant issues.
- The Children and Young People's Services Committee will provide feedback to the Comhairle na nÓg on relevant issues.
- The Children and Young People's Services Committee will invite a member of Comhairle na nÓg to sit on the committee, with support provided by the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator.

Responsibilities of Comhairle na nÓg

- The Comhairle na nÓg will feed into the three-year Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).
- Local authorities will report on the level of engagement between the Comhairle na nÓg and the local Children and Young People's Services Committee in the Annual Report of the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund.
- The Comhairle na nÓg will engage with the Children and Young People's Services Committee at appropriate points, once an issue has been identified and young people have sufficient capacity.
- Comhairle na nÓg members/adult organisers/DCYA Participation Officers will attend Children and Young People's Services Committee meetings, as agreed with the CYPSC Chairperson.
- Comhairle na nÓg members or adult organisers will seek support and information on relevant projects from the Children and Young People's Services Committee.
- The Comhairle na nÓg will provide feedback to the Children and Young People's Services Committee on relevant issues.
- The Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator will provide support for the young person who is a member of the CYPSC.

Other agencies involved

Comhairle na nÓg should also join the **Public Participation Network (PPN)** in each local authority area to ensure they are represented on appropriate committees of the local authority such as the Local Council Development Committee (LCDC) or Strategic Policy Committees (SPC). Comhairle na nÓg should also be involved in the development of the **Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)**. See p. 10 for details.

There are a number of other key agencies involved in organising Comhairle na nÓg around the country, most notably **Youth Services** organisations and the **Education and Training Boards** (represented by their Youth Officer). However, the precise role of these agencies depends on what model is used to deliver Comhairle na nÓg in each local authority area. Though the local authority has ultimate responsibility for Comhairle na nÓg, some Comhairlí na nÓg are organised internally, while others are organised externally with a youth service contracted by the local authority to deliver the programme. Delivery by many Comhairlí na nÓg is organised in a 'partnership' between the local youth service and the local authority. In some instances, an external part-time worker has been employed by either the youth service or the local authority to drive the work of the Comhairle na nÓg.

The process to arrive at the best delivery partners and mechanisms at local level is an organic one and is often contingent on specific local factors. Sometimes there is a natural fit of 'delivery partners', while in other locations it takes longer to establish what works best. It would seem that there is additional merit in the 'partnership approach' to delivering Comhairle na nÓg. The youth service brings the experience of youth work, working directly with young people and sometimes knowledge of other youth participation structures. The local authority often provides the venue which is important for the development of links to the decision-making bodies in the area, not least the City/County Council itself. Importantly, the local authority retains the expertise of working directly with young people, which enables them to better include young people in all other aspects of their work, while the youth service makes important links with local decision-makers. Partnerships are also often developed with the local Education and Training Board (ETB) Youth Officer.

Importance of keeping current records

The structure and 'Who's who' of Comhairle na nÓg can vary considerably from Comhairle to Comhairle. It is essential that each Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator documents the particulars in their area in the event that another member of staff has to take over at short notice. This document should include:

- the agencies involved in the delivery of Comhairle na nÓg and contact details for them;
- the key personnel involved in the delivery of Comhairle na nÓg and contact details for them;
- a list of the members of the Steering Committee and contact details for them;
- the structure and service agreement outlining the partnership/delivery mechanism for Comhairle na nÓg;
- any other key information particular to that area.

Chapter 3

Comhairle na nÓg Work Programme



Overview of work programme

The work programme of Comhairle na nÓg centres on two core mechanisms that enable Comhairle na nÓg members to have a voice on the services, policies and issues that affect them in the local area in which they live, namely:

✎ **WORKING ON TOPICS OF IMPORTANCE TO YOUNG PEOPLE:** Identifying what is important to young people and working on that to achieve a targeted outcome or impact is the first way that young people can have a voice through Comhairle na nÓg. It is central to the core programme of Comhairle na nÓg that young people are facilitated to select and work on their own topic(s) or things of importance to pursue and progress.

The process starts with the selection of topics for discussion at the Comhairle na nÓg AGM, which is held in September/October. Examples of the topics selected by young people in Comhairlí to date include mental health awareness and services for young people, facilities for young people, how young people are treated by the adult world and homophobic bullying. These topics are then discussed and perhaps prioritised at the AGM, before a smaller committee of young people is (s)lected to pursue these topics and particular outcomes throughout the year. The Comhairle na nÓg Committee may spend some further time prioritising the topics before deciding on the precise change or outcome that they aspire to on each topic, or even one topic, and then develop a work or action plan to help them achieve that target. Committee members usually have a lot of preparation work to do on the topic before bringing it to a stage where they can present their findings or proposed changes and desired outcome to relevant decision-makers, who may be able to help them achieve their targeted outcome. This work includes getting the views of other young people, doing background research, meeting with local decision-makers, developing surveys, organising meetings, making videos, producing leaflets or posters, developing online materials and other activities.

The work culminates in the Comhairle na nÓg members seeking to make an impact or change to improve the lives of young people.

The committee often charts and presents its progress to the wider cohort of young people who were at the AGM on the Comhairle's website, using promotional materials such as e-newsletters, or in the local media. The committee should also have a chance to present its progress on the topics at the following year's AGM. This process helps the AGM attendees and Comhairle na nÓg Committee members decide whether they wish to pursue that particular topic for their second term of office or whether they will choose a new topic or topics. In some instances, Comhairlí choose to divide their time between completing a topic from the previous year and also commencing work on a new topic.

✎ **ACTING AS A CONSULTATIVE FORUM FOR ADULT DECISION-MAKERS IN THE LOCALITY:** It is also central to the core programme of Comhairle na nÓg that they can act as a consultative forum for adult decision-makers in the locality. This can include participation in consultations where Comhairle na nÓg members are asked for their opinion, input and feedback on new and existing services, policies and decisions that affect young people. The input may be on the process itself; for

example, helping to design or giving feedback on a youth-friendly questionnaire to be distributed in schools on 'facilities in the area'. The input can also be on the actual content of the policy or the service itself; for example, a local Sports Partnership may consult with the Comhairle na nÓg to get members' opinions on the location or type of new sports facility to be established in the area. Comhairlí na nÓg are also often asked for (or volunteer) formal submissions on local policies or to take part in public consultation processes.

Acting as a consultative forum also means that representatives from Comhairlí na nÓg often sit on adult committees where they input the views of young people on such committees and also report information and decisions back to the wider Comhairle na nÓg group. In addition, Comhairle na nÓg may join the Public Participation Network (PPN) in each local authority area or be involved in the development of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

Comhairlí na nÓg members are also often asked to participate in a diversity of other local initiatives, e.g. local festival committees or anti-litter drives. They also link in with elected officials to seek their support for a particular topic or the general work of the Comhairle.

The Comhairle na nÓg lifecycle

The Comhairle na nÓg cycle has both a local and a national cycle.

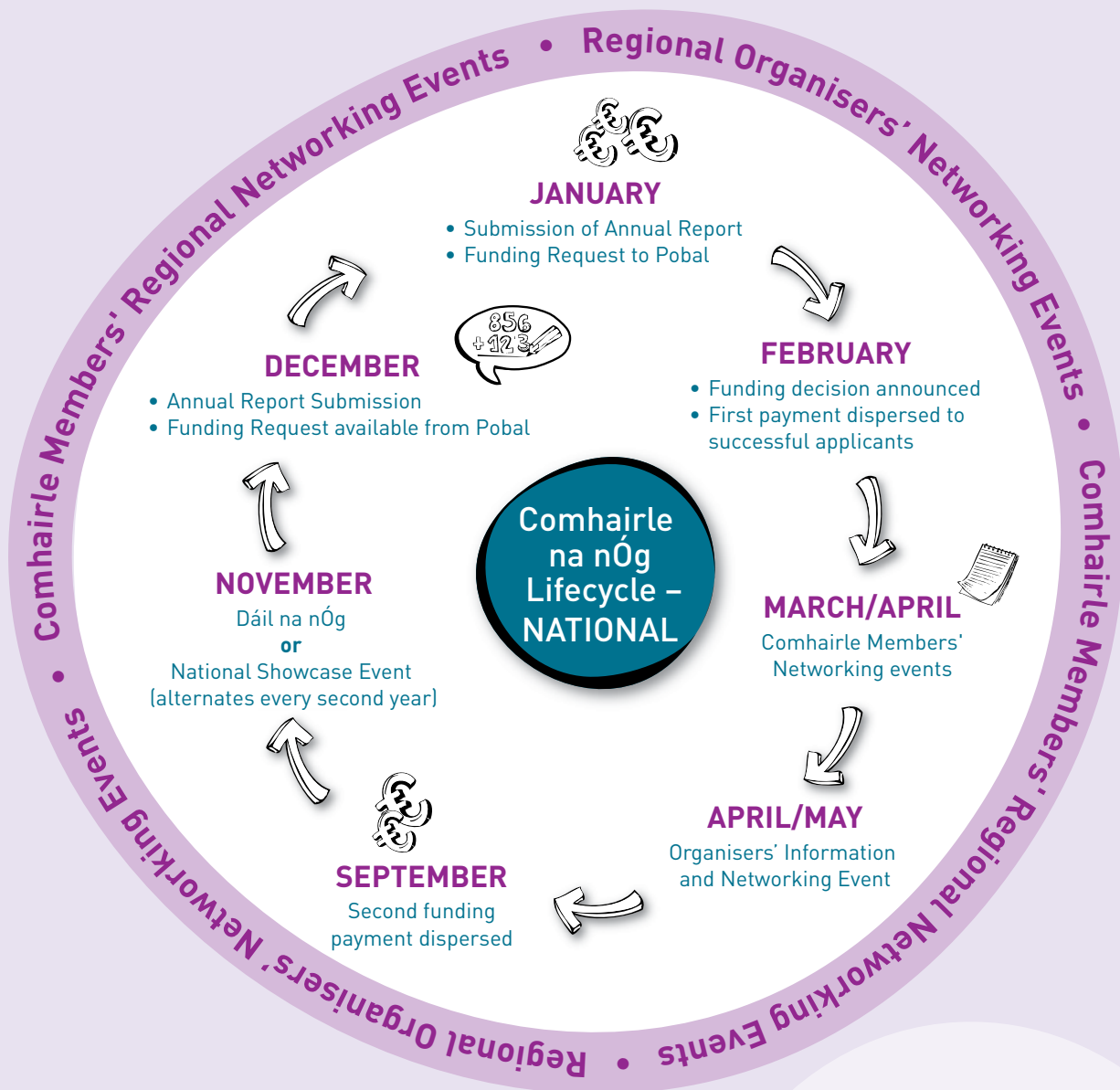
Local Cycle

The local cycle outlines all of the key stages necessary to select and make the necessary progress on a topic to achieve a desired outcome, impact or change.



National Cycle

The national cycle outlines the stages of the funding process as well as national events that take place for both Comhairle na nÓg members and adults.



Work Programme








Working on topics that are important to young people

The key stages in ‘Working on topics that are important to young people’ are outlined in Table 1 below. **Steps that are crucial to help progress the topics that are important to young people are highlighted in PINK.**




Table 1: Key stages in ‘Working on topics that are important to young people’.

Time of year	Key stages in the lifecycle and steps to progress the topics that are important to young people
September/ October	<p>SELECTION OF TOPICS (OR THINGS) THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOUNG PEOPLE</p> <p>The first stage in the process is for young people to decide what topic they would like to work on. This is the main opportunity for young people to identify, prioritise and pursue issues of importance to them. In light of this, it is important that it is <i>young people themselves</i> and not adults that select the topics to be pursued. Each topic should be something that is important to young people, but also something that is realistic to work on and achieve an outcome on. There is no point in choosing something outlandish, such as ‘changing the system of national government’ if there is little likelihood of young people achieving this.</p> <p>The topic to be worked on throughout the year needs to be selected by young people. Considerations in how to select the topic for discussion are outlined in detail on p. 125 of the toolkit’s section called <i>Running an effective Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meeting</i>.</p>
September/ October	<p>COMHAIRLE NA NÓG AGM</p> <p>The Comhairle na nÓg AGM, held in September or October, is where the Comhairle na nÓg Committee is (s)elected and where the topics to be pursued are identified, discussed and sometimes prioritised.</p> <p>The Comhairle na nÓg AGM takes place on one day and should be attended by a wide group of young people, invited from schools, youth organisations and organisations that work with and/or represent young people, including seldom-heard young people.</p> <p>The process to identify topics for discussion at the AGM varies from Comhairle to Comhairle and is outlined on p. 125 of the section called <i>Running an effective Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meeting</i>. The most popular topics are then discussed at the AGM with a view to determining key recommendations on what outcome, impact or change should be sought by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee throughout the year.</p> <p>The Comhairle na nÓg Committee is a smaller group of young people, usually (s)elected at the Comhairle na nÓg AGM, who meet on an ongoing basis to pursue and work on the topics, recommendations, outcomes and impacts as determined by the young people at the AGM.</p>
November/ December	<p>PRIORITISING THE TOPICS</p> <p>There are many topics that are important to young people. The process to identify topics of importance usually yields a varied host of ideas. Unfortunately, it is not possible to pursue all of these topics or ideas. It is really important not only to prioritise or rank the topics of importance that young people want to work on, but also to narrow down the focus of these topics.</p>

(continued)

Time of year	Key stages in the lifecycle and steps to progress the topics that are important to young people
November/ December	<p>It needs to be decided how many topics and recommendations can realistically be pursued by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee. This usually depends on the structure and size of the committee and the size of the task being suggested. In cases where there are geographical subgroups it works better to take on a bigger topic or two to three smaller topics which can be divided up among the subgroups. If there is just one group that meets together, it is recommended to work on one topic as it is more achievable. If the group happens to complete their work on the first priority topic, they can always work on the second priority topic from the AGM list. The Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator or a Comhairle na nÓg Committee member should briefly outline to the AGM delegates how many topics or recommendations are realistically possible to pursue in one year or two years. Emphasis should also be put on what are realistically achievable outcomes. Ask the delegates to bear the following questions in mind while they are voting on the top topics and recommendations they would like to pursue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  What topics are really important to them locally?  Realistically, what are the most achievable outcomes? <p>There are a number of mechanisms to prioritise and rank the topics and narrow down the focus of any one topic. Again, some Comhairlí na nÓg choose to do this at the AGM, while others do it afterwards with the Comhairle na nÓg Committee. It is recommended by those close to the Comhairle na nÓg process for the last number of years that the AGM delegates prioritise the topics and recommendations in as much detail as possible <i>at the AGM</i>, so the mandate for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee is very clear and agreed by all.</p>
	<p>A separate section in this toolkit, <i>Running an effective Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meeting</i>, outlines the profile and selection of young people for an AGM, the preparation for an AGM, the selection and prioritisation of topics at an AGM and the practical tools for use at an AGM.</p>
November/ December	<p>DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN ON KEY TOPIC(S)</p> <p>Once the topic(s) of importance has been identified, the real work of progressing it begins. To assist this process, it is best practice to devise a work plan or an action plan with the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members that enables them to see the key areas of work and who is responsible for each. The precise goals in terms of outcomes, impact and desired change should also be outlined. The key areas of work are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  research and/or consultation, and analysis of gathered information;  contacting and engaging with key stakeholders and decision-makers relevant to the topic;  taking the advice of these stakeholders/decision-makers on board and conducting further work, as advised and appropriate;  influencing and lobbying the key stakeholders for the desired outcome, impact and change;  informing a wider group of young people, including those who attended the AGM, about progress. <p>A number of useful tools can be used to develop an action plan and these are described in Appendix 3.</p>

(continued)

Time of year	Key stages in the lifecycle and steps to progress the topics that are important to young people
November	<p>DÁIL NA NÓG</p> <p>The Comhairle na nÓg Participation Team will ensure that adequate information on Dáil na nÓg is provided to all delegates in advance of the event.</p>
November–August	<p>PROGRESSING TOPIC AND IMPLEMENTING ACTION PLAN</p> <p>Now that the topic has been selected by young people, discussed at the AGM, narrowed down either at the AGM or by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee, work to start progressing the topic can commence. To progress the topic, the key areas outlined in the action plan need to be implemented. The bulk of the work to implement the action plan takes place between January and May. (Realistically, it can take from September to December to stage the AGM, work with the delegates who are attending Dáil na nÓg and put an action plan in place.) There are therefore about six months to implement the action plan before the summer break in June.</p> <p>Implementing the action plan involves going through the key stages of the plan step by step, as follows:</p> <p>○ STEP 1: RESEARCH AND/OR CONSULTATION</p> <p>Gathering information through conducting research and/or consultations is the first necessary step. This allows the young people to be knowledgeable about the topic and to learn about it from different perspectives and angles. It also enables them to make informed decisions about the direction in which they would like to take the topic.</p> <p>The research and/or consultation might take the form of any or some of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Gathering information from print or online sources. Ask young people to look up information online or use the local library where there is no or limited access to the Internet. It is also useful to visit any agencies relevant to the topic, e.g. the HSE or local health office if it is a health topic or the Garda Station if it is a safety topic. As much information from as many sources as possible should be gathered to give an overview of the topic.  Conducting a survey of a wider group of young people. This is a great way to get input on the topic from larger numbers of young people. However, the process involves the design of a questionnaire, as well as the dissemination, collection and analysis of information, all of which can take several weeks to complete so enough time should be allocated to this stage. It works well if one group of young people takes responsibility for making up the questions for the questionnaire, while another takes responsibility for getting the questionnaire into schools, youth organisations and any other facilities used by young people. The Comhairle na nÓg Committee is likely to need adult help in analysing the information and translating it into some kind of report or presentation format. A sample survey is provided in Appendix 4.  Holding a seminar or Information Day. This is another way of getting input from a wider group of young people and can be especially useful if the AGM delegates did not have an opportunity to give significant detail on the topic. The seminar or Information Day can be used to have further discussion on the topic and the precise outcomes that young people would

(continued)








Time of year	Key stages in the lifecycle and steps to progress the topics that are important to young people
	<p>like to achieve. Alternatively, or in addition, part of the day can be dedicated to an information session, where experts and relevant local stakeholders are invited to make presentations to the young people/committee members on the topic to help them make decisions on what they want and what is realistically achievable.</p> <p>➔ Recruiting others to help with the work. There may be some aspects of the work that the young people will not be able to do on their own, e.g. the analysis of the survey or the professional design of a poster. There might be other young people who can help or an adult member of the Comhairle na nÓg organising team or Steering Committee may be able to assist. Get the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members to ask these people for their help.</p> <p>➔ Designing/working with graphic designers on tools such as posters or websites to help promote or advertise the topic. It works well when a professional designer works directly with the young people on their poster or website. This way, the young people can give their input on the overall look and feel, the font, colours and images used, as well as the content. Young people can therefore contribute meaningfully to the design without having the professional skills to execute it.</p> <p>➔ Going to conferences or meetings of relevance. If there are any conferences on topics that are related to the topic being worked on, it is useful if Comhairle na nÓg members attend (where possible and relevant), even if this is only to pick up any printed information being given out. Alternatively, the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator might attend and bring the information back to the group.</p> <p>➔ Identifying the key stakeholders who can have influence in the area. The group should draw up a list of all the people or groups in the area that are connected to the topic being worked on. Young people will most likely need help from the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator for this part of the process.</p> <p>➔ Founding a working group in the area. If there is limited information available on the topic being worked on, it might be helpful to establish a working group of all the people and groups in the area that work on the topic. The Comhairle na nÓg members can outline their topic and desired outcome to this group and seek help on achieving their outcome.</p> <p>➔ Contacting national bodies with expertise in the area for factual information (e.g. the HSE, relevant government departments, NGOs).</p> <p>All of the information gathered in the research and/or consultation phase then needs to be analysed and collated to form a particular position or the basis for seeking a particular outcome, impact or change.</p> <p>○ STEP 2: ENGAGING WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS</p> <p>It is likely that the Comhairle na nÓg members will not be able to achieve their desired outcome or impact on their own. To this end, it will be important that they bring their initial ideas and plans to key stakeholders relevant to the topic for advice and support on how best to go about achieving the desired outcome. These key stakeholders may include the Steering Committee members, who can also help to make introductions to additional stakeholders. These stakeholders should be asked for their advice and direction on how best to achieve the desired outcome. Meeting key stakeholders at an early stage engages them in the process from the outset and ensures they have a personal investment in achieving a positive outcome for Comhairle na nÓg. These meetings can be informal or formal, as appropriate.</p>

(continued)

Time of year **Key stages in the lifecycle and steps to progress the topics that are important to young people**
















○ STEP 3: CARRYING OUT RELEVANT ACTIONS

Depending on the advice of key stakeholders, as well as the outcomes of any research, consultations and analysis of any surveys conducted, further work and development of the topic is usually required. This might constitute further research and/or consultation, but often includes preparing and collating the information already gathered for presentation to key local decision-makers. Young people should be extremely familiar with the topic they have been working on, the process to arrive at their conclusions and the desired outcome or impact being sought. They should also be very clear on what they are asking the key decision-makers to do and be confident in doing this. To this end, significant time may need to be spent on preparing presentations that document some or all of the following information:









-  information on Comhairle na nÓg;
-  the topic being worked on;
-  the process to arrive at selecting the topic;
-  the work that has been completed to date;
-  any conclusions or outcomes to date;
-  a clear statement on the desired outcome and impact;
-  a clear statement on what is needed from the particular decision-maker being presented to.

It is important that young people are given the opportunity to make the presentations to key stakeholders, wherever appropriate. To this end, they will need training on presentation skills and sufficient time should be earmarked for practising giving the presentations. Some tips on giving presentations are outlined below.

Tips on giving presentations

-  Make sure you know about what you are presenting. Do your research or read back over the research that your Comhairle na nÓg has completed;
-  Write out the main points and arrange them how you like them – some people like to write one or two key words to help them remember the main points;
-  Think about questions people might ask. How would you answer?
-  What do you want to get out of giving the presentation? Are you informing the audience about something? Do you need to explain some facts to the audience first?
-  Use props, like charts and drawings, to demonstrate things. Think about what you would enjoy yourself;
-  Being inspirational involves encouraging others to do something. But you don't have to be Obama!
-  Practise your speech with a timer. If the speech is too long, cut it down until you can deliver it in the time allotted to you;
-  Practise in front of a mirror so you can see what you look like. Don't do things like jingle coins in your pocket;
-  Be yourself;
-  Practise as much as you need to!
-  On the day before the speech, make sure you get enough sleep;
-  On the day of the speech, eat properly;
-  Speak out and speak up;
-  Look at people in the audience – make eye contact;
-  Smile when you are talking.

(continued)

Time of year	Key stages in the lifecycle and steps to progress the topics that are important to young people
	<p>○ STEP 4: INFLUENCING KEY DECISION-MAKERS TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES AND IMPACT</p> <p>Once the young people are fully prepared with their information, presentations and how to state what input they are seeking to achieve their desired outcome, they can set about influencing and lobbying key decision-makers in a bid to achieve that outcome. It is best practice to facilitate the Comhairle na nÓg members to make presentations to key decision-makers, where at all feasible. A number of mechanisms can be used to influence and lobby key decision-makers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Making presentations to key decision-makers relevant to the topic If the young people are working on a topic where there is an identifiable decision-maker in the local area, they should seek to make a presentation directly to that person or agency. The presentation, delivered by young people, should include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – details on the topic being pursued; – details on the process that has been followed to identify and prioritise the topic, gather information pertaining to the topic and the reasons for the need for desired change; – the precise outcome and impact desired by Comhairle na nÓg and how the decision-maker can help them.  Presenting to/discussions with the Steering Committee As the Steering Committee members are involved from the outset, they are very likely to engage with Comhairle na nÓg members and help them progress their chosen topic. In addition to presenting to the Steering Committee as a group, it is useful to help the Comhairle na nÓg members to identify any members of the Steering Committee who have particular influence in the topic being pursued. The presentation should follow a similar line to that outlined above, emphasising how the Steering Committee members can best help them achieve their outcome.  Presenting to local authorities The local authority is comprised of key structures and decision-makers and is a useful body to make presentations to on the topic. Some Comhairlí na nÓg present to the local authority once a quarter, so it is a good idea to keep them informed about the topic on an ongoing basis and then present the final findings and desired outcomes to the group. Alternatively, a formal submission to a local authority strategy plan, policy or other local plan may also be relevant, depending on the topic.  Hosting an event for key decision-makers Some Comhairlí na nÓg have hosted specific events, inviting all of the decision-makers relevant to their topic to a formal event. The Comhairle na nÓg members then make a presentation, as outlined above, to the decision-makers as a group. This presentation can be followed by a questions and answers session or more usefully by facilitated group sessions where the decision-makers are asked to commit to particular actions that will help bring the desired outcome or impact to fruition. <p>○ STEP 5: INFORMING THE WIDER GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE</p> <p>It is important to keep a wider group of young people, particularly those who attended the AGM, informed about the process. This can be done via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  the Comhairle na nÓg website;  e-newsletters;  articles in the local media;  articles in school and youth organisation newsletters or magazines. <p>A brief presentation on the process, progress and outcomes should also be made at the following year's AGM. This will help the AGM attendees and Comhairle na nÓg Committee members decide whether they wish to pursue that particular topic or whether they will choose a new topic, or topics, for their second term of office.</p>

Case Studies of how to progress a topic from beginning to end

There are numerous examples of Comhairlí na nÓg that have had great success in progressing topics that are important to young people using the steps already outlined.

CASE STUDY (National Executive)

How the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive progressed their selected topic of 'Mental Health':

1. Selection of topic (at AGM)

The theme for a recent Dáil na nÓg was 'Mental Health', voted as the topic of most importance to young Comhairle members all over the country. The delegates spent the day discussing all aspects of mental health including topics such as Leaving Cert reform, exam pressure, bullying, cyberbullying, peer pressure, sex education, abuse of drugs and alcohol and other issues. At the end of the workshop session, a number of recommendations were put forward and voted on. The most popular recommendation was to host 'a national gathering for second-level students, with music and events, to improve attitudes towards mental health'.




2. Comhairle na nÓg National Executive

The recommendation was then brought to the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and formed the basis of their work plan for their two-year term.




3. Develop an action plan

The group then came up with some key action points to progress their recommendation.

General action plan

-  To launch a positive mental health campaign: 'Let's Go Mental: do something for your mental health today' involving music, sport, the arts and other fun activities, developed by teenagers for teenagers;
-  To ensure the focus of the campaign was a positive one by basing the campaign on Headstrong's 'Five-a-Day for your Mental Health';
-  To engage the support and guidance of a steering committee of experts from a number of relevant mental health organisations such as Headstrong and ReachOut.com, HSE and National Office for Suicide Prevention.

The specific plan included:

-  Coming up with a title and strapline for the campaign that would portray a positive, fun and memorable message around mental health;
-  Hosting a national launch of Let's Go Mental, followed by a series of 31 regional events, one to take place in each local authority area. Campaign to be officially launched by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. TDs and Senators to get involved on the day by getting on board the Let's Go Mental bus;
-  Coming up with a template of ideas to make the 'Five-a-Day' a reality at the regional events, and to provide coordinators with a menu of options to choose from under each of the five. This ensured that each event conveyed a consistent message nationally;

continued

- Sourcing three well-known event ambassadors to endorse the campaign nationally and to represent the different Five-a-Day concepts: Annalise Murphy as sports ambassador; Brian Gleeson as arts ambassador; and Hamsandwich as music ambassadors;
- Launching an online campaign 'Let's Go Mental' on Facebook and Twitter with the endorsement of the three ambassadors – #LetsGoMental2015;
- Commissioning a video production company to produce a series of videos to promote the campaign online and at the regional events: a launch video and three videos featuring the ambassadors promoting the importance of the Five-a-Day for your Mental Health.

4. Meeting with key stakeholders

Since 2013, it has become a requirement that each Comhairle na nÓg National Executive present on their work progress and topic to members of the Oireachtas. This presentation is called Your Comhairle Needs You and the aim is to create a greater understanding of the workings of Comhairle na nÓg nationally, and to strengthen links between Comhairle and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Five link TDs and Senators were also put in place, one from each of the main political parties and one independent representative. It is their role to support the National Executive in more effectively linking their work to and promoting it within the Dáil and the Seanad. Presentations on Let's Go Mental were made to:

- the Ceann Comhairle and the group of five Link TDs and Senators;
- both houses of the Oireachtas in the AV Room, Leinster House.

The Your Comhairle Needs You event was a really big success with 78 TDs and senators in attendance.

5. Outcomes

- 4,600 young people from all over the country attended 30 Let's Go Mental events;
- Over 2,600 followers on the Facebook page;
- The Let's Go Mental launch featured on *Six One News* and the campaign was given a prime-time slot on *Two Tube* on RTÉ2;
- Media coverage both nationally and locally;
- The campaign raised awareness of the importance of a positive approach to mental health and 'doing something for your mental health today': the small things we can all do which make a difference to how we feel.

CASE STUDY (Dublin City Comhairle na nÓg)

1. Selecting the topic

Through a designated section on the registration form for the AGM, Dublin City Comhairle na nÓg asks each participant what they would like the discussion topics to be on the day of the AGM. One year, the three most popular topics identified for discussion were 'Youth Services', 'Litter' and 'Cyberbullying'.

2. Prioritising the topic

Workshops on all three topics were facilitated at the AGM before all 200 young people voted to pursue 'Youth Services' as their preferred topic to make progress on throughout the year. As this is a very broad topic, it fell to the Comhairle Committee to narrow down the focus of the topic which they did through facilitated workshops and subgroups and through a forum with an expert panel comprising key decision-makers from Youth Services and the DCYA. This combined process helped the young people to narrow down the focus to the need for a:

- ✍️ designated Youth Café in Dublin City;
- ✍️ Jigsaw Service for young people in Dublin City centre.

3. Developing an action plan on the topic

Supported by the Comhairle Coordinator, the Comhairle na nÓg Committee developed an action plan with two key objectives:

- ✍️ Link with the Dublin City Council Recreation Centres to establish a designated Youth Café in Dublin City;
- ✍️ Link with Headstrong, the HSE and Dublin City Council to promote the need for a Jigsaw Service in the Dublin City area.

The key actions and areas of work identified were:

Youth Café

- ✍️ Work closely with the manager of the 13 Recreation Centres in Dublin City Council;
- ✍️ Identify the best place to open a Youth Café in the Dublin City area by visiting all recreation centres and rating the options;
- ✍️ Compile findings into a report to present to the Recreation Centres.

Jigsaw Service

- ✍️ Visit current Jigsaw Services with the Youth Engagement Officers to learn more about it and see if they still felt it would be useful in the urban setting of Dublin City;
- ✍️ Research how a Jigsaw Service gets developed;
- ✍️ Engage with the key stakeholders to stress the importance of a Jigsaw Service for young people in Dublin City.

4. How to progress a topic – implementing the action plan

STEP 1: RESEARCH/CONSULTATION

Youth Café: The Comhairle na nÓg members identified that there was no dedicated Youth Café in the Dublin City area. They also noted that youth services feel they are in competition with the commercial cafés in the city. The Comhairle members felt that there was still a case to be made that young people in Dublin City should have access to a Youth Café in the City Centre. Through their visits to the Recreation Centres, they were able to identify the most suitable location for a Youth Café. They compiled their research into a report which was then presented to the Recreation Centres' manager.

continued

Jigsaw Service: The Comhairle na nÓg members identified that there was no Jigsaw Service available to young people in the city centre despite the high population of young people in Dublin City. The nearest services were in Dublin 15, Tallaght or Balbriggan. They identified mental health as a very important issue for young people and have worked on this area before, linking with Headstrong, who are a member of the Dublin City Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee. They felt that it was important for young people who are based in the city centre to have easy access to a Jigsaw Service. They linked with the Youth Engagement Officer in Headstrong to visit all the Jigsaw sites in the wider Dublin area to establish whether or not it could be replicated for Dublin City.

STEP 2: MEETING WITH AND INFLUENCING KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Youth Service

- Members identified a list of people who they should invite to be on their panel of experts;
- Met with and listened to the advice of the panel of experts which helped them to narrow the focus of their topic;
- Linked with representatives from youth services on their Steering Committee to seek their advice about how to best progress the topic;
- Met and worked closely with the manager of the Dublin City Recreation Centres.

Jigsaw

- The Comhairle Committee met with the CEO of Headstrong to seek his views on the viability of having a Jigsaw Service in Dublin City. They quickly learned that the decision to open and run a Jigsaw Service must be a joint commitment from the HSE, the local authority and Headstrong and that Headstrong's commitment alone was not enough as funding comes from the other agencies;
- Comhairle na nÓg invited the CEO of Headstrong, the youth engagement officer in Headstrong and the Assistant CEO of Dublin City Council to meet to progress discussions around establishing a Jigsaw Service for Dublin City;
- During the year there were a number of meetings between the HSE, Dublin City Council and Headstrong.

5. Outcomes

- The young people identified Bluebell Recreation Centre as the best place to host a dedicated **Youth Café** for young people in Dublin City;
- **Funding** was secured through Dublin City Council to implement the youth café in Bluebell Recreation Centre and secure a worker to progress the project;
- A commitment was made between the HSE, Dublin City Council and Headstrong in 2015 to open a Jigsaw in the city centre;
- A Jigsaw **manager** has been hired to progress the project;
- A **premises** for the new Jigsaw Service has been found;
- Two members of the Comhairle na nÓg will sit on the **board** to set up the Jigsaw;
- Some Comhairle na nÓg members to be part of the **Youth Advisory Panel (YAP)** for the Jigsaw Service;
- Dublin City Comhairle na nÓg members were identified as a **key stakeholder** for the needs and resource assessment for a Dublin City Jigsaw.

CASE STUDY (Galway County Comhairle na nÓg)

1. Selecting the topic

From the topics identified as important at the Galway County Comhairle na nÓg AGM, the Comhairle Committee prioritised the area of 'education'.

2. Prioritising the topic

Following a series of workshop discussions, it was initially agreed to narrow the focus to addressing the highly pressurised system of education, particularly the Leaving Certificate/Points System. The Comhairle members soon realised that while changing the Leaving Certificate process was their ultimate goal, this was something that would need to be tackled at national level. The revised goal was to research and produce a practical guide to study or revision.

3. Developing an action plan on the topic

The Comhairle members devised a plan to realise their goal through research and consultation with both young people and academic experts in the area.

PROGRESSING TOPIC AND IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION PLAN

RESEARCH/CONSULTATION

This phase included:

- conducting workshops with young people at local area events to establish what skills and qualities enabled young people to study effectively;
- linking with staff and PhD students from NUI Galway to benefit from the fruits of their research in this area;
- the research and consultation with both young people at the local area events and meetings with NUI Galway staff and students informed the nature of the study booklet. After much exploration about how young people learn differently, study styles and the importance of physical activity, the committee decided to produce a short targeted booklet.

4. Outcomes

- A booklet was produced and edited by Comhairle members;
- (Then) Minister for Education, Jan O'Sullivan, launched the booklet in Galway County Council chambers to a packed audience of young people, Councillors and other interested parties;
- Copies of the booklet were then distributed to schools around the county;
- It was translated and distributed to Irish language schools.

CASE STUDY (Cork County Comhairle na nÓg)

1. Selecting the topic

All AGM delegates were asked to identify issues that they would like the newly selected Comhairle na nÓg Committee to progress for the coming year. All issues identified were recorded and grouped geographically. The consultation results were then published.

2. Prioritising the topic

Time was allocated for new council members to begin the process of prioritising issues in order of importance to them during their first and second monthly meetings as they organised team-building activities and elected officers. A dedicated day-long meeting was held to finalise prioritising of the topic. The selection process included time to explore the eight main topics identified which were then progressed to eight project ideas. Each group presented their findings and the decision to select two main topics was reached by ballot. The two main topics agreed were:

- ✍ High costs of local transport;
- ✍ Colour Cork County community events.

3. Developing an action plan to work on the topic (Transport issue)

- ✍ **Main campaign ask:** Affordable student transport fare for under 18s through the use of an identification/student card. The identification card will be in credit card format and will include a profile picture, date of birth and an expiry date. The group worked closely with Jerry Buttimer, Cork-based TD and link person for Comhairle na nÓg;
- ✍ Linked directly to key stakeholders identified, e.g. Leo Varadkar TD, (then) Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, and TDs from Cork County;
- ✍ Members presented action plan to members of Cork County Council Development Committee;
- ✍ Members used monthly meetings to agree tasks and Google applications, e.g. Google+/Documents/Hangouts to collaborate and progress work between meetings.

4. Implementing the action plan

- ✍ Members presented the action plan to members of Cork County Council Development Committee;
- ✍ Letters were sent to the following key stakeholders: local TDs, transport spokespeople in political parties, political party leaders, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport and the National Transport Authority;
- ✍ Each member agreed to collect 100 signatures for the petition: 'Not treated like an adult, so why pay as one?';
- ✍ Events targeted for petition signatures included Cork Summer Show and a number of street-based activities in towns throughout Cork County;
- ✍ Social media support for cause was generated by creating a dedicated Facebook page and online petition;
- ✍ Media: two radio interviews were conducted.

continued

5. Meeting with key stakeholders

Meetings held with:

- ↳ local TDs;
- ↳ transport spokespeople in political parties;
- ↳ political party leaders;
- ↳ Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport;
- ↳ Minister for Children and Youth Affairs;
- ↳ An Taoiseach.

6. Outcomes

(Then) Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar TD, announced a child fare extension to the Leap Card. The Leap Card discounts included:

- ↳ Cheaper public transport for 16–18 year olds;
- ↳ Simplified fare structure for children and teens – Child Leap Card Fares to apply from ages 4–18;
- ↳ Free public transport for children up to the age of 4;
- ↳ Simplified package of fares for schoolchildren and teens using public transport for the new school year;
- ↳ A photocall with Minister Varadkar and County Cork Comhairle na nÓg celebrating the announcement of new Leap fares for 16–18 year olds was conducted. The Minister also committed to identifying an interim measure as young people awaited the rollout of Leap Card in their local areas. (Then) Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Charlie Flanagan TD, expressed his interest in establishing a new ID solution for young people. Representatives then met with An Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD.

KEY ADVICE

BEFORE THE AGM

- ↳ Decide on a date for the AGM and inform key agencies of this at the earliest opportunity;
- ↳ It is essential that young people are central to the process of selecting the topics to be discussed and pursued;
- ↳ Include the AGM delegates in the prioritisation of the topics, wherever possible.

KEY ADVICE**AFTER THE AGM**

- Get as much clarity as possible on the mandate for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee at the AGM;
- Decide how many topics or what size of topic is realistic to work on;
- Narrow down the topics and develop a work or action plan as quickly as possible;
- Ask the young people to take what is realistically achievable into account when prioritising the topic;
- Devise an action plan with the Comhairle na nÓg Committee so that there is a plan with a clear objective, measurable actions and a timetable outlining who is responsible for what;
- Progressing a topic takes a lot of time – be realistic in your aims;
- Involve key local decision-makers in the process whenever appropriate so that they have a personal investment in the success of the project;
- Ensure young people make the presentations to the decision-makers, wherever possible and appropriate.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK

- Taking videos/documentaries to make a point or highlight an issue is a good way to reach other young people (be aware of getting consent from young people featured in videos);
- Make sure the topic suits your area. Work on local issues;
- Ensure the actions taken actually benefit young people;
- Focus on one or two aspects of your topic – not lots of different aspects;
- Stick to the agenda to ensure work is progressed (at your Comhairle meetings);
- Have online meetings in between main meetings (this could be using a Facebook group page, Google Hangouts, etc.) as a way to keep people up to date with what actions they said they would do in between meetings;
- Tasks need to be divided up and followed up on. Don't leave all the work to one subgroup (i.e. share the work evenly);
- Have smaller subgroups rather than large groups that have too many people (10–12 people max.);
- Coordinators should provide support to help link in with the right decision-makers to progress topic;
- Get a guest speaker (who knows a lot about the topic) to attend a Comhairle meeting to give more information about the topic.

Comhairle na nÓg as a consultative forum

Comhairle na nÓg also acts as a key consultative forum for young people. This is a really important way for young people to have an influence and impact on important matters in the local area. There are a number of mechanisms or formats for how Comhairle na nÓg can act as a consultative forum, including:

Participating in consultations

Comhairle na nÓg members are often asked by local decision-makers for their opinion, input and feedback on new and existing services, policies and decisions that affect young people. The input may be on the process itself; for example, helping to design or giving feedback on a youth-friendly questionnaire to be distributed in schools on 'facilities in the area'. The input can also be on the actual content of the policy or the service itself; for example, a local Sports Partnership may consult with the Comhairle na nÓg to get members' opinions on the location or type of new sports facility to be established in the area.

CASE STUDY

Dublin City Comhairle na nÓg has been involved in multiple consultations with significant impact and outcomes, including:

-  **Dublin City Council Parnell Square Cultural Quarter:** Comhairle members have been involved in consultations for the development of a new civic plaza which will include the development of the new Dublin City Library. Contributions from Comhairle members were given to the design team responsible for the Parnell Square Cultural Quarter and included in the draft plan for the new space;
-  **Smarter Cities Challenge:** Comhairle members were consulted as part of the IBM Smarter Cities Challenge which examined how Dublin City can harness, produce and use solar power;
-  **Pivot Dublin:** The City Architect presented a new project to promote design. Comhairle members helped to pitch a specially commissioned and educational animated film on design to young people. They also helped the architects department implement a school programme around design;
-  **Net Children Go Mobile:** Members participated in focus groups for the Net Children Go Mobile study which is supported by the European Commission's Safer Internet Programme. The outcomes of the focus groups will directly contribute to education and awareness raising within Ireland's *Action Plan on Bullying*. The information gathered will be the base for advancing young people's use of information and communications technology (ICT).

Making Submissions

Comhairlí na nÓg are also often asked for (or volunteer) **formal submissions** on local policies or to take part in public consultation processes.

CASE STUDY

Dublin City Comhairle na nÓg members made a submission to the *Dublin City Development Plan 2016–2022*. Having made their submission, they were asked to create a short DVD explaining the development plan and inviting young people across the city to make further submissions. Young people were also facilitated to make further submissions at the AGM. A special subgroup of the Dublin City Development Planning group has now been formed to facilitate the continued engagement of Comhairle na nÓg at each stage of the plan and they are also being consulted with on each of the area plans.

Sitting on adult committees/decision-making bodies

Acting as a consultative forum also means that representatives from Comhairlí na nÓg often **sit on adult committees** where they input the views of young people on such committees and also report information and decisions back to the wider Comhairle na nÓg group. In addition, Comhairle na nÓg may **join the Public Participation Network (PPN)** in each local authority area or be involved in the **development of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)**.

Having young people represented on decision-making bodies is a very direct link between Comhairle na nÓg and decision-makers. Just under half of Comhairlí na nÓg have young people represented on structures such as:

- ✍ ETB Youth Work Subcommittee;
- ✍ Headstrong National Advisory;
- ✍ Jigsaw;
- ✍ Joint Policing Committee;
- ✍ Local Development Companies;
- ✍ Public Participation Network;
- ✍ Rural Transport Committee;
- ✍ Sexual Health Forum;
- ✍ Sports Partnership;
- ✍ Strategic Policy Committees such as Community, Recreation and Amenities;
- ✍ Youth Café Committee;
- ✍ Youth Strategy Committee.

There are many benefits to having direct representation on decision-making bodies, including:

- ✍ young people have the opportunity to raise matters of concern to young people, like any of their adult peers might;
- ✍ young people have the opportunity to influence and generate change in the communities they live in;
- ✍ young people develop an understanding of how adults make decisions and the challenges of the decision-making process;
- ✍ young people are more aware of the key local issues and can report back to the Comhairle na nÓg Committee in verbal updates and in written progress reports (the latter should be a fixed agenda item);
- ✍ agencies are more aware of the Comhairle na nÓg's agenda and key topics of interest;

- membership of decision-making bodies can give rise to other opportunities for the Comhairle na nÓg;
- young people develop increased competencies, skills and knowledge, e.g.
 - teamwork and team building;
 - working alongside others who have different views;
 - self-discipline and time management;
 - negotiating, planning and reporting;
 - communication skills;
 - problem-solving and decision-making skills;
 - ensuring that more relevant and appropriate decisions can be made with regard to children and young people and their needs.

Supporting the work of other youth participation structures

Comhairle na nÓg members also support the work of other youth participation structures, including:

- Youth-related projects, such as youth cafés, youth strategy groups or youth festival organising groups, where it is especially important that the views of young people are taken into account;
- Student councils, which promote the work of Comhairle na nÓg and encourage students to get involved;
- Jigsaw and Headstrong, both organisations being focused on the mental health of young people.

Key agencies presenting to Comhairle na nÓg

A number of agencies make presentations to Comhairle na nÓg. This is sometimes in a bid to share information, but also to seek the input of the Comhairle na nÓg members on their work. It is very important that the agency is briefed to ensure that the presentation is youth-friendly and, most importantly, that they provide a report or return to give another presentation on the impact that the Comhairle na nÓg feedback had on the topic discussed.

Coordinator's membership of key agencies



There are some instances where young people are not in a position to, are not interested in or are not invited to sit on particular boards or committees. In such cases, the Comhairle Coordinator may sit on the committee and provide the link between the Comhairle na nÓg and the decision-makers.

Participating in other initiatives


Comhairle na nÓg members are also often asked to participate in a diversity of other local initiatives, e.g. local festival committees or anti-litter drives.

CASE STUDY

Waterford Comhairle na nÓg participates in a vast array of other initiatives including the following:

-  Waterford Comhairle na nÓg (WCNN) acted as a consultative forum to the **West Waterford Festival of Food (WWFOF)** in their effort to increase the participation of local young people in the festival and to make the festival more 'youth-friendly'. To facilitate this, the organisers of WWFOF met regularly with the young people of Comhairle for focus groups and feedback on the run-up to the festival. The WWFOF also provided funding and sponsorship to the Comhairle to run an event for young people at the festival. One of these events was a 'Bia, Craic agus Ceol' picnic in the park (and flashmob) for teenagers which was attended by over 100 young people.
-  The **Sean Kelly Tour (SKT) of Waterford** has over 5,000 participants every year. The organising committee of the SKT used Comhairle as a pilot group in the development of their 'youth challenge' programme where they supported young people who would not have normally participated in cycling in the past (or who had never learned to cycle) to participate in the 50km and 100km route of the tour. The SKT team ran a summer programme with the Comhairle members, supported them with provision of bikes and gear for those who didn't have them, and used the feedback from Comhairle members to enhance the programme going forward.

There was a clear benefit to young people and an opportunity to influence all of these external initiatives. Comhairle members also participate in these projects as stewards and volunteers, instilling a sense of active citizenship and all while wearing their purple hoodies to promote Comhairle na nÓg!

-  The Waterford Children and Young People's Services Committee 3 Year Young People's Plan identified an information hub for young people as a key objective. Supported by the CYPSC, Tusla and Waterford Council, Waterford Comhairle na nÓg was identified as the lead agency in the project. Waterford Comhairle na nÓg was then awarded **€9,500 from the Department of Health National Lottery Fund** to develop the 'information hub' for the young people of Waterford. Called '**Teen Space**', it is designed to provide information on and mapping of services for all the health services, education services, training services, youth-friendly café's, clubs, etc. for young people specific to Waterford. The project has been completely youth-led with a Comhairle subgroup working directly with the website developer and designer from concept stage and involving the wider Comhairle group in decisions such as the logo for the website.

Linking with elected officials

Comhairlí na nÓg also link in with elected officials to seek their support for a particular topic or the general work of the Comhairle.

KEY ADVICE

To ensure your Comhairle na nÓg is connected to key local agencies, you should:

- ✍️ Ensure Comhairle na nÓg is included as a 'delivery structure' in the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), the Local Development Strategy (LDS) and the CYPSC Young People's Plan. This obliges local authorities and local agencies to meaningfully engage and support Comhairle na nÓg;
- ✍️ Register your Comhairle na nÓg with the PPN;
- ✍️ Get to know and build relationships with personnel in key agencies. While the personnel are often the influencers and senior staff, it is also important to build relationships with those responsible for writing the local development and strategic plans;
- ✍️ Make presentations about Comhairle to local agencies and decision-makers. A blank Comhairle na nÓg PowerPoint template and a Sample Presentation are available in Appendices 8A and 8B and in soft copy in the Coordinators Corner; (<http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/resources/coordinators-corner/>)
- ✍️ Take some time out to think about and ask your contacts in the local authority how you can best go about linking Comhairle na nÓg to local strategic groups and people;
- ✍️ Write to all of the elected officials in your local area and let them know about Comhairle na nÓg and the work you are doing. Ensure to keep them updated on topics you are working on, at least on an annual basis;
- ✍️ Invite relevant local agencies, e.g. festival committees, to make a presentation to the members to see if they are interested in getting involved;
- ✍️ It is very important that young people are properly supported to engage with and sit on decision-making bodies;
- ✍️ Agencies should be encouraged to make their meetings as accessible and youth-friendly as possible.

The National Cycle of Comhairle na nÓg includes:

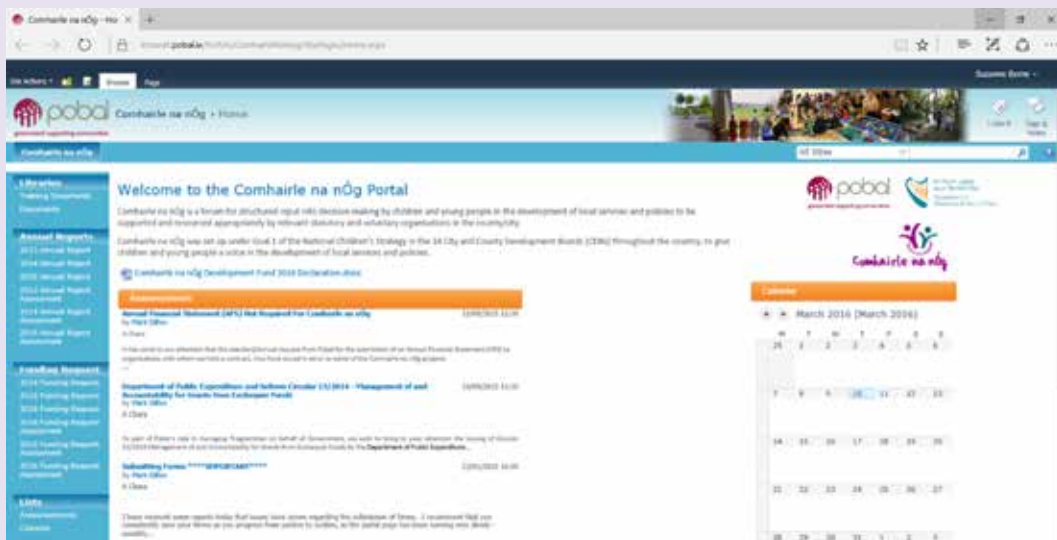
- ✍ Funding and reporting;
- ✍ National Events;
- ✍ Comhairle na nÓg National Executive.

Funding and reporting

Comhairlí na nÓg are part-funded by the DCYA Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund, which is managed by Pobal in cooperation with the DCYA. The grant scheme aims to develop, support and enhance the core objectives and key activities of the Comhairle na nÓg programme, the delivery of which is the responsibility of the local authority in each city and county. In collaboration with DCYA, Pobal administers the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund. Pobal manages the transfer of payments and the annual reporting and funding request process.

An application for funding must be made to Pobal on an annual basis in January alongside the submission of an annual report for the previous year. The decision on funding is made and communicated in February alongside the first payment for successful applications. A second payment is made in September. A comprehensive 'User Guide' providing clear instructions on the Pobal reporting and funding request process is available at

<https://intranet.pobal.ie/Portals/ComhairleNaNog>



Local authorities also provide funding and resources for Comhairle na nÓg. In addition, many Comhairlí na nÓg seek additional funds through other sources, e.g.:

- ✍ Department of Health National Lottery Grants (for health-based projects);
- ✍ Erasmus Plus;
- ✍ Local ETB Youth Grants (can be programme or running costs);
- ✍ Local festivals (fund a youth event);
- ✍ Local HSE National Lottery Grants (for health-based projects);
- ✍ Local Lions Clubs (projects);
- ✍ Meet your MEP Fund;
- ✍ SICAP (through local partnerships);
- ✍ Various local authority bursaries.

National events

COMHAIRLE NA NÓG NATIONAL SHOWCASE/DÁIL NA NÓG

The Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase and Dáil na nÓg are the national events that take place in November in alternate years.

COMHAIRLE NA NÓG NATIONAL SHOWCASE

The Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase takes place every second year in November. The purpose of this event is to present the work and topics each Comhairle has been working on over the past two years or more, and to showcase this work to relevant decision-makers. Up to 465 Comhairle members, 15 from each Comhairle, are offered the opportunity to attend each Showcase event.

The young people have the opportunity to participate in relevant workshops on the day and to discuss their experiences of having their voices heard in decisions affecting their lives. Further details on the Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase event is available at:

<http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/comhairle-na-nog-showcase-2014-3/>

Requirements of coordinators

Comhairle stands and display boards: Each Comhairle is required to host an exhibition stand at the Showcase event. The purpose of the stands is to give each Comhairle na nÓg the opportunity to showcase their most significant achievements over the last two years. It is advisable to focus on one or two projects at most.



Each Comhairle na nÓg will be requested to display their work on a single A0 mounting display board. These boards are supplied in advance through your Comhairle na nÓg Child and Youth Participation Officer. The display stands include a table area that your Comhairle na nÓg can use for any leaflets, books or materials associated with your work.

An information document detailing 'Guidelines, Visuals and Information' on the display of the exhibition unit is provided in advance of the Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase event by the Participation Coordinator.

Showcase booklet and DVD: In advance of each Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase event, a promotional booklet and DVD is produced to highlight the successes of each Comhairle and the important work being carried out at local level. Each Comhairle is required to contribute information and promotional material to both the Showcase booklet and the Showcase DVD.

Booklet: Each Comhairle is allocated one page of the booklet to feature the topics they have been working on over the past two years, as well as an accompanying image.

Requirements for submission:

-  Narrative piece of up to 80 words;
-  A number of good quality photographs – minimum size of 1MB each.

DVD:Requirements for submission:

- ✍ A number of really high quality or professional photographs – minimum of 1MB in size, and/or;
- ✍ A high quality or professionally made video. Only original files can be used;
- ✍ Press cuttings on any success stories from your Comhairle;
- ✍ A narrative piece to accompany all photographs and videos explaining the background to them and your related topic;
- ✍ Any other items that you feel will help us to visually tell the story of the success of your Comhairle.

✍ **DÁIL NA NÓG**

Dáil na nÓg (<http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/dail-na-nog/>) is the national youth parliament for young people aged 12–17 years. It was established under the *National Children's Strategy* to provide a national forum for young people to discuss and vote on issues that affect their lives. Some 200 delegates, elected through the 31 Comhairle na nÓg, participate in the biennial Dáil na nÓg event, hosted by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. As part of the day-long event, delegates get the opportunity to meet with adult decision-makers and policy-makers. The DCYA is responsible for funding and overseeing Dáil na nÓg.

✍ **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive is made up of 31 young people comprising one representative from each Comhairle na nÓg. They are tasked with following up on the recommendations from Dáil na nÓg and aim to make changes for young people in that area. The National Executive has a term of office of two years and meets once a month. The Executive is facilitated and supported by the DCYA, who ensure that they get the opportunity to engage with appropriate Ministers, policy makers, Oireachtas Committees and other decision-makers.

Who is eligible to become a National Executive member?

Age: The young person must be aged 16 or under at the date of the first meeting in January

AND/OR

School Year: The Comhairle member must be in Transition Year or below on the date of the first meeting in January.

A Comhairle will only have one opportunity to replace their National Executive member during the two-year term. Should a member leave prior to September of Year 1, they can be replaced that September. However, should a member leave after September in Year 1, they cannot be replaced. It causes too much disruption to replace members on an ongoing basis.

Key events in the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive calendar

Your Comhairle Needs You is one of the key events in the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive calendar. It takes the form of an information session and presentation to members of the Oireachtas by members of the National Executive on their current topic. It highlights the work process to date, highlighting any key developments or successes. It is a requirement for each Comhairle na nÓg National Executive member to participate.

 **COMHAIRLE MEMBERS' NETWORKING EVENTS**

The Comhairle Members' Networking Events are held regionally (Dublin, Limerick and Sligo) to allow members of Comhairle na nÓg from all over the country to network with other Comhairlí in a very informal way. The Networking events encourage young Comhairle members to link in and engage with each other, and learn from each other by sharing ideas. It affords them the opportunity to discuss their topics including any highlights or challenges while working on their topic.

 **REGIONAL ORGANISERS' NETWORKING EVENTS**

The Regional Networks for Organisers meet in Leinster, Munster and Ulster/Connaught. They meet three to four times per year and are an opportunity for Comhairle personnel to share information, good practice as well as to problem solve and to carry out collaborative work.

Chapter 4

Working arrangements of Comhairle na nÓg



Although all Comhairlí na nÓg have the same goals and need to follow the same core programme to achieve those goals, each Comhairle na nÓg has developed with varying local conditions. The precise working arrangements are therefore not entirely uniform, nor do they need to be. However, there are some core working arrangements, described below, that are useful to adhere to.

Selection of young people for Comhairle na nÓg Committee and membership profile

Background

Most Comhairlí na nÓg select or elect their Comhairle na nÓg Committee each year at the Comhairle na nÓg AGM, using a variety of methodologies (*outlined below*). Whatever the method of selection, a membership profile that balances age, gender, geographical location and inclusion of young people who are seldom-heard* is considered best practice. While it is a challenge to achieve a perfect balance, it is essential to strive for it so that every young person aged between 12 and 17 has access to Comhairle na nÓg regardless of their age, gender, background or where they live. Strategies to help achieve the goal of a balanced membership profile on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee are outlined below.

Strategies to achieve a balanced membership profile

Gender

It must be the aim of all Comhairlí to have a relatively even participation rate among all genders. In many instances, this simply works out on its own. Some Comhairlí na nÓg ask each school, youth organisation or other organisation to send an even number of girls and boys, where at all possible.

Some Comhairlí na nÓg also work specifically to ensure gender balance on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee. This can be achieved by electing half of the committee from a pool of boys and the other half from a pool of girls.

Geographic location

It is important to ensure that young people from urban, rural and/or disadvantaged areas are involved in Comhairle na nÓg. This is best achieved by working with schools, youth organisations and any other organisations that work with young people in the area to ensure a balanced profile.

Some Comhairlí na nÓg also work specifically to ensure geographic balance on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee. Again, this can be achieved by electing a particular number of committee members from each area.

* 'Seldom-heard' is a term used to describe children and young people who have fewer opportunities to participate and/or who encounter more obstacles when attempting to participate (see p. 56).

Quite a number of Comhairlí now operate at regional or municipal level because of the large geographic spread of the Council area. Kerry Comhairle na nÓg reported a very significant increase in membership when a subgroup of Comhairle was founded in each of their four Municipal Districts. In addition to making the arrangements of meetings much easier and increasing attendance, this system also allows for the input of young people at a more localised level. Many of the Comhairlí who operate at this more localised level with subgroups stage a smaller number of 'county committee' meetings throughout the year comprising representatives from all areas. In addition, selection for the Comhairle na nÓg AGM is made to ensure that all regional/Municipal areas are proportionally represented.

Age

Comhairle na nÓg is for all young people aged between 12 and 17. Throughout the history of Comhairle na nÓg, the membership profile has been skewed towards young people aged 15 and over. However, there are many Comhairlí na nÓg that work with a broader age range of young people with great success. There are a number of strategies to ensure the participation of the younger cohort under 15, including:

Working with schools and youth organisations

- ✍️ Ask schools and youth organisations to provide an equal number of representatives from the Junior and Senior cycles;
- ✍️ Work directly with teachers and youth workers on the topic;
- ✍️ Ensure all correspondence clearly states that Comhairle na nÓg is directed at young people aged 12–17 years. Request that young people are chosen from each year up to 5th year and that a policy of selecting Transition Year or older students/organisation members be avoided;
- ✍️ Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator visits 6th class (only) in primary school, Junior cycle classes and youth organisations that have programmes for younger young people to explain Comhairle na nÓg and to encourage participation of those aged between 12–15 years;
- ✍️ Comhairle na nÓg members make presentations to 12–15 year olds in their own schools and youth organisations and to 6th class in their former primary schools;
- ✍️ Rotate age requirements for individual schools/youth organisations for attendance at the AGM;
- ✍️ Contact and include 6th class in primary schools and youth organisations that have programmes for younger young people in all correspondence and on the Steering Committee.

General

- ✍️ Provide age-appropriate packs and information;
- ✍️ Follow up any written correspondence with telephone calls emphasising the age range;
- ✍️ Use social media to target young people;
- ✍️ Produce posters and newsletters promoting Comhairle na nÓg specifically targeting younger members;
- ✍️ Have age-specific working groups at the AGM from which the Comhairle na nÓg members are elected, ensuring a certain percentage of each age group are elected to the Comhairle na nÓg Committee;
- ✍️ Where vacant seats arise on the committee, fill them with young people aged 12–15 years, if necessary.

Seldom-heard young people

'Seldom-heard' is more complicated to define than 'participation'. Any child or young person might argue that they are 'seldom-heard' or that their voice is not heard at all on important decisions that affect them. For the purposes of this Toolkit, 'seldom-heard' is a term used to describe children and young people who have fewer opportunities to participate and/or who encounter more obstacles when attempting to participate, including but not limited to seldom-heard children and young people who are:

- ✎ bullied;
- ✎ children in care;
- ✎ experiencing domestic violence;
- ✎ from a minority ethnic background;
- ✎ homeless or at risk of losing their home/living in temporary/unsuitable accommodation;
- ✎ in hospital (including those with mental health issues);
- ✎ lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT);
- ✎ living in poverty;
- ✎ living in rural isolation;
- ✎ living with mental health issues;
- ✎ living with parental addiction;
- ✎ living with strained family relationships;
- ✎ not in school;
- ✎ persons with physical and intellectual disabilities;
- ✎ refugees and asylum-seekers;
- ✎ Travellers;
- ✎ unemployed;
- ✎ young carers.

Comhairlí na nÓg are actually very successful at ensuring that seldom-heard young people are included in the process. There are numerous strategies to help achieve the participation of seldom-heard young people, including:

Links with organisations

- ✎ Ensure organisations representing the seldom-heard are on the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee;
- ✎ Establish an expert advisory subcommittee to develop a strategy for social inclusion;
- ✎ Link with the School Completion Programme;
- ✎ Ensure schools do not only send young people from student councils;
- ✎ Invite young people from Special Youth Projects (SPY) and Garda Diversion programme;
- ✎ Create links with Youthreach and youth training workshops;
- ✎ Work with youth services that can provide links to seldom-heard young people;
- ✎ Engage with representatives from RAPID programmes;
- ✎ Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator visits seldom-heard groups;
- ✎ Seek special additional funding to work on strategies to include seldom-heard young people.

CASE STUDY

The Sligo Coordinator specifically meets with groups that work with seldom-heard young people including the local youth service, a service for young people with disabilities, the Community Training Centre and Youthreach about four weeks ahead of the AGM. During these meetings, the Coordinator takes the groups through and practices the exact process of the AGM. In addition, the agenda for the day is outlined and voting practice sessions are held alongside group discussions. The Coordinator also focuses on the importance of all groups having a chance to 'speak out'.

Capacity-building

- ✎ Build capacity with young people (e.g. training, building confidence, presentation skills) to ensure they are ready for the experience of sitting on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee;
- ✎ Conduct capacity-building workshops before the AGM. Wexford Comhairle na nÓg, for example, stage a 'mock AGM' every year for seldom-heard young people so that they are familiar with how an AGM works before the day itself;
- ✎ Develop leadership and youth participation programmes for young people;
- ✎ Be aware that continual support of a seldom-heard young person, whether from a teacher or a youth worker, is essential to their staying involved.

AGM-related strategies

- ✎ Designate specific places for seldom-heard young people at the AGM and on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee;
- ✎ Stage an attractive youth-friendly AGM that uses creative methodologies;
- ✎ Provide a template note to schools about why students would be absent on the day of the AGM. This means that those who attend the AGM can be marked as 'present' rather than as 'absent' at school.

Promotion

- ✎ Send invitations to attend the AGM to organisations representing seldom-heard young people;
- ✎ Send promotional materials, such as newsletters, to organisations representing seldom-heard young people;
- ✎ Make a DVD to promote Comhairle na nÓg with these groups;
- ✎ Hold specific events in disadvantaged communities;
- ✎ Hold an event targeting a particular group of young people, e.g. children in care or a disability group;
- ✎ Include 'seldom-heard' as an agenda item for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee so young people know the importance of inclusion.

List of agencies

Suitable agencies to contact to help achieve a balanced membership profile include:

- ✎ Youth services;
- ✎ Schools;
- ✎ Organisations representing 'seldom-heard' young people;
- ✎ Local Partnership Committees, including Sports Partnership Committees;
- ✎ Garda Youth Diversion Projects/Garda Youth Liaison Officers.

'A practical guide to including seldom-heard children and young people in decision-making' is available on the DCYA website: http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/playandrec/2015061.Seldom-heard-a_practical_guide.pdf

Retention of young people

Remember that it is difficult to retain the interest of all the young people involved in Comhairle na nÓg. To increase the likelihood of them staying with the programme, Comhairle na nÓg needs to be youth-led so that the young people feel a sense of ownership of the programme. The practical arrangements also need to be workable. However, it is still wise to recruit a larger group of young people than is actually required at the beginning to account for the inevitable fall-off. The opportunity to fill places that have been vacated at the AGM should also be availed of.

Selection of young people for Comhairle na nÓg Committee

The young people who participate in Comhairle na nÓg are themselves evenly divided on whether candidates should be elected or selected for the Comhairle na nÓg committee. About half feel that they should be elected while the other half feel strongly that elections should be avoided at all costs. Essentially, there is absolutely no requirement to elect Comhairle na nÓg committee members. Once strategies have been put in place (listed above) to ensure a balanced membership profile, candidates can then be (s)electd using a variety of methods, including:

Electoral areas

(S)electing by electoral area ensures a good geographical spread of delegates. The electoral areas and number of seats per electoral area can be based on the corresponding number in the local authority. Delegates vote for candidates from the electoral area in which they go to school/Youthreach. Provision for age, gender and seldom-heard young people can be made by allocating a minimum number of seats to these groups.

Schools and youth organisations

AGM delegates are asked to (s)elect representatives from their own group. Where two or more candidates are (s)electd from each group, a balance in terms of age and gender can be sought.

AGM workshops

Delegates are asked to (s)elect any interested candidates from the workshop they attend at the AGM. This method allows young people to (s)elect a candidate who is knowledgeable or interested in the topic being discussed and which will be worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee during the year. Using this method also requires that workshops are coordinated so that there will be representation from both genders, young people under and over 15, as well as seldom-heard young people. This requires allocating places in workshops by age and having a separate workshop of young people from seldom-heard organisations and/or allocating designated seats on the committee for these groups.

Expression of interest

Some Comhairlí na nÓg do not conduct elections, but rather ask any young person who is interested to make an 'expression of interest', either verbally or in writing, to the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator. Then, either all of the candidates are invited to join the Comhairle na nÓg Committee or the committee is picked out of a hat.

Independent of what method is used, it is helpful to retain the documentation from the (s)election process so that in the event of any drop-off, other young people who were interested can be approached and co-opted onto the committee.

CASE STUDY

Louth Comhairle na nÓg recruits directly from schools and youth organisations. In the weeks prior to the annual AGM the organisers visit schools and youth organisations to promote the event and to develop interest among young people in joining Comhairle na nÓg for the two-year cycle.

The schools and youth services then send five representatives each to the AGM giving an approximate attendance of 100 young people. After the AGM, schools and youth organisations are contacted with the date for the first Comhairle meeting of the year and two representatives from each school/youth organisation are asked to join. This results in a committee of around 40 young people. In the event that any young person leaves the Comhairle, their place is filled from the school/organisation they represented.

The schools and organisations were advised to select students under 16 to ensure that they don't turn 18 before their term is completed. In addition, the age profile of the young people on the Comhairle is assessed and any positions are filled with this age profile when vacancies arise.

Louth Comhairle na nÓg also works with youth services based in RAPID areas and the HSE to ensure the voices of seldom-heard young people are included.

CASE STUDY

Mayo Comhairle na nÓg asks their members to take responsibility for promoting the Comhairle AGM in their own school and to:

- meet the Principal to gain support from the school to send students to the AGM with the help of a letter and information sheet;
- speak to all of the classes about Comhairle and the AGM, encouraging students to apply to participate;
- select two students from all classes from 1st to 5th year (an extra two places per school are also allocated);
- meet with the group of selected participants to give more information about Comhairle na nÓg and the AGM process.

Where schools do not have a Comhairle member, a teacher is approached to carry out the same process having being briefed by the Coordinator. In the instance of new schools or where schools are not represented on the Comhairle committee, a student is co-opted.

In addition to this process with schools, recruitment also takes place via organisations who work with seldom-heard young people including Foróige and Travellers Support Groups.

CASE STUDY

Wexford Comhairle na nÓg operates its selection process on the basis that every young person who is interested in being on the Comhairle Committee should get an equal opportunity to become a member. It operates a random selection process based on geographical areas within the county in the following manner:

- ✎ An existing member of the Comhairle makes a presentation to the young people attending the AGM about what is involved in being a member of the Wexford Comhairle;
- ✎ The presentation includes information on the frequency of meetings; the opportunities the members get; the responsibilities associated with membership; and what they've enjoyed about the role;
- ✎ Every young person who attends the AGM gets the opportunity to express an interest in becoming a Comhairle Committee member;
- ✎ They can express an interest by filling out a short form at the AGM, which asks them a few simple details such as what locality/school/youth organisation they are from;
- ✎ The forms are split into different groups based on the four geographic districts of Wexford and an extra grouping for young people attending the AGM through their youth club/organisation;
- ✎ The forms are put into five separate boxes;
- ✎ Three to five forms are picked from each box (depending on the number of places free on the Comhairle) to make a total membership of 25 (ensuring a good representation of seldom-heard and geographic mix).

This method can also be adapted to ensure an even representation from each grouping, i.e. have separate boxes in all the categories for young people aged 12–15 and 16–17 year olds.

CASE STUDY

Waterford Comhairle na nÓg doesn't actually recruit at the AGM. Instead, young people are asked to declare their interest in joining the Comhairle Committee and are then invited to a 'Recruitment Day'. Steering Committee members help to run the day which includes an introduction to Comhairle, team-building activities, focus groups and elections. Half of the available places are allocated by direct election and the other half are selected by the Coordinator/Steering Committee with an emphasis on seldom-heard young people. This has resulted in increased participation from DEIS schools, young people from disadvantaged areas, young people under 15 and young people with disabilities.

Training for Comhairle na nÓg Committee members

Background

The majority of Comhairlí na nÓg organise some training for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members. In the first instance, it is important to outline the structure and workings of a typical committee. The Child and Youth Participation Officers allied to each Comhairle are happy to help you deliver this training if needed or you can deliver it yourself. A suggested workshop outline is provided in Appendix 5.

Induction training

Induction training might include information on:

- ✎ What is the purpose of Comhairle na nÓg?
- ✎ How does Comhairle na nÓg work?
- ✎ The lifecycle of Comhairle na nÓg;
- ✎ What is the role of a Comhairle na nÓg Committee member? What is expected of me? What do I have to do?
- ✎ How can I represent the views of other young people as well as my own?
- ✎ What topics are being discussed and pursued?
- ✎ What is expected to happen? What outcome is expected at the end?
- ✎ How is a meeting organised and run?
- ✎ Practical information, such as the location and times of meetings, how to confirm attendance or non-attendance at meetings;
- ✎ Team-building activities to facilitate working together as a committee.

Committee skills training

It is very likely that when a young person is (s)elected to a Comhairle na nÓg Committee, it is their first time on any kind of committee. Training on committee skills is therefore essential, particularly if the Comhairle na nÓg Committee is youth-led, which is always desirable where possible. Committee skills training might include information on:

- ✎ How to (s)elect a chairperson;
- ✎ What is the role of a chairperson?
- ✎ Other committee positions, e.g. secretary;
- ✎ How to take minutes and why this is important;
- ✎ What is an agenda? Why is it important?
- ✎ Time management;
- ✎ Attendance;
- ✎ Games that are useful for a committee to play together in order to develop teamwork.

Preparing young people for adult committees

Adult committees can be challenging for young people because of their formal structure and the use of language. Comhairle na nÓg members who are invited or selected to sit on largely adult committees should be provided with a briefing or training in advance on what to expect, topics that will be discussed and methodologies that will be used. A debriefing session should also take place with the Comhairle members after the session to ensure that it was a positive experience for them. It is also important to remember that participation is not mandatory and young people should always be given the choice to participate or not.

Preparing adults for having young people on adult committees

Where possible, the adult committee should also be advised to:

- ✎ ensure that all materials in the room are appropriate for the age of young people (e.g. posters on sexual health, hard-hitting campaigns on child poverty);
- ✎ use language that is accessible and appropriate for a young audience. In more informal settings, it might work to use the 'jargon jar' which is used to help understand different jargon and words that are used by adults and young people. If one person doesn't understand a term being used, they can put the word in the jargon jar and it will be explained by another member of the committee in accessible language.

CASE STUDY

Clare Comhairle na nÓg asked a communication consultant, Joe Saunders, to prepare adult members of their Steering Committee for the integration of Comhairle members. This presentation helped to clarify the role of Steering Committee members, how to select the Comhairle members for the committee and how best to integrate them. It also outlined how best to support and empower the young people. It also provided an opportunity to discuss the practical details about working on a committee with young people, e.g. meeting in the evenings/at weekends, and Garda vetting. The presentation delivered at the session is available in Appendix 6.

Other training

Other training can be devised depending on the needs of the Comhairle na nÓg Committee and relevance for the topic(s) being pursued in any given year. Such training might include:

Skills-based training

- ✎ Communication skills
- ✎ Decision-making
- ✎ Facilitation
- ✎ Leadership
- ✎ Media and social media
- ✎ Public relations (PR)
- ✎ Presentation skills
- ✎ Web skills

Issues-based training

- ✎ Youth participation
- ✎ Cultural diversity
- ✎ Disability awareness
- ✎ Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) awareness
- ✎ Team building

You can discuss any further training needs with your Child and Youth Participation Officer. You can also see whether other Comhairle Coordinators have made suggestions or you can start a forum discussion on any other ideas about training that you have in the Coordinators Corner: <http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/resources/coordinators-corner/>

Independent of what training is offered to Comhairle na nÓg Committee members, it is really important to let them know that the focus of Comhairle na nÓg is not about their individual needs, but rather about pursuing the topic identified as a priority at the AGM and achieving the outcome agreed.

KEY ADVICE

- Discuss the training needs of your Comhairle na nÓg Committee members with the Child and Youth Participation Officers, who can help you deliver some of this training and advise on further training needs;
- Ensure that young people are given an introduction or induction at the beginning of their term of office;
- Ensure that Comhairle na nÓg Committee members are familiar with basic committee skills to facilitate efficient and youth-led meetings.

Running a Comhairle na nÓg Committee meeting

Background

The style of Comhairle na nÓg Committee meetings varies from Comhairle to Comhairle. There is no exact model for a typical Comhairle na nÓg meeting since the make-up of the group and the topic(s) being discussed may vary considerably. However, feedback from young people in Comhairlí na nÓg indicates that young people prefer meetings that are well organised, have clear objectives, are well facilitated and where they receive information about the meeting well in advance. The main focus of Comhairle na nÓg Committee meetings is to facilitate young people to work on the topics that have been identified as important to them, make progress on these topics and try to achieve outcomes on them.

If you are new to the Comhairle na nÓg process, the two most important things to do are:

- talk to your Child and Youth Participation Officer about how to run a Comhairle na nÓg Committee meeting;
- arrange to attend a Comhairle na nÓg Committee meeting in one of your neighbouring counties. Your Child and Youth Participation Officer will also be able to help organise this.

Youth-led meetings

What is important is that Comhairle na nÓg Committee meetings are youth-led, wherever possible. To facilitate this, some of the following points may help:

- ↪ train the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members in committee skills (*see above*) to enable young people to lead their own meetings;
- ↪ facilitate and empower young people to identify the topics that matter to them, both for the AGM and at committee stage. Adults are therefore not involved in the selection of topics;
- ↪ work with the elected chairperson on the agenda;
- ↪ allow all young people to give their input to the agenda for each meeting;
- ↪ provide the agenda in advance so that young people can prepare if necessary;
- ↪ provide capacity-building training for any young person who needs additional assistance to engage with the meeting in a meaningful way;
- ↪ allow young people to give their input on the dates that suit them for meetings;
- ↪ allow young people to conduct their own presentations to decision-makers (where possible and appropriate).

Sligo and Cork Comhairlí na nÓg are examples of good practice in running youth-led meetings, as seen in the case study below.

CASE STUDY

Every **Cork City Comhairle na nÓg** meeting is led by three young people: the Chair, the Vice Chair and the Secretary. While the Secretary is a yearly position and is chosen by a members' vote at one of the first meetings of the year, the Chair and Vice Chair are rotating positions. All members can put their names forward for the position. When it is his or her turn, a young person spends three meetings as Vice Chair before graduating to the Chair for three more meetings.

Before each meeting, the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary meet with the organisers to prepare the meeting. They review the agenda and plan their approach. The organisers provide guidance and training on consensus building, meeting management, and project planning as well as any updates and strategic decisions necessary.

When the meeting starts, the Chair is in charge of progressing the agenda, gathering input from all present and helping the group come to agreement. The organisers stress that the Chair is not 'the boss' – their opinion is only one of many – and their main job is to facilitate productive agreement among the group. The Vice Chair is there to observe and prepare for their turn as Chair, as well as keep time, order and focus. The Secretary takes notes on a laptop, which are shared by Google Docs and Facebook afterwards.

When the project demands it, the main group may choose to break into smaller working groups in order to make progress on some particular aspect of the project. While the main group meetings are still the main hub of decision and information sharing, half of the meeting may be given to working groups, again, led by members chosen from within each group.

CASE STUDY

Meetings of the Sligo Comhairle na nÓg are youth-led. One of the members is elected as Chairperson, while minutes are recorded by another elected member. The Comhairle na nÓg Project Worker acts as facilitator and advisor, enabling the young people to direct the meeting themselves. Members make their input directly by setting agendas and arranging dates for meetings. Projects undertaken are agreed on by the members and their ideas are used to guide the course of the project. Responsibilities are shared and jobs are delegated, enabling the members to enhance their personal development and also to develop as a team.

To enable the young people, training was organised for them to develop their skills as committee members. During the training, they revisited their roles on the committee, took part in team games, explored the structure of the committee and received training in decision-making, teamwork, structure of meetings, media skills and PR. This has proved to work well and the group can put this training into practice at the meetings.

Having a Comhairle na nÓg that is 'youth-led' does not mean that the young people are left to their own devices and do not need help, advice, support and direction. Comhairle na nÓg members do need advice and support on most aspects of Comhairle na nÓg, including:

- training on how to run a meeting;
- ongoing guidance on how to run a meeting, including advising on a suitable and realistic agenda;
- practical support to run the meetings;
- advice on how to select and prioritise topics;
- advice on how to bring a topic through the lifecycle and process so that an outcome, change or impact is achieved;
- advice and training on how to reach decisions.

In short, young people need to be facilitated to make their own decisions, but will need guidance and support around that. This might include asking leading questions, presenting various options, helping to generate ideas and advising against ideas that are not feasible or realistic.

A sample Agenda and Minutes from a Comhairle na nÓg Committee meeting in Meath Comhairle na nÓg are provided in Appendix 8.

Including young people in budgeting and expenditure

To ensure that all elements of the process are 'youth-led', it is important to include young people in the process of 'budgeting and expenditure' of Comhairle.

CASE STUDY

Tipperary Comhairle has the 'budget' as an agenda item at every full group Comhairle meeting when members can discuss any relevant spending or expenditure. It is common for members to vote on budgeting decisions, e.g. what companies/quote to avail of for branded items such as hoodies. The subgroup of Comhairle members assigned to plan the Comhairle na nÓg AGM are also allocated a budget for the event. It is the job of the subgroup to determine what is needed to run the day and the costs involved for each aspect of the day. Once all quotes from companies are received, the young people decide what to spend on travel, food and information packs. This results in having to make some difficult decisions, e.g. the members recently opted to spend less money on food (having sandwiches and chips instead of a full hot meal) as they wanted to retain a part of the budget to spend on a video production of the AGM event.

The Comhairle members were also charged with the responsibility of the €1,000 budget for the 'Let's Go Mental' event on positive mental health. Again the Comhairle members decided on how much to spend on each aspect of the day. As they needed additional funding to achieve their vision for the event, they successfully applied for additional sponsorship from the local ETB.

The sitting Comhairle group has recently decided to seek additional sponsorship to run regional subgroups.

Where and when do meetings take place?

The majority of Comhairlí na nÓg meet once a month although many others meet as often as once a fortnight. Where the Comhairle is divided into subgroups, the full group usually only meet together once every two months with regional subgroup meetings in the interim period.

Some Comhairlí na nÓg meet in local areas on an ongoing basis and come together on a county-wide basis a set number of times per year – this is a particularly prevalent practice in larger counties like Galway or Cork.

Meetings are usually about four hours long, although it depends on the number of items on the agenda and the time of year. The Comhairlí who meet fortnightly usually meet for two hours. Maintaining focus and energy for this length of time can be a challenge, but might be helped by:

- ↪ including agenda items that maintain the interest and energy levels of the young people;
- ↪ choosing an appropriate venue, food, refreshments and time of day for the meeting;
- ↪ arranging suitable transport for the participants.

Some Comhairlí na nÓg stage their meetings in the office of the local authority, others in the youth service organising the meetings and others in a youth café or youth centre. Many Comhairlí na nÓg use a combination of these venues throughout the year depending on the nature of the meetings, availability of premises and to ensure a presence in each building.

How to set an agenda

1. Decide on the reason for the meeting

Decide on the reason for the meeting and list the topics that need to be discussed. Ask the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members (either at the previous meeting or by text) to let you know what topics or items they want on the agenda. Give them a specific deadline for when they need to make their suggestions for the agenda.

2. Decide on the main topics for the meeting

Working with the Chairperson or a smaller group of young people, spend some time working out what topics are most important and put these as items on the agenda in order of importance. Be mindful of the need to include regular items, such as:

- ↪ minutes and matters arising from minutes;
- ↪ feedback from Committee members sitting on external committees;
- ↪ feedback from the Dáil na nÓg Councillor.

3. Decide on the leaders

Work out what young person will take the lead on each item, e.g. the Chairperson or other members of the Committee. It is better if one person is not taking the lead on every item since it is good to share responsibility and build the confidence of all members of the Committee.

4. Work out a schedule

Decide on the total length of the meeting and then estimate how much time is needed for each agenda item. Don't try to put too much into one meeting. Allow extra time for each item in case anyone strays off the topic or needs to be heard. Having a schedule will help the Chairperson stay focused and on track.

5. Stick to what you have planned

Encourage the Chairperson to stick to the agenda – don't add or skip items. Ideally, don't go over the time given to each item. Make sure the person who was asked to take the lead on an item is given a chance to do so. Over time, young people will come to respect a well-planned and well-followed agenda.

Keep attendance records

It is essential to record the attendance of children and young people at each Comhairle na nÓg Committee meeting or event and to keep a list of the adult support workers and any other adults present.

KEY ADVICE

- ↪ If you are in any way unsure about how to run a Comhairle na nÓg Committee meeting, talk to your Child and Youth Participation Officer;
- ↪ Ensure all adult facilitators and young people are appropriately briefed and trained to enable the meetings to be youth-led;
- ↪ It is best practice to meet at least once a month;
- ↪ Ensure that young people have an opportunity to be involved in setting the agenda and then stick to the items on that agenda;
- ↪ Keep an attendance record of both young people and adults, including support workers, present at each meeting.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK

- ↪ Have bonding evenings and 'friendship time';
- ↪ Hold walking debates to make decisions;
- ↪ Comhairle na nÓg that meet regionally and have representatives on subcommittees can work on their projects in their local area;
- ↪ Comhairle to be publicised more, e.g. in schools;
- ↪ Have more regular meetings. Some people suggested having meetings once every two weeks while others suggested having meetings at least once a week;
- ↪ Chairperson should make the agenda for every meeting and send it to every Comhairle member before the following meeting;
- ↪ Have meetings in a centralised place;
- ↪ Have a suggestion box at every meeting for new ideas.

Promotion and branding

While it is critical not to allocate too much time or resources to the promotion of Comhairle na nÓg at the expense of working on topics, it is important to promote the work of Comhairle na nÓg so that:

- ↪ Comhairle na nÓg develops and maintains a status in the local area so that:
 - young people are encouraged to become involved;
 - decision-makers can see that the Comhairle na nÓg is active in the area and an appropriate group to consult with and listen to.
- ↪ the topics and work of Comhairle na nÓg reach a wider group of young people than those directly involved;
- ↪ the young people who are involved directly can reap the rewards of their work.

Raising the profile of Comhairle na nÓg

A key element of promoting Comhairle na nÓg is the work done to raise the profile of its programme. A number of strategies are used to do this with schools, youth organisations and key decision-makers as well as online through social media and websites.

DECISION-MAKERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Providing information via the Steering Committee meetings; ➤ Providing a quarterly report to local authorities and LCDCs on Comhairle na nÓg; ➤ Making annual presentations to City/County AGM; ➤ Hosting an information-sharing event between decision-makers and Comhairle na nÓg members; ➤ Having seats on decision-making bodies.
SCHOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sending correspondence with information on Comhairle na nÓg to all Principals, CSPE Teachers, Transition Year Coordinators and Student Council Liaison Teachers; ➤ Sending progress reports and any key information to these people; ➤ Comhairle Coordinator and/or Comhairle na nÓg member visits schools and makes presentations to pupils; ➤ Presentations to Student Councils; ➤ Providing information, posters or newsletters for noticeboards; ➤ Hosting a meeting or Information Day for key personnel in schools and youth organisations; ➤ Inviting all schools to the Comhairle na nÓg AGM.
YOUTH ORGANISATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engaging with youth workers on an ongoing basis; ➤ Providing updates/information for youth workers; ➤ Providing information, posters or newsletters for noticeboards; ➤ Inviting all youth organisations to the Comhairle na nÓg AGM.
WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA	<p>Comhairle na nÓg has a dedicated website which is a key resource in raising the national profile of Comhairle – www.comhairlenanog.ie. The website is a useful resource for coordinators and serves a number of important functions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provides a showcase page for each Comhairle highlighting key topics being worked on locally and emphasising successes; ➤ Gives up-to-date information on all events and consultations; ➤ Presents an online monthly record of the work process of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive; ➤ Provides a password-protected forum for coordinators to liaise with each other and to share resources and ideas; ➤ Provides downloadable forms for all events and consultations.

In order for the website to remain current and fresh, **coordinators are required to send any updated information on their topic, as well as any relevant promotional materials, photos or videos to the Participation Coordinator on a regular basis.**

Comhairle na nÓg also has a national presence on social media:



@ComhairleNaNog1

The Comhairle na nÓg Twitter account is used to promote all Comhairle activities, both locally and nationally. It is also used to engage with relevant decision-makers and the media.



There are two Facebook accounts; a general **Comhairle na nÓg** page and another page specifically dedicated to the promotion of the ongoing work of the **Comhairle na nÓg National Executive**, documenting and highlighting their work and achievements during their two-year term of office.

Search for 'Comhairle na nÓg' or 'Comhairle na nÓg National Executive' on Facebook.

Promotional tools

Some of the tools used to promote Comhairle na nÓg include:

- **Print formats**, such as issuing a press release; articles in the press; creating a newsletter that is distributed to schools, student councils, youth organisations and other relevant local outlets;
- **E-formats**, such as emails, e-bulletins, websites;
- **Local radio** programmes;
- **Promotional stands** at events such as Volunteer Week and local road shows;
- **Websites and social media sites** such as the national Comhairle na nÓg website www.comhairlenanog.ie – Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Balancing promotion and child protection

Comhairle organisers need to be mindful of their obligations to protect and safeguard the child when using promotional tools, especially social media. All Comhairlí should develop a safe strategy for the use of social media by accessing the most up-to-date available information and advice.

While there is a need for the organisation to have a policy on the use of social media and online tools, they should not be overlooked as a significant means of including a diverse range of children and young people.

Resources on social media safety include:

- Office for Internet Safety Ireland – <http://www.internetsafety.ie/website/ois/oisweb.nsf/page/safety-en>
- SpunOut.ie – <http://spunout.ie/life/article/internet-safetyUK>
- Safer Internet Centre – <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/young-people/>
- Think U Know, from the National Crime Agency UK – <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>
- NSPCC – <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/>
- The National Centre for Technology in Education – <http://www.webwise.ie>

Useful training

Local media are often interested in Comhairle na nÓg and speaking with Comhairle na nÓg members. In light of this, it is helpful to ensure that at least some members of the Comhairlí na nÓg Committee have received a media briefing or media training. The News Editor in your local newspaper or radio station might be willing to help with this.

Branding

Consistent branding is key to successful promotion. To this end, the DCYA produced a localised version of the national logo for each individual Comhairle na nÓg. Each Comhairle na nÓg has been provided with a CD ROM of their logo in various formats. The logos are also available online at: <http://www.comhairlenanog.ie/resources/coordinators-corner/brand-guidelines/> If you do not already have your username and password, please contact the Participation Coordinator.

KEY ADVICE

- Comhairle na nÓg can be promoted through a number of media and social networking tools that do not cost any money;
- Send any relevant promotional materials or information for inclusion on the national Comhairle na nÓg website to the Participation Coordinator;
- Comhairle organisers need to be mindful of their obligations to protect and safeguard children and young people under the age of 18 when using social media;
- Seek up-to-date guidance on the safe use of media/social media with children and young people;
- Ensure you have appropriate consent from participant/parent/guardian/your agency to use any materials in the media/online.

Closing the Comhairle na nÓg experience for members

It is important to mark or recognise the work of the young people whose term is coming to an end in Comhairle na nÓg. For some, being on the Comhairle may be the first time they felt listened to and valued.

CASE STUDY

Kildare Comhairle na nÓg first consult with the members whose term is not up to see how they would like to mark the occasion for their Comhairle colleagues. This year's group decided to present certificates of participation, chocolates and a personalised Comhairle na nÓg mug to each of the departing Comhairle members. On the day, they took responsibility for setting up the party while a debriefing session was facilitated with the members whose term was coming to an end. This facilitated session included the following questions:

- If you were given the opportunity to re-live your Comhairle experience, is there anything you would change or do differently?
- What would you tell someone considering getting involved in Kildare Comhairle na nÓg?
- What is your greatest learning from being involved in Comhairle?
- What is your fondest/proudest Comhairle memory?

The session was followed by a presentation ceremony where their hard work and achievements were recognised before the all-important party!

It is also important to provide information on other opportunities for civic engagement that departing members might like to get involved in. This might include facilitating a 'what's next?' session with the departing members or having a 'what's next' ideas board with information on any relevant local or national groups, e.g.

- Amnesty International;
- Community Development;
- Local/National Festival Committees;
- Tidy Towns;
- Youth Services.

There are also thousands of specific voluntary positions available on Voluntary Ireland – www.volunteer.ie

Appendices



Appendix 1: Sample Letter of Invitation to potential Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee members



Address

Date

RE: COMHAIRLE NA NÓG STEERING COMMITTEE

Dear.....,

I am contacting you to invite you to become a member of the
..... City/County Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee.

Comhairle na nÓg (www.comhairlenanog.ie) are local councils for children and young people, aged 12–17, that give them a voice on the development of local policies and services. They are the recognised key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 local authorities of the country. Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) are required to engage with Comhairle na nÓg. The first *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020* reiterates the fact that Comhairle na nÓg is the nationally recognised structure that enables children and young people to have a voice in local decision-making.

..... (name of local authority) is responsible for the delivery of Comhairle na nÓg. Comhairle na nÓg is organised by

..... on behalf of City/County Council.

This process is driven by the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator,

The Steering Committee is designed to advise and assist the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator in organising the Comhairle na nÓg throughout the year. The role of the Steering Committee includes ensuring that:

- Comhairle na nÓg is formally connected to local decision-makers and key stakeholders in the area, particularly in relation to the topic(s) being worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg in any given year;
- Comhairle na nÓg has an opportunity to influence decision-making and service development that will affect young people in the City/County;
- organisations representing seldom-heard young people are engaged in the process and can contribute to all aspects of the Comhairle na nÓg;
- Comhairle na nÓg is promoted and championed in every key local agency in the area.

If you have any questions in relation to the information above, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

We would greatly value your time and contribution to the City/County Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee. Please confirm your interest and availability to join the Steering Committee to me before (date).

Yours sincerely,

.....
(Position)

Appendix 2: Steering Committee – Sample Terms of Reference

COMHAIRLE NA NÓG STEERING COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE





Background

Comhairle na nÓg (www.comhairlenanog.ie) are local councils for children and young people, aged 12–17, that give them a voice on the development of local policies and services. They are the recognised key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 local authorities of the country. Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) are required to engage with Comhairle na nÓg. The first *National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020* reiterates the fact that Comhairle na nÓg is the nationally recognised structure that enables children and young people to have a voice in local decision-making.

Comhairle na nÓg is organised by
on behalf of City/County
Council. This process is driven by the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator. The local authority is responsible for the delivery of Comhairle na nÓg.

Role of the Steering Committee

A steering committee, or a committee of key stakeholders and decision-makers, should be put in place to oversee Comhairle na nÓg. The Steering Committee is designed to advise and assist the organisers of Comhairle na nÓg throughout the year. The role of the Steering Committee includes ensuring that:

-  Comhairle na nÓg is formally connected to local decision-makers and key stakeholders in the area, particularly in relation to the topic(s) being worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg in any given year;
-  Comhairle na nÓg has an opportunity to influence decision-making and service development that will affect young people in the City/County;
-  organisations representing seldom-heard young people are engaged in the process and can contribute to all aspects of the Comhairle na nÓg;
-  Comhairle na nÓg is promoted and championed in every key local agency in the area.

Membership

Permanent members of the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee are:

Permanent members	No. of representatives
Comhairle na nÓg Committee members	
Comhairle na nÓg Committee Coordinator/organiser	
A representative from the local authority	
Education Training Board Youth Officer	

(continued)

Members of the Steering Committee selected on an annual basis are:

Steering Committee members	No. of representatives
An Garda Síochána	
Chair of City/County Council (or other nominated councillors)	
Chair of Council/County Council Joint Policing Committee(s)	
Chair of Strategic Policy Committee(s)	
Community sector	
County ETB – Youth Officer	
Department of Social Protection	
Drugs Task Force	
Health Service Executive (HSE)	
Leader Partnership	
Mayor of Council	
Sports and Recreation Partnership	
Stakeholders specific to particular topic being worked on by Comhairle	
Voluntary Youth Council	
Youth organisations	

Chairperson

The Chair of the group will be,
in the absence of whom an alternative chairperson will be appointed from the members of the Steering Committee.

Frequency of meetings

- Under normal circumstances, the group will meet approximately four times per year, for no more than two hours per meeting;
- In exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of members, the group may meet more often, as necessary.

Role of members

The role of the Steering Committee members includes:

- Contribute to the effective operation and development of Comhairle na nÓg on the basis of their experience and position;
- Utilise the influence of their position to facilitate the input of Comhairle na nÓg into adult decision-making bodies in
- Advise on upcoming policy developments that would benefit from input from Comhairle na nÓg;
- Give insights into the work of Comhairle na nÓg from the point of view of the organisations they represent;
- Assist Comhairle na nÓg to link with the wider community and to assist the wider community to link with Comhairle na nÓg;
- Suggest any new ideas or innovations for the development of the work of Comhairle na nÓg;
- Contribute to any reviews/evaluations of the work of Comhairle na nÓg.

Appendix 3: Tools to develop an Action Plan

There are a number of small tools that can be used to help develop a work plan or action plan. The template illustrated here is called 'Making a plan become a reality' and is based on materials sourced in Tom East's book *Responding to Youth*.

MAKING A PLAN BECOME A REALITY

This tool encourages you to take seven key steps in order to make the work plan become a reality. The seven key steps include:

1. Meet and focus on the real needs;
2. Set a clear goal that responds to that need;
3. Find and select partners and identify resources to help you;
4. Create a shared plan with those resources;
5. Develop the plan. Answer the four W's: WHO will do WHAT, WHERE and WHEN?
6. Build ownership and support;
7. Evaluate.

PLANNING WORKSHEET

Step 1 – Focus on Need

How will we determine the needs? Which need will be our focus?

Need Selected:

Step 2 – Set a Goal that Responds to the Need

This statement should include only one goal and should be achievable and measurable. What do we want to accomplish?

Goal Selected:

Step 3 – Select Partners and Identify Resources

Who else can help? What are our resources?

People/Organisations to Contact:

Person Responsible:

Step 4 – Choose a Plan

What is our plan?

Plan Selected:

Step 5 – Develop the Plan

Description of a plan for programme or strategy:

When will the programme be held or when will the strategy begin?

Where? Do we need facilities?

Who will be invited to participate?

What will the plan include? Create an outline of the event/programme/action

What supplies are needed?

How will we promote it?

Who will lead each part of the plan? Which of our partners can help us?

When does each step need to be accomplished by and by whom?

Step	Due Date	Person Responsible

Step 6 – Build Ownership and Support

How will we build ownership from those people being served by this programme?

How will we get support? From whom?

Step 7 – Evaluate

How will we evaluate this programme?

What worked well?

What did not work so well? What would we improve next time around?

(continued)

Having completed the action plan, you should revise it to see if it is **SMART**:

- 👉 **Specific goal:** Does the plan state a very specific goal?
- 👉 **Measurable outcome:** Does the plan state what outcome is wanted at the end of the plan?
- 👉 **Actions:** Are the actions to achieve that outcome clearly stated?
- 👉 **Realistic:** Can those actions and that outcome be realistically achieved?
- 👉 **Timeline:** Is enough time given to each stage of the plan? Can the actions and outcome be achieved within two years?

Appendix 4: Sample Survey



THE GREAT WICKLOW YOUTH SURVEY!

Co Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg

Coordinator: Dermot O'Brien

Email: wicklowcomhairle@gmail.com

Find us on Facebook and Twitter

THIS SURVEY WILL ONLY TAKE UP SIX MINUTES OF YOUR TIME!

This survey is for all of the young people of Co Wicklow aged 12–18 years old.

The purpose of this survey is to ask the youth of Wicklow how important these issues are for you? Each question asks you to decide if the topics are:

Very important Important Not important

You will make your choice by ticking a box. Feedback from this survey will decide the focus of the work of Co Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg over the next few years!

HAVE YOUR SAY!

1. How important are the following 'places to go' for young people?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Youth cafés, youth centres, clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Places to socialise, discos, gig venues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safe places to 'hang out' with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Young people's health – how important are these issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Crime and anti-social behaviour – how important are these issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Young people committing crimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rates of pay for young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job opportunities for young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Transport in Co Wicklow – what are the issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Accessibility – young people with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Services – networks of bus and rail services in the county	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ticket prices for young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(continued)

5. Employment – what are the issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Young people's rights and entitlements in the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rates of pay for young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Job opportunities for young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Housing – what are the most important issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Homeless young people (alone or as part of a family)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Families with unsuitable accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Affordable accommodation for students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Drugs – what are the issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Young people dealing drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young people using drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of awareness and knowledge of drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Alcohol – what are the most important issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Underage drinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The advertisement and promotion of alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge and awareness of the effects of alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. The voice and views of young people – what are the issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Adults don't care enough about young people's ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young people don't care enough to get involved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comhairle na nÓg (the Youth Council) is not promoted enough	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(continued)

10. Discrimination – what are the issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Racism towards ethnic minorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discrimination based on where you live	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discrimination because you are 'young'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Social media – what are the issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Cyberbullying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Too much 'screen' time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge and understanding of risks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. The environment – what are the issues?

	Very important	Important	Not important
Pylons in Wicklow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Illegal dumping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General knowledge and awareness of environmental issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

HAVE YOUR SAY! SHARE YOUR VIEWS ON OTHER TOPICS OR ISSUES

Thank you so much for doing this Youth Survey!! Please share some info with us so that we can do the best analysis of the survey possible. When we ask for 'general area you live' we mean the general area according to the County Council election areas. So, Bray would be Bray, Kilmac, Newtown, Enniskerry, etc.

AGE: _____ **GENERAL AREA YOU LIVE (circle one of these options):**
GENDER: _____ Bray Greystones Wicklow Arklow Baltinglass

COMMITTEE SKILLS WORKSHOP FOR COMHAIRLE

TOOLBOX

AIM OF WORKSHOP:	Highlight the importance of the Committee roles and of the commitment members are making by putting themselves forward for a position.
PARTICIPANTS:	Full Comhairle na nÓg group
WORKSHOP FACILITATORS:	Participation Officer and/or Comhairle Coordinator
LENGTH OF WORKSHOP:	1½ hours
EQUIPMENT NEEDED:	Flipchart paper/colourful A2 sheets, markers and pens (one each), coloured card, paper.
WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES:	<p>1. ICE-BREAKER See p. 162 for ideas on good group ice-breakers</p> <p>2. WHAT DO WE NEED TO HAVE A GOOD MEETING? Allow group to work in pairs to come up with list of things that make a good meeting. Invite group to share their ideas – this can be done by facilitator writing list on flipchart or each pair writing their idea(s) on coloured card and sharing with the group to make larger list.</p> <p>Ideal answers: Agenda; time keeping; get things done on our topic; promote the work of Comhairle to wider audience; work together.</p> <p>3. WHO DO WE NEED TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN? Give time to the group to name all the roles/positions they feel that they need on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee.</p> <p><i>Suggested positions:</i></p> <p>Chairperson – three meeting rotation Vice Chair – three meeting rotation (Vice gets opportunity to be next Chairperson) Secretary – selected on yearly basis Public Relations Officer (PRO) – two or three members selected on yearly basis National Executive Delegate – this position is chosen for two-year term General Comhairle member – all (emphasise that this is most important role)</p>

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES: (CONTINUED)

4. WHAT IS EACH ROLE RESPONSIBLE FOR?

Split into buzz groups (of 3–5 depending on size of group) – use flipchart paper to identify the main responsibilities of each position

Rotations – each group visits the other groups to add to their responsibility list

Feedback – to the wider group

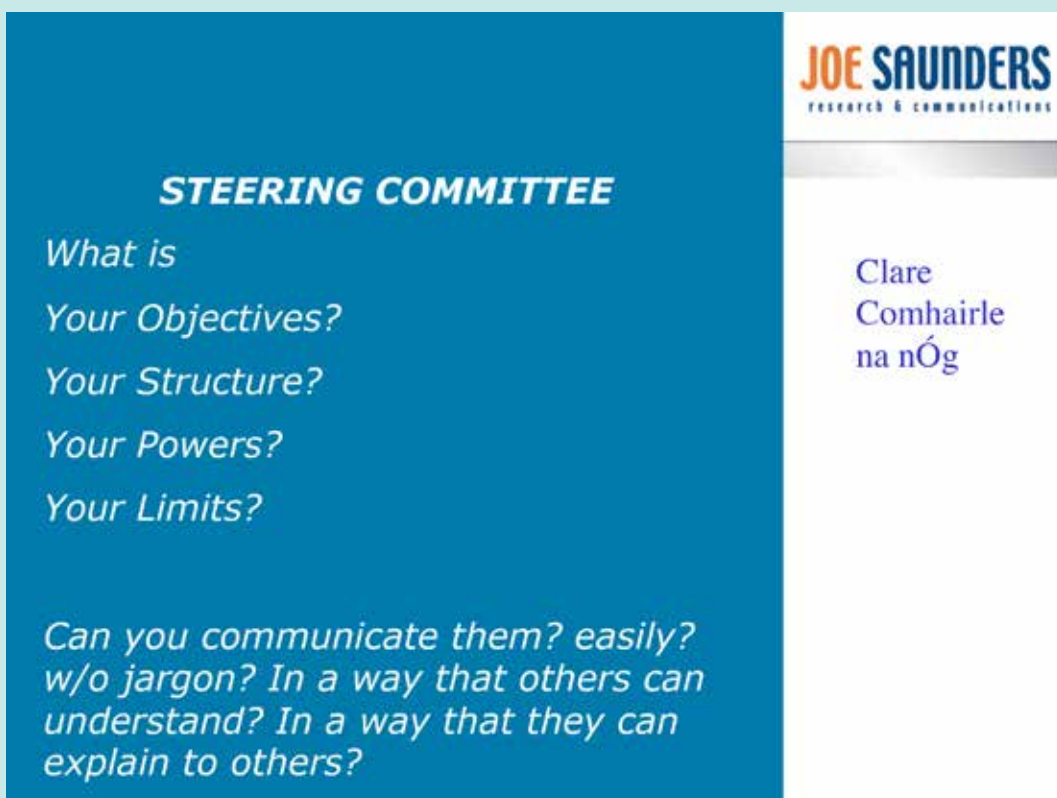
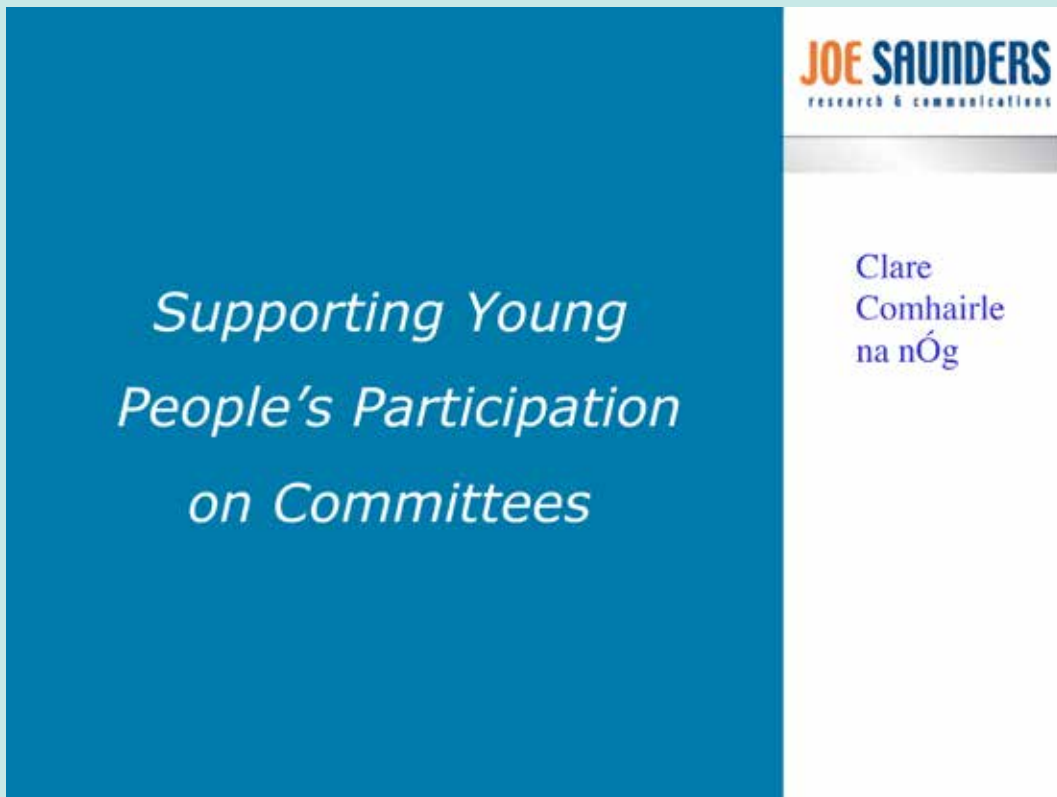
5. HAND-OUTS OF THE ROLES

You can find all appropriate hand-outs on the Coordinators Corner on <http://www.Comhairlenanog.ie/resources/coordinators-corner/> If you do not already have your username and password, please contact the Participation Coordinator.

6. VOTING IN THE POSITIONS

- Write names of all young people interested in position on flipchart/white board;
- Give each young person one minute to say why they would like the role;
- Remind young people of the names – remind them to use their vote to pick the person they feel best represent them;
- Hand out voting cards;
- Count and announce names of people with most vote(s).

Appendix 6: Preparation of adult members for Comhairle Steering Committee



Know this before you start

What are you asking these young people to join?

A Committee, company, consultative group, as a representative or nominee or both etc?

What do you want them to do?

Is what you want them to do compatible with the role of the forum – if you only want them in a consultative or advisory role, is it appropriate to ask them to join a decision-making company or statutory committee?

Clare
Comhairle
na nÓg

Appointing Them

- *What is the basis of their appointment? Selection, election, nomination, co-option, hybrid? By who? Position advertised?*
- *Is there a Role Description (functions, tasks, responsibilities)? Is there Person Specification?*
- *Diversity, equality, inclusion, age.*
- *Basis of Rotation?*

Clare
Comhairle
na nÓg

<p>Supporting Them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Induction (pack) /training/ committee skills</i>• <i>Mentor/buddy</i>• <i>Ongoing</i>• <i>Specific</i>• <i>Venue</i>• <i>Transport</i>• <i>Timing</i>• <i>Expenses</i>• <i>Reporting to their constituency</i>• <i>Other staff – development workers, secretaries, receptionists</i>	<p>JOE SAUNDERS research & communications</p> <hr/> <p>Clare Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee</p>
--	---

<p>EMPOWERING THEM</p> <p><i>Will they have same powers as others at the table?</i></p> <p><i>Other POWER issues – language/times of meetings/ Meeting before meetings/access to documentation/roles for them/input to Agenda/AOB</i></p>	<p>JOE SAUNDERS research & communications</p> <hr/> <p>Clare Comhairle na nÓg</p>
--	--

Some Principles/Issues

- *Confidentiality*
- *Consent*
- *Child Protection*
- *Media*
- *Procedure for Troubleshooting – whose responsibility?*
- *Is this the best way to involve young people/are there others?*

Clare
Comhairle
na nÓg

ENTHUSING THEM MAKE IT INTERESTING!

Your

Licence to Bore

*Is Limited to Victims Over 18 Years
who are paid and contractually
obliged to listen*

Keep your Meetings Jargon Free

Clare
Comhairle
na nÓg

Appendix 7 : Template for Certificate of Participation



The certificate template features a light blue background with decorative teal swirls and pink flowers in the top left. A teal box in the top left contains the harp logo and text: "An Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige / Department of Children and Youth Affairs". A large teal oval in the top right contains the "Comhairle na nÓg" logo and text: "Comhairle na nÓg / Young Voices. Local Issues." The main text is centered and includes a large, faint blue graphic of a person with arms raised.

CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

This Certificate of Participation is awarded to _____

for membership of the _____

Comhairle na nÓg Committee

from _____ to _____

SIGNED _____

(Position) _____

Appendix 8: Sample Agenda and Minutes from a Comhairle na nÓg meeting



Agenda of Meath Comhairle na nÓg meeting

Date:

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Warm-up activity
3. Minutes of previous meeting
4. Mental health video project – next steps
5. Presentations to student councils
6. Meeting with Meath County Council councillors
7. Feedback from National Executive
8. Jigsaw Meath Button workshop
9. AOB (any other business)
10. Next meeting – date and venue



Comhairle na nÓg Meeting

Date:

Minutes – Meath Comhairle na nÓg Meeting

Item	Discussion/Actions	Responsible
1. Apologies	List names ...	
2. Music Video Project on Mental Health	<p>Group decided to develop a new video to promote positive mental health. All aspects of the video will be designed and created by the young people of Meath Comhairle na nÓg.</p> <p>Storyboard/Script: List names ...</p> <p>Music: List names ...</p> <p>Actors: List names ...</p> <p>Camera Crew: List names ...</p> <p>Directors: List names ...</p> <p>First meeting for script/storyboard group – Tuesday January 26th, 6.00pm–7.30pm Ardboyne Hotel foyer</p>	
3. Presentations on Meath Comhairle na nÓg to all schools/student council	Each member of Meath Comhairle na nÓg will make a short presentation to a number of classes of different ages within their schools. They will also make presentations to the student council if one exists. The point of this is to increase awareness of Meath Comhairle na nÓg, what we do and feedback to other young people in Meath what Comhairle is working on both locally and nationally.	
4. Meeting with Meath County councillors/ TDs, etc.	Mary* to arrange a meeting with councillors and TDs for April 23rd to coincide with launch of the music video.	
5. Feedback from National Executive	The National Executive representative gave feedback to the group on the first meeting of Comhairle na nÓg National Executive. They are working on the theme of education and specifically exploring 'What happens in the classroom'. The National Executive representative will keep the members of Meath Comhairle na nÓg informed over the coming months.	

* Names are fictionalised to 'John' and 'Mary' throughout the Toolkit.

(continued)

6. Election to Steering Committee	John and Mary were elected as representatives to the Meath Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee. The next Steering Committee meeting will take place on Tuesday, February 9th in the Ardboyne, Navan from 5.00pm–6.00pm.	
7. Jigsaw Button Project	Mary outlined the Jigsaw Meath Button. List names ... expressed interest in the project. John to email details to Sinead in Jigsaw and let young people know the start date and times. Mary to suggest starting at 4.30pm so that young people have a chance to get there from the various schools.	
8. AOB		
9. Next meeting		
10. Date		
11. Venue		
12. Chair		



Comhairle na nÓg

Young Voices. Local Issues.

Running an effective Comhairle na nÓg Annual General Meeting



CONTENTS

1. Overview	97
What is Comhairle na nÓg?	98
What is a Comhairle na nÓg AGM?	98
Where does the AGM fit into the lifecycle of Comhairle na nÓg?	98
2. Before the AGM	101
Selection of young people for the AGM	102
Identifying the topics for discussion at the AGM	107
Promotion of the AGM	112
Practical preparation for the AGM	112
Identifying and allocating key roles	113
Resources	114
Practical suggestions	115
AGM checklist	116
3. At the AGM	119
Agenda for the day	120
Presentation by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee on work in previous year	122
Workshops to discuss and make recommendations on topics of importance to young people	122
What workshop methodologies are commonly used?	126
Prioritising topics and recommendations at the AGM	139
(S)election of the new Comhairle na nÓg Committee (or new delegates for the Committee if it is the second year of a two-year term)	142
The (s)election process	143
Evaluation of AGM event	145
Other creative methodologies for use throughout the day	150
Practical suggestions	151
4. After the AGM	153
Meeting with the Comhairle na nÓg Committee	154
Production of a report on the AGM	154
Distribution of AGM report to local decision-makers	155
Keeping in touch with AGM delegates and wider cohort of young people	155
Appendices	
Appendix 9: Sample Letter of Invitation to Schools	158
Appendix 10: Sample Letter of Invitation to Organisations	159
Appendix 11: Sample Facilitator Pack	160
Appendix 12: Typical Ice-breakers	162
Appendix 13: Sample Lifeline Template	168
Appendix 14: Sample Evaluation Form	169



Chapter 1

Overview



What is Comhairle na nÓg?

Comhairle na nÓg (www.comhairlenanog.ie) are local councils for children and young people, aged 12–17, that give them a voice on the development of local policies and services. They are the recognised key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 local authorities of the country. Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) are required to engage with Comhairle na nÓg. The first *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020* reiterates the fact that Comhairle na nÓg is the nationally recognised structure that enables children and young people to have a voice in local decision-making.

What is a Comhairle na nÓg AGM?

A Comhairle na nÓg AGM is an annual general meeting (AGM) of a diverse group of invited and interested young people, aged 12–17. A Comhairle na nÓg AGM is held in each of the 31 local authority areas on an annual basis. Funding criteria demands that a Comhairle AGM is staged annually. The Comhairle na nÓg AGM has a number of objectives, including to:

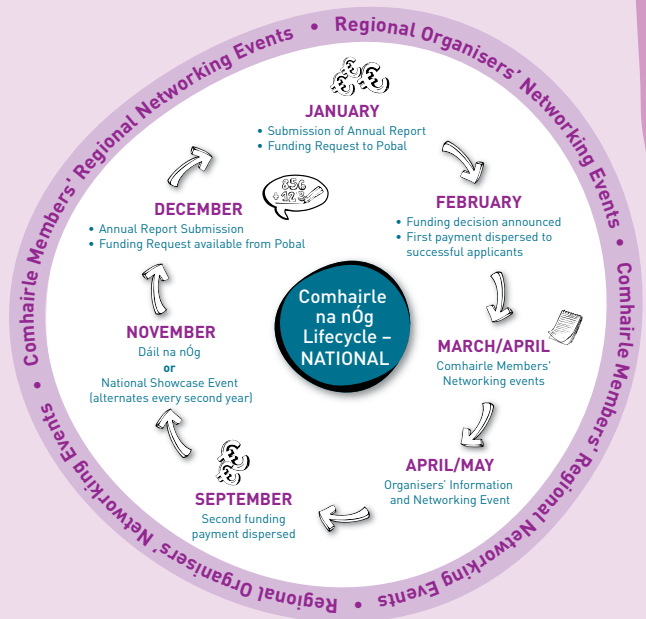
- discuss and explore issues or matters of importance to young people;
- prioritise one or two topics on these matters that will provide the focus of work for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee over the following year;
- provide feedback on the progress made on the topic(s) identified as important at the previous year's meeting;
- (s)elect young people to the Comhairle na nÓg Committee. This committee is responsible for working and making progress on the topic(s) and recommendations identified as important for young people at the AGM.

Where does the AGM fit into the cycle of Comhairle na nÓg?

The Comhairle na nÓg AGM, held in September or October, is one of the first stages of the Comhairle na nÓg work programme. Staging the AGM in September/October allows ample time to:

- prioritise, pursue and make progress on the topic that has been identified as important by the AGM delegates;
- select and train delegates for Dáil na nÓg in November;
- select and brief delegates for the Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase event in November;
- select, brief and train delegates for Dáil na nÓg.

The full cycle of Comhairle na nÓg and where the AGM fits into that cycle is illustrated in the diagram below.



Chapter 2

Before the AGM



Although the Comhairle na nÓg AGM takes place on just one day, there are a number of key aspects, described below, that need to be considered before the event to ensure the success of the day.

Selection of young people for the AGM

The AGM is an opportunity for a wide cohort of young people to come together to identify issues or matters of importance to them. The Comhairle na nÓg programme is for all young people aged between 12 and 17, and needs to be accessible to them. It is important that the profile of young people attending the Comhairle na nÓg AGM is both balanced and diverse. This means that there should be a balance in terms of age, gender and geographic location. In addition, there should be approximately 20% of the delegates at the Comhairle na nÓg AGM from 'seldom-heard' backgrounds.*

In recent years, it has proved particularly difficult to ensure equal representation from young people aged 12–15. Specific steps to ensure representation from this cohort must be made (see p. 104). In addition, nominees for the AGM should be 16 or under to allow for two years' service without aging out.

Number of places available at the AGM

The maximum number of places available at the AGM needs to be decided in advance. It is **best practice** to reserve a minimum percentage or number of places for both genders, young people under 15 and seldom-heard young people.

Selecting the young people for the places available

The majority of young people who attend the Comhairle na nÓg AGM come from schools and youth organisations while others come from special youth projects and organisations representing young people who are seldom-heard.

Young people are selected to attend the AGM in a variety of ways. For the most part, the Comhairlí na nÓg send a general invitation to schools, youth groups and a host of other organisations that work with and/or represent young people, including organisations representing seldom-heard young people. The Steering Committee members can also play a useful role in linking with youth organisations, organisations representing seldom-heard young people and other agencies.

* 'Seldom-heard' is a term used to describe children and young people who have fewer opportunities to participate and/or who encounter more obstacles when attempting to participate. A more comprehensive definition and explanation is available on page 7 of *A practical guide to including seldom-heard children and young people in decision-making* which is available on the DCYA website: http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/playandrec/2015061.Seldom-heard-a_practical_guide.pdf. See also p. 56.

Some Comhairlí na nÓg allocate a certain number of places per electoral area or designate a certain number of places per school/organisation. Some Comhairlí na nÓg are even more specific, as illustrated by the case study below.

CASE STUDY

Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg: 15 places were allocated to each school/youth centre, excluding those who were already serving on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee. The young people were then allocated to these 15 places per school according to:

- level of interest shown;
- age range (keeping in mind the need to increase the membership of young people aged 12–15);
- seldom-heard young people;
- those willing to put their names forward for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee.

For any schools or youth centres that were unavailable on the day, extra places were reserved for them on the Committee.

Engaging with schools, youth organisations and clubs

By and large, schools, youth organisations and their staff are enormously supportive of Comhairle na nÓg. Some schools can be more difficult to engage with than others.

Strategies to get contacts in and engage with schools include:

- Meet and liaise directly with:
 - the School Principal;
 - the Student Council Coordinator;
 - the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Teacher;
 - the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Teacher;
 - School Completion Programme Workers;
 - agencies with a remit to work with schools, e.g. Youth Information Officers.
- Provide an Information Pack for school/youth organisation staff;
- Provide feedback on the AGM and work of the Comhairle na nÓg throughout the year via e-newsletters, a Comhairle na nÓg update on the noticeboard or web links;
- Ask for an opportunity for the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator and/or young people to make presentations to school staff/students and youth organisations/service users;
- Engage with schools and youth organisations as early in the school year as possible;
- Ask the schools to consider the Comhairle na nÓg as a 'day of attendance' if the Comhairle na nÓg is held on a school day;
- Inform the schools that young people from their school may also be attending as representatives from other organisations and that these young people should also be marked as 'present';
- Provide a 'certificate of participation' for the school/organisation as well as for the individual delegates.

Strategies to ensure a balanced profile and attendance of seldom-heard young people

As outlined above, it is important that the AGM delegates are balanced in terms of gender, age and geographic location. Ideally, about 20% of the delegates should be young people that are seldom-heard. The best way to ensure a balanced profile is to invite young people from a diversity of organisations, including schools, youth organisations and organisations that work with seldom-heard young people. However, there are a number of other strategies to ensure a balanced profile and the attendance of seldom-heard young people at the AGM.

Gender

- Ask each school, youth organisation or other organisation to send an even number of girls and boys, where at all possible;
- Reserve a minimum percentage (e.g. 40% of AGM) of places for girls and the same minimum for boys.

Geographic location

- Invite all schools, youth organisations and any other organisations that work with young people from every electoral/municipal area of the county/city;
- Where Comhairle na nÓg is run on a municipal/area basis, an appropriate number of representatives should be invited/selected from each area;
- Reserve a minimum percentage or number of places for young people from each electoral/municipal area.

Age




- Ensure that all correspondence and application forms clearly state that organisations and schools must provide an equal number of representatives aged 12–15 as 15–17;
- Ask schools to provide an equal number of representatives from the Junior and Senior cycles;
- Ensure all correspondence and promotional materials clearly state that Comhairle na nÓg is directed at *all young people aged between 12 and 17* and request that a policy of selecting Transition Year or older students only be avoided;
- Provide age-appropriate packs and information;
- Follow up any written correspondence with telephone calls emphasising the age range;
- Be mindful of two-year membership term. Some Comhairlí only invite young people aged 12–16 so that members will not have turned 18 by the time their membership term is over;
- Invite youth organisations that have programmes for younger young people to send representatives.

There are also strategies that help to ensure a balanced age profile that can be worked on throughout the year and not just in the run-up to the AGM, including;










- Invite youth organisations that have programmes for younger young people to join the Steering Committee;
- Work directly with teachers/youth workers on the topic;
- Organise Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator visits to primary schools and Junior Cycle classes to explain Comhairle na nÓg and encourage participation;
- Organise Comhairle na nÓg members to make presentations to Junior Cycle pupils in their own schools and their former primary schools as well as in their youth clubs and organisations.

Seldom-heard young people

The three most important strategies to help ensure the participation of seldom-heard young people at the AGM are:

-  **Developing partnerships with organisations** that work with and on behalf of seldom-heard young people. The organisations that work with seldom-heard young people know them best. By working directly with the organisation, they can assist you with the dissemination of the information about the AGM in a meaningful way and can help 'sell' the AGM to the young people;
-  **Having these same organisations represented on the Steering Committee.** This ensures that the organisations are familiar with the entire process and recognise the importance of attending the AGM in order to be involved in the overall programme;
-  **Conducting capacity-building programmes** and supporting the seldom-heard young people in advance of the AGM. It is likely that the organisations that work directly with the young people can assist you in this regard. However, it is important that a session takes place to prepare and brief the young people on what to expect at the AGM, how the (s)election procedure works and any other relevant information that will empower them to participate in a meaningful way at the meeting.

Other strategies

-  Asking the ETB Youth Officer for support;
-  Inviting young people from Special Projects for Youth (SPY) and Garda Diversion programmes;
-  Creating links with Youthreach and youth training workshops;
-  Working with youth services that can provide links to seldom-heard young people;
-  Engaging with representatives from RAPID programmes;
-  Organising Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator visits to seldom-heard groups;
-  Designating specific places for seldom-heard young people at the AGM and on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee;
-  Staging an attractive youth-friendly AGM that uses creative methodologies;
-  Having a mock AGM with an election in advance of the actual meeting so that the young people are familiar with the process.

What happens next?

Once the invitation is disseminated, organisations are asked to send back a **Nomination Form** as well as a **Consent Form** for each young person attending from their parent/guardian or care worker by a certain date to secure their places.

Sample letters of invitation to schools and organisations are provided in Appendix 9 and 10.

CASE STUDY

Mayo Comhairle na nÓg asks its members to take responsibility for promoting the Comhairle AGM in their own school and to:

- meet the Principal to gain support from the school to send students to the AGM with the help of a letter and information sheet;
- speak to all of the classes about Comhairle and the AGM, encouraging students to apply to participate;
- select two students from all classes from 1st to 5th year (an extra two places per school are also allocated);
- meet with the group of selected participants to give more information about Comhairle na nÓg and the AGM process.

Where schools do not have a Comhairle member, a teacher is approached to carry out the same process having being briefed by the Coordinator. In the instance of new schools or where schools are not represented on the Comhairle committee, a student is co-opted.

In addition to this process with schools, recruitment also takes place via organisations who work with seldom-heard young people, including Foróige and Travellers Support Groups.

BEST PRACTICE

WHEN SELECTING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR COMHAIRLE NA NÓG

The following is considered best practice when selecting young people to attend the AGM:

- Send as wide an invitation as possible to schools, youth groups and organisations that work with seldom-heard young people;
- Ask all organisations to send a group of young people that is balanced in terms of age, gender, ability and background wherever possible;
- Allocate a minimum number/percentage of places for those aged under 15;
- Allocate a minimum number/percentage of places for both genders;
- Allocate a number/percentage of places for young people who are seldom-heard – 20% is considered ideal;
- Offer support to any young person who needs it to enable them to participate in a meaningful way.

Identifying the topics for discussion at the AGM

It is crucial that the process for selecting topics for discussion at the AGM is well thought out by the Comhairle Committee members and organisers in advance of the AGM. As the topics discussed at the AGM form the foundations of the Comhairle na nÓg work programme for the next year, or possibly two years, it is important that the issues are representative of as many voices as possible. It is equally important that the topics discussed are of interest and relevance to young people. Choosing a topic that really matters to young people is essential to ensure that the Comhairle Committee remain interested in the topic throughout the year. To ensure this is the case, **the topics for discussion need to be identified by the young people themselves.**

There are two distinct routes that Comhairlí na nÓg take to identify the important topics or issues for discussion at the AGM, including:

Selecting the topics before the AGM

Some Comhairlí na nÓg carry out a survey in advance of the AGM. The survey can be issued through schools and/or youth organisations. Some Comhairlí na nÓg simply include a question on the 'expression of interest' or 'permission' forms. In more cases, an online survey is conducted through a website or, more typically, using social media. The advantages of carrying out a survey in advance of the AGM are:

- ✎ topics are known in advance of the AGM so organisers and facilitators can prepare and plan accordingly;
- ✎ young people can identify the topic that interests them without feeling under pressure from their peers.

A potential disadvantage is that the topics selected by a wider body of young people may not be the topics of interest to the young people who actually attend the AGM. This is particularly true in the instance of anonymous online surveys. In light of this, any online surveys should be designed in a way that allows for respondents to be identified.

Selecting the topics at the AGM

More Comhairlí na nÓg now select their topics on the day of the AGM. This is often done using the 'Open Space' methodology (see p. 126). The advantages of this process are that:

- ✎ AGM attendees are discussing topics that they have identified and are interested in themselves;
- ✎ The young people who are recruited to the Comhairle na nÓg Committee have been involved in the identification and discussion of the topic that they will be working on throughout their time on the Committee.

It is not recommended that the topic is identified by the existing Comhairle Committee as the topics identified are often not the same as those identified by the actual participants at the AGM. The potential exception to this is where a topic is being worked on by the Comhairle Committee for two years, as the AGM in the intervening year can be used as an opportunity to find out more information on the topic and to check that the Committee is proceeding in a way that is relevant to the wider group of young people at the AGM.

CASE STUDY

Prior to the AGM, the current **Carlow Comhairle na nÓg** members prepare a questionnaire which is distributed to secondary schools, young people accessing activities and services with Carlow Regional Youth Services, local youth facilities and clubs around the county. When the questionnaires are returned, the Comhairle members analyse the results to establish the most prevalent issues which have been identified by young people in Carlow. This ensures that the voices of local young people are being heard and that they are actively involved in determining which issues are to be discussed during the workshops at the AGM.

CASE STUDY

Cork City Comhairle na nÓg holds an 'Ideas Factory' meeting in the summer when they are at the stage of preparing for a new topic/project. This Comhairle meeting is designed to give existing Comhairle members a chance to input on future topics and projects. All ideas are assessed against the following criteria:

- ↳ Inspiring (unique + momentum)
- ↳ Practical (done in two years + local to Cork)
- ↳ Influential (specific + policy change)
- ↳ Media impact (relevant + photogenic)

All of the ideas are rated against this criteria to identify the top four topics.

The Comhairle organisers then conduct a similar process in meetings with schools and youth centres when they reform in September. The 'top four' choices from the Comhairle members are revealed but young people can also propose their own ideas to the 'Ideas Factory'.

The ideas from the 'Ideas Factory' are presented at the AGM. All attendees are invited to engage with the ideas via interactive stations/stands. At the end of the AGM, one topic is chosen for the Comhairle committee to pursue. The Comhairle committee then spend its first few meetings refining the idea.

Methodologies to use at the AGM include:

- ✍️ Asking young people to identify topics of importance to them on arrival at the AGM. This could be done by asking young people to place their ideas on a Post-it on a graffiti wall or by including a special section on any 'registration form' provided;
- ✍️ 'Open Space' – This is a methodology that allows every person present to post as many ideas or suggestions as they like onto a board (e.g. using Post-its). These Post-its are then grouped to form a certain number of themes or topics. Facilitated workshops are then held on these topics and the young people can choose to go to whatever workshop they like or move from one to another if they prefer. At the end of these workshops, each group prioritises a recommendation or recommendations for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee to pursue.

The following toolboxes from *A practical guide to including seldom-heard children and young people in decision-making* outline additional methodologies that can be used either before or at the AGM.

IDENTIFYING ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

POST-ITS

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Post-its, pens, space to post the Post-its

TIME

15 minutes

NOTE

Requires literacy levels or provision of support with Post-its.

Explain that you want to find out what topics they would like to discuss or what areas of work they would like to focus on. Ask every participant to write down any ideas they have on a Post-it. Advise the group that they can come up with as many ideas as they like – the more the better – but they should put one idea only on each Post-it. The ideas should be in one or two words. Leaders should mingle with the group and help any child/young person write their ideas on Post-its, if necessary.

When the young people have written down all their ideas on their Post-its, they should stick the Post-its on a wall or white board or anywhere you can see them all together. Ask for a couple of volunteers to help you group the Post-its into a number of themes or topics. Put any similar topics together. These are your topics for discussion.



TOOLBOX

BUZZ GROUPS

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Coloured card



TIME

30 minutes

Buzz groups are essentially small groups of three or four young people working together to discuss and answer given questions. An adult Facilitator is not usually needed unless the question posed is a difficult or sensitive one – usually the group works on its own to answer a given question. For example, the question might be: ‘What topics would you like to work on as a group?’ or ‘What types of things would you like the group to work on together?’ The question that needs to be asked should be typed up, stuck onto coloured card and one card distributed to each group. Each group is asked to invent a name for themselves and this name is put at the top of the sheet of coloured card. The group then works together in a given timeframe (approximately 20 minutes) to come up with their ideas on the answer to the question posed. They record these ideas on the coloured card. If there are a number of questions to pose, the additional questions should be posted on different coloured cards. The cards with the answers are then posted on a wall and the young people can be invited to feed back the information to the wider group, as necessary. Once the coloured cards are on the wall, you can see if there are any recurring themes and work with the full group to decide which ones they would prefer to pursue (using ‘Prioritising preferences’, pp. 139–141).

ONLINE SURVEYS

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Access to computer and Internet



TIME

As short or as long as you make the survey.
Short is better!



You can also use free online surveys to ascertain what young people want to discuss. You need to create the survey online using the likes of www.surveymonkey.com or www.doodle.com and then send the link to the young people in your group. This has the advantage of including people who don’t attend meetings. You need to check if the young people have access to a computer or a smartphone, or else you need to make one available to them to complete the survey. You can find out how to use SurveyMonkey at: http://help.surveymonkey.com/articles/en_US/kb/How-to-create-a-survey or Doodle Poll at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nO21Ujn-peg>

COMMUNITY MAPPING BY SURVEY

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Training, copies of survey, ID badges/T-shirts



TIME

Over a longer period, e.g. number of weeks

NOTE

Requires literacy levels or provision of support with surveys.

Community mapping is a process where young people survey people in the community to get their views on a particular topic. It can be helpful to identify what people in the community want, as well as what participants in the group want. Steps include:

- Decide on the questions to be asked and draw up a simple survey;
- Advise and train the young people on typical survey skills, keeping safe, how to record answers and how to engage with members of the public;
- Conduct a trial run with the group members;
- Design or get ID badges and/or T-shirts, as well as an 'explanatory note' so that the young people feel 'official' conducting the survey;
- Allocate specific days for surveying so that a debriefing session can take place after each round of surveying;
- Collate the information from the survey;
- Decide on what issues or actions to pursue based on the survey results.

TOOLBOX

Before the AGM

BEST PRACTICE WHEN IDENTIFYING TOPICS FOR THE AGM

While there is not necessarily only one 'best way' of selecting the topics for discussion at the AGM, what is essential is that the:

- topics are selected by young people themselves so that they are relevant and interesting;
- methodology used to select the topics is inclusive and takes into account young people of varying abilities;
- topic is one where young people could realistically make a difference or have an impact.

Promotion of the AGM

The promotion of the AGM in the period before it takes place is principally aimed at potential delegates to the AGM. *It is considered best practice for members of the Comhairle na nÓg Committee to promote attendance of the AGM at their own schools and youth groups.* Other methods to promote the AGM among potential delegates include to:

- 👉 provide a poster with all the necessary details for noticeboards;
- 👉 invite all schools and youth groups to the AGM;
- 👉 ask Comhairle na nÓg Committee members to conduct interviews with or writing articles for local media outlets;
- 👉 provide information on websites and social networking sites used by local young people;
- 👉 invite the local radio station to do a live broadcast from the AGM.

Practical preparation for the AGM

Organising a Comhairle na nÓg AGM is similar to organising any event involving young people. Some of the key aspects to consider are:

THE DATE

Fix a September/October date for the AGM at the earliest opportunity. This makes the promotion of the AGM much easier and more effective. In addition, schools often offer free advertising for Comhairle na nÓg in their school journals. However, since these journals are usually printed in May, it is necessary to know the AGM date and give it to the schools before May so that the AGM can be freely advertised to every single student.

THE VENUE

The AGM venue should be a place that young people find inviting and welcoming, and should not be intimidating for anybody. Ideally, the venue should be somewhere that regularly hosts events for young people. If the venue is a hotel or other venue used to hosting adults, the staff should be briefed on what to expect and asked to respect the young people as guests. In all cases, the venue should be vetted and approved by members of the Comhairle na nÓg Committee.

CATERING

The food selected needs to be youth-friendly. It also needs to be something that can be served and eaten relatively quickly since the day is quite short. Again, the Comhairle na nÓg Committee should be involved in selecting the food options and ideally be allowed sample a selection of what will be offered. Healthy options should be made available.

TRANSPORT

Some Comhairlí na nÓg organise collection and drop-off points for each young person attending the Comhairle na nÓg AGM. Other Comhairlí ask the school or organisation that the young person is from to make transport arrangements for the young person in their care. Whatever method is chosen, it is important to make sure that transport arrangements are in place for AGM delegates.

Identifying and allocating key roles

It is essential that young people are central to proceedings at the AGM. While it is important that elected officials are invited to participate, they should not usurp young people from the stage or prominence. All adults who are present should have an assigned role or brief rather than being present in an observatory capacity. This includes Steering Committee members who should be well briefed for their role in advance.

There are a number of key roles that are central to the success of the day, including:

KEY SPEAKERS

Although it is ideal not to have too many speakers making presentations from a podium, it is likely that there will be at least one if not two key speakers on the day, even if that is just to open and close the event and to present feedback from the previous year. Where possible and appropriate, the speakers should be Comhairle na nÓg Committee members, especially when the progress from the previous year is being presented. All adult speakers should be briefed on the importance of being succinct, using youth-friendly language and speaking about topics that the young people can relate to, even if the key speaker is the Mayor or any other dignitary.

FACILITATORS and CO-FACILITATORS

Depending on how the day and/or workshops are structured, it is likely that facilitators and co-facilitators will be needed. The role of the *facilitator* in a workshop is to take the young people in the group through a process that allows them to explore and discuss a topic. Again, depending on the structure of the workshops, it may also be that the facilitator needs to ask the young people to then focus on a particular aspect of a topic and identify recommendations or outcomes they would like the Comhairle na nÓg Committee to work on achieving. The role of a facilitator is skilled and pivotal to the success of the AGM. Unless the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members have had extensive facilitation training, it is not necessary to ask young people to play the role of facilitator.

If the group is large, it may be helpful to have a *co-facilitator*. He or she can help control the group and perhaps lead some of the opening ice-breakers. This role is suitable for a young person who is well briefed on the importance of letting the workshop delegates have a voice and of withholding their own opinion.

NOTE-TAKERS

In some instances, co-facilitators double as note-takers in order to minimise the number of 'adults' or non-participants at the workshop. Regardless of who takes the notes, the note-taker should be briefed to ensure that they take legible notes on all the key points made in the workshop since these will prove vital in writing up the final report of the day.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

There are multiple administrative roles to be carried out on the day of the AGM. It is helpful if at least one person is allocated as the 'coordinator' who can oversee the day. This may be the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator. Administrative staff, which should be Comhairle na nÓg Committee members, need to look after registration, refunding any transport costs incurred by young people, coordinating the entertainment and any other relevant administrative tasks on the day.

Briefing for Comhairle na nÓg Committee members

Regardless of what specific roles the young people from the previous year's Comhairle na nÓg Committee are playing, they will need to be extremely well briefed and prepared for these roles. It may take at least one specific Comhairle na nÓg Committee meeting to ensure that everybody is familiar with their role and prepared for it. Unless the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members are taking part in the workshops as regular participants, it is really important that they are aware of the importance of withholding their own opinion from the discussion.

Resources






There are a number of resources that need to be prepared in advance of the AGM, many of which are to help prepare those playing some of the key roles, outlined above. Some of the necessary resources include:

FACILITATOR PACK

The Facilitator Pack helps ensure that each workshop is structured in the same way and that each facilitator has the same objectives and achieves the same outcomes in a set format at the end. The Facilitator Pack must be accompanied by a 'briefing for facilitators' in advance of the AGM so that facilitators understand their role in the process, the goal of specific workshops and can raise any questions that they have about the process. (Details on the 'briefing for facilitators' and a sample Facilitator Pack are provided in Appendix 11.) A sample and more detailed Facilitator Pack from Dublin City Comhairle na nÓg AGM is also available in the Coordinators Corner (www.comhairlenanog.ie)

PACK FOR AGM DELEGATES

Providing a simple pack for AGM delegates is also recommended. The pack can be very short and should be written in youth-friendly language. The pack should include:

-  the agenda for the day;
-  an explanation of Comhairle na nÓg and the Comhairle na nÓg AGM;
-  information on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee, including an outline of the commitment needed, expectations of delegates and a likely schedule of meetings;
-  information on the (s)election procedure;
-  brief background information on the topics being discussed at the AGM.

Practical suggestions

There are a number of practical suggestions that are useful when organising the AGM, including:

MAKE THE AGM YOUTH-FRIENDLY

- ✎ Ask and train the young people to run the registration desk. This makes it clear from the off that young people are central to this process;
- ✎ Ask and train the young people to lead the ice-breakers and games throughout the day;
- ✎ Ask and train Comhairle na nÓg Committee members to be involved in the workshops in some capacity. This helps put young people at the heart of the day;
- ✎ Run a trial version of the workshops with the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members and incorporate their feedback into the process;
- ✎ Ensure that the venue and food is specifically geared towards young people and vetted by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee;
- ✎ Brief any adult speakers on what exactly Comhairle na nÓg is and confirm to the speaker that the audience consists of young people. Remind them that their speech or presentation should be engaging for young people and should be delivered using youth-friendly language.

PROVIDE AN OFFICIAL LETTER TO CERTIFY ATTENDANCE

- ✎ Each young person who attends should be given an official letter of attendance that proves that the young person participated in the day and asks their school to treat Comhairle na nÓg as a day of attendance (if the Comhairle na nÓg is run on a weekday).

NEGOTIATE ON COSTS

- ✎ Negotiate on costs for the venue, catering and other resource needs.

AGM checklist

Use the following checklist to help you establish if you have completed all the necessary tasks.

BEFORE THE AGM CHECKLIST

Aspect of AGM	Tasks
Practical preparations	<input type="checkbox"/> Set AGM date at earliest opportunity – send ‘save this date’ correspondence as soon as date is confirmed <input type="checkbox"/> Book youth-friendly venue <input type="checkbox"/> Book youth-friendly catering and confirm numbers close to the date <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange transport for young people: book buses and arrange pick-up times for young people, as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Book key equipment, such as projectors, laptops, AV equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Send invitations to key stakeholders, as appropriate
Key roles	<input type="checkbox"/> Select facilitators <input type="checkbox"/> Select co-facilitators <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange briefing meeting/rehearsal for facilitators <input type="checkbox"/> Select and brief note-takers <input type="checkbox"/> Select and brief speakers <input type="checkbox"/> Select young people for administrative tasks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> registration <input type="checkbox"/> refunding costs on day <input type="checkbox"/> coordinating entertainment
Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepare presentations and displays of work from previous year <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare and print information pack for AGM delegates <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare and print information pack for facilitators <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare and print letter/certificate of attendance for each attendee <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange registration sheets, reimbursement sheets, name badges, signs for the venue
Promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Print and disseminate promotional poster/leaflet for noticeboards <input type="checkbox"/> Update information on any websites/social networking sites <input type="checkbox"/> Send diary note to photographers <input type="checkbox"/> Book photographer for the day <input type="checkbox"/> Work up draft press releases <input type="checkbox"/> Send press release to media
Selection of young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Send invitations to schools, youth organisations and organisations representing seldom-heard young people <input type="checkbox"/> State need to send representation that is balanced in terms of age, gender and geographic location <input type="checkbox"/> Seek Consent Forms for all young people nominated <input type="checkbox"/> Fill minimum percentage of places for girls <input type="checkbox"/> Fill minimum percentage of places for boys <input type="checkbox"/> Fill percentage of places for young people aged under 15 <input type="checkbox"/> Fill percentage of places for seldom-heard young people <input type="checkbox"/> Support seldom-heard young people to attend, where necessary
Topics for discussion	<input type="checkbox"/> Make young people central in selection of topics for discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Identify key topics for discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and rehearse methodology to select topics on the day <input type="checkbox"/> Agree methodology and final agenda

'ON THE DAY' CHECKLIST

You might also find the following checklist helpful 'on the day':

Tasks

- Set up all rooms/breakout spaces/workshop spaces with any necessary equipment,, e.g. flipchart and pens
- Set up all necessary IT equipment, including laptops, projectors, presentations loaded
- Set up Registration Desk with registration and reimbursement sheets and name badges
- Check that the caterers have arrived and are set up
- Check that all facilitators have arrived
- Check that all key speakers and guests have arrived
- Check that all participants have arrived and follow up unexplained absences
- Distribute information packs with agenda/speaker profiles/evaluations and pens
- Put all evaluation tools in place (don't forget to collect after the evaluation has been conducted)
- Distribute all certificates of attendance

KEY ADVICE

- ✍ Set the date for the AGM well in advance. Send a 'save this date' note;
- ✍ Email/letter to key stakeholders, such as schools and key decision-makers as soon as the date is confirmed;
- ✍ Stage the AGM in September/October so there is enough time to deliver all the other aspects of the programme;
- ✍ Ask the Comhairle na nÓg Committee members to assess the venue and food in advance for 'youth-friendliness';
- ✍ Select the workshop topics in advance, wherever possible;
- ✍ Keep speeches and presentations to a minimum and make sure they are short and use youth-friendly language;
- ✍ Provide an information pack for all AGM attendees;
- ✍ Provide an information pack for all facilitators;
- ✍ Ask Comhairle members to promote the AGM at their own schools and youth organisations;
- ✍ Put strategies in place to ensure the Comhairle na nÓg AGM attendance is balanced in terms of age, gender and geographic location;
- ✍ Aim to have 20% of attendees from seldom-heard backgrounds;
- ✍ Develop partnerships with organisations who work with seldom-heard young people;
- ✍ The topics for discussion at the AGM must be selected by young people;
- ✍ Involve young people in the delivery of every aspect of the day;
- ✍ Ensure Comhairle na nÓg Committee members know the importance of allowing other voices to be heard, of not participating in workshops where they are not participants, and of not dominating workshops if they are participants.

Chapter 3

At the AGM



In order to fulfil the objectives of the AGM – which include discussing and prioritising topics of importance to young people, providing feedback on the previous year's work and electing the Comhairle na nÓg Committee – there are four key elements of a Comhairle na nÓg AGM, namely:

1. **Presentation** by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee on work in previous year;
2. **Workshops** to discuss and make recommendations on topics (things) of importance to young people;
3. **Prioritisation of topics** for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee to pursue;
4. **(S)election** of the new Comhairle na nÓg Committee (or new delegates for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee if it is the second year of a two-year term).

The AGM also usually includes a brief evaluation of the event at the end of the day.

Agenda for the day

How AGMs are organised vary from Comhairle to Comhairle. The exact structure of the day is dependent on the methodologies used to select the topics for discussion, how many topics are being discussed and whether a Comhairle na nÓg Committee needs to be (s)elected. Outlined below is a typical agenda for a Comhairle na nÓg AGM where the topics have been pre-selected before the meeting and a Comhairle na nÓg Committee needs to be (s)elected. A sample agenda is illustrated below.



Comhairle na nÓg AGM Agenda

10.00am–3.45pm

10.00am–10.30am	Arrival and Registration Graffiti Wall	Hall Foyer
10.30am–10.40am	Welcome and Agenda for the Day <i>John, Comhairle na nÓg Committee</i> <i>Mary, Comhairle na nÓg Committee</i>	Main Hall
10.40am–11.00am	Presentation on work of Comhairle Committee 2010 Vote on whether to continue with this work in the future. <i>John, Comhairle na nÓg Committee</i> <i>Mary, Comhairle na nÓg Committee</i>	
11.00am–12.00pm	Workshop 1: Bullying in Schools Discussion on topic > Recommendation	Main Hall (Tables)
12.00pm–12.45pm	Lunch	Canteen (Downstairs)
12.45pm–1.45pm	Workshop 2: Do we need a Youth Café? Discussion on topic > Recommendation	Main Hall (Tables)
1.45pm–2.00pm	Break	Main Hall
2.00pm–2.40pm	Nominations and Voting for Comhairle na nÓg Committee	Main Hall
2.40pm–3.15pm	Feedback from Workshops Vote on 'Most Important' topics and recommendations	Main Hall
3.15pm–3.25pm	Comhairle na nÓg Committee Election Results	Main Hall
3.25pm–3.45pm	Evaluation and Closing <i>John, Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator</i> <i>Mary, Comhairle na nÓg Committee</i>	Main Hall

Detailed consideration of the four key elements outlined on p.120 will greatly assist in running an effective AGM. A guide on what to consider and how to implement these elements is outlined below.

Presentation by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee on work in previous year

It is important that the Comhairle na nÓg Committee presents the progress on the topics worked on throughout the previous year because it:

- ↳ informs a wider cohort of young people on the topics of importance and the progress made on these in their local area;
- ↳ allows that wider cohort to make an informed decision on whether it would be good to conduct further work on that same topic or whether enough progress has been achieved and they would prefer to work on another topic of importance;
- ↳ demonstrates that young people are central to the process and to the work involved;
- ↳ provides a natural link from year to year.

The presentation itself should:

- ↳ be made by one or a number of Comhairle na nÓg Committee members who were central to the process;
- ↳ be short and to the point;
- ↳ be accompanied by any visual aids, where available and appropriate;
- ↳ outline the process that the Comhairle na nÓg Committee undertook to work on the topic;
- ↳ outline any progress, impact or change that resulted from working on the topic;
- ↳ include a recommendation from the Committee as to whether they think sufficient or as much progress as possible has been made on the topic or whether it should be one of the topics worked on by the Committee for a further year;
- ↳ be followed by a vote on whether the topic should be further pursued for another year (if appropriate);
- ↳ be made at the beginning so that the workshops (see *below*) can take into account the recommendation from the Comhairle na nÓg Committee and/or outcome of the overall vote.

Workshops to discuss and make recommendations on topics of importance to young people

What are the workshops for?

The workshops are a key element of an AGM and are central to the decision about what topic(s) or aspects of the topic(s) to work on throughout the year. The workshops should be designed *to bring the young people through a process to identify what really matters to them and to make recommendations on what aspects of the topic or outcomes the elected Comhairle na nÓg Committee should seek on their behalf throughout the year.* Again, as well as ensuring the desired outcomes are realistically achievable, they should also be something that young people feel really does matter and where a positive change would make a difference in their life.

Typical topics

A vast diversity of topics have been discussed in the Comhairlí na nÓg over the years. Sometimes young people put forward topics in a bid to appear sophisticated when they might prefer to talk about something else. It works well when the topic chosen is realistically achievable and is something that young people are really passionate about. What is really important to young people can be quite simple: 'What to do when you don't like school', 'Trying to balance working and doing my homework' or 'How to deal with bullies in my school'. While the precise topics discussed depend on the outcome of the selection process used to identify those topics, Comhairlí na nÓg can be guided by topics that:

- really matter to young people;
- are particularly relevant at local level;
- have had a successful outcome in other Comhairle na nÓg areas;
- have been considered in the past and can be further built on;
- are relevant or 'newsworthy' nationally.

Some of the topics that have been considered in recent years include:

HEALTH

- Drugs and alcohol
- Substance abuse and its effects on young people
- Headshops
- Underage alcohol and drug use
- Smoking
- Mental health
- Mental health and the community
- Suicide and depression
- Promoting positive mental health
- Promoting youth health
- Youth health and well-being
- Cervical cancer vaccination
- Sexual health

FACILITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Facilities
- Lack of facilities
- Sport and recreation for young people
- Youth facilities
- Cost of activities
- Sports facilities
- Lack of inexpensive activities
- Safe places to hang out
- Creating youth spaces
- Transport
- Lack of transport for young people
- Green areas and community facilities
- Infrastructure and town layout
- Role of local councillors
- Local democracy/how young people can get involved
- Youth centres

EDUCATION

- Early School Leaving
- Supports and issues facing young people
- Education/education system
- Education cuts
- Sexual education
- Cutbacks to school resources
- Disability access in schools
- Exam stress

HAVING A VOICE

- Do young people have a say in matters that affect them?
- Giving young people a voice
- Lowering voting age
- Children's rights
- Getting your voice heard

SAFETY ISSUES

- Road safety
- Domestic violence
- Relationships
- Sexism
- Bullying
- Street violence
- Internet safety and social networking

ATTITUDES

- Racism
- Ageism
- Discrimination of young people
- Stereotypes
- Deep-seated attitudes, e.g. homophobia
- Negative stereotyping of young people/challenging negative stereotypes

YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE WORKPLACE

- Young people and the recession
- Lack of jobs
- Gaps in weekend services
- Young people's rights in the workplace
- Unemployment (for young people)
- Employment and associated legislation

OTHER

- Peer pressure
- Image pressures
- Homelessness
- Young people and direct provision
- Family support – Tusla
- Interculturalism
- Inclusion and diversity
- Irish culture – what is it?
- Irish identity – what it means to be Irish
- Diversity
- Youth power
- Young people and the media
- Youth justice
- Youth arts
- Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)
- Juvenile record
- Country life
- Vandalism
- LGBT rights
- Sports

Who is involved in the workshops?

FACILITATOR	The workshops should be facilitated by a skilled facilitator who is well briefed on their task (see p. 160).
CO-FACILITATOR	A Comhairle na nÓg Committee member may play the role of co-facilitator (see p. 160). This person might lead the ice-breaker games and help ensure all workshop delegates are included in the conversation.
NOTE-TAKER	In some instances, the co-facilitator may double as a note-taker (see p. 160). However, some people prefer to have a dedicated skilled note-taker who can record all of the key points made in the workshop.
YOUNG PEOPLE	Approximately 10–12 young people attend each workshop. Ideally, no more than 15 should attend a workshop as otherwise not everyone will have an opportunity to contribute. The young people are often grouped for the workshops by age and with a gender and geographic balance. This can be organised in advance of the day. It is most important to ensure the delegates are divided by age so that younger delegates are not intimidated by older ones. However, if the workshops are run using an ‘open space’ style methodology, where the young people choose their own workshop, the make-up of the group is usually more random.

What actually happens in a workshop?

The workshops usually commence with a brief ice-breaker, which helps the group to get to know each other’s names and to relax so that they can work effectively together. Ask the Comhairle na nÓg Committee to recommend their favourite ice-breakers to start a workshop. A list of typical ice-breakers is listed in Appendix 12.

The workshop then moves to the stage where the facilitator:

- ✎ introduces the topic;
- ✎ explains the purpose of the workshop and what tasks the young people have to complete;
- ✎ explains what outputs are needed at the end;
- ✎ facilitates the young people to discuss the topic;
- ✎ facilitates the young people to make a decision on the most important points;
- ✎ facilitates the young people to make a recommendation on the precise aspects of the topic or outcomes that the Comhairle na nÓg Committee should pursue.

What workshop methodologies are commonly used?

There are many instances when workshops are simply facilitated as outlined above, the information is fed back to the wider cohort and decisions on what topics and recommendations to pursue for the year are made based on that information. However, there are a number of other creative methodologies that can be used to ‘workshop’ the topics, some of which are described below.

WORKSHOP TECHNIQUES

Workshops are an important means of engaging with all young people. Ensuring that workshops are short, interesting and engaging is important. Young people are not always used to an atmosphere of ‘considered debate’ or ‘sharing views’ and they can lose interest relatively quickly. In light of that, it is important to use creative methods and to allow the participants to opt in and out as they are interested and have an idea that they want to share.

The typical structure of a workshop is:

- ✎ Brief ice-breaker to relax and get to know each other (where relevant). Use one of the ice-breakers on pp. 162–167 or ask the participants for their suggestions.
- ✎ The Facilitator or leader then:
 - introduces the ‘topic’ or question for discussion;
 - explains the purpose of the workshop and what tasks the children and young people have to complete;
 - explains what outputs are needed at the end;
 - facilitates the young people to discuss the issue;
 - facilitates the young people to make a decision on the most important issues;
 - facilitates the young people to achieve the desired outputs.

‘OPEN SPACE’

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Blank space on wall, Post-its



TIME

15 minutes for generating ideas,
10 minute break/game while Post-its are being ‘themed’
and 30 minutes for workshop

This is a methodology that allows every person present to post as many ideas or suggestions as they like onto a board (e.g. using Post-its). These Post-its are then grouped to form a certain number of themes or topics (*as outlined on p. 127*). Facilitated workshops are then held on these topics and the children and young people can choose to go to whatever workshop they like – or move from one to another if they prefer.

CASE STUDY

Louth Comhairle na nÓg uses Open Space Technology (OST) at their annual Comhairle na nÓg event. The Development Officer worked with a subgroup of the Comhairle na nÓg Committee in planning the agenda, the exhibition area, media coverage and also provided training to the young people to facilitate the Open Space Technology workshops.

On the day, the Open Space piece was introduced by a young person who explained what would happen and how the young people present could participate. She then asked for topics to be put forward by the participants. Members of Comhairle na nÓg passed around Post-its to the participants to write topics on. The Post-its were then stuck on a white board. The young people trained in OST clustered the topics into 10 areas for discussion, under the supervision of the Development Officer. The group then dispersed into 10 different workshops, where a young person trained in OST facilitated the workshop. There was a pre-arranged note-taker who had been given a template to complete covering the following titles:

1. the problem;
2. the cause of the problem;
3. the impact of the problem on young people;
4. the solution.

Each workshop was supervised by an adult who did not take part but who was on hand to provide support if necessary. The concept of OST is that people can fluidly move from one workshop to the next, take part in the discussion and then move on.

The note-taker then took the notes to a side table where three adults put the notes up on PowerPoint. The young people went for lunch and when they returned a brief presentation was made on the result of the workshops. An open discussion took place with invited guests, which included elected members of Louth County Council, senior management in Louth County Council, Louth ETB, Louth Leader Partnership, HSE North East and Youth Services in Louth. The young people were then asked to prioritise areas for an action plan and the four areas that scored the highest were as follows:

1. bullying;
2. cross-border relations with other youth councils;
3. Louth – an age-friendly county, an intergenerational project;
4. media presentation of young people.

The newly elected Comhairle na nÓg Committee then prepared an action plan based on the above areas at a special all-day event held shortly after the annual event.

CREATIVE METHODOLOGIES

ARTS AND CRAFTS

TOOLBOX

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Arts and crafts materials, e.g. markers, stickers, glue, glitter, magazines for collage, coloured paper, scissors



TIME

40 minutes



Arts and crafts work really well with seldom-heard young people. They can have a calming effect on a group and it is sometimes useful to introduce them when you need the group to focus on a task. The method is also especially useful in groups where literacy levels are low. Even where literacy levels are good, it can sometimes be easier for a young person to draw or doodle over a period and to then talk about their drawing rather than give a direct 'opinion' or 'view'. Sometimes opinions and views are too hard to give, but can be teased out by talking through what their drawing, doodle or graffiti represents for them. You can use arts and crafts as the actual workshop process where you ask all of the participants to draw/doodle/graffiti/mix media their response to a particular question. You can also make arts and crafts materials available throughout other workshops. That way, if a person is not interested or able to contribute verbally, they can occupy themselves by doodling and the Facilitator can ask them about their output during the workshop.

BODY MAPS

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Flipchart paper taped together vertically to form a long sheet, markers



TIME

40 minutes

Body Maps are a particularly good tool to find out how young people are feeling about something. They are also a good way of making the workshop setting informal since young people have to work on the floor and use markers/crayons, etc. Ask one person to lie on a giant piece of paper and get another volunteer to draw all around them. The body can be used in different ways. You could ask the children and young people to use the top/right-hand side of the body to write down things that are important to them. These need only be one or two words. The Facilitator can also ask people to tell her their ideas, so that anybody who doesn't want to write does not have to. Alternatively a different part of the body (e.g. the legs or the heart) can be used for specific questions. The idea is to spark discussion in an informal way, while still getting the necessary information. At the end of the discussion, the young people can rank the issues by using sticky dots or markers on the Body Map. The Body Map is also a good visual tool to help with giving feedback to a larger group.

GRAPHIC FACILITATION

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Skilled Graphic Facilitators, big whiteboard/space for flipcharts



TIME

Can be full length of workshop or at appropriate times of workshop (e.g. when groups are feeding back their ideas).



TOOLBOX

This method is particularly good for people with low literacy rates. It really helps to bring alive the ideas that are being generated at the workshop. While you can use graphic illustration at different stages of a workshop and for different purposes, essentially the role of the Graphic Facilitator is to draw/doodle/sketch the ideas and suggestions made by the young people in real time. This enables young people to 'see' their thinking. It is very helpful when dealing with complex issues or explaining difficult or abstract concepts. The graphic recordings also provide a map and record of the 'journey' of the thinking process to reach a particular idea or outcome. This can really help to inspire young people to keep going until they achieve their outcome.

An example of Irish graphic illustrator Elfie Rocher (<http://elfiegraphicrecording.blogspot.ie/>) mapping the outcomes at a CoderDojo event (for adults) is depicted below:



Examples from the international graphic illustrator Julie Gieseke (who also conducts work in Ireland) can be found at www.mapthemind.org:



At the AGM

CASE STUDY

Consultation with children on development of new children's hospital

The DCYA supported a consultation day with children (aged 7–12) on the development of the new Children's Hospital. All of the children had experience of being in hospital, many over a long period. Over the course of the day, the children had the opportunity to:

- ↪ play ice-breaker games;
- ↪ discuss their ideas in small groups aided by Lifelines and drawing;
- ↪ meet and hear from the designers of the hospital;
- ↪ ask questions;
- ↪ draw, doodle and sketch their ideas on a graffiti wall;
- ↪ give their ideas in a diary room that was set up as a Santa's Grotto (it was December);
- ↪ hear from young people who were involved in designing the hospital in Glasgow;
- ↪ discuss ideas on specific topics such as 'treatment areas', 'rooms' and 'education'.

Graphic illustration

At that point, the graphic illustrators asked for some of the big ideas that came up during the day. They then sketched out what they might look like.

Body Map

One of the workshop groups was asked to explore what they would like the new Children's Hospital to 'look and feel like'. Using flipchart pages stuck together, the Facilitator asked one child to lie on the floor as the others drew around her.

Using this as a Body Map, the Facilitator then gave the following instructions:

- ↪ Beside the ears, write what you hear;
- ↪ Beside the eyes, what do you see first?
- ↪ Beside the nose, how does it smell?
- ↪ In the head, what are you thinking?
- ↪ At the mouth, how do people speak to you?
- ↪ In the heart/tummy, how are you feeling (physically and emotionally)?
- ↪ At the feet, where do you go? Can you find your way?
- ↪ Outside the body, write all the things that could make it easier or more friendly. If you don't like the sounds, what could be done to change that? How could you feel less scared? Could someone answer questions for you? Is there something to do that might help to pass the time?

This is a perfect example of using the Body Map to explore how young people are feeling about something.

LIFELINES

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Lifelines (A sample Lifeline Template is provided in Appendix 13)



TIME

40 minutes



TOOLBOX

Using Lifelines is a way of drawing out the important parts in people's lives. They might be especially useful for young people who would find it hard to contribute to a group. Use a sheet with clouds or speech bubbles and ask the young people to write in 'the most important things that have happened in their lives', starting from when they were born. Ask the young people to feed back what they have written down. The Facilitator can then note some of the common important things and use that to start a discussion on what actually matters to young people.

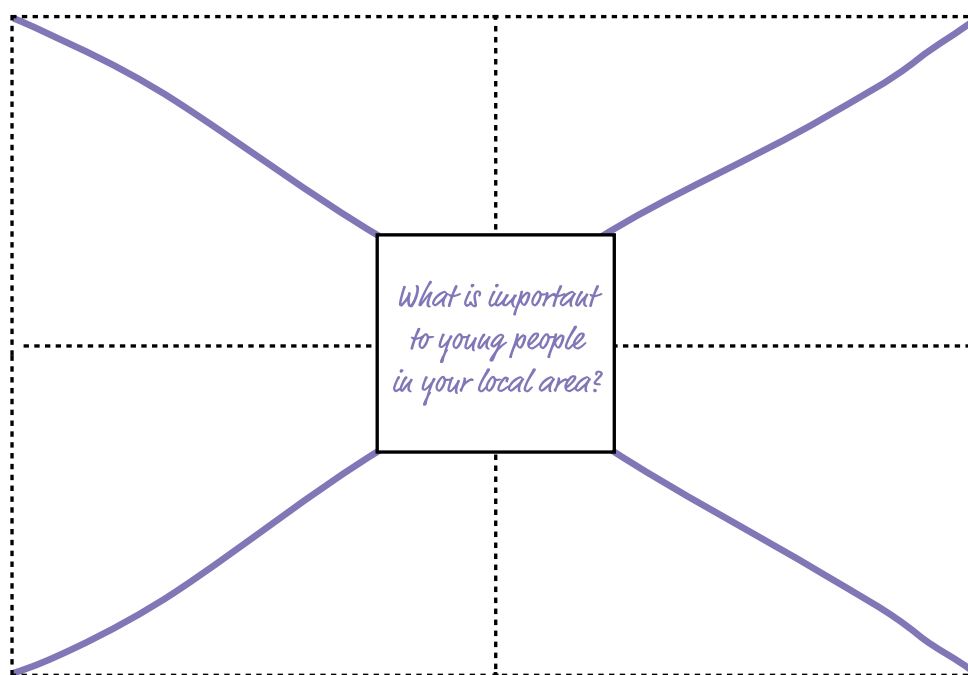
PLACEMAT/FLOORMAT METHOD

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Table or floor space, placemat (can be made with four flipchart sheets taped together to form a square), markers

TIME

40 minutes









At the AGM

(continued)

TOOLBOX

The Placemat method allows big groups to split up and work in smaller groups while still remaining physically close together. It also creates an informal atmosphere. Four flipchart sheets are taped together to form a big sheet. You can work on the mat on a floor or on a table – whatever works better for your group. A square is drawn in the middle and the key question to be answered is written in the square, e.g. ‘What is important to young people in your local area?’ Four lines are then drawn from the square to each outer corner (or to however many spaces you need for each group). The participants are then split up into pairs or small groups. Each group works at one of the corners of the square, where they respond to the questions asked by:

-  listing words;
-  writing statements;
-  writing an answer in the form of a narrative;
-  making a sketch;
-  providing an illustration or diagram;
-  simply doodling.

At the end of an allocated amount of time, the placemat can be turned around and shared with other groups or groups can verbally feed back their answers to the question to the wider group. If the most important answers to the question need to be prioritised, sticky dots can be distributed and the young people asked to allocate these to what they consider the most important answers to the questions.

CASE STUDY

Placemats in action at ‘Young Voices – Have Your Say’

‘Young Voices – Have Your Say’ is a series of consultations (meetings) with young people aged 15–30 on how they can be more fully included in society. The consultations are part of a European programme called ‘Structured Dialogue’, which gives young people all over Europe a chance to ‘have your say’ about decisions affecting their life. The consultations in Ireland are conducted by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI).

When the theme was on ‘Jobs and Entrepreneurship’, young people were facilitated to answer questions on jobs, internships, training, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. They worked in groups of approximately 10 people, using the Placemat method. The placemats were large, colourful, 5-foot square pieces of paper, designed and printed professionally in a child/youth-friendly layout with the consultation questions written on them. The participants moved around the tables in pairs or small groups of three to answer each of the questions, before discussing the answers together in their group of 10. After this discussion, the group then prioritised the key issues in each section/under each question using sticky dots. These prioritised ideas were then put forward to the main group for an overall vote.

(continued)

Pictures of workshops in action and an example of a completed Placemat are shown below.



TOOLBOX

POST-ITS

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Post-its (in different colours), pens, flipchart paper

TIME

40 minutes

Choose a particular question or topic, e.g. playing/hanging out in my area. Give each participant two different coloured Post-its. On one coloured Post-it, ask the participants to write, list or draw all of the good things about playing/hanging out in the area. Now, on another coloured Post-it, ask the young people to write all of the things that are not good about playing/hanging out in the area. Ask each person to talk through their ideas as they stick them to a flipchart sheet on the floor/on the wall.

CASE STUDY

Consultation with children on development of new Children's Hospital

During the consultation with children with experience of hospitals on the development of the new Children's Hospital, the children were asked to write or draw all of the things that help them meet/play with others in the hospital. On another coloured Post-it, they were asked to list or draw the things that made this difficult. Each person talked about their idea as they stuck their Post-it onto a flipchart sheet.

At the AGM

MOVING DEBATE

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Big room



TIME

20 minutes

NOTES

- Gives you comprehensive feedback on particular questions posed;
- Be mindful not to use the words 'stand' or 'walk' if there are people in the group who do not have these abilities. Alternatively, use the words 'move' or 'take up a position' if there are wheelchair users;
- Excellent technique for breaking up workshops and re-energising the group;
- Ask all the participants in the room to situate themselves (standing if they can) in one line;
- Pose the question for debate;
- Ask the children and young people to move to the right of the room if they AGREE with the statement or to the left of the room if they DISAGREE. Alternatively, they can move to anywhere in between to represent their position;
- Ask one or two children and young people in each spot why they agree/disagree/don't know;
- Where possible, record the outcome of the Moving Debate either through video, photography or by simply noting the number of children and young people standing in each place for each question.

CASE STUDY

The DCYA conducted consultations on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills on the 'Forum of Patronage and Pluralism'. The day included a Moving Debate, where the following two 'statements' for debate were posed:

- schools should have a uniform;
- school should be a place where everyone feels included.

TOP 10 TIPS

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Coloured paper, markers



TIME

30 minutes

Ask the young people to come up with the 'Top 10 tips' or the 'Top 10 most important things' about whatever topic you are discussing. For example, during the consultation with children with experience of hospitals on the development of the new Children's Hospital, the children were asked to come up with the Top 10 things they would suggest to the designers about designing a hospital room for children.

WORLD CAFÉ

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Flipchart paper, markers, round tables and chairs



TIME

40 minutes

This is a methodology that facilitates people to sit in very small groups of four or five and have quite in-depth conversations – like you would do in a café – about the assigned topic. The young people are then asked to move to another group and another topic. At every move, a 'host' or Facilitator remains behind to explain the outcome of the previous conversation and to see what the new group would like to add. The process facilitates the sharing of ideas and the young people get to consider a number of ideas in a short space of time. At the end, all groups are asked to share their key ideas.

This is a methodology that allows every person present to post as many ideas or suggestions as they like onto a board (e.g. using Post-its). These Post-its are then grouped to form a certain number of themes or topics (*as outlined on p. 109*). Facilitated workshops are then held on these topics and the young people can choose to go to whatever workshop they like – or move from one to another if they prefer.

TOOLBOX

At the AGM

CASE STUDY

Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg used a variation of the World Café method to good effect at their AGM. They set up the room with three rows of tables covered in flipchart paper (tablecloths). These tablecloths facilitated young people to write down their thoughts and opinions and made the writing up of the report a lot easier. Each row of tables had a set of questions related to the topic being discussed. Participants discussed the question posed and wrote their ideas on the tablecloth. Facilitators were moving round the hall during the proceedings to offer any assistance required. After a given amount of time, a bell sounded and the participants moved from their table to the next table (with the group at the last table moving to the first table). They then considered what previous groups had said by reading what was written on the tablecloth and adding their views/opinions to it. This process continued until all participants had been to all of the tables and ended with each group returning to the first table they were at to consider what had been added by all the other groups during the process. At the end of this process, the original group decided on the top recommendations to put forward from their table.

Having used this method at their AGM, Roscommon Comhairle has the following advice:

THE PREPARATION

- Run a mock café with your Comhairle and your facilitators to ensure: questions are relevant, questions are specific enough, questions are understandable, everyone knows what they are doing on the day.

THE SPACE

- Create a café space with comfortable tables, chairs, atmosphere, food and music. Place some fruit and snacks on the tables, but don't serve drinks as any spillage ruins the paper tablecloths with the information on them. Place plants and posters around the space to create a relaxed café atmosphere;
- Ensure your space is big enough and comfortable because there will be a lot of people moving around.

THE TABLES

- Sit no more than 10 people around each table (with space for a table facilitator if needed);
- Use paper tablecloths so the young people can answer the question at each table by writing on the cloths (or use plastic tablecloths with flipchart sheets over them).

THE QUESTIONS

- Assign one question per table and allocate specific time to answer the question. Plan the questions carefully – make sure they are specific and related 100% to the topic. Time is tight so questions need to be simple and clear, yet specific to allow for energetic discussion;
- At the end, whatever has been decided, ensure each table addresses the following question: What can Comhairle *do* about this?

THE PRACTICAL ADVICE

- Use one colour marker only for each question – makes recording easier;
- Manage your time – nominate a time-keeper who makes some signal for people to change tables;
- Don't expect quietness – this model should be full of noise, energy and movement!

CASE STUDY

Kildare Comhairle na nÓg has also used the World Café method to good effect at an AGM. A description of how it uses the World Café sessions is below:

5 mins	Introduction to World Café and how to find your table
35 mins	Session 1 (see structure below)
5 mins	Session changeover
35 mins	Session 2 (repeat of session 1 on separate topic)
5 mins	Move to Plenary Room
25mins	Feedback session

World Café Session

5 mins	Welcome young people to the table
	Introductions
	Briefed on plan for the session and outline of the topic being discussed
5 mins	Ice-breaker
7 mins	Topic Expert input
10 mins	Questions and Answers session with Topic Expert
8 mins	Agree on action points and recommendations emanating from discussions above

Note-taker makes note of the action points and recommendations on the tablecloth so that they can be part of the feedback session (two mins).

TOOLBOX

At the AGM

BUZZ GROUPS

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Coloured paper, markers



TIME

40 minutes

Buzz groups can be used as a workshop technique as well as a way to identify issues for discussion (*as outlined on p. 110*).

NARROW IT DOWN!

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Coloured card, flipchart paper, markers



TIME

40 minutes

Sometimes you will need to narrow a topic down to identify key themes and actions to work on. This method should help.

- Identify one clear question to be discussed by all groups;
- Divide the group into pairs and allocate 5–10 minutes to discuss the question and produce a response on one sheet of coloured card;
- After the allocated 5–10 minutes, direct each pair to sit with another pair. Invite the new groups of four to discuss their responses to the question (on their coloured card) and now produce a joint response on a new piece of coloured card;
- Where numbers permit, ask each group of four to pair with another group of four, to produce a group of eight. Again, invite them to discuss the question and their responses and come up with one more joint response;
- Invite the group of eight to write their joint response and post it on the wall;
- Invite each group to feedback their response to the full group;
- Based on the recurring themes, the Facilitator should be able to identify themes and actions for the group.

Prioritising topics and recommendations at the AGM

The workshops produce a lot of information and recommendations from each workshop group. This information needs to be further distilled or prioritised before the Comhairle na nÓg Committee has a mandate for its work for the following year. It is really helpful and recommended by Comhairle na nÓg organisers that the AGM delegates prioritise the topics and recommendations in as much detail as possible *at the AGM* so that the mandate for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee is very clear.

First off, it needs to be decided how many topics and recommendations can realistically be pursued by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee. This usually depends on the size of the Committee and the size of the task being suggested. The Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator or a Comhairle na nÓg Committee member should briefly outline how many topics or recommendations are realistically possible to pursue in one year or two years. Emphasis should also be put on what are realistically achievable outcomes. Ask the delegates to bear this in mind while they are voting on the top topics and recommendations that they would like to pursue. This can be achieved quite simply and effectively through the mechanisms described below.

PRIORITISING PREFERENCES

Workshops obviously generate lots of ideas and suggestions from the participants. Usually, it is necessary to prioritise these ideas to produce an achievable set of goals or simply to know what is actually most important to the group. Before asking the children and young people to vote, you should ask them to vote for what THEY REALLY WANT and not what is popular or what their friends want. They should also be encouraged to vote for things that are realistically achievable. Simple mechanisms to help prioritise preferences are listed in the Toolboxes below.

SHOW OF HANDS/STAND UP VOTE

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

None

TIME

Instant results

NOTE

Use alternative methods if the group includes people who cannot stand or raise their hands.

This method works well if the overall group is not too big and/or if you need to do the voting really quickly. It simply involves reading out the main ideas from the workshops and asking the young people to put up their hand or stand up for what they think is the most important idea. Most votes win!



TOOLBOX

At the AGM

STICKY DOT VOTING

TOOLBOX

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Sticky dots, large piece of paper



TIME

15 minutes

NOTE

Since this voting method is not anonymous, sometimes young people are swayed by the votes of their peers. Encourage children and young people to vote for what they really want themselves.

This is a slightly more elaborate method of voting than the 'show of hands' method above. Here, the young people are given a set number of 'sticky dots' to distribute as their votes. Each recommendation should be written up on a large piece of paper with plenty of space beneath it. The children and young people are then asked to vote on what they think are the most important ideas by distributing their sticky dots however they like. For example, each person is allocated 10 sticky dots to allocate between 10 ideas from the workshops. They can choose to put all 10 of their dots on one idea if that is the most important issue for them. They can also put one dot on each idea if they think they are all equally important. Or they can distribute their dots however they like across a number of ideas. At the end, the ideas with the most dots are the ones that the group as a whole think are the most important.

VOTING CARDS

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Green and red A5 cards



TIME

Instant results



This method has the same principle as the 'show of hands' method (see above). Distribute small A5 cards with 'YES' (green card) or 'NO' (red card) to each of the young people in the group. Read out each idea or thing to vote on. Make sure you ask the question using a YES/NO answer, e.g. read statement and then ask 'Do you think this is a good idea?' or 'Would you like this to be one of the things this group works on?' The young people then vote on the issue by raising up either the YES or the NO card, and the votes are counted and recorded.

BALLOT BOX VOTING

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

A 'Ballot Box' (can be any box with a printed label saying 'Ballot Box')
Voting cards/ballot papers



TIME

15 minutes

Each young person is given a ballot paper and asked to vote for the idea that is most important to them or perhaps to rank the Top 3 most important issues with 3 votes in order of preference (1, 2 and 3). The completed ballot papers are then cast into a ballot box before they are counted. The ideas with the most amounts of votes are deemed most important. The ballot box has the advantage of being anonymous and encouraging the children and young people to vote for and prioritise what is really important to them.

TOOLBOX

At the AGM

(S)election of the new Comhairle na nÓg Committee (or new delegates for the Committee if it is the second year of a two-year term)

In the majority of cases, a Comhairle na nÓg Committee is (s)elected for a two-year term of office. In Year 1 of any given cycle, an entire Comhairle na nÓg Committee will need to be (s)elected at the AGM. In Year 2 of the cycle, a Comhairle na nÓg Committee does not need to be (s)elected. However, often there may be some spaces on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee due to natural drop-off, in which case a (s)election process for these free spaces is held at the AGM. Again, the process to (s)elect a Comhairle na nÓg Committee is not entirely uniform across all 31 Comhairlí na nÓg. Some Comhairlí even operate a system where some (up to half) delegates are (s)elected each year.

Comhairle na nÓg organisers strongly recommend having a minimum membership of **25 young people** as this greatly helps with attendance numbers at meetings.

The process to select the Comhairle na nÓg Committee should also consider the following:

The need to have a Comhairle na nÓg Committee that is balanced

The Comhairle na nÓg Committee needs to be balanced in terms of age, gender and geographical spread, as well as representation from young people who are seldom-heard.

This may require having a minimum number of designated seats for:

- 👉 girls/boys;
- 👉 young people under 15 and over 15;
- 👉 each electoral/municipal area;
- 👉 organisations that work with seldom-heard young people.

The need for (s)election

Check and see if the number of interested candidates exceeds the number of places on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee. Where there are fewer candidates than seats available, a selection process is not necessary. Where there are one or two candidates more than the number of seats available, you can decide to increase the number of seats to accommodate the interested parties and avoid an upsetting (s)election process for the one person who does not get (s)elected. Where there are considerably more interested candidates than places available, a (s)election process will be necessary.

Where the AGM occurs in the second year of the two-year term, check and see if all existing Committee members are prepared to sit on the Committee for a further year and that each Committee member has attended regularly. Where no free places exist, an election in the second year is not necessary. Where free places are created by people leaving or not attending regularly, the choice is between running a selection process to fill those places or co-opting people to ensure that a balance in terms of age, gender, geography and representation from seldom-heard young people is maintained.

What the existing Comhairle na nÓg Committee thinks

The young people on the existing Comhairle na nÓg Committee will have had experience of the (s)election process used in your area. Discuss the process with the existing Committee and seek their feedback and what they thought worked well and what could be improved. Ask them what (s)election process they think is fair for young people of all ages and abilities.

The (s)election process

In general, any young person who is interested in being on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee can put their name forward for consideration. Candidates are sometimes asked to provide a written submission, complete an application form or make a brief 'speech' on the day as to why they would like to be on the Committee. Where young people are asked to make a speech, it is important that there is a minimum number of seats available for candidates who are under 15 as well as seldom-heard young people since these groups are less likely to prosper if this is the method used to (s)elect candidates. In addition, it is possible to have a number of co-opted places so that those who would not have the ability to make a written submission or the confidence to make a speech have some opportunity of getting a place.

Where the AGM delegates are voting on the candidates, each AGM delegate is allocated a certain number of votes depending on the number of places available and the number of candidates. For example, if there are 20 places and 40 candidates, each AGM delegate might be allocated three votes so that they can vote for their top three preferred candidates.

PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL COMHAIRLE NA NÓG COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Regardless of the process, it is vital that any young person putting themselves forward for consideration is clearly informed about what is involved in being a Comhairle Committee member. The candidates should be told about the work involved, where and when meetings are held, how the group works and how much time and commitment will be expected from them. Ideally, this should be communicated to the candidates in a small group setting so that young people can ask questions easily.

(S)election methods

There are a number of methods that can be used to (s)elect candidates for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee. Candidates can be (s)elected from:

- ✎ **Electoral areas:** (S)electing by electoral area ensures a good geographical spread of delegates. The electoral areas and number of seats per electoral area can be based on the corresponding number in the senior City/County Council. Delegates vote for candidates from the electoral area in which they go to school/Youthreach. Provision for age, gender and seldom-heard young people can be made by allocating a minimum number of seats to these groups;
- ✎ **Schools and youth organisations:** AGM delegates are asked to (s)elect representatives from their own group. Where two or more candidates are (s)elected from each group, a balance in terms of age and gender can be sought;
- ✎ **AGM workshops:** Delegates are asked to (s)elect any interested candidates from the workshop they attend at the AGM. This method allows young people to vote for a candidate who is knowledgeable or interested in the topic being discussed and which will be worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee during the year.

Using this method also requires that workshops are coordinated so that there will be representation from both genders, young people under and over 15, as well as seldom-heard young people. This requires allocating places in workshops by age and having a separate workshop of young people from seldom-heard organisations and/or allocating designated seats on the Committee for these groups;

- ➔ **Expression of interest:** Some Comhairlí na nÓg do not conduct elections, but rather ask any young person who is interested to make an 'expression of interest', either verbally or in writing, to the Comhairle na nÓg organiser. Then, either all of the candidates are invited to join the Comhairle na nÓg Committee or the Committee is picked out of a hat. This method is used where there is not much competition for places or where, historically, only very articulate and confident young people had the opportunity to join the Committee because 'public speaking' skills were required in advance to 'campaign' for a Committee seat.

Independent of what method is used, it is helpful to retain the documentation from the (s)election process so that in the event of any drop-off, other young people who were interested can be approached and co-opted onto the Comhairle na nÓg Committee.

CASE STUDY

Wexford Comhairle na nÓg operates its selection process on the basis that every young person who is interested in being on the Comhairle Committee should get an equal opportunity to become a member. They operate a random selection process based on geographical areas within the county in the following manner:

- ➔ An existing member of the Comhairle makes a presentation to the young people attending the AGM about what is involved in being a member of the Wexford Comhairle;
- ➔ The presentation includes information on the frequency of meetings; the opportunities the members get; the responsibilities associated with membership; and what they've enjoyed about the role;
- ➔ Every young person who attends the AGM gets the opportunity to express an interest in becoming a Comhairle Committee member;
- ➔ They can express an interest by filling out a short form at the AGM, which asks them a few simple details such as what locality/school/youth organisation they are from;
- ➔ The forms are split into different groups based on the four geographic districts of Wexford and an extra grouping for young people attending the AGM through their youth club/organisation;
- ➔ The forms are put into five separate boxes;
- ➔ Three to five forms are picked from each box (depending on the number of places free on the Comhairle) to make a total membership of 25 (ensuring a good representation of seldom-heard and geographic mix).

This method can also be adapted to ensure an even representation from each grouping, i.e. have separate boxes in all the categories for young people aged 12–15 and 16–17 year olds.

CASE STUDY

Waterford Comhairle na nÓg doesn't actually recruit at the AGM. Instead, young people are asked to declare their interest in joining the Comhairle Committee and are then invited to a 'Recruitment Day'. Steering Committee members help to run the day which includes 'an introduction to Comhairle', team-building activities, focus groups and elections. Half of the available places are allocated by direct election and the other half are selected by the Coordinator/Steering Committee with an emphasis on seldom-heard young people. This has resulted in increased participation from DEIS schools, young people from disadvantaged areas, young people under 15 and young people with disabilities.

CASE STUDY

Louth Comhairle na nÓg recruits directly from schools and youth organisations. In the weeks prior to the annual AGM the organisers visit schools and youth organisations to promote the event and to develop interest among young people in joining Comhairle na nÓg for the two-year cycle.

The schools and youth services then send five representatives each to the AGM giving an approximate attendance of 100 young people. After the AGM, schools and youth organisations are contacted with the date for the first Comhairle meeting of the year and two representatives from each school/youth organisation are asked to join. This results in a Committee of around 40 young people. In the event that any young person leaves the Comhairle, their place is filled from the school/organisation they represented.

The schools and organisations were advised to select students under 16 to ensure that they don't turn 18 before their term is completed. In addition, the age profile of the young people on the Comhairle is assessed and any positions are filled with this age profile when vacancies arise.

Louth also works with youth services based in RAPID Areas and the HSE to ensure the voices of seldom-heard young people are included.

Evaluation of AGM event

It is critically important to evaluate the Comhairle na nÓg AGM. It is very helpful learning for future AGMs to get feedback from the delegates on even the most basic aspects of the meeting. A number of evaluation methods are described below.

TOOLS FOR EVALUATION

BULLSEYE

TOOLBOX

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Blank space on wall, four flipchart pages stuck together in a square or blank archery target, sticky dots



TIME

10 minutes
(best used in groups where there are less than 30 people in attendance, otherwise it is too unwieldy)



NOTE

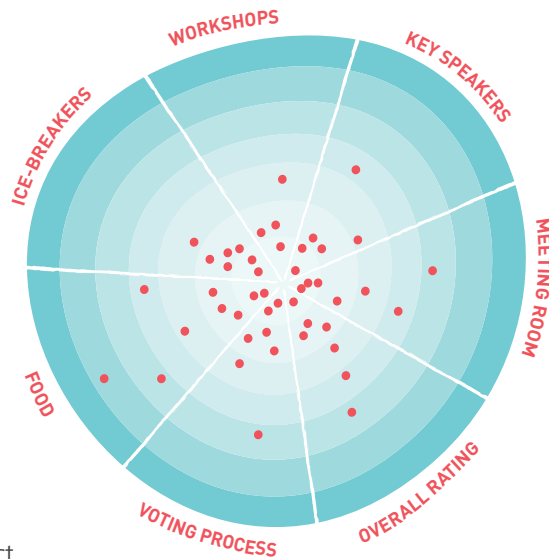
Good method where there are literacy problems since you can read out the headings and the participants do not have to write.

Decide on what elements of the AGM you want to seek feedback on, e.g.

- Ice-breakers
- Workshops
- Key speakers
- Overall rating
- Meeting room
- Food
- Voting process

Prepare the following in advance:

- Use a giant piece of paper (4 flipchart pages taped together or a blank archery sheet) and draw a gigantic circle with a bullseye in the middle;
- Divide the circle into the number of segments you need to cover each aspect (based on the examples given above, there would be 7 segments);
- Write the name of each aspect beside the segment.



On the day:

Distribute a sticky dot to each participant for placing on each segment of the circle. Ask the participants to rank each element by placing their sticky dot close to the bullseye if they thought it was GREAT/SUPERFAB and at the far end of the bullseye if they thought it was NOT GOOD AT ALL. They can also place the sticky dot anywhere in between.

EVALUATION PERSON

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Flipchart paper, pens, Post-its, sticky-tape



TOOLBOX

TIME

20 minutes

- 👉 Tape two pieces of flipchart paper together and draw a person on the paper;
- 👉 In the picture, include a person's heart, a thought bubble coming out of their head, a bag or satchel in one hand, and a rubbish bin beside the person;
- 👉 Hand out four Post-its to each participant;
- 👉 Pose Question 1 and ask them to write the answer on ONE of their Post-its:
 - *What did you like about the day?*
- 👉 Ask them to post their Post-it on the heart of the person;
- 👉 Pose Question 2 and ask them to write the answer on ONE of their Post-its:
 - *What will you take away from the day and use again in your life?*
- 👉 Ask them to post their Post-it on the bag or satchel;
- 👉 Pose Question 3 and ask them to write the answer on ONE of their Post-its:
 - *What did today make you think about?*
- 👉 Ask them to post their Post-it on the head;
- 👉 Pose Question 4 and ask them to write the answer on ONE of their Post-its:
 - *What did you not like about today?*
- 👉 Ask them to put their Post-it in the rubbish bin.

RANKING AGENDA

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Flipchart paper, coloured card x 1, marker,
sticky dots x 3 (different colours)

TIME

10 minutes

- 👉 List the day's agenda on a flipchart page and leave space at the side for participants to post their sticky dots.
- 👉 Give each participant enough sticky dots for each agenda item in three different colours (e.g. red, yellow, green).
- 👉 Put the following key code on coloured card beside the flipchart page:
 - Red: NOT GOOD – DID NOT LIKE
 - Yellow: OK
 - Green: EXCELLENT – REALLY LIKED IT
- 👉 Explain the key system to the participants, i.e. that they should put a red dot beside any agenda item that they really did NOT like, a yellow dot beside anything they thought was OK and acceptable but not amazing, and a green dot beside anything that they really enjoyed.

At the AGM





VIDEO DIARIES

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Camera, cordoned-off space, sign indicating what issue or question the children and young people should address

TIME

Over period of time (e.g. during lunch break)

-  Cordon off an area to create a 'booth' or Big Brother Diary Room experience;
-  Leave a camera rolling or draw a big arrow pointing to the button that the participants should press to start the camera recording;
-  Write a question on a piece of coloured card and leave it in the booth for all to see. The question could be 'What was your favourite thing about this group?' or 'What did this group actually achieve?' Alternatively, you could let participants know in advance what ONE question they should address in the booth;
-  Ensure access to the diary room/booth over a long period of time so people can pop in individually or in groups during breaks/lunch time and record their message and opinions.

FEEDBACK FORM/QUESTIONNAIRE

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Blank feedback forms (see sample Evaluation Form in Appendix 14), pens/pencils






TIME

10 minutes

NOTE

Should mostly be used with groups with good literacy levels. Symbols and emoticons should be used where possible. Leaders should be on hand to help anybody who needs help completing the form.

A feedback form is an efficient way to conduct a comprehensive evaluation very quickly. The form should be very short and use child/youth-friendly language;

-  Explain that you want to get feedback on the meeting/group/any other issue;
-  Ask the participants to be completely honest – you really want to know what they think, whether it is good or bad;
-  Explain clearly what you want participants to do on the form, e.g. should they ring the answer or put an 'X' in a box. Make sure the instruction is clear!
-  Give each participant a form, pen or pencil;
-  Give the participants 5–10 minutes to complete the form. Be aware that some people will finish quickly, while others may take more time. Make sure people are given the time they need.

STANDING DEBATE

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Large room/space

TIME

20 minutes

If there is plenty of time at the end and you want to get more comprehensive feedback on the day, a standing debate is a useful tool:

- Ask all the participants in the room to stand in one line;
- Call out each aspect of the day that you want to rate, one by one;
- Ask the young people to move to the right of the room if they thought it was GREAT/EXCELLENT or to the left if they thought it was REALLY POOR/AWFUL. Alternatively, they can stand anywhere in between to represent their position;
- Ask one or two young people in each spot why they rated it as they did;
- Where possible, record the outcome of the standing debate either through video, photography or by simply noting the number of young people standing in each place for each question.

TOOLBOX

At the AGM

Other creative methodologies for use throughout the day

Many Comhairlí na nÓg feel the need to build in some additional creative methodologies or fun elements in order to make the day appealing to young people and to find out 'what worked well' at the AGM and 'what did not work so well'. While it is important that the event is appealing and fun for young people, it is also important that these elements do not detract from the main purpose of the day. Some of the creative methodologies used by Comhairlí na nÓg to good effect are described below.

Conducting a vox-pop

A vox-pop is an informal way of interviewing people to get their views on a topic. This can be done before the AGM begins, at lunchtime or as people are leaving the venue. Usually conducted by Comhairle na nÓg Committee members, it can be used to get the opinion of AGM delegates on a particular topic. Alternatively, it can be used as an informal method of evaluation.

Materials needed: Microphone and recorder.

Comic Life reporting

Comic Life is a piece of software that allows you to create comics or picture albums from photos or webcam shots. You can add text with speech balloons. This is something you can use to create a novel comic strip to show at the end of the AGM. Some Comhairlí na nÓg have also used it to create the presentations given by young people at the AGM. Further details are available on www.plasq.com.

Materials needed: Software package, overhead projector, comic strip.

Graffiti Wall

Create a wall with paper or white board, and leave Post-its/markers/creative arts materials for the young people to 'doodle' or 'graffiti'. The Graffiti Wall can be left totally blank for young people to respond to in their own way or you can post a particular question and ask them to respond, using graffiti and/or creative materials.

Materials needed: Blank 'wall' space made of paper or white board, Post-its, markers, creative arts materials.




Electronic voting mechanisms, e.g. Qwizdom

Electronic voting systems or audience clickers allow the AGM delegates to vote using hand-held remotes. The Qwizdom system allows the polling of the audience at any point and an instant view of a graph of the results. See www.qwizdom.com for further details.

Entertainment

Some Comhairlí na nÓg include entertainment on the day, either before the AGM starts or during the lunch break. Again, it is important to ensure that the entertainment is short and does not detract from the main purpose of the day.

Providing entertainment can be useful:

-  to create an informal atmosphere;
-  to appeal to an audience of children and young people;
-  to break up the day and provide an alternative focus for a short while.

(continued)

Examples of entertainment include:

- a live band;
- a DJ;
- playing music;
- a drama display;
- a dance display;
- Team games: for example, you could ask a celebrity or person from the Sports Partnership or sports section of the local authority to lead a game.

Celebrity presence

Some Comhairlí na nÓg invite a local celebrity, such as a member of the GAA hurling or football team, to open the Comhairle na nÓg AGM or meet the young people at lunchtime. Again, this is something that can work well as long as it in no way detracts from the main purpose of the day.

Methodologies to help the young people to relax are also popular. Past ideas include a chill-out or adult-free zone or having an ice-cream or chip van outside!

Practical suggestions

- Set the date for the AGM as early as possible so that it is in the planned schedule of schools, youth organisations and young people;
- Ask local businesses for sponsorship or resources that you need;
- Make sure there are numerous registration desks so that the day can start on time;
- Invite members of the Steering Committee to participate in or observe the day;
- Involve the ETB Youth Officer in the Comhairle na nÓg process by asking them for support recruiting delegates and/or the transport of delegates;
- If the schedule or any aspect of the day is not working, change it and do something else;
- Use Gardaí buses or rural county buses for transport, where possible;
- Have designated drop-off and collection points for buses;
- Play music at a low level during certain parts of the day to create an informal atmosphere;
- Provide a letter or certificate of attendance for each delegate;
- Don't be afraid to 'manage' the media – inform media photographers that the young people are to be the centre of any photographs or stories;
- Take a group photo at some point during the day to record the event;
- Ensure that the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator does not have any allocated tasks on the day so that he or she can be available throughout the day and troubleshoot as necessary.

KEY ADVICE

- A presentation on the key progress and outcomes of the previous year's work should be made at the beginning of the AGM by Comhairle na nÓg Committee members;
- Workshops to decide on the topics of importance for the next year need to be facilitated by a skilled and well-briefed facilitator;
- The delegates for each workshop should be grouped by age. This can be organised in advance or by asking young people to sign up to groups by age at registration;
- Prioritise the topics at the AGM if possible since it makes the work and mandate for the Comhairle na nÓg Committee much more straightforward;
- The election of the Comhairle na nÓg Committee should be fair and take varying abilities of young people into account;
- Don't be afraid to alter the schedule on the day if it is obviously not working;
- An evaluation of the AGM should be conducted to ensure learning for future years;
- Any creative methodologies used should not detract from the main purpose of the event.

Chapter 4

After the AGM



While the AGM is only a one-day event, it is a significant undertaking that requires a lot of energy, time and resources to organise. Although the temptation may be to take a much-earned rest after the event, the AGM is effectively the starting point of the Comhairle na nÓg programme, providing the key topics and recommendations that need to be worked on and progressed throughout the year by the (s)elected Comhairle na nÓg Committee. There are a number of key steps to take after the AGM and these are described below.

Meeting with the Comhairle na nÓg Committee

The elected or selected members of the Comhairle na nÓg Committee are likely to be very enthusiastic and eager to meet initially after the AGM. Ideally, the Committee members should be given the date of the first meeting at the AGM.

KEY TIP!

One of the most important pieces of advice from Comhairle na nÓg organisers is the importance of getting to work on prioritising the topic (if that was not completed at the AGM) and developing an action plan on it as soon as possible after the AGM.

Production of a report on the AGM

With so much valuable information produced at the AGM, particularly in the workshops, it is important to produce a report recording all that happened at the event. The report should be concise and include information on:

- ✎ selection of the AGM delegates;
- ✎ the names of all the AGM delegates;
- ✎ how the topics were selected for discussion;
- ✎ the agenda for the day;
- ✎ the topics discussed;
- ✎ the outcomes and/or recommendations made by the young people in the workshops;
- ✎ the process to prioritise the recommendations;
- ✎ the overall outcomes and recommendations to be worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg Committee throughout the year;
- ✎ the process to (s)elect the Comhairle na nÓg Committee;
- ✎ the names and ages of the (s)elected Comhairle na nÓg Committee members, as well as the areas they represent;
- ✎ the results from the evaluation process.

The report should be produced in youth-friendly language and disseminated to the AGM delegates and a wider cohort of young people. This can be in the form of an e-report that is sent to the schools and organisations that participated and made available online in order to save on costs.

Distribution of AGM report to local decision-makers

In addition to the topic(s) and recommendations prioritised to work on throughout the year, the AGM generates a huge volume of information on the opinions of young people on a range of topics. It is important that this information is not lost and that key local decision-makers are made aware of these opinions. To this end, the report should be distributed to all relevant local decision-makers, such as:

- ✍ the Local Community Development Committee;
- ✍ the City/County Manager;
- ✍ relevant Departments in the local authority;
- ✍ members of the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee;
- ✍ Public Participation Network;
- ✍ organisations or agencies that deal with any of the topics discussed on the day;
- ✍ schools and youth organisations.

Keeping in touch with AGM delegates and wider cohort of young people

The Comhairle na nÓg Committee is only a small percentage of the AGM delegation and of young people in the area. While the committee will update the delegates in the following year at the AGM, it is also helpful to keep them updated continually throughout the year in order to:

- ✍ ensure the Comhairle na nÓg AGM delegation feel valued for their contribution;
- ✍ inform young people in the area about the work of Comhairle na nÓg and perhaps encourage them to attend the AGM the following year;
- ✍ facilitate the possibility of other young people giving feedback on topics to the Comhairle na nÓg Committee throughout the year.

The group can be kept updated by:

- ✍ sending them a copy of the report on the AGM;
- ✍ having a regular slot on a local radio programme;
- ✍ updates on the website and social networking sites;
- ✍ sending an e-newsletter once or twice a year.

KEY ADVICE

- ✍ Arrange a date for the first meeting of the new Comhairle na nÓg Committee at the AGM;
- ✍ Produce and distribute a report on the AGM to the delegates and local decision-makers;
- ✍ Keep in touch with a wider group of young people throughout the year.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE THINK

- Promote and provide more information about the AGM in advance of it taking place;
- Schools should be given more notice and information about Comhairle na nÓg so that people who are interested in making a difference can become involved;
- There should be an induction process for members selected to sit on the Comhairle na nÓg Committee to ensure that they are genuinely interested;
- There should be a common selection process (and not an election process with voting) in all 31 Comhairlí na nÓg;
- Have something to show that you're on Comhairle, e.g. a badge or hoodie;
- Current members should be identifiable at the AGM;
- Have plenty of ice-breakers at the AGM.

Appendices



Appendix 9: Sample Letter of Invitation to Schools



Address

Date

Dear.....,

..... Comhairle na nÓg is pleased to announce that its AGM will take place on in

Comhairle na nÓg (www.comhairlenanog.ie) are local councils for children and young people, aged 12–17, that give them a voice on the development of local policies and services. They are the recognised key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 local authorities of the country. Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) are required to engage with Comhairle na nÓg. The first *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020* reiterates the fact that Comhairle na nÓg is the nationally recognised structure that enables children and young people to have a voice in local decision-making.

Comhairle na nÓg provides a forum for young people aged 12–17 to identify and work on issues of importance to them before working with key local decisions-makers in a bid to achieve their desired outcome, impact or change. The Comhairle na nÓg AGM is one of the first steps in that process, bringing together young people from throughout the city/county to identify and prioritise these topics of importance.

The topics chosen for this year's event are
..... The day consists of a series of facilitated workshops to discuss these topics before the young people prioritise them and make suggestions or recommendations on how to achieve a desired impact or outcome in relation to each topic.

You are invited to nominate number of young people to attend the event. The event is inclusive of young people from varying backgrounds, abilities and age groups. To this end, the nominations from your school should be balanced in terms of age (12–17), gender, ability and background. The Nomination Form (enclosed) for the school should be accompanied by a completed Consent Form for each nominee and returned to me no later than(insert RSVP date).

The success of Comhairle na nÓg is dependent on and indebted to the continuous support from the schools and school staff. Please accept our kind thanks for facilitating the young people to represent your school and their own views at the AGM.

Further details in relation to transport will be provided closer to the date. In the meantime, if there is any aspect of the event you wish to discuss, or if you would like a visit to your school from the Comhairle na nÓg Representative, please contact

Kind regards,

.....

(insert name and position)

Appendix 10: Sample Letter of Invitation to Organisations



Address

Date

Dear.....,

..... Comhairle na nÓg is pleased to announce that its AGM will take place on in

Comhairle na nÓg (www.comhairlenanog.ie) are local councils for children and young people, aged 12–17, that give them a voice on the development of local policies and services. They are the recognised key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 local authorities of the country. Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) are required to engage with Comhairle na nÓg. The first *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015–2020* reiterates the fact that Comhairle na nÓg is the nationally recognised structure that enables children and young people to have a voice in local decision-making.

Comhairle na nÓg provides a forum for young people aged 12–17 to identify and work on issues of importance to them before working with key local decisions-makers in a bid to achieve their desired outcome, impact or change. The Comhairle na nÓg AGM is one of the first steps in that process, bringing together young people from throughout the city/county to identify and prioritise these topics of importance.

The topics chosen for this year's event are The day consists of a series of facilitated workshops to discuss these topics before the young people prioritise them and make suggestions or recommendations on how to achieve a desired impact or outcome in relation to each topic.

You are invited to nominate young people to attend the event. The event is inclusive of young people from varying backgrounds, abilities and age groups. To this end, the nominations from your organisation should be balanced in terms of age (12–17), gender, ability and background. The Nomination Form (enclosed) for your organisation should be accompanied by a completed Consent Form for each nominee and returned to me no later than (insert RSVP date)

The success of Comhairle na nÓg is dependent on and indebted to the continuous support from your organisation and staff. Please accept our kind thanks for facilitating the young people to represent your organisation and their own views at the AGM.

Further details in relation to transport will be provided closer to the date. In the meantime, if there is any aspect of the event you wish to discuss, or if you would like a visit to your organisation from the Comhairle na nÓg Representative, please contact

Kind regards,

.....

(insert name and position)

Appendix 11: Sample Facilitator Pack

Briefing for facilitators

The objective of the briefing for facilitators is to ensure that all facilitators are aware of the purpose and format of the workshop, as well as how the outcomes of the workshop should be formatted. The briefing meeting should be held in the venue for the AGM, where possible, so that facilitators are familiar with the space that they will be in. Items to address at the briefing, which should also be documented in writing, are as follows:

Information on the topics

Facilitators should be prepared to offer basic facts and answer basic questions on the topic that they are covering in their workshop. They should be given as much information as possible on the topics, as well as a list of potential questions to pose about the topic. (*This is only the case where the topic is known in advance.*)

Format and process of workshops

It is beneficial to spend some time on suggested methodologies to facilitate workshops so that the workshops are relatively uniform. Most important is that each workshop takes the young people through a process:

- to discuss their general opinion on the topic being addressed;
- to establish what is most important about that topic;
- to make suggestions and recommendations on what should be done about the topic.

Role of co-facilitators and note-takers

Note-takers should be introduced to the co-facilitator and/or note-taker for the group. The roles of each should be clearly explained. Note-takers should be clear that it is their job to record what is said by young people.

Ice-breakers

A number of ice-breakers should be demonstrated that can be used at the beginning of workshops.

Needs of young people




Any special needs or requirements of delegates should be pointed out to facilitators.

Format for day

Facilitators should be brought through the agenda for the day and made aware of any processes being used that are likely to inspire questions from young people.

Outline of workshop











The role of the facilitator is to take the young people in the workshop through a process that allows them:

-  to explore and discuss a topic;
-  to focus on a particular aspect of a topic;
-  to identify a particular set of recommendations or a recommendation that would help achieve an outcome on that topic.

The workshop can be outlined as follows:

1. (5–10 minutes): Start with an ice-breaker or energiser;
2. (5 minutes): Facilitate a general discussion on what Comhairle na nÓg is. Make sure that the young people understand the purpose of Comhairle na nÓg, how the workshop fits into that and how they can be involved;
3. (20 minutes): Identify the topic or aspect of the topic that you have been asked to explore. Facilitate discussion on:
 - general thoughts and opinions on the topic;
 - why this topic is important to young people in the area;
 - what is the most important aspect of this topic;
 - what would young people like to see done about it.
4. (15 minutes): Further explore the recommendations on what young people would like to see done about the topic. Make a list of what they recommend should be done. Ask them to consider that list and decide on:
 - What is the most important recommendation?
 - What is realistic? What is a realistic outcome?
5. (15 minutes): Based on what is decided to be the most important and realistic recommendation, ask the group to make suggestions on what outcome they would desire and what could be done to help achieve that outcome.

Tips for facilitators

-  **Know what Comhairle is about** – read the background information and be ready to explain it to young people;
-  **Establish and maintain a high energy level** – this engages the group by getting their attention, gaining their interest, and keeping it fun;
-  **Facilitate objectively** – avoid giving personal opinions and stick to facts. Your job is to get the young people to identify their own solutions and recommendations;
-  **Practice active listening skills** – engage with speakers, listen attentively and ask leading questions;
-  Think about how you will do the following:
 - Answer difficult questions;
 - Keep young people engaged;
 - Encourage participation from everyone in your group;
 - Make sure everyone is treated with respect.
-  **Be inclusive** – watch who is contributing and who is not. Ask those not contributing for their ideas; if they won't speak, ask them to 'show' agreement by using drawings or asking them to raise their hand if they agree, stand up if they disagree;
-  **Value the young people's ideas** – convey warmth to young people, use smiles, praises and gestures. Acknowledge all inputs, even if not entirely relevant;
-  **Let them think** – let them know that it's OK to think about a question for a few moments – don't be afraid of a bit of silence while people take a moment to think;
-  **Make sure there is agreement before moving on** – if a young person proposes an idea, or an answer to a question, ask the entire group for feedback. Make sure that solutions have the support of the majority before they are adopted;
-  **Keep the main objectives in focus** – keep a note of the most popular ideas and recommendations as you go along on a separate sheet. Use this list when you need to prioritise the ideas.

ICE-BREAKER GAMES

These games are often used at the beginning of an activity or session to help people to get to know each other better. They can also be used as energisers in between workshop sessions.

BALLOON GAME

**RESOURCES/
EQUIPMENT
NEEDED**

Balloons, string



TIME

5–10 minutes, depending on the size of group

NOTE

Balloons should be blown up and string cut in advance.

Tie a balloon on a string (at least two feet long) to each person's ankle. Walking round in a circle, people try to burst each other's balloons while protecting their own. The objective of the game is to be the last person with an unpopped balloon around one's ankle.

COMMUNICATING CHALLENGE

**RESOURCES/
EQUIPMENT
NEEDED**

None



TIME

5–10 minutes. Round two will tend to be quicker since, at this stage, the best mode of communication will have been established.



Give everyone a number. Now ask them to arrange themselves in numerical order, communicating with each other without speaking or holding up fingers. They make up their own sublanguage or sign-language to communicate with each other.

NAME GAME

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

None



TIME

5 minutes



Ask everyone to gather around in a circle. The first person says his or her name. Then the second person does the same, only they also have to introduce the first person. The third person has to introduce themselves, the second person and the first person. Continue to go around like this until the last person's turn and they say the name of every person. The game is very light-hearted, with everyone trying to help the last person.

TOOLBOX

MYSTERY WINKER

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

None





TIME

10 minutes



Ask everyone to stand in a circle. Ask one person to stand out of the circle and be the 'leader', i.e. the person that makes sure everyone is playing by the rules! This person should change every round so everyone gets a chance to play. Rules include:

-  Eyes must be kept closed when the leader is choosing the 'Mystery Winker'!
-  No talking or communicating between players.

Ask all of the players to close their eyes. The 'leader' chooses one person to be the 'Mystery Winker' by tapping on their shoulder. Once the person gets the tap on the shoulder, they know they are the 'Mystery Winker'. Invite the group to open their eyes and mingle around the room, making sure to look at each other in the eyes. The 'Mystery Winker' is in the mix and tries to wink at other players without being detected by others. If a person is winked at, they must continue mingling for a few seconds and then 'drop out' of the game by falling to the floor. If one of the remaining players thinks they know who the 'Mystery Winker' is, they can stop the game and make a guess. If they guess right, the game is over. If they guess wrong, they must drop out of the game and the game continues. The game continues until the 'Mystery Winker' is found out or there is only one player left.

TOOLBOX

TOILET ROLL GAME

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Roll of toilet paper



TIME

5–10 minutes



The person leading the game takes the roll of toilet paper and pulls off several squares before handing the toilet paper to another person and asking them to do the same. Once everyone has taken some toilet paper, everyone counts the number of squares that they have and then tells everyone in the room that many things about themselves. For example, if someone has three squares, they share three things about themselves.

HUMAN BINGO

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Bingo cards x each participant, pens/pencils
(see *sample card on next page*)



TIME

5–10 minutes. You can stop the game at any time you need to – the winner will be the person with the most number of boxes filled in at that time.

Create a bingo card grid from a sheet of A4 paper by dividing it into a grid of fairly large squares using a thick pen/pencil and a ruler. In some of the squares, write a phrase such as 'Has climbed a mountain', 'Rides a bike', 'Has run a marathon', 'Likes Britney Spears', etc. The number of squares you fill in is up to you, but the more you create the more time it will take to complete. Photocopy enough copies for all participants.

At the start of the session/meeting, give each person a copy and tell them to find one person who has done each thing, i.e. ask the other players whether they have 'climbed a mountain', etc. If the player being asked has done that activity, they sign their name to that box. Players can only get a signature on one box at a time from each person.

Keep going until someone has all of the boxes filled in. You can offer a small prize (e.g. a bar of chocolate) for the person who gets all of the boxes filled in first. Get them to read out the name of the person for each box. You can invite some participants to demonstrate the truth of their claims to make it more interesting (e.g. 'Can do the splits')!

(continued)

HUMAN BINGO: 8–12

Has a pet	Likes One Direction	Plays 'Angry Birds'	Supports Liverpool
Can draw a cat	Can ride a bike	Loves swimming	Loves music
Likes basketball	Plays guitar	Watches soap operas	Likes chips!
Has blond hair	Loves popcorn	Can do the splits	Is an only child
Born same month as you	Can skip	Can touch tongue to nose	Has performed on stage
Has been to a library	Pepperoni pizza is favourite	Likes comics	Has been ice-skating
Likes art	Has been on a farm	Broken an arm or leg	Milked a cow
Has been on a train	Likes school	Has read a Harry Potter book	Has run a race

TOOLBOX**HUMAN BINGO: 13–18**

Can juggle	Has been camping	Has a part-time job	Would like to go snow boarding
Is in a youth group	Loves popcorn	Pepperoni pizza is favourite	Loves music
Sings in the shower	Plays guitar	Watches soap operas	Likes chips!
Prefers Vans to Converse	Watches X-Factor	Has read a Harry Potter book	Is an only child
Born same month as you	Can name two characters from 'Lost'	Would like to drive	Has performed on stage
Likes animals	Knows the winner of X-Factor	Likes comics	Wears nail polish
Likes art	Has been on a farm	Broken an arm or leg	Milked a cow
Knows a celebrity	Likes school	Is on Instagram	Has run a race

TOOLBOX

WHAT WHITE LIE?

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

None



TIME

15 minutes



This is a very basic ‘getting to know you’ exercise with a slight competitive twist. Start with everyone in your group writing down/thinking of two truths about themselves and one lie. Go around the room and let each person give their three statements, one of which is a lie. Everyone (except the person making the statements!) should vote on which statement is the lie. The person who gets the fewest votes for their lie wins. It may sound like a game where you are encouraging lying, but you learn lots about each other!

CHAIRS

RESOURCES/ EQUIPMENT NEEDED

Chairs for everyone in the group except one (i.e. minus one chair)



TIME

As long as you like!

This is a very simple game, but one that groups of children and young people ask to do again and again! It is especially useful at the very beginning of a group session, where people do not know each other at all. The leader of the game starts off in the middle without a chair. He or she gives an instruction that starts with ‘Everyone who ... travelled by bus to get here/is wearing runners/has blue eyes/has hair/likes One Direction – MOVE CHAIRS!’ Everyone who falls into the category must move chairs. The only rules are that you cannot move to the chair immediately to your left or right, and you cannot return to the same chair that you leave. Whoever ends up without a chair gives the instruction from the middle of the circle and the game continues until you bring it to an end.

TOOLBOX

DESIGN YOUR OWN NAME BADGE

RESOURCES/
EQUIPMENT
NEEDED

Name badges, markers

TIME

10 minutes





Younger children often like to design their own name badge. It is a good way to calm a group down on arrival and allows people to settle into the group.

Provide name badges, markers and crayons, etc. Ask the participants to write or draw or doodle their first name only on their badge. Encourage them to be creative, but advise them that their name needs to be legible so that everyone can read it. Once everyone is finished, you can admire the different name badges and colours used. Ask the participants to stick/pin on their name badge where it can be seen. You could follow this game with the 'Name Game' (see above) which is made easier by the badges!

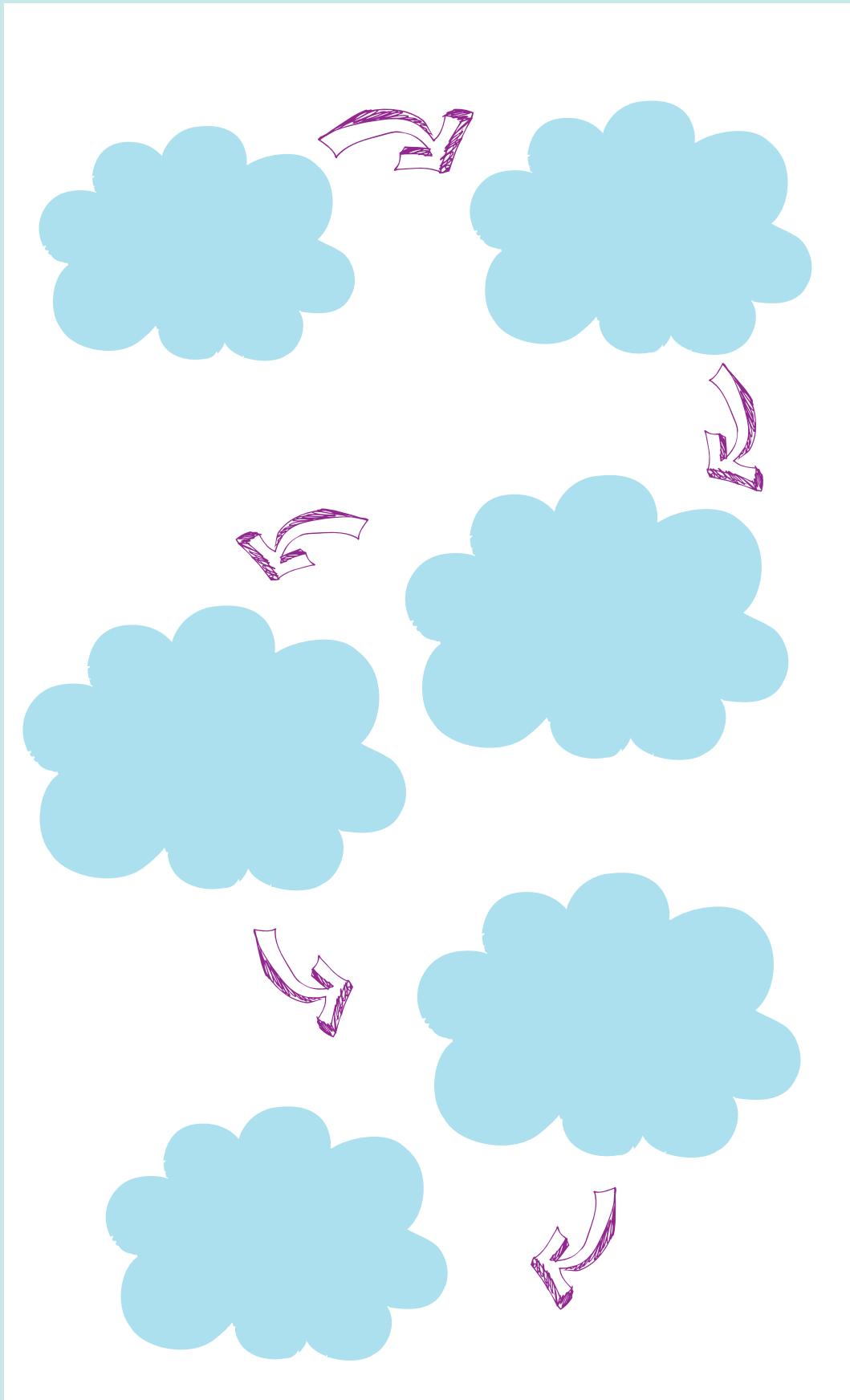


SIGNPOST

TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: ICE-BREAKER GAMES

-  http://www.jubed.com/youth_ministry/search/ice-breaker
-  <http://youthgroupgames.com.au/top-ten-icebreaker-games/>
-  http://insight.typepad.co.uk/40_icebreakers_for_small_groups.pdf
-  <http://www.group-games.com/games-by-age>

Appendix 13: Sample Lifeline Template



Appendix 14: Sample Evaluation Form



WHAT DID YOU THINK? (City/County) Comhairle na nÓg AGM

It is really important that you tell us WHAT WORKED and WHAT DID NOT WORK so that we can make it better next year. Tick the box to let us know what you thought of each part of the day.

Q1. THE WHOLE COMHAIRLE NA NÓG AGM EVENT

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Q2. THE FIRST WORKSHOP

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Q3. THE SECOND WORKSHOP

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Q4. THE VENUE

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Q5. THE FOOD

Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Q6. THE ELECTION OF THE COMHAIRLE NA NÓG COMMITTEE

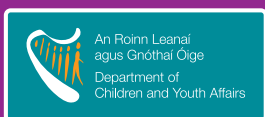
Poor Good Very Good Excellent

Q7. What suggestions do you have to make the event better?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!



Comhairle na nÓg
Young Voices. Local Issues.



Department of Children and Youth Affairs
43 Mespil Road
Dublin 4
D04 YP52
Tel: +353 (0)1 647 3000
Fax: +353 (0)1 667 0826
Email: contact@dcya.gov.ie
Web: www.dcya.ie