TUSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Child and Youth Participation Toolkit

Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit

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This resource is to support Tusla staff and funded projects to engage with children and young people in decision-making affecting their lives at the individual and at the collective level. At the time of publication all information is correct to the best of our knowledge.

A list of references for previously published materials appears at the end of the toolkit.

Produced by: Dr. Celia Keenaghan and Dr. Sue Redmond.

Disclaimer
The Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit is a 'quick reference' document to support skilled practice both within both Tusla and funded agencies. It is designed to be used after attending the Tusla standardised Child and Youth Participation Training Programme and in the context of relevant laws, policies, procedures and guidelines that govern staff practice.

Activities are offered as prompts for staff to use to support their practice and while some might be similar to activities in a therapeutic context that is not their intended purpose here. Professional judgment should be applied in the use of any of the activities.

Equalities Statement
Throughout the process of participatory practice with children and young people, staff should be aware of differing family patterns and lifestyles, not only due to different racial, ethnic and cultural groups but also issues of age, disability, gender, religion, language and sexual orientation.

Terminology
Throughout the toolkit, references are made to "child", "children", "young person","youth", and "young people". All of these references refer to children under the age of 18 years old. The term "child" instead of "child and young person" is sometimes used as the latter phrase can be cumbersome and make the content harder to understand.

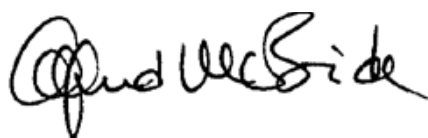## Foreword to 'Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit'

Tusla – Child and Family Agency is committed to engaging with children, families and communities on the design and quality of services provided to them. Tusla works with families, young people and communities to involve them in key decisions affecting children's lives, their care and support and to provide them with the necessary tools to manage challenges while providing services that are proportionate and timely.

The participation of children and young people is fundamental to a child-centred, rights-based approach to working with children and young people. It is a requirement of the 'National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs) and is a key point of note in the 'National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children' (HIQA).

Child protection is everyone's responsibility across Government and across society as a whole, and partnership, co-operation and the sharing of power, responsibility and accountability with other agencies and with children, families and communities themselves is necessary to deliver proportionate and effective services successfully. This approach leads to the best outcomes for children and young people.

Under the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support programme (PPFS), Tusla is committed to further developing its participatory practice at all levels in the organisation. The purpose of this 'Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit' is to support Tusla staff in facilitating participatory practice at every level of Tusla and in every engagement with a child or young person. Embedding participation throughout Tusla's work will enable staff to identify the best supports for each individual child and help him / her to access these supports through a range of different services offered by Tusla and partners, where possible. It is hoped that this, in turn, will reduce the need for a statutory intervention for many children and young people.

This toolkit should be seen as a guide to practice and should be used by staff in support of their own professional skills and judgement.

Fred McBride,
Chief Executive
Tusla - Child and Family Agency

Acknowledgements

Toolkit Development Process

This toolkit has been developed through a collaborative process involving a number of Tusla staff and managers, key stakeholders, community voluntary groups, and young people. The following process was involved in the development of the toolkit:

- The national child and youth participation working group was involved and consulted throughout the process. This group includes a wide range of stakeholders. A subgroup including representatives from the Workforce Learning and Development (WLD) team and Prevention Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) staff fed directly into the development of the resource and training materials.

- A national survey was conducted with all Tusla staff in partnership with the National University of Ireland, Galway and Tusla on child and youth participation.

- Regional consultations were conducted in Dublin, Cork and Galway with managers across Tusla.

- The resource was piloted with a comprehensive multidisciplinary cross section of the Tusla staff, managers, trainers and funded agencies.

- Children and young people were involved in the design of the toolkit through:

  o Desk research to gather the views of children and young people from earlier research and consultations conducted and reports written;

  o The pilot and design of the resource;

  o Compiling a short video of their views for the training days.

Relevant expertise was used in the design of this resource. This included help from NALA and EPIC.

THE VOICE OF A CHILD

WHEN CONSULTED WITH RESPECT,
THE INSIGHT AND THE VIEWS
OF CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
ARE INVALUABLE

Tusla (2014) Towards a Shared Purpose

Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit

Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of this toolkit is to support Tusla - Child and Family Agency staff to facilitate child and youth participatory practice at every level of Tusla and in every engagement with a child or young person. It outlines:

- The context and rationale for child and youth participation;
- Guidance in the application of the Lundy model of participation;
- Examples of activities that can support participatory practice.

This toolkit offers a framework, and ways for Tusla staff to think about their practice beyond addressing specific social work, family support, education and/or community and voluntary practice. It is taking a broader perspective due to the diversity of needs within Tusla. Participants are advised to use the toolkit in support of their own professional skills and practice. The toolkit is not intended as development in intervention or therapeutic practice.

Relevant Legislation and Strategy

International Law

In 1992, Ireland ratified the 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UNCRC) and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child monitors its implementation. Article 12 of the Convention codified in international law the right of the child to have his or her views heard and given due weight in all matters affecting them. Ireland, as a State Party, agreed to undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to implement Article 12, Article 19 and all rights recognised in the Convention (Article 4). In 2014, the Irish Government signed and ratified the 'Third Optional Protocol to the UNCRC'. This enables children and their representatives to complain to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child when their rights have been breached.

Irish Law

The 'Thirty-First Amendment of the Constitution (Children) Act 2012' was signed into law on 28th April, 2015. It asserts the best interests of the child as paramount and that in respect of any child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the views of the child shall be ascertained and given due weight having regard to the age and maturity of the child.

The 'Children First Act 2015' puts elements of 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011)' on a statutory footing. These guidelines are intended to support people to identify and report child abuse and neglect, and to support front-line practitioners to deal effectively with concerns. One of the key principles of best practice in child protection and welfare is the child's right to be heard and these national guidelines emphasise this right at every stage of the process.

Section 9 of the 'Child and Family Agency Act 2013' places a statutory duty on Tusla – Child and Family Agency to give consideration to the views of the child in specified circumstances. These include when planning and reviewing the provision of services and when performing its functions under the 'Child Care Act 1991', the 'Education (Welfare) Act 2000' and the 'Adoption Act 2010.'

In relation to children or young people in care, the 'Child Care Act 1991' makes provision for detailed regulations to govern the placement of children in residential care, in foster care and with relatives. These regulations require, in so far as is practicable, that a care plan be drawn up in consultation with the child and their guardians with the intention to ensure that the needs of the child coming into care are clearly identified and met in a systematic and timely manner (HSE, 2009). They also provide that when the case of a child in care is reviewed, regard shall be given to the views of the child.

In relation to child care proceedings coming before the Courts, Section 25 of the 'Guardianship of Infants Act 1964' allows for the court, where it thinks it appropriate and practicable and with regard to the age and understanding of the child, to take account of the child's wishes. Provision is made in the 'Child Care Act 1991' to appoint a Guardian ad Litem to present the views and wishes of the child, but this is at the discretion of the judge.

Provision is made under the 'Children Act 2001', for the courts to make an Order instructing Tusla to convene a Family Welfare Conference (a family-led decision-making meeting involving family members and professionals, convened when decisions need to be made about the welfare, care or protection of a child/young person). Provision is also made in the Act for the Children (Family Welfare Conference) Regulations 2004; these require the coordinator of the Conference to consult with the child and his or her parents or guardian on the timing, location, attendance and procedures to be adopted during the meeting.

The educational welfare services of Tusla operate under the 'Education (Welfare) Act, 2000', which provides for the promotion of school attendance, participation and retention. The Act provides for the educational welfare officers to consult with children.

Strategy and Standards

Ireland is the first country in Europe (and possibly the world) to have developed a cross-Government National Strategy on children and young people's participation in decision-making (2015-2020). This strategy was launched in June 2015, and is a constituent of 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2014-2020'.

Tusla is currently developing a participation strategy for children and young people. 'Toward the Development of a Participation Strategy for Children and Young People' (Tusla, 2015) provides the evidence base and background information for this strategy.

HIQA (the Health Information and Quality Authority) monitor a range of services for children and young people against national standards for the protection and welfare of children; children's residential centres; special care units; foster care; children's detention schools; and residential services for children with disabilities. Participation of children and young people in their service is a cross-cutting theme of the standards.

Other documents guiding Tusla's commitment to participatory practice include the 'Tell Us', Tusla's policy for receiving feedback and complaints, the 'National Children's Charter for Young People in Social Care Settings' (Tusla, forthcoming) and the 'HSE National Consent Policy - Children and Minors'.

This toolkit is one component within a suite of work being undertaken on prevention, partnership and family support addressing early identification of need and help-provision to children and families across the continuum of care. Additional components include:

• Area-based approach and Meitheal national practice model;

• Alternative care strategy;

• Parenting;

• Hidden harm;

• Commissioning;

• Public awareness.

Tusla Vision

This toolkit aims to support staff in realising Tusla's vision.
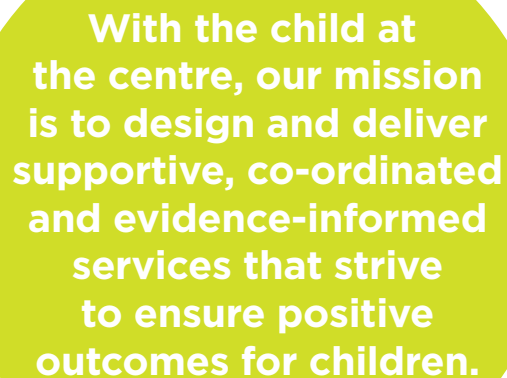
All children are safe and achieving their full potential.

Tusla Corporate Plan (2015-2017)

Mission

Participatory practice is essential to keeping the child at the centre of Tusla's services. This is highlighted in Tusla's Mission Statement:

With the child at the centre, our mission is to design and deliver supportive, co-ordinated and evidence-informed services that strive to ensure positive outcomes for children.

Tusla Corporate Plan (2015-2017)

Values and Behaviours

The vision and mission are not just statements; they outline what Tusla wants to be, how it wants to act and what it wants to deliver. To help achieve this, Tusla has developed a set of values and behaviours that set out a firm commitment to service users and stakeholders about how the Agency will act and interact with children, families and other stakeholders. These values and behaviours are fundamental to participatory practice:

COURAGE AND TRUST

- Reliable, committed and accountable
- Professional, ethical and responsible
- Willing to stand up for our values

RESPECT AND COMPASSION

- Putting the individual at the heart of our services
- Protecting the most vulnerable
- Respectful and considerate towards all

EMPATHY AND INCLUSION

- Fair, responsive and transparent
- Promoting collaboration and connected thinking
- Taking a long-term whole system view

Tusla Corporate Plan (2015-2017)

1.1 Context and Rationale

The participation of children and young people is fundamental to a child-centred, rights-based approach[1] to working with children and young people. All Tusla staff work within the framework of the 'National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020' and Tusla's 'Toward the Development of a Participation Strategy' (2015). These documents set out a roadmap for the realisation of a child's right to participate and are underpinned by the 'Lundy Model of Child Participation' (2007).

Tusla acknowledges the need to further develop and mainstream participation processes and structures. Every contact with a child or a young person – at a reception desk, at a meeting, or at a home visit - presents an opportunity for participatory practice. In effect, inclusive participatory dialogue needs to occur throughout the organisation at every level of engagement not just during individual case work.

The right of the child to participate is not limited to particular ideal circumstances. Therefore, Tusla has committed to supporting staff, children, young people and families to engage with each other in a participatory way through training, practice development and quality assurance.

As part of its Prevention, Partnership and Family Support Programme (PPFS), Tusla has committed to bringing about a culture change at all levels to fulfil its legal obligations in relation to children's rights. It requires a commitment from individual practitioners, to upskilling, personal development, reflective practice, openness to learning and growth, and dialogue with colleagues and clients. It requires commitment and leadership at management level including allocation and use of resources to create a truly participatory organisation that is well led, safe and effective. Ultimately, it requires a sharing of power and responsibility between adults and between adults, children and young people.

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[1]A rights-based approach is the application of human rights standards in practice. The right to participation is one of the underpinning principles of a rights-based approach and it also recognises the interdependence of all human rights, meaning the realisation of one right may depend on the realisation of others.

Tusla's commitment to children and young people's participation is central to its legal and policy obligations in the following areas:

Tusla's Commitment to Children and Young People's Participation	
Legal Framework	National Policy and Standards
• 'UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989'; • 'The Child Care Act 1991'; • 'Education (Welfare) Act 2000'; • 'Children Act 2001'; • 'The Thirty first Amendment of the Constitution (Children) Act 2012'; • 'Child & Family Agency Act 2013'; • 'Children's First Act 2015'.	• DCYA Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: 'The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020'; • HIQA National Standards for Children's Services; • DCYA 'National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation 2015'; • Tusla 'Towards the Development of a Participation Strategy 2015'; • Tusla 'Participation Strategy 2016'; • 'Tell Us', Tusla's policy for receiving feedback and complaints 2016; • The 'National Children's Charter for Young People in Social Care Settings' (Tusla, forthcoming); • HSE 'National Consent Policy - Children and Minors'.

Models of Participation

While there are several models of participation, Tusla have adopted the 'Lundy model of child participation (2007)'. This is an important conceptual model for understanding Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus decision makers on all four elements of the provision (2007: 933). These four elements are:
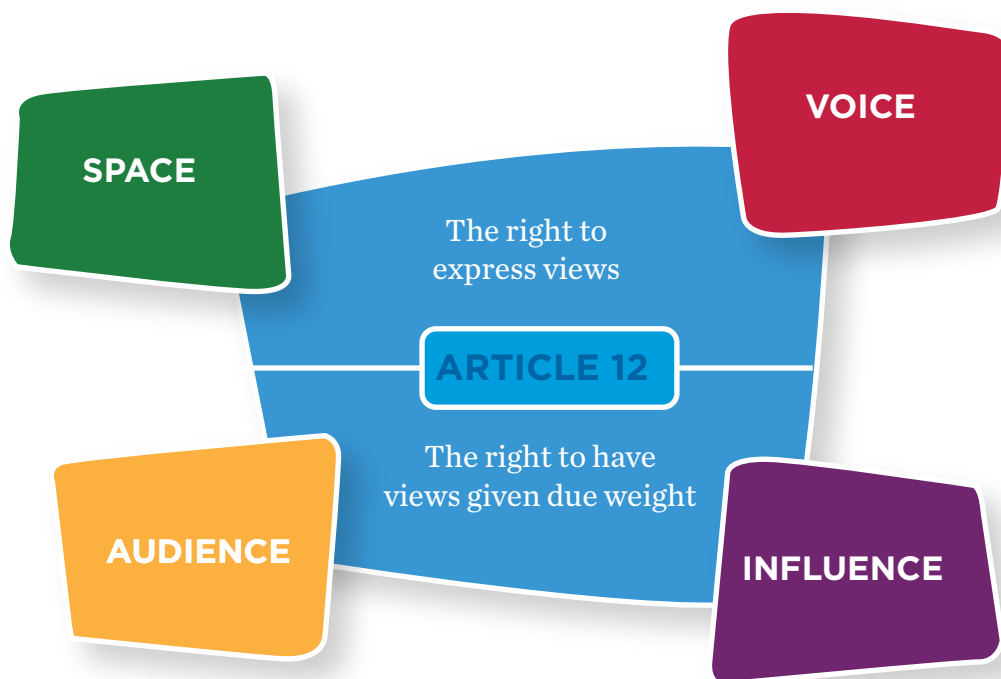
This model provides a way of conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus educational decision-makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of the provision.
The four elements have a rational chronological order:

- SPACE: Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view.
- VOICE: Children must be facilitated to express their view.
- AUDIENCE: The view must be listened to.
- INFLUENCE: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

Source: National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision making (2015-2020).

Lundy Model Checklist

This checklist provides a way of exploring whether or not you have considered the various components of the model.

SPACE

HOW: Provide a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views

- Have children's views been actively sought?
- Was there a safe space in which children can express themselves freely?
- Have steps been taken to ensure that all children can take part?

VOICE

HOW: Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views

- Have children been given the information they need to form a view?
- Do children know that they do not have to take part?
- Have children been given a range of options as to how they might choose to express themselves?

AUDIENCE

HOW: Ensure that children's view are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen

- Is there a process for communicating children's views?
- Do children know who their views are being communicated to?
- Does that person/body have the power to make decisions?

INFLUENCE

HOW: Ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate

- Were the children's views considered by those with the power to effect change?
- Are there procedures in place that ensure that the children's views have been taken seriously?
- Have the children and young people been provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken?

Source: National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015-2020).

Due Weight

Under Article 12, children and young people do not have the definitive say in the decision making process, but their views should be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. As articulated by Lansdown (2010), adults retain responsibility for the outcome, while being informed and influenced by the views of the child or young person. However, the decision-maker must inform the child or young person of the outcome of the process and explain how their views were taken into consideration (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009).

Archard and Skivenes (2009) advise that deciding what weight to give to the views of the child depends on:

- The consistency with which the opinion was expressed;

- The reasons given by the child for holding the opinion;

- The child's appreciation of the consequences of their decisions;

- Whether the child was in possession of good information;

- Whether proper procedures were used to ascertain the child's true opinion.

This toolkit will help workers to fulfil their duties in relation to giving due weight. It does so by offering creative and practical ideas for meaningful engagement with children and young people and by highlighting barriers and how they can be overcome. Assumptions about age, maturity or ability should not get in the way of due weight.

Best Interests of the Child

A European resource called 'Unlocking Children's Rights' (Coram, 2015) explores the application of the 'best interests of the child' and how to apply this principle in practice. Article 3.1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child highlights that 'in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration'.

The best interests of the child are largely determined by their normative and developmental needs, as well as their rights. It is important therefore that the child's views be taken into account with respect to decisions affecting the preservation of the family, preservation of relationships, care, safety, protection, the child's right to health and education. The UNCRC's General Comment No. 14 provides additional information. The following checklist from Coram (2015), can be supportive of ensuring the application of the best interests of the child:

- Listening to the child;

- Hearing from those who know the child;

- Considering what you think;

- Explaining the decision to the child.

Demonstrating Change

Participation is a process involving active dialogue and change, facilitated by processes of space, voice, audience and influence.

Pathways to Participation - Harry Shier 2001

Levels of Participation

| Openings | Opportunities | Obligations |

5
Children share power and responsibility for decision making.

- Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?
- Is there a procedure that enables children & adults to share power & responsibility for decisions?
- Is there a policy requirement that children & adults share power & responsibility for decisions?

4
Children are involved in decision-making processes.

- Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making processes?
- Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decision-making processes?
- Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decision-making processes?

This point is the minimum you must achieve if you endorse

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

3
Children's views are taken into account.

- Are you ready to take children's views into account?
- Does your decision-making process enable you to take children's views into account?
- Is there a policy requirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision-making?

2
Children are supported in expressing their views.

- Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?
- Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?
- Is there a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?

1
Children are listened to.

START HERE

- Are you ready to listen to children?
- Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?
- Is there a policy requirement that children must be listened to?

"Are we ready to go there (Level 5)? Are we ready to share some of our adult professional power with children, families and communities ... consider where we are on that continuum? What do we really need to do to get to Level 5 because I for one think Level 5 is where we should be."
- Fred McBride, CEO, Tusla - Child and Family Agency, 7th January 2016.

Also part of the participation stream of the Prevention, Partnership and Family Support programme is a quality assurance process across Tusla. 'Investing in Children', U.K. has been commissioned to introduce the 'Investing in Children Membership Award™'.

This is an independent kite mark that is awarded to services and organisations that can demonstrate that they have engaged in a process of dialogue and change with children and young people (see page 130 for further details).

Investing in Children, U.K. make a distinction between 'consultation' where powerful people consult the powerless, and 'dialogue' where young people are seen as partners with a valid contribution to make to the design and delivery of services (Investing in Children, 2016). A constant focus on what has changed for the child (including what the child feels has changed) as a result of their participation is an essential element of participatory working. This has been demonstrated clearly by Shier (2001). At all levels it is important to consider space, voice, audience and influence.

Principles for Participation

These principles are the agreed 'Principles for Participation' that have been set out in the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec (2012) 2 of the Committee of Ministers:

- There is no age limit on the right of the child or young person to express her or his views freely;

- The right of children and young people to participate applies without discrimination on any grounds;

- Particular efforts should be made to enable participation of children and young people with fewer opportunities or seldom heard children;

- Parents and carers have the primary responsibility;

- In order to be able to participate meaningfully and genuinely, children and young people should be provided with all relevant information and offered adequate support for self-advocacy appropriate to their age and circumstances;

- 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;

- Children and young people who exercise their right to freely express their views must be protected from harm;

- Children and young people should always be fully informed of the scope of their participation;

- 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.

1.2 Good Participatory Practice

Good participatory practice incorporates activities which positively promote the participation of children and young people in decisions that affect their lives both on an individual level and also pertaining to broader social issues that affect children and young people (collective level).

Practice standards, service guidelines and professional experience will inform the selection and adaption of ways of working to the needs of particularly vulnerable children. The following are important points to consider in terms of how they can inhibit or enhance participation. This applies whether engaging on an individual or collective level across ages and other differences.

Participatory Values and Relationships

Values that are important in building relationships include: openness, honesty, respect and trust. They require the capacity to build relationships, the need to bear in mind the world of the child, giving children choice, maintaining attitudes that are non-judgemental and having an awareness of adult use of power.

Safe Practice

Participatory practice is safe practice. Follow child protection and welfare procedures and create a safe space for the child. Consider privacy, environment, rights, provision of adequate information and confidentiality and consent.

Communication

Use simple language, use play when appropriate. Exercises, role-plays and sculpting are also useful tools as are digital technologies and the use of advocates. Consider issues of race, ethnicity, culture, age, disability, gender, religion, language and sexual orientation.

Embracing Uniqueness

While you must implement consistent standards of professional practice, it is important to recognise that every child is different and every worker is different, therefore every interaction is going to be different. Common to all will be the need to create a space for clear communication and mutual respect. Use your professional skills and personal instincts to discern the appropriateness of individual activities for individual children.

Background Knowledge

It is vital to know the context that the child is coming from. This means finding out as much as possible in advance of meeting with the child or group of children about their family, community, school, culture etc. Important information can be gathered by talking to people who have had previous contact with the child.

Access

It is important to consider how a family or young person can access service meetings/events. Consideration must be given to access for people with disability, public transport, timing and issues such as literacy, confidence and associations that the child may have with a particular location.

Age

It is important to ensure that the manner in which you engage with children and young people is age-appropriate. Use your creativity and professional discretion to innovate and adapt the activities in this Toolkit (see page 31 for tips relating to different ages) so that the activity jumps off the page and becomes engaging.

Ability

There are some key considerations which should be applied to adopting an inclusive approach to participation which include: planning for inclusion, making the process accessible, using appropriate language and being disability aware.

Culture and Religion

It is important to consider the child's culture and religion to ensure safe and equal practice. This can range from offering single-sex environments for certain activities to being aware of dietary requirements, special worship days or times. If working with groups of children, agree at the outset standards of behaviour including non-discrimination, not imposing religious views on others, respecting diversity etc. Enabling children to talk about their culture or religion and providing a lot of support and positive reinforcement can enhance a child's positive view of themselves, their culture and their identity.

Sexual Orientation

Assumptions about sexual orientation should not be made when working with young people. If a young person has not used a pronoun when describing a relationship, it is best not to assume one. Having something LGBTQ-related visible in an office can convey a positive environment. Staff should be encouraged to challenge discrimination and be aware of anti-discrimination policies and practices and to learn about and work with LGBTQ organisations, projects, helplines etc.

Behaviour

When working with children whose behaviour may already have resulted in exclusion from many situations, use of temporary restrictions, risk assessment and renegotiation of ground rules may be necessary. Finding out the triggers to challenging behaviour will help prevent it. It also helps to discuss with the child the consequences of particular types of behaviour and to ask them what would help them to avoid them.

Communication Passports

Communication passports are a way of recording information about individuals who have communication difficulties. The unique passport contains information that can be shared with the people who are supporting them. It helps to ensure their likes, dislikes and needs are understood, by recording how they communicate and the best ways of communicating with them. The passport is developed by people who know the child best.

For more information: http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk/

Boundaries

Attending to professional and personal boundaries in the child/worker relationship is important to the safety and wellbeing of both child and staff member. It should be remembered that a boundary is where things come together so the focus should be on how the child and worker come together and not on building a wall to keep them apart. If you are asking children to share a lot of personal information, it is fair and appropriate to share information about yourself. This can be simple information about what food you like or your favourite colour – anything that allows the child to see you as a person to whom they can relate.

Participatory versus Therapeutic

While some of these activities are similar to those used in therapeutic interventions, their primary purpose here is to improve the participatory relationship between staff and children and young people. The therapeutic use of drawing, drama etc. should only be used with appropriate training.

Sensitivity

Sensitivity and support is required particularly when dealing with specific family circumstances. Consider how you adapt your participatory practice to work in diverse situations, for example domestic violence, poverty, mental health and bereavement. Participatory practice can elicit many emotions, you may be delving into aspects of a child's life that can leave them feeling very vulnerable.

Creativity

One size will never fit all. Staff who work with children need to be open to adapting their practice to the child's needs rather than expecting all children to be comfortable with professional or service norms. Creativity doesn't always mean having to use art, drama or music although they do offer useful ways to engage with children. It may be that rather than a one-to-one interview to fill out a form, you start by going for a walk outside with the child. It's often easier to walk and talk than to have to talk in an office environment. Time spent getting to know them while feeding ducks, splashing in puddles or skimming stones can lead to greater progress in the long term.

Professional Discretion

Use your professional discretion to creatively amend or add to your participatory practice. The best attitude to bring is one of curiosity; this will help you to explore deeper which leads to greater understanding and impact.

Self-Care

Spend a few moments before engaging with children and young people to reflect on how you are. Remember to be really present and listen with your heart as well as your head. This will help ensure a more meaningful engagement.

Staff Management and Supervision

In terms of management and supervision of staff, team support and good supervision is essential to maintain core professional skills that underpin participatory practice.

Tools to Support Participatory Practice

It is useful to have paper, toys and knickknacks with you or in a treasure box in the office to support communication with children and young people. What you end up using will be determined by the context and the preference of the child or young person.

- Dolls house: furniture.

- Small figures: people, animals.

- Tea set and play food.

- Doctor's kit.

- Puppets.

- Soft toys.

- Dolls – diversity, age, gender, ethnicity etc.

- Lego.

- Sparkly pens.

- Toy telephone.

- Buttons (various sizes and colours).

- Stones (various sizes, shapes and colours).

- Play mat.

- Playdough, Silly Putty.

- Bubbles.

- Stickers (variety of shapes and sizes).

- Paper (various colours and sizes).

- Colouring/blank drawing books.

- Pens, Pencils, Crayons.

- Certificates.

- Books on related issues.

- Poems.

- Music.

- Soft balls.

- Worksheets.

- Flip chart paper.

- Nature - leaves, shells, sticks etc.

- Bean Bag.

- Computer, laptop, tablet, smart phone.

Questions to Consider

Outlined below are some simple questions to consider in thinking about your participatory practice:

Space:

- Have you given attention to the physical space where you meet?
- Have you sat in the room and looked at it from a child's perspective?
- Have you given time to developing safe emotional space with the child?
- Have you considered how children or families can access services or meetings?
- Do you have a creative tool box?
  e.g. box/bag with toys, tissues, markers, paper, games

Voice:

- Have you checked out the child's level of communication?
- Have you thought through the barriers to participation?
- Do you know their favourite means of communicating?
- Have you spent time building their capacity to express their voice?
- Does the child understand the importance and value of their voice being expressed?

Audience:

- Have you decided what to do with the information the child has given you?
- Have you identified who needs to hear what the child is saying?
- Have you identified who has responsibility to listen to the voice of the child?

Influence:

- Do you have access to the appropriate decision makers?
- Have you fed back to the child what is happening and why?
- Are you aware of who the key stakeholders are and are they on board?
- How can you demonstrate that children and young people are influencing your practice and your service?

1.3 Illustrative Examples

The table below presents examples of the different approaches adopted by Tusla as part of the process of facilitating space, voice, audience and influence. The examples are drawn from HIQA reports sampled for a baseline study on children's participation in Tusla and the responses to the open-ended questions in a questionnaire distributed to all Tusla staff (Kennan et al., forthcoming). They are divided into children and young people's participation in decisions of a personal nature, affecting the individual child and participation in decisions of a public nature affecting children as a collective.

Individual Participation

Lundy model	Context & source	Example extracted from source
Space: Creating a safe space in which children can express themselves freely.	Facilitating child friendly meetings Tusla Management (survey respondent)	I have chaired child-in-care reviews where children have attended. I have tried to make this a more comfortable space for the child by meeting with the child and their social worker or advocate (whoever is their most trusted) before the meeting. I talk to the young person about who will be at the meeting and what will be talked about. I ask the young person if there is anything that they want said or anything that they don't want to hear (offer the opportunity for them to leave the room for part of the meeting).
Voice: Providing children with a range of options to choose how to express themselves.	Writing letters Social Worker (survey respondent)	In the case of a 16-year-old female I prepared her for speaking with the judge prior to a hearing which was focused on a decision being made as to where she was going to live following the breakdown of her placement. I had a meeting with the young person and listened to her views on the issue. I encouraged her to write a letter to the judge and the judge then offered to meet with the young person.
Audience: Communicating children's views to those with the power to make decisions.	Communicating children's views in a report to decision makers Social Worker (survey respondent)	As part of the initial assessment process I have the responsibility to obtain the view of the child. I meet with each child on an individual basis and through conversation and play I try to gain an insight into what life at home is like for them. The children's account of life at home influenced the recommendations made in my report regarding them.

Influence: Children's views being considered by those with the power to effect change.	Using financial and human resources to act on the child's views HIQA inspection of a residential centre in the south (February 2014)	The inspector found that the staff team were flexible and imaginative in catering for the individual needs and interests of the children and they were able to develop their interests and talents. For example, two of the children were interested in fishing and hunting and some of the staff team organised a boat for sea fishing and regular days out hunting. Another child was interested in carpentry and he attended a training course on boat building. The manager used financial and human resources well to ensure that the children's talents and interests were fully developed.

Collective Participation

Lundy model	Context & source	Example extracted directly from source (text in italics has been added)
Space: Creating a safe space in which children can express themselves freely.	Structured 'circle time' Project manager of Youth and Family Centre (survey respondent)	Children attend our service twice a week and may attend for up to seven years. During their group time we consistently discuss ideas and issues with the children through a structured 'circle time' group and individually. Part of our programme is designed to encourage children to speak their minds and develop their self esteem so they are more confident when asserting their needs.
Voice: Providing children with a range of options to choose how to express themselves.		I have through individual relationships with children asked them to take part in the induction of new Social Workers coming on to the team…The young person spoke at induction about how much she valued her social worker having one visit every few months with just her, her brother and her sister (no parents / grandparents etc). She spoke about how they felt comfortable to talk to their social worker about how their visits were going and any changes they wanted to make. They also got to just have fun together on an outing. As a result, several of the social workers who heard her speak brought this into their work.

| Audience: Communicating children's views to those with the power to make decisions. | Presentation to social work.

Social care worker (survey respondent). | A children-in-care group was set up with group sessions run by two Tusla staff. During these group sessions the young people and children discussed issues/concerns and wishes in relation to being in care. Feedback from these group sessions was sent up the line to management and the young people have been asked to have an input in the design of a new access room. Review forms are now more colourful and child friendly, and a presentation was prepared for the larger social work team. The presentation covered all the group sessions, insights to what goes through a young person's mind when moving into care, what's important to them and their worries/fears and concerns. The feedback, from this presentation, was positive and it gave social workers invaluable insights into a young person's view. Social workers are now more aware of what is important to the young people and have incorporated this into their everyday work ethic. Management have taken on board the young people's point of view and small changes have been made but there is a commitment to make further changes. |
|---|---|---|
| Influence: Children's views being considered by those with the power to effect change. | Service improvement from individual complaints.

Tusla Management (survey respondent). | Locally we have struggled to find a mechanism for involving children/young people in our service planning and to do this in a way that is inclusive and not tokenistic. Time and scope have been factors in this. Feedback on the service is gathered through complaints (which includes those from children and young people) and this information is used in service planning and review and to make service improvements. |

Case Study Example

EPIC, an independent association that works with and for children and young people who are currently living in care or who have had an experience of living in care, in partnership with Tusla, have developed local youth fora for young people living in foster care between the age of eight and seventeen. The purpose of these fora is to create a space where young people can share their experiences about the services in which they are engaged with local practitioners and policy makers. The aim is that the experiences of the young people can then positively influence change and service provision within their local area.

These fora are young person led and reliant on the voluntary participation of their members. The following case study is in relation to the Cork fora and is considered according to Lundy's Model of Child Participation.

Space:

All young people growing up in foster care and living in the Cork area from the age of 12-17 were invited to voluntarily participate in an action forum. The purpose of the forum was to create a space in which young people in care could engage in dialogue on the challenges and opportunities of living in care while identifying issues they felt were important to them with a view to working on campaigns to make care better. The key principles of the group were:

- Universal invitation to all young people in foster care;
- Voluntary engagement;
- Meaningful and purposeful participation;
- Opportunities for young people to create change through direct access to professional policy and decision makers;
- Fun.

Creating the space in which young people felt comfortable to talk required consideration, the physical environment had to be open and welcoming in a non-statutory building. It was important that the young people be informed of the purpose of the initial introduction session and what would happen on the day. It was also vital that young people be empowered to speak about their experiences and views without fear, thus confidentiality and what that meant for the process had to be explored with the group. It was also vital that the young people felt part of the initial process and have fun with it.

Voice:

The initial discussion phase invited the young people to explore their identified views about the care system through a very broad lens. The outcome was that the young people identify the area of the care system which impacted most significantly on their lives and how they could create change. In the initial process the parameters for change were explored with the young people. It was really important for meaningful participation that the young people explore what were the areas they could impact on, which was operational issues, i.e. how the care system works. It was vital that the

young people were clear that this action group had no influence on whether they remained in care, or access with parents on personal issues belonging to individual young people, but rather the system as a whole.

Through group discussion the young people identified that they were unhappy with their Child in Care Review, identifying that the review was not participative in the way it was facilitated. Young people did not feel they had the opportunity to have their voice heard and they felt it was "a professionals meeting that they just went to" as opposed to a decision making forum in which they fully participated. The young people identified the Child-in-Care Review forum as the best way they could influence change for other young people in care. If the review form was more child friendly, then young people had more opportunity to actually participate in decisions made about them at the review. So the young people asked 'what should my form ask of me? '

Audience:

As the Child in Care Review is a statutory meeting, any changes to the format requires partnership with statutory policy makers. If the young people wanted to change the review forms, then senior management had to support any and all changes. Influence for change was key, and this influence was committed prior to the formation of the group. Considerable ideological discussion between the NGO and the statutory agency took place about what does participation mean and what could or should it look like. Partnership was key to this action. The partnership was made up of young people, the area manager, principal social worker, social workers and EPIC staff members. Each relevant stakeholder identified that it was important for the young people's voices to be heard and to empower them to continue to speak out about issues of concern to them. With this in mind, the local working group and young people began working on changing and adapting the current review form to suit the identified views of the young people. Throughout this process and during each session with the young people, comprehensive notes were taken and a report was compiled from these setting out what had been discussed, identified, flagged and any actions/tasks moving forward. The young people all received a copy of this report following each session.

Influence:

The partnership of young people, senior managers and frontline workers in collaboration created a review form which the young people felt best represented them as individuals and respected their views as young people in care. They also assisted in ensuring that the relevant funding was secured to facilitate the young people in developing their new review form. The commitment was given that if the new young person friendly form met with the statutory requirements then it would be adopted as standard practice for all young people. The challenge was for the young people to create a review form which was personalised, met the statutory requirements and encouraged buy in from frontline workers. The young people presented their form to the senior management team and the young person's form was adopted and rolled out in the Cork city and county area. Social workers adopted the form with many reporting a really positive reaction from young people using the form. A timeline of six months for full usage of the young person's form across the county was met. The entire process took one year and the partnership between young people and adult professionals endured. The young people are currently working on an App for young people in care.

Case Study Source: Reidín Dunne and Suzanne O'Brien, EPIC.

Creating Child and Youth Friendly Versions of Written Material

When communicating with children and young people the same good communication principles apply as with adults:

- Get to know your audience and how best to engage them;

- Involve the target audience (and/or people who are experienced in communicating with your target audience) in the design and editing process;

- Cut out what isn't relevant and include everything that is relevant to your audience;

- Use humour, colour, and pictures appropriately.

Information should be:

- Clear (easy to find, access, and understand);

- Concise (short, simple, to the point);

- Consistent (no mixed messages or variation in use of terms).

Keep Writing Simple:

- Be personal. Where possible use words like 'we' and 'you';

- Use active verbs to make your writing clearer and less formal;

- Keep sentences short. Avoid jargon and unexplained/ unnecessary acronyms;

- Cut out any unnecessary words and phrases;

- Use lists judiciously. Break them up with sub-headings, colour or contrast;

- A 'frequently-asked-questions' format can be good for emphasis;

- Make use of supports such as www.simplyput.ie, the website of the National Adult Literacy Agency.

Additional Participatory Practice Resources

Tusla Resources

'Child protection conference and the child protection notification system –information for professionals' (2015).

'Child protection conferences – information for parents' leaflet.

'Child protection and welfare practice handbook' (2011).

'Children first: national guidance for the protection and welfare of children' (2011).

'It's about me – young people's experiences of participating in their care reviews' – available from EPIC.

'Me fein' – national care planning project.

National standards for the protection and welfare of children (2012).

National standards for residential care for young people (2004) .

National standards for special care units (2014).

'Special education needs – a continuum of support – resource pack for teachers' (2007) – available from education.ie.

'TACTIC (teenagers and children talking in care – me and my care plan review form'.

'Tell Us – a guide on how to give feedback and make complaints to Tusla - Child and Family Agency'.

'Tell Us' - feedback and complaints: policy and procedure' 'Toolkit for parental participation – national guidance and local implementation' (December 2015).

N.B. All Tusla documents are available from the publications section of the Tusla.ie website.

Additional Resources

Australian Youth Affairs Coalition (2011) 'New energy, ideas and perspectives'.

Barnardos (2006) 'Say it your own way: Children's participation in assessment - a guide and resource'.

Brattman, K., and McAuley, M (2002) 'Hearing young voices', Children's Rights Alliance and National Youth Council of Ireland.

Brendtro, Larry – 'Responsibilities Programme'.

Buckley, Helen – 'Listen to me, children's experience of domestic violence'.

Buckley, Helen – 'Framework for the assessment of vulnerable children and their families'.

Cafcass (2013) 'How it looks to me', Cafcass.

Camis, J., (2001) 'My life and me', BAAF Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service.

Coram Children's Legal Centre (2015) 'Unlocking children's rights', the fundamental rights and citizenship programme of the European Union.

Davis, Nancy – 'Therapeutic Stories'.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015) 'A practical guide to including seldom-heard children & young people in decision-making'.

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2011) 'Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children'.

Edinburgh and Lothians (2013) – 'Getting it right for children and families affected by parental drug use'.

Equitas: International Centre for Human Rights Education (2008) 'Play it Fair'.

Feantsa (2009) 'Empowering Ways of Working'.

Focus Ireland, EPIC and Empower Ireland (2012) 'Pathways' available online: https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/pathwaysfinal.pdf.

Garbarino J. and F. Stott – 'What children can tell us' Know your rights: The rights of children and young people. http://childrensrights.ie/sites/default/files/submissions_reports/files/KYR2015.pdf .

Grundtvig Participation Project (2013) 'Participation Toolkit'.

Hart, Rodger (1979) 'Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship', UNICEF.

Hughes, Daniel (2007) 'Attachment focused family therapy', WW Norton & Company.

Jennings, Sue – 'Creative Care', available at: http://www.suejennings.com/creativecare.html.

Life story work www.lifestoryworks.org.

Magic wands worksheets http://www.sheffkids.co.uk.

Mitchell, JT., (2003) 'Critical Incident Stress Debriefing', International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.

My world triangle. www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/guidance-documents.

National Evaluation of the Children's Fund – 'The Evaluators Cookbook'.

Participation Works (2008) 'Evaluating Participation Work: The Toolkit and The Guide' Picture exchange communication system http://www.sess.ie/pecs.

Redl, Fritz – 'The Life Space Interview', available at: http://www.behavioradvisor.com/

SOS Children's Villages (2013) 'Securing Children's Rights' Steve de Shazer – 'Miracle question'.

Sunderland and Engleheart – 'Draw on your emotions'.

Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families.

Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Fostering.

Trotters, Chris (2006) 'Working with involuntary clients', SAGE Publications Ltd.

Turnell, A., and Murphy, T., (2015) 'Signs of safety' Three houses and Fairy or Wizard Tool www.signsofsafety.net/.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Whitehouse and Pudney – 'A volcano in my tummy – helping children handle anger'.

Wilson, Jim – 'Child-focused practice a collaborative systemic approach'.

Section 2: Toolkit Activities for Creating Space

"Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view" according to the Lundy Model of Participation 2007. While providing space is vitally important, it loses meaning if there is no capacity for children to voice their opinions. Additionally, their opinions need to be heard by an appropriate audience who has the capacity to influence decisions that affect them.

There are a number of ways of looking at space which include:

- Physical space;
- Safe emotional space;
- Inclusive space;
- Time.

These forms of space can also be considered at the following levels:

- Individual;
- Collective.

2.1 Space Explored

Physical Space
The physical environment can be conducive to engagement or act as a barrier.

- Are your reception areas, waiting rooms, corridors, office spaces and meeting spaces conducive to participatory practice or do they act as a barrier? e.g driving a car.
- Are the spaces you use age appropriately safe? What about outdoor space?
- In what ways do you create a safe physical space for children and young people in your work or service?
- Are there noises or sounds that are unfamiliar to the child that might frighten or scare them? Consider the needs of children with autism for example.

Safe Emotional Space
For children to participate they need to feel that the space they are in is safe. Safe emotional spaces are created by building up rapport, relationships and trust.

- In what ways do you create a safe emotional space for children and young people in your work or service?
- How do you engage children and young people so they feel that they can relate to you, can build a relationship with you and trust you (and your service)?
- Do you consider children with different needs and at different stages of emotional development?

Inclusive Space

Having a sense of inclusion is critical to the development of a child; this also applies to the space they engage with for your service.

- Do you consider cultural needs, e.g. personal space, gender differences, language needs and sexual orientation?
- Do you consider issues of ability, e.g. mobility, learning and communication?
- Is everyone who wants to be involved afforded the opportunity to be involved?

Time

Having adequate time to offer a child or young person creates the space for sharing at a deeper level than if we are simply 'too busy' to get into more complex issues. Good participation requires time.

- Do you give children and young people time and space to engage in deeper dialogue?
- Do you consider the time of day when holding meetings or events that children or young people could engage with e.g. after school time?

Individual Space

Individual space is when you are engaging with any child or young person on a one-to-one basis, which can range from a simple conversation with a receptionist to a one-to-one session with a practitioner. Almost every interaction with a child or young person provides the opportunity to connect on an individual level.

- Do you make an effort, even when busy, to be welcoming and approachable to every child or young person in your service?
- Are you aware of creating individual space when there may be groups of children or young people?
- In your individual sessions with children and young people are you approachable and available to listen and do you provide a range of mechanisms of engagement that are needs led, age and developmentally appropriate, gender informed and engaging?

Collective Space

Collective space is when a group of children and young people are brought together for a purpose, e.g., to share their thoughts and ideas about a service or programme.

- Have you considered a range of mechanisms to offer space for children and young people to engage in a collective way?

2.2 Creating Space

As a team, consider space under the following headings:

Now	Future
Physical Space Ways our physical space is conducive to participatory practice.	Physical Space Ways our physical space will be more conducive to participatory practice.
Safe Emotional Space Ways that my service and I create a safe emotional space for engaging with children and young people.	Safe Emotional Space Ways that my service and I will create a safe emotional space for engaging with children and young people.
Inclusive Space Ways our service is inclusive of cultures, race, religion, gender, sexuality.	Inclusive Space Ways our service will be inclusive of cultures, race, religion, gender, sexuality.

Now	Future
Time Ways my team and I have sufficient time to create space for children and young people to share.	**Time** Ways my team and I will have sufficient time to create space for children and young people to share.
Individual space Ways my team and I are supportive of creating space for individual children and young people.	**Individual space** Ways my team and I will be supportive of creating space for individual children and young people.
Collective space Ways my team and I are supportive of creating space for individual children and young people.	**Collective space** Ways my team and I will be supportive of creating space for individual children and young people.

Age Appropriate Ideas for Space

Below are some ideas for creating space for different age ranges. Many of these ideas suggested here work across all age-groups.

Children 0-3	Children 4-11	Children 12-18
• Ensure there is sufficient space for children to play in their play area.	• Provide child friendly spaces for children to play and explore in a safe space.	• Provide teen oriented spaces for young people to hang out and cultivate their ideas and opinions.
• Soft space for children to play safely and explore risk taking safely.	• Consider the space from the eye-level of a child.	• Engage teens in actively modifying the space to be youth friendly.
• Enable children of different ages to play with each other if they choose to.	• Ask children what they would like the space to be like.	• At meetings where a young person cannot attend, have a piece of art or their picture to represent them.
• At meetings where a child cannot attend have a toy or picture to represent them.	• At meetings where a child cannot attend have a toy, their picture or a piece of art to represent them.	• Use animals and pets to connect with young people.
• Ensure meeting and waiting areas are buggy-friendly and have clean, safe spaces for babies to lie down, toddlers to explore, infants to feed.	• Engage animals and pets to connect with children.	• Use car journeys to have discussions with teenagers - sometimes they prefer not to be eyeballed.
• Engage children in actively modifying the space to be child friendly.	• Movement and dance - use movement: running, climbing, handstands, cartwheels, dance to connect with children	• Talk about things of interest not just school and how things are at home. Get to know them, find out their passion. Share your passions too.
• Outdoor space - get into nature.	• Nature walks - walk with children in nature to explore how they feel about their world.	• Outdoor activities - go on fieldtrips, fishing trips, kayaking, hikes etc., as an alternative to indoor meetings.
• Predictable space - familiar and comfortable.	• Reality box - have a selection of toys and knickknacks that children can depict what's happening in their family with.	
	• Engage children in actively modifying the space to be child friendly.	

Building trust and creating emotional space - make contact to celebrate positives, for example, send a birthday card or make a call to say hello.
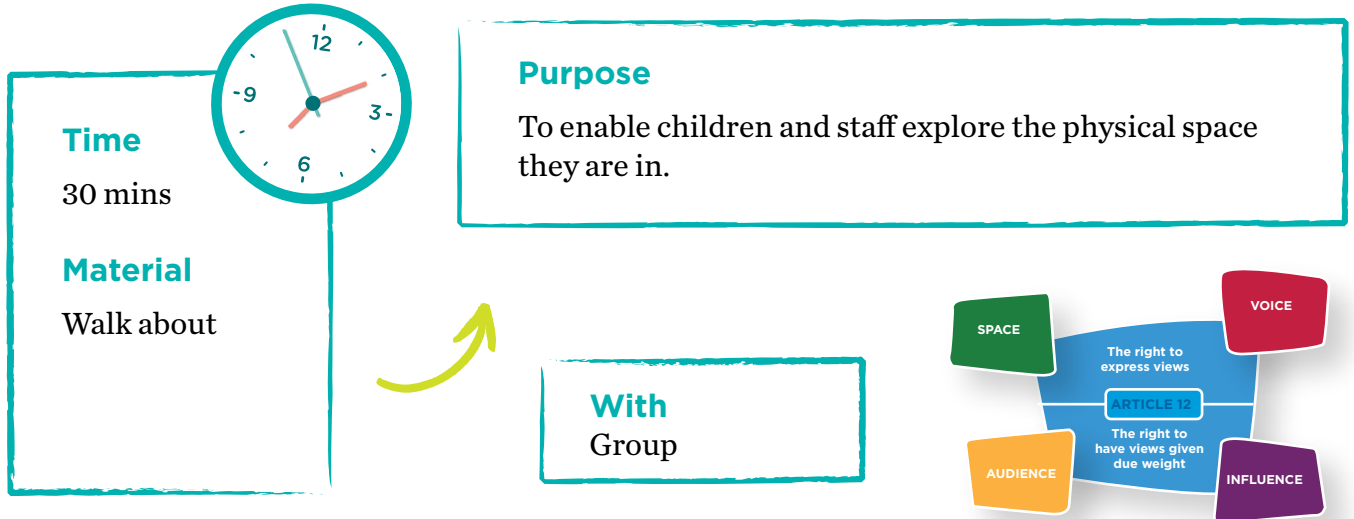
Space Considerations

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Space

- These activities are particularly useful to help cultivate safe space;

- Allows staff member and child to get to know each other a bit better.

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Voice

- Discuss how they feel and what they would like to happen;

- Have children sufficient information to participate?

- Always explain to children that they do not have to take part.

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Audience

- See audience section for more details;

- Discuss with children who might be the most appropriate person/service to share their views with;

- Ensure children are happy for their views to be shared;

- Ensure the views of children are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen.

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Influence

- Ensure the wishes of the children or group are shared as agreed;

- Ensure feedback is given to children about the outcome of this;

- Discuss this outcome – positive or negative.

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2.3 Space Activities

The activities in this section are particularly useful when paying attention to creating space but voice, audience and influence should also be considered, as the four elements of Lundy's model of participation. It is important to give children and young people space so that they have a platform to engage in decision-making processes. Without the other elements of the Lundy model their rights may not be enacted to facilitate their meaningful engagement in decision making that affects them. In the context of child and youth participation, space alone will not impact decision making.

Mapping our Service

Time
30 mins

Material
Walk about

Purpose
To enable children and staff explore the physical space they are in.

With
Group

Method:

- Invite colleagues and/or children to walk around the service exploring 'what is working well' and 'what could be improved'.

- You may like to give them different coloured posts to add a visual dimension allowing them to stick 'green' to positive spaces and 'red' to spaces that need to be improved.

- This can also be done as a visualisation, enabling the participants to imagine what it is like to enter the service as a client e.g. from a toddler's perspective, 5-year-old, 10-year-old, 15-year old, parent, grandparent, or person with disability.

- After the visualisation or the walk about invite participants to share in smaller groups what is working well and what needs to be improved. It is important to give time to what is working well otherwise people may overly focus on what isn't right. When exploring what needs to improve, encourage participants to give ideas they have around how these improvements could be made.

- Document the findings and feedback to the participants in relation to what can or cannot be done.

Discussion:

- What was it like to move through the building and the space in this way?

- What are the key priorities from all the aspects that could be improved that you would like to see changed the most?

- What impact do you think these changes could make?

Space Visualisation

Time
30 mins

Material
Flip chart
Markers

Purpose
To enable children and staff explore the space they occupy through a visualisation.

With
Group

SPACE

VOICE

The right to express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to have views given due weight

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE

Method:
- Invite staff and/or children to take part in a visualisation of their service.
- This can be done with staff and/or children and young people. If you use it with staff, insert the piece in brackets that enables them put themselves in a client's shoes.

Space Visualisation:
Read out the following piece, slowly and with regular pauses, to give people time to reflect.

Sitting tall in your chair, close your eyes.

Imagine for a moment you are a child - pick an age that regularly visits your place of work e.g. baby in a pram, a 2-year-old, 5-year-old, 10-year-old, 15-year-old, someone with a disability, someone from a minority community, perhaps a parent or a grandparent is with the child also, you may like to consider how they see the world. Imagine you are that child for a moment. Really put yourself in their shoes, behind their eyes. How do you see the world?

Imagine you approach the building of your service.
What does it look like to you? What does it feel like as you approach the door?
What does it feel like when you enter the building?
When you greet the receptionist, what kind of welcome do you get?
When you wait in the waiting room, what is there? What is it like?
When you walk down the corridor what greets you?
When you meet with the staff how do you feel?
Really get a sense of what it is like to be in that building, in that space. What is the physical space like for you? What is the emotional space like? How open do you feel about sharing what is happening in your life?
Feel the feet on the floor, the body in the chair. When you are ready, open your eyes.

Discussion

Invite the participants to share what their experience was like in pairs and what changes they would like to see happen. This can then be shared with the larger group using some of the discussion questions:

- What was it like to enter the building?
- What feelings did you feel as you went through each part?
- Were there any surprises or new insights as you went through the building and meeting the various people in this way?
- What changes do you think would need to be made to improve this space? (document on a flip chart)
- What are the key priorities from all the aspects that could be improved that you would like to see changed the most?
- What impact do you think these changes could make?

Debrief

Ask each person to say 'I am not the person I envisaged and my name is...' to their partner.

This exercise becomes more participatory when brought through the entire Lundy Model.

Space	Voice
• Invite a group of children who use the service to take part in the exercise (ensure all children have opportunity to take part); • Explain exercise.	• Give participants the opportunity in smaller groups or individually to explore what is working well and what is not; • Discuss and document what changes could be made to improve things; • Consider what might be needed to make the changes; • Discuss if suggested changes are realistic, what resources might be needed.
Audience	**Influence**
• Explore who is the most likely person who would be able to influence the changes that the children or group would like to happen; • Explore what is the best way to share this information, being clear about what is or is not possible.	• Ensure the wishes of the children or group are shared as agreed; • Ensure feedback is given to children about the outcome of this; • Discuss this outcome – positive or negative.

Exercises for Creating a Safe Space
Ice-Breakers

Introduction games and ice-breakers are a great way of helping staff, children and young people to relax as they get to know each other. They also help build children and young people's confidence in expressing themselves, which will help them to engage in dialogue. This supports the creation of a safe emotional space in a collective environment, which is important to encourage participation.
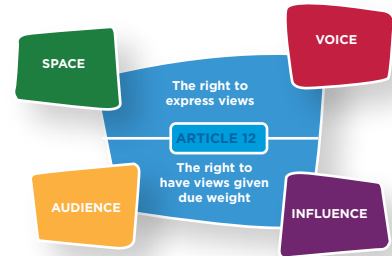
Introduction Games
Fun Introductions

Each person should introduce themselves and share one thing about themselves e.g.

- If they had a magic wand what would they wish for;
- Their favourite song, colour, food etc;
- What they hope to get out of the day .

Linking us up

Start by inviting one person to introduce themself and share something about themself e.g. sports they like or places they have been. Next invite the group to see how they link to that person. It might be that someone likes a similar sport or has been to a similar place or has the same colour eyes. They then introduce themselves and the next person finds something in common.

Name Games

Recall Game

Each person to introduce themselves with an adjective that describes them with the same letter as their name e.g. Laughing Lucy, Super Sarah.

Ball Game

Throw the ball around the room and the person throwing must say the name of the person they are throwing the ball to. It is simple and fun, you can add extra balls to make it harder/faster paced.

Ice-breakers

Tall Stories

The facilitator starts a story with a sentence that ends in SUDDENLY. The next person then has to add to the story with his own sentence that ends in SUDDENLY. Continue the story until everyone has contributed. The story becomes crazier as each young person adds their sentence. Tape it and play it back. For example; 'Yesterday I went to the zoo and was passing the elephant enclosure, when SUDDENLY.....'

Exercises for Creating a Safe Space
Fact or Fiction?

Ask everyone to write on a piece of paper three things about themselves which may not be known to the others in the group. Two are true and one is not. Taking turns, they read out the three 'facts' about themselves and the rest of the group votes which are true and false. There are always surprises. This simple activity is always fun, and helps the group and facilitators get to know more about each other.

Would you Rather?

Questions may range from silly trivia to more serious content. Place a line of tape down the centre of the room. Ask the group to stand with one leg on either side of the line.

When asked 'would you rather?' they have to jump to the left or right as indicated by the facilitator. Here are some starter questions, just add your own and let the fun begin.

Would you rather...

- Eat broccoli or blueberries?

- Own a lizard or a monkey?

- Have a beach holiday or a mountain holiday?

- Be invisible or be able to read minds?

- Be hairy all over or completely bald?

- Time travel or be in two places at the same time?

- Go to the moon or deep dive in the sea?

- Wrestle a lion or charm a snake?

- Cage dive with sharks or swim with dolphins?

Talking about Me

Time
5-20 mins

Material
Pre-prepared Worksheet

Purpose
To agree with the child about what information they are comfortable having shared with their parents, other family members and services.

With
1-1 or small family group

SPACE
VOICE
The right to express views
ARTICLE 12
The right to have views given due weight
AUDIENCE
INFLUENCE
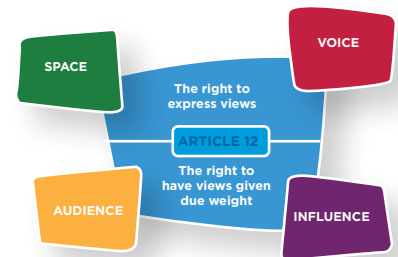
Method:

- Discuss what confidentiality means in your contact with the child: e.g., that you won't share what they tell you unless you are worried about them and/or when they give you permission to share the information. Explain that you are now going to help them decide what is ok to share and what is not.

- Use this sheet to check in throughout the conversation and check back in relation to follow-up conversations.

- Always be clear that if they tell you that they or their family or another child aren't safe or that they've been hurt then something might need to be done about that.

- Emphasise that while the child may not want someone to know something, it may still need to happen.

Discussion Questions:

- Who are you most comfortable sharing your story with?

- If you are not happy for me to tell _____ about _____ now, can you think of a time when it would be ok?

- Explore if there are any particular ways of sharing that might be ok? e.g. in a letter.

Alternatives:

Write what children say often on cards. Give them sticky labels/smiley faces to indicate along a continuum their level of agreement to share information, i.e. Tell me if you really strongly agree or disagree with the following: 'I'm happy for you to talk to _____ about _____'.

What do I want to say?	Who needs to know?	When is it OK to tell them?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Who's involved?	What do I not want them to know?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Plain
English
Approved by NALA

Me, Me, Me

Time
20 mins

Material
Worksheet

Purpose
To enable staff build a relationship with the child and learn more about how they see themselves, their talents and strengths.

With
1-1 or group

SPACE

VOICE

The right to express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to have views given due weight

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE
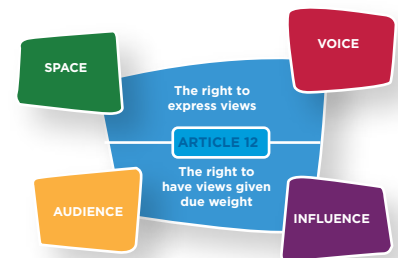
Method:

- Explain that everyone has talents, strengths and gifts.

- Point out some nice things that you have noticed about them already. Things you admire about them or what you have seen them do.

- Give each person a copy of the template and work through the questions with them, using their answers as opportunities for deeper discussion. It can help if you share some of your own personal examples such as 'I'm really proud of myself when I can train my puppy not to eat shoe laces'.

- Explain that you would like to learn a bit more about how they feel and what they would like to have happen.

- There are also two additional sheets that can be used to reflect on school and what the child's strengths and needs are here.

Discussion Questions:

- What is it like to think nice things about yourself?
- What other nice things would you like to see on that sheet?
- What would have to happen for them to be there?

Me, Me, Me

I feel happiest when...

I'm good at...

I am proud of myself when...

I like myself most when...

My parents/family are proud of me when...

3 nice things people say about me are...

Other kids look up to me when...

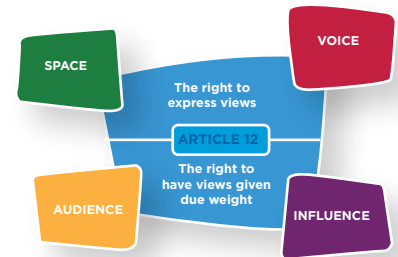Plain English
Approved by NALA

Trust

Time
15 - 20 mins

Material
Obstacles e.g. chairs, teddy, cushions, blindfolds, conversation starters

Purpose
To enable children and young people to explore trust and safety in a safe and fun way.

With
Group

SPACE
VOICE
The right to express views
ARTICLE 12
The right to have views given due weight
AUDIENCE
INFLUENCE

Method:

- This is useful when bringing a group of children or young people together to build trust.

- Brainstorm what the word 'trust' means. Dig deeper by asking 'how would you know if you can trust someone?', 'what do you notice in your body or your mind when you don't feel like you trust someone?'

- Explain that this is a trust exercise and that they can choose to participate or opt out if they feel uncomfortable.

- Demonstrate the exercise by asking the young people to guide each other through a pre-arranged obstacle course with one person blindfolded – imagine it is a forest with lots of trees that have been blown down in a storm and some holes in the forest floor. The child must guide their partner to safety by directing them so they don't bump into anything along the way.
  If they do, they must start at the beginning again.

- When the pair have each had a turn ask the discussion questions below.

Discussion Questions:

- What was it like to be trusted?
- Was it easy or difficult to keep your partner safe?
- How did you feel when it looked like they might not be safe?
- What did it feel like when you got through safely?
- If you were doing it again what would you improve?

Feeling Safe

Time
20 - 30 mins

Material
Worksheets

Purpose
To introduce the topic of safety and hear about what makes the child feel safe and unsafe.

With
1-1

Method - Part 1: Safe
- Explain that safety is really important for children and young people. It is like being wrapped up in a blanket, you feel warm and safe tucked up inside.

- Explain that on the worksheet there is a young person wrapped up in their blanket with different things that make them feel safe. Invite the participants to fill in the blanket with things that make them feel safe.

Method - Part 2: Unsafe
- Explain that there are also things that make you feel unsafe that you want to push away;

- Explain that on the worksheet there is a young person trying to push away things that makes him/her feel unsafe;

- Use the words on the worksheet as a prompt for discussion with the child or young person about what helps them to feel safe or what stops them from feeling safe. For example, probe by asking: What feelings help you feel safe? What places help you feel safe? Etc.

- Explore the explanations deeper if they are comfortable to do so. Be cautious as this can be a very sensitive exercise revealing aspects in their lives that hold deep vulnerability and risks.

Adapted from Moore, T & Layton, M., (2007)

Alternatives: invite the participants to draw images to illustrate what makes them feel safe or unsafe.

Discussion questions:

• What does feeling safe mean to you?

• What does feeling unsafe mean to you?

• What support do you need from me to help you feel safe and happy?

What makes me feel safe? I feel safe when?

Feelings	Things people can do	People in my family
Places	Things I know	Animals
Anything else?	Other people	

What stops me feeling safe?

Feelings

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

People in my family

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Places

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Things I know

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Anything else?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Things people do

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Other people

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit

Plain English
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Bank of Questions

The following questions can be useful in specific processes such as 'Meitheal' to assist the staff in gaining greater understanding of the child's situation and needs.

11 - 18 Year Olds

- What's it like where you live?
- What's the best thing about being in your family?
- What do you like best about your friends? What makes you a good friend?
- Who do you talk to if you have a problem?
- Do you find it hard to talk to _____?
- Tell me about the ups and downs of school? And homework?
- If you had one wish what would that be?
- Do you feel something needs to change? What would you like to see change?
- How does x impact y (e.g. housing impact your school work)?
- Sometimes children can't get to do things that they enjoy e.g. Sport because there is not enough money in the family for that, do you find that?
- Who keeps you safe?

5 - 10 Year Olds

- If you had a genie and she could grant you three wishes, what would you want?
- Tell me about your family and friends?
- Tell me about meal times? What's your favourite food? Who cooks dinner?
- Who brings you to school?
- If you were worried, who would you talk to?
- Who would you call if you were scared?
- How do you find doing your homework? Does anyone help you?
- Tell me something interesting about your culture/religion?
- What's your favourite thing to do with mum or dad?
- Sometimes families don't have enough money for food, books or activities after school. How is that in your family?
- Do you have a pet or is there a pet that you visit? Tell me what you like about them?

Bank of Questions

2 - 4 Year Olds

- Draw your house and your family – or let's build your house with lego, use dolls for your family … Is this doll's house like your house – what would make it more like yours?
- Tell me about your day? Show pictures of people doing everyday things, getting ready for school, eating, watching telly.
- What's your news?
- What's your favourite game? Do you like climbing trees, making mud cakes, playing with sand/water/clay?
- Who keeps you safe?
- What is it like when someone is angry?
- What makes you feel happy?
- What makes you feel sad?
- What's the best thing about your family?
- What is your favourite toy?

Building Conversation Starters

Having good questions to hand helps to engage with a wide range of children in a fun and interesting way. Here are some useful questions:

If you had a superpower, what would it be? Why?	If you were a car, what type of car would you be?
The person who makes me laugh the most is...	If I won the lotto, I would...
My favourite colour is...	The food I love the most is...
The best holiday I ever had was...	If my life was a movie, I'd like to be played by...
Who is your role model? Why?	My favourite music is ...
What do you get excited about? Why?	What's your favourite thing to do?
If you found a genie in a lamp, what would you wish for?	What would you like to change in your life?
What is your favourite thing about being you?	What's your favourite tradition? Why?
If you were to go on the radio, what would you like to speak about? Why?	What's it like to have your voice heard? What's it like not to be heard?
What things do you like about being in school?	What would you love to see change?
Describe the perfect relationship.	What makes a happy relationship?
What do you like about where you live?	What could be improved?
If you were to pick a car to describe your life, what car would you pick?	What do you like about your friends?

Question Cards

What is the most challenging thing for you?	If you had a magic wand, what would you change?	Whose opinion is most important to you?
What would you most like to achieve?	If you had one wish what would it be?	Imagine you could achieve anything, what would it be?
How are your values the same to your family?	What do you hope for?	What values do you share with your family?
What makes you strong?	What's the most important thing to you right now?	Who is the wisest person you know?
What does it mean to be seen and heard?	Who would you most like to thank?	Who do you trust most?
What makes a good friend?		

Getting Ready for my Meeting

Time
15 - 30 mins

Material
Pre-prepared

Purpose
To enable staff explain and prepare the child or young person for a meeting.

With
1-1 or family

SPACE
VOICE
The right to express views
ARTICLE 12
The right to have views given due weight
AUDIENCE
INFLUENCE
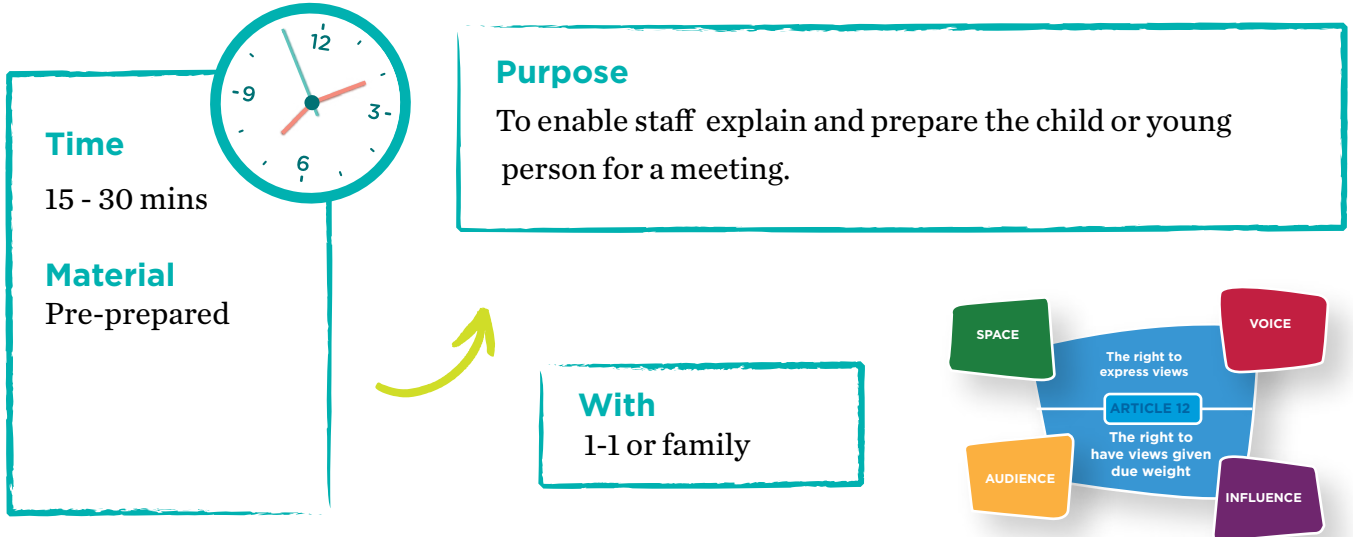
Method:

- It is important to explain how a meeting runs and who will be there, see box on the next page for some tips.

- Prior to the meeting the worker should complete the worksheet to give to the child so they feel adequately informed about what is going on. Use images if literacy is an issue.

- Explain that this exercise will help to prepare the child for the meeting by informing them about the meeting and then supporting the child in deciding whether or not they wish to attend the meeting.

- Share the agenda of the meeting with the child and discuss what is coming up. Explore expectations and discuss limitations.

- Explain the purpose of the meeting that the child is due to be involved in and walk through the worksheet. It can be very helpful for the child to know the benefits and drawbacks to their attendance and non-attendance. For example, benefits of attendance might include those with the decision making power will get to see and hear how the decisions will affect the child. Drawbacks might include the child may feel uncomfortable hearing what other people have to say about them and their family.

- Invite the young person to contribute to the discussion in terms of what they see the benefits and drawbacks of attending the meeting to be.

- Explain that if they choose not to attend the meeting, you will record what they would like the people at the meeting to know about 'what you want to happen so you can have your voice heard'.

- After the discussion, the child might want to make a decision on whether they attend the meeting or not, alternatively they may like some time to think about it.

- At the end of the meeting, ensure you give the child the information of where it will be held, how they will get there and confirm the details you have discussed.

Getting ready for My Meeting

Discussion Questions:

- What would worry you about the meeting in general?
- What is the most important message you have for the meeting?

👥 Explaining a meeting:

- A chairperson runs the meeting;
- A secretary takes the minutes or notes of what is discussed at the meeting and a list of what is going to happen after the meeting;
- What everyone discusses is on the agenda;
- At the end of the meeting, the chairperson ensures that all things on the agenda have been covered;
- The decisions made at the meeting are written into your case plan. The case plan has all the important things that should happen for you.

💬 Discuss strategies on the following:
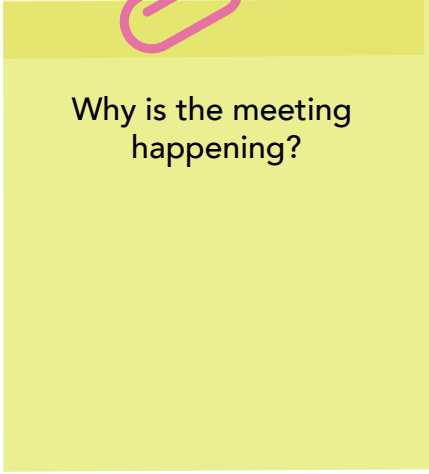
- If there is someone that the child does not want to attend the meeting, how will the child deal with this?
- If the child or adults in the room engage in challenging behaviour, how will this be managed?
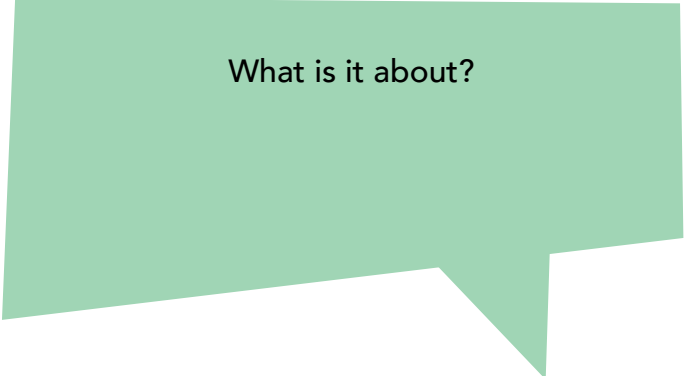
🕐 Note:

- Ensure you give adequate time to prepare the child, this may require several sessions to get them to a point of being prepared for the meeting;
- Breaks need to be scheduled so that the child knows when they will be. This can also be a good time to check in with the child about how they are feeling about what is happening within the meeting. This helps to give the child a chance to process what is happening.

Getting ready for my meeting

Why is the meeting happening?

What is it about?
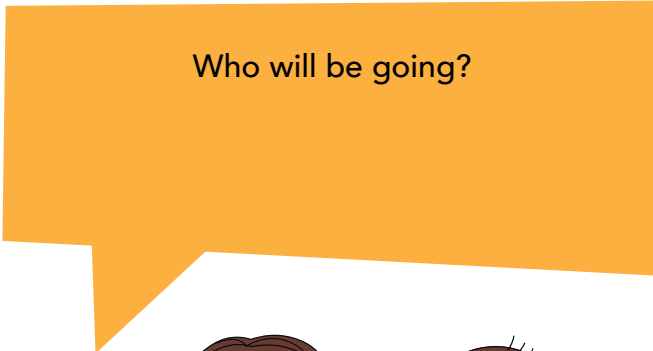
How long is the meeting?

Where will it be held?

Who will be going?

Why are they going?

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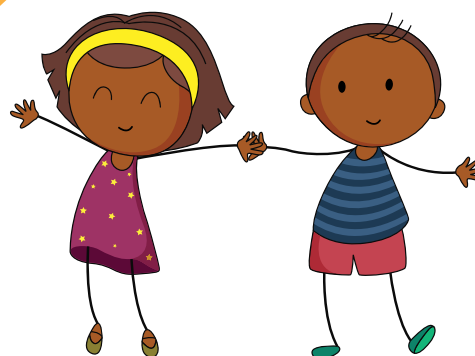
How will the meeting work?

How can I have my say?

Why will it be helpful to have me here?

What might be difficult if I go?

What do I want to say?

Who needs to hear?

What I would like to happen?

I feel well prepared to decide whether or not to go: (circle one) Yes or No

If possible, I would like _____ to go to the meeting with me.

How will I get to the meeting?

What will happen afterwards?

Signed:

Dated:

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Investing in Children: Agenda Days™

'Investing in Children' has been running 'Agenda Days™' for over 15 years. They are intended to provide the chance for children and young people to debate the important issues of the day amongst themselves. They are most successful when children and young people see them as the start of a process of engaging in dialogue with decision-makers, and campaigning for change.
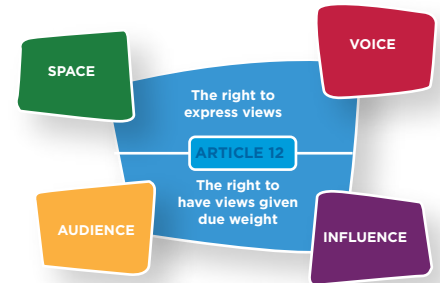
An 'Agenda Day™' is an opportunity for a group of children and young people to come together to begin to discuss a particular area or issue. This can be geographic (what's it like growing up in this town?) or about a particular issue (what are the play facilities like around here?) or specific to a particular group (what's it like growing up with a disability?).

They are useful as a research tool in generating information, gathering views and opinions and collecting evidence directly from children and young people.

Some Important Characteristics of an 'Agenda Day™'

• It's an adult-free environment - this means that adults don't take part in the debate, and the children and young people are free to discuss issues without adult influence. This can be achieved by using young people as facilitators. Of course it is necessary to ensure that the event is safe, so there are a number of important safeguarding roles for adults.

• It starts with a blank sheet - this means that the group are encouraged to think their own thoughts, and come up with their own ideas.

• It can be used with any age group - 'Agenda Days™' have been run with a variety of age groups. The concept stays the same, but the working methods may have to vary to take into account the characteristics of the children or young people.

• It works best when seen as a start of a process, not an end - sometimes 'Agenda Days™' are seen as consultation events. However, they are much more potent if seen as the start of a process in which young people develop their ideas, and their capacity to engage in dialogue.

How Does it Work?

A group of children and young people are invited to spend time together discussing an issue. Out of this will come some ideas about what is most important, and what needs to be changed (the 'agenda'). The group are then invited to consider whether any of them are interested in doing further work on the agenda, by finding out as much as they can about it, and by engaging adults in a dialogue about how things might change. This process normally happens over a period of months.

An 'Agenda Day™' can Produce a Number of Important Outcomes

• As the name implies, it creates an agenda i.e. it identifies the particular issues seen as important by this group of participants.

• It can act as a starting point for groups of children and young people to research issues and campaign for changes.

Agenda Days™ provide a tried and tested technique for children and young people to become active in the process of campaigning for change, in which they can engage in dialogue having had the opportunity to develop well-considered and hopefully powerful arguments for change.

Trademarked Concept

'Agenda Days™' are unique to Investing in Children and the 'Investing in Children Agenda Day™' received confirmation of its trademark in June 2015.

*For more information contact Investing in Children at : www.investinginchildren.net

Section 3: Facilitating Voice

According to the Lundy Model of Child Participation 'Children must be facilitated to express their view'. This cannot happen if children do not have the space to express their views or loses impact if there is no audience or capacity for influence. There are a number of ways of facilitating the meaningful expression of children's views:

- Provision of information;
- Facilitating and supporting engagement;
- Commitment to dialogue;
- Building capacity;
- Using a range of mechanisms.
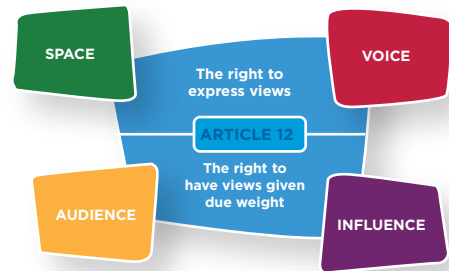
These forms of voice can also be considered at the level of

- Individual;
- Collective.

3.1 Voice Explored

Provision of Information

For children to participate they need to have adequate information to form a view point.

- In what ways do you provide children with information so that they can make an informed decision about their participation in decisions that affect them?
- Do you provide them with options about how they can have their voice heard? e.g. video, attend meeting, have someone advocate on their behalf.
- Are children aware of the organisation's feedback and complaints policy and how they can make their opinions heard? e.g. 'Tell Us' at Tusla.

Facilitating and Supporting Engagement

The capacity and skill of staff to facilitate and support children and young people's engagement is necessary so that they can feel both listened to and heard.

- How do you listen to children?
- Are you skilled at facilitating and enabling children and young people to express themselves?
- What challenges do you face when engaging children and young people? e.g. personal, organisational or external.

Commitment to Dialogue

The ability of staff to engage in ongoing dialogue develops trust between them and children. Dialogue will also be brought through audience and influence. It may be useful to revisit the conversation starters and bank of questions for ideas.

- How do you engage in dialogue with children?
- What attitudes do you have that are supportive of ongoing dialogue and the development of relationships?
- What attitudes might you have that may be a barrier to ongoing dialogue and relationship development?

Building Capacity

An important aspect for children to participate is that they have confidence in themselves, their experience and their viewpoint. Many children who lack confidence may feel that their opinion doesn't count and may never feel ready to voice their opinion or they may voice it inappropriately through challenging behaviour. To enable children to participate, professionals need to build their capacity to do so.

- Do you actively build up children's capacity to express themselves?
- Are there things you are doing that might undermine the confidence and capacity of children and young people to voice their opinion?

Children are more likely to use their voice if they feel that they are being listened to. If they haven't been listened to before they are far less likely and possibly sceptical of tokenistic engagement.

Range of Mechanisms

Having a range of mechanisms to engage children and young people ensures that you are responsive to their needs and providing a variety of opportunities for them to engage with you and your service. Children are unique and like to have their voice heard in different ways. Sometimes adult suggestions for how they could engage are not engaging for children.

- If a child doesn't participate do you leave it, thinking they would prefer not to engage?
- Do you try a number of creative mechanisms to engage children?

Children like to engage in a range of ways, what works for one child may not work for another.

Staff: 'Do you want to come to the meeting?' Young Person: 'No' Staff: 'Ok so'.	Alternative phrasing: Staff: 'Do you want to come to the meeting?' Young Person: 'No' Staff: 'How would you like to get your view to the meeting?'

Individual Voice

Individual voice is on a spectrum; it can be as simple as a short conversation which makes every interaction count, to more complex engagement where a child advocates on behalf of other children. Making every interaction count provides the opportunity for a child to use their voice if they are supported and encouraged to do so.

- Do you really listen and hear what children and young people have to say?
- Can you decode their messages and understand what they are trying to say if it is difficult for them to speak? e.g. body language, disability, language barriers.
- When you are busy and have competing demands how do you create the space for a child's voice to be heard?

Collective Voice

Facilitating collective voice is possible in any engagement where you are working with a group of children and young people. How they are facilitated to share their thoughts and ideas contributes to the quality of the engagement and the resulting outcomes.

- How do you facilitate listening to the voices of collective groups of children?
- How do you accommodate different needs?
- How do you include seldom heard children or minority groups?

3.2 Facilitating Voice

As a team, consider voice under the following headings:

Now	Future
Provision of Information Ways that my service and I provide information to children and young people.	Provision of Information Ways that my service and I will provide information to children and young people.
Facilitating and Supporting Engagement Ways we facilitate and support engagement in participatory practice.	Facilitating and Supporting Engagement Ways we will facilitate and support engagement in participatory practice.
Dialogue Ways that my service and I engage in ongoing dialogue with children and young people.	Dialogue Ways that my service and I will engage in ongoing dialogue with children and young people.
Building Capacity Ways that my service and I spend time building capacity of children to express their opinion.	Building Capacity Ways that my service and I will build capacity of children to express their opinion.

Now	Then
Range of Mechanisms Ways I use a range of mechanisms to engage children and young people.	Range of Mechanisms Ways I will use a range of mechanisms to engage children and young people.
Individual Space Ways my team and I listen to the voices of individual children and young people.	Individual Space Ways my team and I will listen to the voices of individual children and young people.
Collective Space Ways my team and I listen to the voices of children and young people at a collective level.	Collective Space Ways my team and I will listen to the voices of children and young people at a collective level.

Age Appropriate Ideas for Voice

Below are some ideas for facilitating voice for different age ranges, in decisions affecting their lives whether that is at an individual or collective level. It is important to remember to provide adequate information to children and young people so that their participation can be meaningful.

Participatory Communication

- When you have information you want to share with children and young people it is helpful to practise how you would pitch this information to different age-ranges to ensure that they can understand what you are telling them and the implications this information has for them.
- Consider the language you use, is there jargon or big complicated words or overuse of acronyms?
- How you give information to children and young people can influence their capacity to respond or engage. Consider how you communicate with children and young people, and how it builds their capacity to participate or prevents them from engaging.
- Consider using creative ways of sharing information e.g. art, crafts, diagrams, ecograms, puppets, or masks as relevant to the child's age.
- Frequently check for understanding.
- Consider the best way to give information so that it enhances engagement in participation.

Clarifying Questions

- What is your understanding of what the process is about?
- Does what I have told you make sense?
- Do you see how it is important to you and your family?
- Is there anything that you don't understand or would like to ask questions about?

Children 0-3	Children 4-11	Children 12-18
• Ensure staff are skilled in understanding child development and behaviours so they can pick up on anything out of the ordinary e.g. excessive crying, unusual behaviours etc. • Offer toy options e.g. one toy or another to get a sense of what they like: doll or teddy, action hero or truck.	• Provide a puppet and toys for children to express their voice and how they feel about topics relevant to them in a creative way. • Give them play dough to illustrate how they feel about their family members or service. • Magic carpet idea where they can fly anywhere - where would they want to go and why? • Superhero idea – You can do anything. What would you like to do? (to who? and why?)	• Group forums where young people can voice their opinion and be listened to. • Art expression sessions through drawing, poetry, song. • Story board: Invite young people to complete the sentence 'All I need right now...' or 'All I want right now..' or 'I think...' • 1-1 mediums. • Wall of wants–young people can add to the wall in different bricks all the things important to them and prioritise what is most important.

Ideas for Engaging Children

Children 0-3	Children 4-11	Children 12-18
Recreating Family - observe their play with different toys and how they play with them. What they do to male/female characters, where they place them in the play house. Try to have different toys for each member of the family so you can observe how they play with them and the language they use. Include pets if relevant.	• Harry Potter: What magic would you need in your life? • If your life was a fairy tale which fairy tale is it most like? e.g. would you be more like Snow White trying to escape the evil Queen or Rapunzel who is locked in a tower? • Use different colour skittles to represent different family members and develop an eco-map to explore proximity and interactions. • Use imaginative play to explore how they feel about things in their life and their world in a creative focus group style e.g. a large sheet as the world, boxes as their home/community or different rooms. • Genogram –Family tree can be done with buttons, toys, coins, etc.	• Wish box – comments or suggestion box with colourful and engaging paper. Can have a 'wishes come true' poster every few months highlighting the changes that have been made from the wish box. • Speech Bubbles–laminate large speech bubbles and ask young people to draw in what they have to say, option to take pictures of them with their words. • Rights wall - needs and rights of children on a wall in a child friendly way. • Graffiti Board - young people use words/symbols to communicate. • Focus groups • Surveys • Agenda Days
Stories • The Gruffalo– Julia Donaldson • The Feel Good Book – Todd Parr • Augustus and His Smile – Catherine Rayner	**Stories** • The Velveteen Rabbit – Margery Williams • Matilda –Roald Dahl • James & the Giant Peach- Roald Dahl • No Matter What – Debi Gliori	**Stories** • The Curly Pyjamas – Michael Leunig • Momo – Michael Ende • Dear Me: A Letter to My Sixteen-Year Old Self– Joseph Galliano

Facebook/Twitter feed - ask families and young people to comment on their experience of your service at a relevant # or FB page. This gives you the opportunity to respond and makes for very transparent engagement including positive/inspiring feedback. You could also send out surveys, carry out polls or competitions from here. Use tusla.ie.

Facilitating Voice at Meetings

Children 0-3	Children 4-11	Children 12-18
• Make a recording of the child to bring to the meeting. Either audio or video if appropriate. • Have a picture of the child and include their hand/feet prints or some art they have done. • A communication passport is a document that the staff or parents collect that identifies the child's communication style, needs, challenges and meanings.	• At meetings where a child cannot attend have their opinion captured through either written recording, art, voice recording or video recording. • Draw a picture of what life is like for you and how you would like it to be. • Keep a diary and share it with the committee. • Worry stones - give children worry stones so that they can place all of their worries in the stone and sleep soundly, invite them to share their worries with you. • Power stones - give children power stones, share with them all the things they are good at and encourage them to fill the stones up with all the things that make them powerful. They can carry them with them to feel strong. Invite them to share with you how they feel strong.	• At meetings where a young person cannot attend have their opinion captured through either written recording on a form, art, voice recording, video recording. • Write a letter to the committee sharing your thoughts, feelings and wishes. • Draw a picture of what life is like for you and how you would like it to be. • Keep a diary and share it with the committee. • Things to celebrate - invite young people to make a journal of things that they like to celebrate in their life, what brings them happiness and a sense of gratitude. • Scrapbook - encourage children or young people to collect images, pictures and words that appeal to them or draw and be creative about what is happening in life.
Engage an advocacy service or assign an individual to advocate for the child or young person.		

Voice Considerations

While these activities are presented in this section it is also necessary to consider the other dimensions of the Lundy Model– space, audience and influence. Below are a number of questions to consider or discuss with the child for each of the following activities:

Space	Voice
• Have you thought about how to create a safe space for the child or group? See space section.	• These exercises are particularly useful for helping children express their view; • Always explain to children that they do not have to take part.
Audience • Discuss with children who might be the most appropriate person/service to share their views with; • Ensure children are happy for their views to be shared; • Ensure the views of children are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen; See audience section for more details.	Influence • Ensure the wishes of the children or group are shared as agreed; • Ensure feedback is given to children about the outcome of this; • Discuss this outcome –positive or negative.

3.3 Voice Activities

The activities in this section are particularly useful when paying attention to facilitating Voice, but Space, Audience and Influence should also be considered, as the four elements of the Lundy Model are interdependent. It is important to remember to provide adequate information to children and young people so that their participation is meaningful and that they know what they are engaging with, the implications of their engagement and the outcome of their engagement. Voice alone does not yield full participation and needs the other elements of the Lundy model to enact the child's rights with respect to participatory practice.
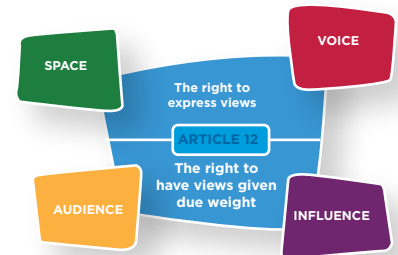
Who's Who

Time
15-30 mins

Material
Tusla information leaflets.
Small discs cut out of card or paper.

Purpose
To enable staff explain to the child or young person what services they are receiving and why and ensure that the child has the information they need.

With
1-1 or small family group

SPACE

VOICE

The right to express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to have views given due weight

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE

Method:

• Simply describe what you do and why you are meeting with the child;

• Explain where your service fits in with other services they are involved with;

• Together name (or describe –they might not remember all the names) the people in the service (and related services) they have met so far;

• Together write their names and/or jobs on small discs. Then lay the discs out on the table or stick on a wall explaining how they link to each other;

• Show the child the Tusla Child and Youth Participation leaflet which demonstrates who everyone in the organisation is and what their role is.

Discussion Questions:

• Who do you think knows you best?

• Does it feel like these people are here to help you?

• What could they do to help you more?

Alternatives: Instead of writing on discs you could use toys or coins to represent different people.

Being Me

Time

20 mins

Material

Tusla Child and
Youth Participation
Leaflet

Purpose

To enable staff explore the strengths, vulnerabilities and
needs of the child in an interactive way.

With

1-1 or group

SPACE

VOICE

The right to
express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to
express views
given due weight

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE

Note

There are many ways to build children and young people's capacity such as self-esteem
programmes or leadership programmes which enable children to develop the skills and
confidence to express themselves. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015) 'A
practical guide to including seldom-heard children & young people in decision-making' is
available online and has many useful exercises for collective engagement and capacity building.

Method:

- Explain that everyone is different and unique. These differences make each person one of a
  kind and very special.
- Invite the child to think about some things that make people different from each other.
- Explain that you are going to explore what things are important to them and that make
  them unique.
- Give each person a copy of the worksheet and work through the questions with them, using their
  answers as opportunities for deeper discussion.
- You may like to complete one of these too and share some information with the child to
  build rapport.

Discussion Questions:

- What was it like to complete the sheet?
- Did you notice any patterns about how you are unique?
- What is it like to think about your strengths?
- What support do you need from me to help you feel safe and happy?

Alternatives:

1. Use magazines, drawing, art or clay to find ways of describing their unique aspects.

2. Initiate the discussion outdoors by looking at how plants/ animals all have things
   that make them unique.

Being Me
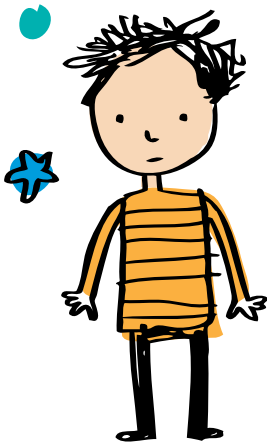
Draw a picture of yourself

The thing I like doing most is...	Something I am passionate about is...
When I'm feeling sad I talk to...	One thing I can do that lots of people can't is...
I want adults to know that I don't like...	I would love to...
I'm scared when...	The funniest thing I ever saw was...
One thing I would like to change...	I am happiest when...
What I want right now is...	To feel safe I need...
The support I need...	To have my say I need...

Plain English
Approved by NALA

What I Would Like

Time
20 mins

Material
Worksheet

With
1-1 or group

Purpose
To enable staff learn more about how children and young people think and feel about their current and future situation.

SPACE

VOICE

The right to express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to have views given due weight

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE

Method:

- Explain that everyone thinks and feels differently about their lives. The exercise will help to get to know the child a little better in how they think and feel about their life now and into the future.

- Explain that sometimes we want things that are hard for us to get. These things might be out of your control or you simply might not have the money to do them. Explain that while you can't guarantee that you will be able to deliver on all of the child's wants, it is important for you to know what they want so that this can be taken into account, and hopefully their voice will help shape what happens to help them and their family.

- Invite them to complete the worksheet with you and discuss what comes up. Remind them that this is just a snapshot in time and that they may change their mind about what they want in the future. This helps to give an idea of what is important to them now.

Discussion Questions:

- What is it like to think about how you feel now?
- What is most important to you if we can't achieve all of these things?
- Do you feel like I am listening to you? What is it like to be listened to?

Adapted from Moore, T & Layton, M., (2007)

Now and Soon

Now	Soon
Something I am happy about:	Something I would like to be happy about:
Something that scares me:	Something that might scare me:
Something that helps me feel better:	Something that would help me feel better:
Something that is happening to me:	Something I'd like to have happen to me:
Something that is happening to my family:	Something I would like to see happen my family:
Something that I know:	Something I would like to know:
Something others do for me:	Something I would like others to do for me:
Something this service does for me:	Something I would like this service to do:
	Something else I'd like to see happen:

Plain
English
Approved by NALA

From Here to Where?

Time
20 mins

Material
Worksheet

With
1-1 or group

Purpose
To enable staff learn more about how children and young people think and feel about their current life and how they would like it to be.

SPACE
VOICE
The right to express views
ARTICLE 12
The right to have views given due weight
AUDIENCE
INFLUENCE

Method:

- Explain that everyone thinks and feels differently about their life. During this exercise I would like to get an understanding of how you feel about your life now and how you would like it to be.

- By understanding what you would like, we can look at what needs to happen to get there.

Discussion Questions:

- How does it feel to think about how you would like your life to be?

- Do you think we can help you in any way to change things from how they are now?

- What is most important to prioritise for you?

Alternatively:

Stick flip chart sheets on both sides of the room. Write on one chart 'Right Now' and the other 'Hopefully Soon'. Ask the young person to start with 'Right Now' and jot down how things are for them now or they can draw pictures. Then ask them to jot down things for 'Hopefully Soon'.

Adapted from Moore, T & Layton, M., (2007)

Life right now	Hopefully soon
Family	Family
Friends	Friends
School	School
Home	Home
Community	Community

From here

To where

Plain
English
Approved by NALA

My Goals and Barriers

Time
20 mins

Material
Worksheet

With
1-1

Purpose
To explore what the child or young person feels might get in the way of their goals.

SPACE — The right to express views
VOICE
ARTICLE 12
AUDIENCE — The right to have views given due weight
INFLUENCE

Method:

- Explain that we all dream about things that we would like to achieve. Sometimes things go right for us and we achieve our goal. Other times things get in the way of our goal. We are going to explore what goals you have and look at what might get in the way of you achieving those goals.

- Encourage the child to think of everything that they would like to achieve and then to consider anything that might act as a barrier to them achieving that goal.

- After that ask them to consider what might support them in achieving their goal.

Discussion Questions:

- What would it be like to achieve that goal?

- Imagine what it would feel like, can you tell me what that would feel like?

- What support do you need to help you to overcome the barriers that might get in your way?

Alternatively:

Have a small goal or basket set up in your office (an office bin works). Invite the child to draw or write down what they would like to achieve and ask them to throw it into the bin. If they get the shot, ask them to step back and try from further away. Talk to them about what might help them achieve that goal in real life and what might hinder it.

What's my Goal?

Barriers: What or who might get in the way?

Supports: What or who might help?

Plain
English
Approved by NALA
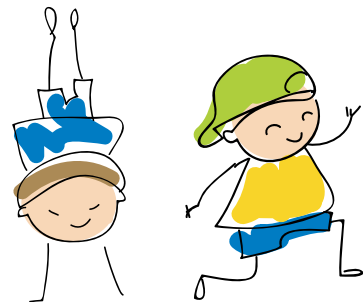
My World

Time
1 hour

Material
My World
Triangle
Clouds

Purpose
To enable staff explore the strengths, vulnerabilities and needs of the child in an interactive way.

With
1-1 or group

Note
This activity can be used with the Meitheal Strengths and Needs Record as it supports gaining information for the My World Triangle. Draw on the bank of questions as appropriate.

Method:
- Print out and laminate the clouds around the 'My World Triangle'. Working with the child ask them to place each of them on the ladder, with 1 at the bottom of the ladder representing not feeling great about things, and 10 at the top of the ladder representing feeling great about things.
- You may like to amend or select only the areas that are relevant to the child.
- Engage the child or young person in a dialogue about what is happening in each area of their lives, how they feel about it and what they would like to change.
- Discuss their strengths as well as needs they feel they have for each area.
- You can use this interactive approach with parents/family also to see what their perspective is and if it differs.

Discussion Questions:
- What strengths would you like to build on?
- What needs are your biggest priority?

Alternatives:
1. For younger children you could invite them to draw pictures for specific areas to gain an understanding of how they feel about that particular area. E.g., you might ask them to describe what mealtime is like or to draw what mealtime is like.
2. Invite the child to draw a picture of how their world is now and how they would like it to be soon (e.g. at the end of the process), using the worksheet or blank paper.
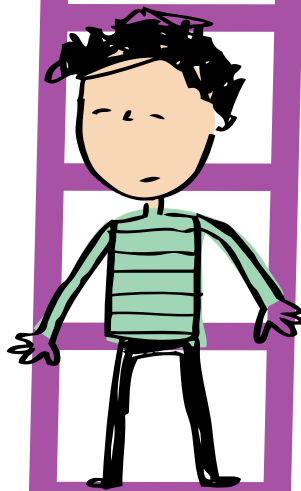
My World Triangle

The whole health and development of the child or young person

Learning and achieving

Being healthy

Being able to communicate

Confidence in who I am

Being Independent, looking after myself

Learning to be responsible

Enjoying friends and family

HOW I GROW AND DEVELOP

WHAT I NEED FROM PEOPLE WHO LOOK AFTER ME

MY WIDER WORLD AND COMMUNITY

Understanding my family's history, background and beliefs

Knowing what is going to happen and when

Guidance, supporting me to make the right choices

Everyday care and help

Play, encouragement and fun

Keeping me safe

Being there for me

School

Enough money

Local resources

Work opportunities for my family

Support from family, friends and other people

Comfortable and safe housing

Belonging

TÚSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

10: Great

My world ladder

1 = Not great

Plain English
Approved by NALA

Me and School

Time

20 mins

Material

Worksheet

Purpose

To enable staff learn more about how children and young people see school.

With

1-1 or group

Method:

- Explain that you are going to explore how they feel about school;
- Work through the templates as a guide, using the questions and their answers as opportunities for deeper discussion;
- Explain that you would like to learn a bit more about what they would like to have happen.

Discussion Questions:

- What was it like to talk about school?
- What would you like to see happen there?
- How can we best support you in reaching your goals?

Me at school part 1

The things I like best are:

The things I like least are:

The things I am good at are:

The things I find hard are:
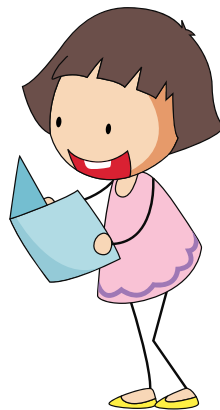
I am happy at break times when:

I am happy in class when:

My friends are:

Plain English
Approved by NALA

I need help with:

My parents would describe me as:

Teachers can help me by:

I don't like school because:

My teacher would describe me as:

…makes it hard for me to

Plain English
Approved by NALA

Me at school part 3

Adults I get on best with in school are:

I get into trouble in school when:

My teacher is proud of me when:

I feel unhappy with my teacher when:

I upset my teacher when:

Rewards I like best are:

I would like to be able to:

Things I need to change are:

Developing my School Plan

Time
20-30 mins

Material
Worksheets

Purpose
To enable children and young people to develop a plan for attending school.

With
1-1 or family

Method:

- Explain that this exercise will enable them to explore what they need to do to be able to commit to attending school;
- Work through each item on the plan and decide if it is an issue for the child or young person or not;
- If it is an issue decide with the child if it is a top priority issue i.e. 1 or a low priority issue 2.
- Work with the child, young person and/or family to come up with a plan to support them in school.

Discussion Questions:

- When you look at the plan what are you committed to doing?
- What barriers do you think you might meet? How will you overcome them?
- What supports do you have that will help you with this plan?

School attendance plan
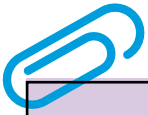
Young person's name:		Date:
Areas	Rank 1= Highest priority Rank 2= lowest priority	Plan
Getting to bed on time (setting alarm clock)		
Turning off technology in the bedroom		
Getting plenty of sleep		
Getting up on time in the morning		
Having my uniform ready		
Having my breakfast		
Getting ready		
Having my homework done		
Preparing my lunch		
Getting to school on time		
Staying in school		

Plain English
Approved by NALA

Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit

School plan review

What I think
(mark on the ladder)
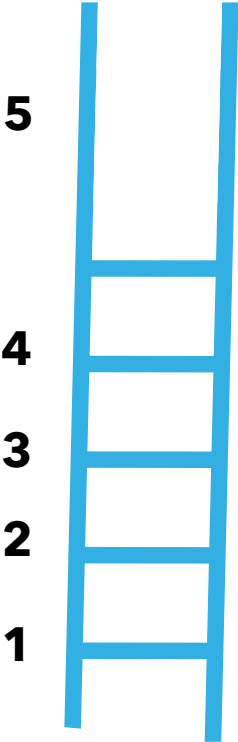
What my worker thinks
(mark on the ladder)

5

4

3

2

1
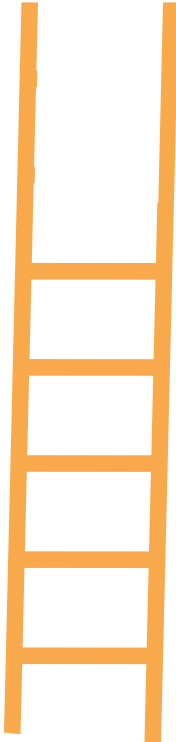
**Doing really well, reaching goals,
lots of control**

Doing some good work

Doing OK

**Doing a bit but could be
doing better**

Not OK, same stuff

5

4

3

2

1

The Ladder

**This is how I think I am going in these areas right now
and what my worker thinks**

Plain
English
Approved by NALA

My Meeting, my Opinion

Time
30 mins

Material
Worksheet

Purpose
To enable the child or young person to give their opinion at a meeting either in person or via an advocate.

With
1-1 or family

SPACE

VOICE

The right to express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to have views given due weight

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE

Method:

- Share the agenda of the meeting with the child and discuss what is coming up.

- Explain that completing this worksheet will help them to get clear about what they want to say or have someone say on their behalf at the meeting. They can add to this beyond the questions that are there if they have more to say.

- Work through the questions with the child, exploring what they would like to be heard at the meeting either to be shared by themselves or to have someone share on their behalf with the people at the meeting.

- Decide on 3 topics the young person would like addressed, and through roleplay or discussion explore what they would like to say.

- Give the child a copy of the worksheet if they would like it.

- Give the child your card or information should they wish to contact you to discuss or change anything before the meeting. Let them know if and when you are not available and if there is another person they can contact.

- Additionally, you might like to invite the child to arrange the cards according to 'what's important to me', with the most important at the top and the least important at the bottom. They might have other things that are important that they can write or draw on the blank cards.

Note: Give adequate time before the meeting to do this with the child. They may want to take a copy with them to think about it and see if there is anything else they would like to add.

Discussion Questions:

- What was it like to complete this? Has it helped you to get clear about what you would like to say or have someone say at the meeting?
- Is there anything that is missing or anything else you would like to add?
- What do you hope the outcome of the meeting is?

During the Meeting:

Provide the child with cards they can use to communicate to you when they are not following things at the meeting. The yellow card indicates that they are getting confused, the red indicating they don't understand what is being said. Alternatively, invite the child to come up with their preferred colours for the cards or another method such as hand signals they can use if they are confused, or would like to leave.

Alternatives:

There are alternative ways the child can participate in the meeting which include:

- Attend only part of the meeting;
- Sharing a video-log of what they think;
- Writing their views down;
- Drawing a picture or using artwork to show what they would like to see happening;
- Speak or listen via telephone;
- Skype, voice recording, video recording.

My meeting, my opinion

My name is:

Today is:

I am happy when I am with:

When I am sad and lonely, I want to be with:

If I had a magic wand, I would:

When I want a hug, I go to:

If I had a magic carpet, I would go to:

If I had a time machine, I would go back to when:

I want to ask (insert name of family member(s)):

I want to tell (insert name of family member(s)):

My meeting my opinion

I want to ask the professional (name, teacher, social worker...)
in the room:

I want to tell the professional (name...) in the room:

The thing that worries me about my family is:

The thing that worries me about my family meeting is:

The thing that is most important to me is:

I dream that one day:

I just want to say:

Signed:

Date:

Plain English
Approved by NALA

What's important to me:

Discuss with the child how you can achieve what is important to them using the statements below:

To not be talked down to	To understand what's going on
To feel included and able to say what I think	To not have to take sides
To not be pushed into making quick decisions	To be left alone if I want to be
To be able to say what I feel	To not be interrupted when I speak
To know I can have a different point of view	To step outside if I am finding it hard
To be able to talk to someone if I need to	

'My Say' Notes:

These can be used before, during or after the meeting. The child or young person can complete these and if their worker is sitting beside them they may be able to address some of them in the actual meeting or as a follow up.

I would like to have a say about:	I didn't understand:
At the next meeting I want to sit next to:	What was good about the meeting was:
I don't want to be asked questions about:	At the next meeting I would like to:

Plain English
Approved by NALA

Video Diary

Time
Over the duration of the event.

Material
Camera
Designated booth
Chair

Purpose
The purpose of this exercise is to enable the child or young person to give their thoughts and opinions on a suggested issue.

With
Individuals or groups

SPACE
VOICE
The right to express views
ARTICLE 12
The right to express views given due weight
AUDIENCE
INFLUENCE

Method:

- Create a video diary room;
- Leave a camera rolling or clearly indicate where the start/stop button is;
- Explain to all participants of your event where the room is and how it will work;
- Have someone at the entrance to the booth tell the child what they would like to hear about from the child and/or have it written on card in the room;
- Have the room accessible in a way that enables children to drop in over the course of a day.

Video Diary Questions:

- What do you think the best thing about _____ is?
- What does this service need to do to make it easier for children to attend?
- What difference has this service/day/project made to your life?

Alternatives:

- Just use audio-recording either in the booth or have other children carry out vox-pop style interviews;
- Have someone on the other side of a screen asking the questions.

Social Media

A social network site/service (SNS) allows its users to:

- Create a profile;
- Link their profile to others through friend connections;
- Experience the site differently depending on the connections they have made.
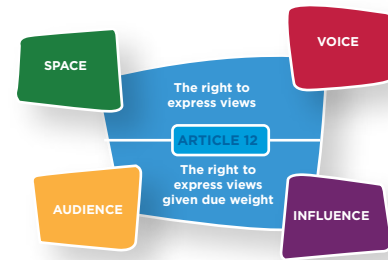
Using social media for youth engagement can help you:

- Reach young people where they already are and using forms they are comfortable interacting with;
- Be found — you can provide young people with information about your service;
- Make ideas and opportunities accessible to young people;
- Meet young people's expectations regarding online interaction;
- Take advantage of networks to spread information about, or to enhance the experience of, engagement opportunities;
- Overcome transport and other access issues;
- Organise dates and times for events;
- Recruit young people from outside your immediate network.

There are a number of different elements to most good examples of participation with young people through social network sites. These are:

- The opportunity for involvement;
- The interaction, discussion and dialogue between young people and between young people and your project/organisation;
- The interface between young people's input and decisions getting made, or action taking place;
- Feedback to young people with regard to the outcome of decisions and changes made with details of what has changed or why decisions were made the way they were.

Method:
A range of mix-and-match approaches are possible, depending on your circumstances.

- Co-design with young people — inviting a small group to work with you to help design your social network presence, plan the project, and promote it when it goes live. This combined with providing feedback to young people on the impact of their work will ensure a sense of ownership.
- Invite decision makers to the discussion rather than reporting what young people say to decision makers at the end of a process, invite (and support) decision makers to join the conversations directly.
- Use offline advertising, including posters and flyers to let young people know about your online engagement opportunities.

- Practise blended facilitation and act as a link between online discussions and offline meetings. For example, create a presentation of key points from online discussions, and take photos of flip charts at face-to-face meetings and upload these to the web.

- Offer incentives for participation, such as prizes or rewards for involvement.

- Listen online and find opportunities for participation.

- Join in interaction in existing and new online spaces.

- Create opportunities for participation by becoming more transparent in your day-day decision making.

- Encourage young people to take action, and communicate young people's views to managers.

- Regularly change and adapt on the basis of what you hear and let young people know about this outcome due to their involvement.

- Engage young people to create media content that will help explain the participation opportunity and make it more engaging.

- Work with a professional media/social media agency to develop your online engagement plan — perhaps involving young people as commissioners of the agency's work.

- Train young people as social reporters or online facilitators and support them to help run your participation project.

- Create a thematic network or engagement opportunity and work with a number of different agencies to make sure young people's views are listened to even if they don't fit within one particular organisation's sphere of responsibility.

- Involve young people in deciding what social networks they want to use. Ensure you have the resources necessary to monitor and support activity.

- Train adults in how to engage directly with young people online. Involve young people in agreeing guidelines around what the platform is for, type of engagement, response time to posts etc.

- In particular, make sure policy practice in relation to online safety is clear and fully implemented.

(Adapted from Ali, LgiU & Davies, 2009)

Specific Resources: www.practicalparticipation.co.uk/yes/
www.spunout.ie/onlinesafety
www.webwise.ie

My Service

Time
20 mins

Material
Feedback from 1 or 2

Purpose
To enable the child or young person to share how they feel about the service.

With
1-1 or group

SPACE

VOICE

The right to express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to express views given due weight

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE

Method:

- Remind the child what your service does. Often a child will know you as a worker but not think about you in terms of a 'service'.
- Explain that we all can improve on what we do, including the service that works with the child. 'We sometimes make mistakes and because we are adults we don't always know how you see things. So we'd like to find out what you think about this service and how we can improve it'.
- Using either feedback form you can invite the child to share their opinion about the service.

Discussion Questions:

- What was it like to be asked your opinion?
- What would you like me to do with your feedback?
- What would you like to happen next?
- Is there someone else you would like to speak to?

Service feedback

My worker is:

This service is:

I don't like:
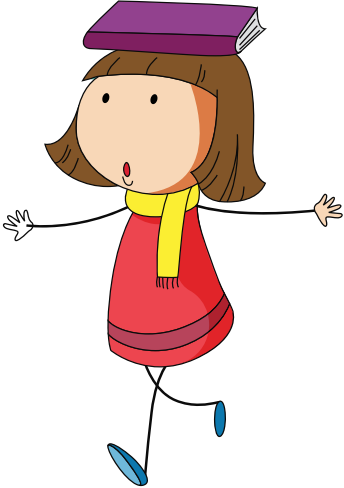
I like:

I wish:

It would be better if:

Plain English
Approved by NALA

Service feedback 2

1. Things have got better for me:

| yes definitely | somewhat | not sure | not really | not at all |

2. This service was good in supporting me:

| yes definitely | somewhat | not sure | not really | not at all |

3. The service was good in supporting my family:

| yes definitely | somewhat | not sure | not really | not at all |

4. People took my views on board in Tusla:

| yes definitely | somewhat | not sure | not really | not at all |

5. I was satisfied with the service:

| yes definitely | somewhat | not sure | not really | not at all |

Overall comments:

Please tell us about any service you feel should be developed in your local area:

Description of the service required:

Area:

Plain English
Approved by NALA

Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit

Focus Group

Purpose
To involve children in creative discussion on a specific topic or issue.

Age 6-12: Groups of four to six children.

Age 13+: Groups of six to twelve young people.

Vulnerable groups or sensitive issues: three people.
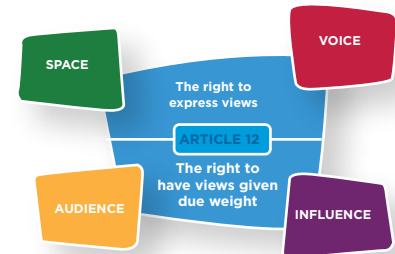
Resources:
A room with suitable seating, recording (flip chart, audio), facilitator.

Approach:

Getting Started

- Decide on your purpose and goal and invite participants accordingly. Be clear what is being asked of participants and what level of influence they can expect.
- Make sure children and young people have enough information prior to the focus group about what it is about so they feel prepared when attending.
- Give plenty of notice so that arrangements can be made for people to attend. Ensure issues of access, communications, transport and inclusion are addressed.
- Pay careful attention to the make-up of the group e.g. if they don't know each other well, are some members likely to feel intimidated by others, are there sub-groups of friends who might sit together in a clique?
- Follow DCYA guidance on child protection, ethical research and the inclusion of seldom heard children and young people.
- Identify topics you want to cover and leave room for children to raise their own issues. Prepare a series of open-ended questions to promote debate.
- Focus on obtaining insights, responses and opinions rather than specific facts. Include creative activities on the discussion topic.
- Maintain a consistent format for all group discussions.

During the Focus Group

- Explain clearly what the purpose of the group is and the roles of the facilitator and note-taker.
- Ensure the participants are clear about what they are being asked to do and what is expected of them.
- Clarify consent and confidentiality, including what will/will not be recorded at, and taken away from, the session. Clearly communicate what the process is if a child or young person would like to leave the session. Highlight what supports are in place for anyone who may become distressed during or after the session.

- Agree ground rules and in particular how views and contributions will be valued and respected:

    o Listen to each other, take turns to speak, don't all speak at once;
    o Respect each other's opinions;
    o No name calling, bullying, etc;
    o You don't have to answer questions if you don't want to;
    o 'Please ask if you don't understand anything';
    o Confidentiality – be realistic about limits;
    o Have fun.

- Help participants feel at ease. Avoid jargon and check understanding regularly.

- Actively encourage the participants to value their personal experiences and knowledge, but be cautious not to leave them feeling exposed as some issues may bring up upsetting feelings.

- Facilitate interaction between group members and make people feel comfortable with having different opinions. Don't take sides.

- Keep the discussion focused but probe if necessary.

- Ensure everyone has the opportunity to speak; however, respect a child's right to remain silent, but give them a chance to share their ideas in other ways, maybe during the break.

- Record what children and young people say so that you can check back with them afterwards and analyse data.

Data Analysis

- After each session, the facilitator and other relevant people should meet, bringing all notes and data for analysis. Children can be involved in this process. Sometimes a second focus group can be carried out to discuss the findings of the first.

- Store the data securely and use the information provided only for the intended purpose.

- Publicise the findings.

- Give feedback to the children who participated, clearly communicating what will happen to the results. Keep them updated on any outcomes from the process.

Topic Guide for Focus Group

Purpose:
This is a suggested outline for a group of 6-8 young people.

Getting Started

- Flip chart paper and pens, blue-tack, name badges, recorder, post-its/coloured paper;
- Profile sheet for participants to fill in giving details that you need, e.g. age, gender, where they live;
- Participant and parent forms should have been completed in advance of the focus group;
- Information sheets on sources of support if sensitive issues are being discussed.

The main objective of the focus group discussion is:

> **(insert specific objective as appropriate)**

Topic Guide Element	Objectives	Mins
Introductions • Thank young people for coming, introduce themselves briefly; • Provide further copies of information sheets with contact details; • Outline purpose of meeting, clarify objectives, structure and timescale; • Confirm confidentiality; • Ask for consent to record using digital recorder and flip chart; • Agree ground rules of group; • Warm up exercise e.g. human bingo.	To make people feel welcome and comfortable To establish group rules To agree how this group works	10
Knowledge and Experiences • Brainstorm a discussion on participants' knowledge and experience of the issue/service/project; • List on flip chart.	Gather information	10

Specific Questions • Explore some questions that you have identified earlier or that emerge from the brainstorm; • Use agree/disagree statements getting people to stand in the room beside agree/disagree signs; • Discuss reasons for choices. Allow people change where they stand; • Record discussion.	Explore attitudes and behaviours	20
Future Focus • Summarise what you have heard. Ask if there is anything anyone wants to add (don't open up a new discussion at this point but record the additional issues); • Invite everyone to say how they are feeling at the end of the focus group. Perhaps one word or on a scale of 1-10; • Invite participants to complete an evaluation form, and/or to discuss their experience of the focus group.	Identify recommendations	10
Conclusion/Summary • Summarise what you have heard. Ask if there is anything anyone wants to add (don't open up a new discussion at this point but record the additional issues); • Invite everyone to say how they are feeling at the end of the focus group. Perhaps one word or on a scale of 1–10; • Invite participants to complete an evaluation form, and/or to discuss their experience of the focus group. • Thank everyone for their participation; explain what will happen to the information and where they can find out more information.	Sum up, review and evaluate	

Surveys
Purpose

To seek the views of children and young people through a questionnaire format.

Approach:

- Decide on the purpose of your survey: service satisfaction, evaluation, design, needs of service users/potential service users. Be clear what you need to know and why and whether a survey is the best method of getting that information from children.

- Secure necessary budget and expertise.

- Follow DCYA guidance on child protection, ethical research and involving vulnerable children and young people.

- Make sure the survey is child/young person friendly. Involve children in writing, designing and piloting the questionnaire.

- Consider the developmental stage of the respondent, e.g., younger children whose memory and cognitive processes are still developing may have difficulty with complex or retrospective questions.

- Allow for children to respond with drawings as well as words.

- Consider using an online version.

- Review already validated surveys and see if they meet your needs.
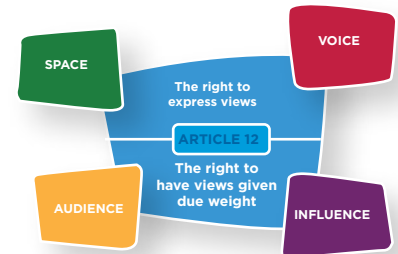
Surveys can be administered by an interviewer or self completed. They can be disseminated by:

- Post, telephone, face-to-face interview, internet/web based, email;

- Placed in public places for people to complete and hand in or put in a collecting box;

- At school, in the service setting, or in a youth club.

Question Checklist

- Is the language simple and clear?

- Can the question be shortened?

- Is it a two-part question? (should it be two separate ones?)

- Is the question leading?

- Will the child/young person have the appropriate knowledge to be able to answer?

- Will the words have the same meaning for everyone surveyed?

- Is the question ambiguous or too precise?

Advantages of Surveys for Children

- Completed over time, allowing time to think through answers or ask for help from a trusted adult;
- Can be interesting;
- Can be quick and easy to complete;
- Can be anonymous;
- Online surveys can be administered using free online questionnaire sites.

Disadvantages of Surveys for Children

- Can exclude children with literacy issues;
- If completing it in a group setting children might not want to ask for help;
- Can seem boring;
- Might not want to offend the interviewer with answers.

Feedback and Complaints

Time
5-15 mins

Material
Feedback and complaints form
tusla.ie

Purpose
To share with the child how they can give feedback or make a complaint.

With
1-1 or small family group

SPACE

VOICE

The right to express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to have views given due weight

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE

Method:

- If the child or family's needs aren't met and they would like to complain or if they have other feedback for staff, they can share this with Tusla.

- Explain that we are Tusla – the Child and Family Agency. It is our job is to keep children and young people safe from harm by working with them and their families. We want to do a good job and we want to do things that help you and your family. You can help us to do our job better.

- Explain that it is important for us to really listen and hear what children have to say. This means listening to feedback and complaints from children and young people.

- Explain that feedback helps us to improve, it lets us know how we are doing as a service.

  For example, you might like to tell us:

  o If we are doing a good job

  o If we could do things better

  o If you don't think we are doing a good job

- Bring the child through the feedback and complaints form and show them how to fill it out and let them know who they can give it to if they want to give feedback or complain.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you think if you had feedback or a complaint to make that you would be able to share it with us?

- What might support you in giving feedback? What might hold you back?

Complaint Form

Please download the form to your PC/Laptop before completing

You can download this form and e-mail to tellus@tusla.ie to tell us about your complaint or, if this form doesn't allow you to tell us about your complaint in full, you can e-mail us at tellus@tusla.ie

What is the name of the service you want to tell us about?

What is the address of the service you want to tell us about?

Tell us what happened. Tell us when and where it happened and the names of any of the people who were involved and why you want to tell us about it?

What would you like us to do about this?

Please tell us your

Name:
Address or email address so we can get back to you?
You can also leave your telephone number if you want us to contact you by phone:

Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit

Feedback Form

Please download the form to your PC/Laptop before completing

You can download this form and e-mail to tellus@tusla.ie to tell us about your complaint or, if this form doesn't allow you to tell us about your complaint in full, you can e-mail us at tellus@tusla.ie

What is the name of the service you want to tell us about?

What is the address of the service you want to tell us about?

Tell us your feedback

Please tell us your

Name:
Address /or email address so we can get back to you?
You can also leave your telephone number if you want us to contact you by phone:

Section 4: Providing a Receptive Audience

According to the Lundy Model on Child Participation 'the view of children and young people must be listened to'. The provision of a receptive audience is a meaningful aspect of facilitating the expression of voice in safe and inclusive spaces. It requires a commitment to ensuring that the outcome of children and young people's views will result in action, when appropriate. For example, ensuring children's views at conferences are heard and listened to and having the views of children as a standing item at staff meetings. There are a number of aspects that ensure children and young people have the appropriate audience to hear their views:

- Responsibility to listen;

- Attitude to children and young people's participation;

- Willingness to listen;

- Motivation to act.

These aspects of audience can be considered at the level of:

- Individual;

- Collective.

4.1 Audience Explored

Responsibility to Listen
For children and young people's views to be taken seriously they need to be communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen.

- Have you clearly identified who the decision-makers are (if it is not solely you) and communicated this to the child or young person?

- Does the child know what views are being communicated to whom?

- Are lines of communication and accountability clear?

Attitude to Children and Young People
If you are engaging with other team members or other services it is important to know whether the person/people with responsibility share your understanding of participatory practice.

- What are the parameters within which they are working? Have they constraints such as time and budget, has their service a different priority to yours?

- Have you engaged with them in participatory practice before and what is your learning from this?

- If practice is not participatory what can you do to highlight Tusla's values and commitment to participatory practice?

Willingness to Listen

The person/people with responsibility must be willing to listen and you should be able to identify evidence of this willingness.

- Does the person/people with responsibility have dedicated time and processes to listen to children's views?
- Is there a formal structure you can use e.g. 'Meitheal' or a youth advisory panel or do you need to set up something new, e.g. a separate meeting, communicate through email, send a letter outlining the child or young person's views?

Motivation to Act

A key element of being a responsive audience is a predisposal to act on what has been heard. Children and young people need to feel that they are being heard in a meaningful way. Many children will have been asked a lot of questions in the past without seeing an impact of what they have said, or without hearing that what they asked for may not have been possible.

- Is there a commitment to asking even if they don't have the solution? It is important to value the listening and respect what is being said even if the final decision doesn't meet the child's wishes.
- Are the boundaries clear and is there honesty about what they can/can't do?
- Is there openness to considering possibilities and offering alternative options?

Dialogue

Dialogue is a continuous and inclusive process, particularly where everyone involved feels they are working together. Remember that a child's sense of time is very different to an adult's so it is important to prepare them for the length of time the decision-making process takes.

- Can you demonstrate that you have dialogue with children and young people?
- How are meetings/conversations closed?
- How does the child hear back from those with responsibility to listen?

Individual Audience

For children and young people's views to be taken seriously at an individual level they need to feel they are genuinely being listened to by someone who is interested in their views. Remember that they may have negative experiences of being listened to and so may need to be carefully supported and encouraged.

- Are you fully present when listening?
- Have you considered the child's individual needs in how they choose to be listened to?
- Is there a good communication system including a feedback loop that ensures the child hears back about decisions taken and also has a chance to re-engage with decision-makers if necessary?

Collective Audience

Collective audience can range from consulting with children and young people on service design or evaluation to involving them in advocating to staff about their experience of services. Remember not to over-consult; many children who have experience of exclusion are regularly consulted but without a commitment to change.

- Is there a process in place for communicating the outcome of collective activities such as focus groups, agenda days, etc?

- Is there a process in place for feedback, response and follow up to such activities?

- Are you open to groups of children and young people coming to you or your service with suggestions or requests?

4.2 Providing a Receptive Audience

As a team consider audience under the following headings:

Now	Future
Responsibility to Listen. Ways that my service and I meet our responsibility to listen and respond to children and young people.	Responsibility to Listen. Ways that my service and I will meet our responsibility to listen and respond to children and young people.
Attitude to Children and Young People. Ways that my service and I demonstrate a positive attitude to children and young people.	Attitude to Children and Young People. Ways that my service and I will demonstrate a positive attitude to children and young people.
Willingness to Listen. Structures and processes that my service and I use to listen to children and young people.	Willingness to Listen. Structures and processes that my service and I will use to listen to children and young people.

Motivation to Act. Ways in which my service and I demonstrate respect for what we have listened to.	Motivation to Act. Ways in which my service and I will demonstrate respect for what we have listened to.
Dialogue. Ways my team and I create dialogue with children and young people.	Dialogue. Ways my team and I will create dialogue with children and young people.
Individual Audience. Ways my team and I are a receptive audience at an individual level.	Individual Audience. Ways my team and I will be a receptive audience at an individual level.
Collective Audience. Ways my team and I are a receptive audience at a collective level.	Collective Audience. Ways my team and I will be a receptive audience at a collective level.

Audience Considerations

Space:

- Have you thought about how to create a safe space for the child or group?
- See space section.

Voice:

- Have children or group been given the information they need to make an informed decision?
- Always explain to children that they do not have to take part.
- See voice section.

Audience:

- These activities support creating a receptive audience;
- Discuss with children who might be the most appropriate person/service to share their views with;
- Ensure children are happy for their views to be shared;
- Ensure the views of children are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen.

Influence:

- Ensure the wishes of the children or group are shared as agreed;
- Ensure feedback is given to children about the outcome of this;
- Discuss this outcome - positive or negative.

4.3 Audience Activities

All the activities in this document require a receptive audience. This section outlines ways in which that audience can best be provided.

Making Every Connection Count

Many Tusla employees do not explicitly work directly with children and young people. This includes senior managers, receptionists, human resource officers, finance officers and drivers. However, all staff need to be aware that children are at the heart of the organisation and that every action of every staff member has an impact on the life of a child. Below are some checklists that might help all staff to review this aspect of their work.
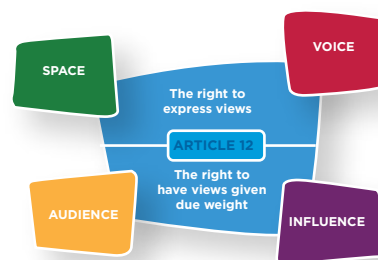
Service Accessibility and Flexibility	Rating				
Our service waiting times are reasonable.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Our service operational hours are well-advertised in a variety of locations and through a variety of media.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Our service is available in convenient and appropriate settings.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Our service is located close to where children and young people live.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Our service has adequate space and a comfortable waiting area.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
There is internet coverage in appropriate areas.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
There are toys and magazines available in appropriate areas.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Our service has non-discriminatory access regardless of minority status.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Our service has operational hours suitable for children and young people (e.g. after school, weekends).	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Our service allocates enough time for the needs of children and young people.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
There is a multiservice approach whereby a range of services are available in one setting.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A

Service Accessibility and Flexibility continued	Rating				
Our service environment is suited to the target age group(s).	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Our service has information available that simply describes the service and explains what children and young people can expect.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Contact details for appropriate staff are available.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Our service provides information through attractive and appealing media (e.g. eye catching posters, online short videos).	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Staff receive sufficient training in appropriate communication skills for dealing with a diversity of children and young people.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A

Meeting with and dealing with queries from children and young people	Rating				
I greet children and young people warmly.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I consider myself approachable.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I reflect on my values and attitudes to children and young people.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I treat everyone with equal care and respect.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I seek consent before sharing any personal information with third parties.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I promote a positive image of the service to children.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I consider the specific needs of each child.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I see and respond to the person instead of the problem.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I am empathetic, non judgmental and fair.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I look at situations from the child/young person's perspective.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A

I ensure my own views don't dominate the interaction.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I let children and young people know the outcome of decisions that are made.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Staff in Services	**Rating**				
I am supported to engage in participatory practice.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Resources are allocated to ensure the voice of children is heard and acted upon, where appropriate.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I consider all elements of space, voice, audience and influence in service planning.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Participatory practice is an agenda item in meetings.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
In supervision I share with my manager my participatory practice.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I reflect on my values and attitudes to children and young people.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I implement high standards in service delivery.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I involve children in policy formulation and review.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I talk to children about the service they receive.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I reflect on the aspects of my work that would benefit from a child or young person's perspective and/or input.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Something has changed for children as a result of their participation over the past week (or month).	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
The experience of children is core to how we measure the impact of our service.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A

Management of Services	Rating				
I support my staff in engaging in participatory practice.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I allocate resources to ensure the voice of children is heard and acted upon, where appropriate.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I consider all elements of space, voice, audience and influence in service planning.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I ensure participatory practice is an agenda item in meetings.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
In supervision I check in with my staff with regard to their participatory practice.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I reflect on my values and attitudes to children and young people.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I implement high standards in service delivery.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I involve children in policy formulation and review.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I talk to children about the service they receive.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I reflect on the aspects of my work that would benefit from a child or young person's perspective and/or input.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
Something has improved for children as a result of their participation over the past week (or month).	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
The experience of children is core to how we measure the impact of our service.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I measure evidence of participatory practice in my service.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A
I use indicators of participatory practice in my plans and reports.	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	N/A

At Meetings

Tips for the Organiser/Chair:

- If the child is not in attendance, have an appropriate toy to represent their place at the table;
- Ensure there are adequate breaks and refreshments;
- Use breaks to check in with the child to give the child time to process what is happening;
- Keep meetings brief and to the point.
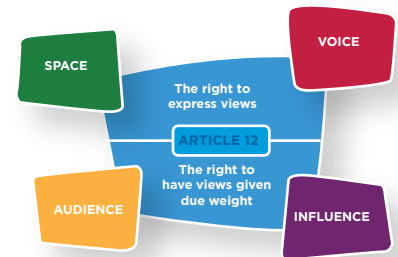
Tips for Meeting Participants:

- Use language children will understand;
- Give the child plenty of time to express their views so they are not rushed;
- Check for understanding at different stages during the meeting.

Tips for the Child's Support Worker:

If the child attends the meeting, ensure the child:

- Knows everyone's name, what they do and why they are there;
- Is familiar with the environment, background sounds and exits;
- Has a pre-arranged signal they can use if they want to leave or don't understand something (e.g. link in the red and yellow cards as signals);
- Has a pen and piece of paper if they want to take notes;
- Has an opportunity to have their say;
- Is given a chance to ask questions.
- Understands what is being discussed and what it means for them;
- Is clear about the decisions that have been made;
- Gets feedback about the changes that have occurred as a result of the meeting.

If there are cultural or language issues, ensure there is someone to support them, e.g. an appropriately trained interpreter. Equally, ensure that the adults at the meeting have been briefed on how to address the child's specific needs in this regard.

It may be helpful to have someone outside the room if the child leaves and the support worker needs to stay.

Traps:

- Thinking attendance is participation;
- Talking for the child or finishing their sentences;
- Setting the seating arrangement up so that someone feels left out;
- Interpreting a lack of participation as lack of engagement, when in fact it may be that the child or young person doesn't feel comfortable or confident enough to speak up.

Conferences, Seminars and Training

Purpose:
To enable staff to involve children and young people in planning and participating in conferences, seminars and training. The focus is on increasing opportunities for dialogue between children and those who make decisions that impact on their lives.
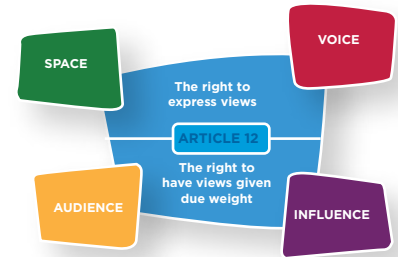
Approach:

- Build children's participation as early as possible into the planning process, e.g., conduct a needs analysis through a focus group to ensure the content is relevant.

- Identify a dedicated budget and staff. For each delegate there will be a conference fee, transport, accommodation and food to consider. Support staff may have to be funded to accompany the children.

- Be honest and explicit about the scope for children's roles in relation to decision-making.

- Work with partners who are actively involved in working with a wide range of children.

- Examine the conference theme and purpose for how they fit with meaningful participation.

- Establish a children's planning group ensuring the following:
  - Select to enable ease of regular face-to-face communication;
  - Strong supports in place, e.g. supported by a local youth organisation;
  - Clarity around parameters of influence and input;
  - Openness in balancing children's needs and interests with the host organisation;
  - Have transparent administrative processes – agendas, minutes, agreed actions;
  - Meet in a child friendly venue with food available;
  - Suit the children's schedules;
  - Use texting/messaging for regular reminders about meetings.

- Establish clear lines of communication between the children's planning group and the host organisation's planning group.

Making it Work

Areas that the planning group can work on include:

- Deciding how children participate in the event;
- Programming, presenting, facilitating and chairing;
- Commissioning speakers and performers;
- Making/commissioning a film or art work to show at the conference;
- Designing promotional materials;
- Designing child specific activities and discussions at the conference;
- Organising fun activities such as a dance class as an energiser, video diary room, voxpops;
- Organising entertainment for young delegates;
- Advising adult presenters on communicating with a mixed audience.

Ensure that the venue is youth friendly:

- It should provide the same level of service to children and young people as it does to adult customers;
- Can provide accommodation for children on the event site;
- Is flexible about use of facilities such as swimming pool;
- Prepares staff to be flexible to meet the needs of guests of all ages;
- Offers a range of juices and will adapt menus on request;
- Uses space imaginatively to accommodate informal and formal meetings and discussions among and between young people and adults;
- Consider using a range of methods of communication, e.g. video diaries and vox pops.

Supporting children's safety and wellbeing at the conference:

- Develop a safe practice/child protection statement;
- Secure parental consent for attendance and parental and child consent for taking and use of photographs/videos;
- Secure consent from school principals for absence with permission;
- Ensure transport to and from venue is well organised and clarify insurance arrangements;
- Have a named person (people) available to meet and greet children;
- Look after any support staff from other organisations who are chaperones;
- Provide a youth friendly 'chill room' with drinks and snacks available;
- Consult on and adapt menus;
- Arrange activities such as dance, music and games;

- Ensure children are happy with the conference programme design and seating arrangements;
- Provide additional support for children chairing or making presentations;
- Provide certificates of attendance and tokens of thanks.

Post-conference:
- Convene the planning group to review the outcomes of the conference. Put together a report on lessons learned and recommendations for the future. Facilitate the presentation of that report to senior management;
- Follow up on any commitments made at the conference;
- Share the learning.

Creating a Receptive Audience

Purpose:
To ensure meaningful consideration of what children and young people have communicated to staff at both individual and collective levels.

Approach:
- Have a standing agenda item at team meetings – 'messages from children and young people'. This gives an opportunity to celebrate what is working well and hear what can be improved. Each team member can take turns so that it's one person delivering one message at each meeting.
- Include a section for children and young people's views in service plans/reviews.
- Ensure adequate time is given to listening to what has been said and responding to children involved, particularly if your service has taken on a specific consultation event, involvement structure or piece of research.

Making it Work:
- While participation is everyone's responsibility, identify one team member who will take the lead to championing participatory practice.
- Consider what aspect of your work could be submitted for an Investing in Children award.
- Adopt a continuous improvement approach which includes regularly assessing your team's attitude and commitment to participatory practice.
- If you are encountering negativity, listen and explore what is underpinning it and what can be done to address it. The best learning can come from the challenges and how you meet them.

Methods:
- Explain that you would like to get the staff's views on the service they are working with, in particular their perspective on how child and youth participation is employed in the service. This is important as part of this is helping the service to learn how to improve things for children and families.
- Invite the staff to complete the self-assessment form individually and discuss as a team.
- See if you can reach a consensus on the score awarded. This can be a useful exercise for monitoring your service's progress in participatory practice.

Discussion Questions:
- How do you feel about the service and its progress in engaging in participatory practice?
- If you had one wish for this service, what would it be?
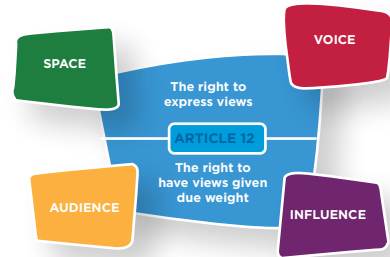
Self-Assessment			
Indicator There is/are….	What is the evidence of indicator?	What do children and young people say about how this indicator is being met?	Score 1-4 1=In place & effective 2= In place & needs improving 3= Being established 4= Not in place
Active participation of children.			
Shared participation values among, staff; for example, openness and willingness.			
Resources allocated to support children's participation.			
Children's participation in service planning.			
Joint decision-making.			

Self-Assessment Continued

Indicator There is/are….	What is the evidence of indicator?	What do children and young people say about how this indicator is being met?	Score 1-4 1=In place & effective 2= In place & needs improving 3= Being established 4= Not in place
Capacity building and training available for children.			
Effective representation of children on issues that affect them.			
Children in positions on either the board or advisory group for the service.			
Children's participation in recruitment, selection and induction of staff and managers.			
Active involvement of children in delivery and evaluation of training to staff and managers.			
Staff who are advocates and champions of children.			

Section 5: Ensuring Influence

"The views expressed by children and young people must be acted upon, as appropriate" (Lundy Model on Child Participation, 2007). To ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, requires a safe and inclusive space, the expression of voice and a receptive audience. There are ways of ensuring children and young people have influence over the decisions that are being taken in relation to their lives.

- Power;
- Decision-making process;
- Procedures;
- Dialogue.

These aspects of influence can be considered at the level of:

- Individual;
- Collective.

5.1 Influence Explored

Power
In any decision-making process all stakeholders will have different amounts of power and will have differing perceptions on who holds the power. It is important to ensure that children and young people are empowered through the participatory process and are clear about who has the power to make what decision.

- Who has the power to change? Remember the answer may be more than one person or service. It is important to clarify what they have the power to change.
- Are you aware of the power differential between you and the child/ children?
- Are you using your power to the maximum benefit of the child/ children?

Decision-making process
It is important that the child hears what the decision-making process is and how it works. This may need to be explained a number of times and in a variety of ways. It is important that the child or young person knows who is responsible for ensuring their views are taken seriously and acted upon where appropriate.

- Is the decision-making process explicit?
- Does the child understand the timeline involved?
- How do you know that the child's views were considered by those with the power to affect change?

Procedures

Good participatory practice needs to be supported by procedures that ensure consistency of practice across the organisation. All children and young people should experience equality of opportunity to engage in a participatory way with their service.

What procedures are in place for the following?

- Feedback on decision taken;
- Offering alternative(s) to the decision if appropriate;
- Feedback and complaints;
- Monitoring progress;
- Demonstrating change as a result of the child or young person's participation;
- Ongoing collaboration to achieve win/win outcomes.

Dialogue

Dialogue is an interactive, ongoing process, not a one-off event. It is the key to enabling children and young people's influence on service delivery and development.

- Are you clear on the distinction between 'consultation' and dialogue where young people are seen as partners with a valid contribution to make to the design and delivery of services?
- Do you have inclusive processes to ensure some young people are not prevented from making a contribution?

Individual Influence

The level of influence you can facilitate at an individual level will vary by case and by the nature of your engagement. For example, it may be possible to ask a child where they would like to meet with you or offer them some options to choose from. If a child is in an emergency situation there may be limited opportunity for them to influence immediate decisions that are made. However, clear communication to the child about what is happening and why is an important aspect of facilitating influence in the long term.

- Have you considered how much influence the child may have on the decisions being made?
- Can you break down the decision-making process so that the child may have more influence over some of the decisions than others?
- How do you communicate back to the child or young person that they have had influence?
- Is your understanding of influence different to theirs?
- What changes can you show that happened as a result?

Collective Influence

Collective influence can range from involving children and young people in conferences, events and recruitment processes, to facilitating children to design/redesign or evaluate a service. It is important that if you are offering children and young people the opportunity to take part in collective activities that there is a real chance of them having some influence on outcomes.

- How do you ensure that your collective engagements are not tokenistic?
- Do children and young people who use the service agree that this is the case?
- How do you recognise and celebrate achievements?
- What changes can you show that happened as a result?

5.2 Demonstrating Influence

As a team consider influence under the following headings:

Now	Future
Power Ways that my service and I share power with children and young people.	**Power** Ways that my service and I will share power with children and young people.
Decision-making process Steps that my service and I take to involve children and young people in decision-making processes.	**Decision-making process** Steps that my service and I will take to involve children and young people in decision-making processes.
Procedures Procedures that my service and I use to respond to children and young people.	**Procedures** Procedures that my service and I will use to respond to children and young people.
Dialogue Ways that my service and I demonstrate that dialogue has led to change.	**Dialogue** Ways that my service and I will demonstrate that dialogue will lead to change.

Now	Future
Individual Influence Ways my team and I facilitate influence at an individual level.	Individual Influence Ways my team and I will facilitate influence at an individual level.
Collective Influence Ways my team and I facilitate influence at a collective level.	Collective Influence Ways my team and I will facilitate influence at a collective level.

Influence Considerations

Space
- Have you thought about how to create a safe space for the child or group?
- Consider power differentials;
- See Space Section.

Voice
- Have children or group been given the information they need to make an informed decision?
- Always explain to children that they do not have to take part;
- See Voice Section.

Audience
- Discuss with children who the most appropriate person/service to share their views with might be;
- Ensure children are happy for their views to be shared;
- Ensure the views of children are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen.

Influence
- Ensure you have the decision makers on board;
- If you are a decision maker what processes do you have in place to ensure that children are being given the space, voice and audience to influence your decision making?
- Clarify that they have the power to change;
- Ensure feedback is given to children about the outcome of decisions taken and the influence of their participation;
- Is participation something that is addressed in service planning, service forms, staff supervision and team meetings etc?

5.3 Influence Activities

All the activities in this toolkit should be engaged in with a view to children and young people having influence over decisions which affect their lives. This section gives examples of specific ways of ensuring influence.

Post Meeting Response

Time

30 mins

Material

Pre-prepared worksheet

Purpose

To enable staff or advocate share what happened in the meeting with the child and the outcome of their contribution, if they did not attend the meeting.

SPACE
VOICE
The right to express views
ARTICLE 12
The right to have views given due weight
AUDIENCE
INFLUENCE

Method:

- Complete the worksheet before meeting the child so they have sufficient information about what happened in the meeting;
- Explain what happened in the meeting with the child giving them relevant information and an overview of what happened;
- You may want to include what was good about the meeting and what was challenging about it;
- Ensure the child is clear about what will happen next and who will do what;
- Ensure the child receives a copy of the minutes of the meeting if they were taken. Go through the minutes with them to make sure they understand.

Discussion Questions:

- How do you feel about what happened in the meeting?
- How do you feel about the outcome of the meeting?
- Are you happy with your contribution? Or are you happy with your contribution even though it didn't affect the outcome? (Include here why it didn't or couldn't affect the outcome).
- What could we do differently for your next meeting?

Purpose of the meeting:	
List of who attended:	What they said:

What happened in the meeting?

What was the impact of the child or young person's opinion at the meeting?

Did it change the outcome in anyway? Yes or No; please explain your answer.
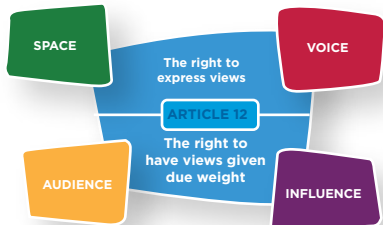
Why/Why not? Please explain your answer.

Post Meeting Reflection

Time
30 mins

Material
Minutes of meeting

Purpose
To enable child and staff discuss what happened in the meeting, where the child attended, and how the child feels about it.

SPACE

VOICE

The right to express views

ARTICLE 12

The right to have views given due weight

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE

Method:

- Invite the child to share what they feel was good about the meeting. You may like to use the worksheet or you might prefer just a conversation.

- Next as the child's worker, you share what was good about the meeting.

- Invite the child to share what they found 'ok' (neither good nor bad) about the meeting. You can share your opinion here too.

- Invite the child to share what they found poor about the meeting. Also explore what they would like to see changed in how the meeting was run or in the outcome of the meeting.

- Explain that it is important to give their feedback - while it might not change the outcome right now it might impact how the meetings are run or the outcome in the future.

- Ensure the child is clear about what will happen next and who will do what.

- Ensure the child receives a copy of the minutes of the meeting if they were taken.

- If the child is really unhappy with how the meeting went, ensure you give them the option of accessing the Tusla complaints procedure.

Discussion Questions:

- How do you feel about it now after talking through it?

- Do you think you would want to participate in a meeting like this again in the future? Why/Why not?

Children's Participation in Decision-Making Measure

This measure was designed by the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUIG as a way to:

- Assess to what extent a child participated in decisions being taken, and;
- Whether their participation is compliant with the Lundy model of participation. It can be used in a variety of contexts.

Child's Question

Please mark one answer for each question.
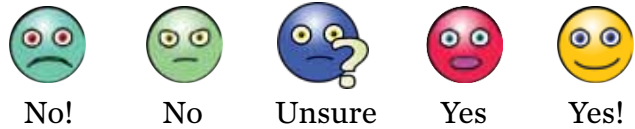
	No!	No	Unsure	Yes	Yes!
1. I knew what was going on.	1. ☐	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐
2. I was aware I could give my views on the choices being made.	1. ☐	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐
3. It was easy for me to give my views if I wanted.	1. ☐	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐

If you gave your views, continue to question 4:

	No!	No	Unsure	Yes	Yes!
4. My views were listened to.	1. ☐	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐
5. My views were taken seriously.	1. ☐	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐
6. I was told how the decisions were made.	1. ☐	2. ☐	3. ☐	4. ☐	5. ☐

Quality Assurance within Tusla - The 'Investing in Children Membership Award™'

The 'Investing in Children Membership Award™' recognises and celebrates examples of imaginative and inclusive practice. Investing in Children members are those services that can demonstrate a commitment to dialogue with young people that leads to change. Within Tusla there is an agreement that services work towards achieving this award.

Dialogue

Dialogue is an interactive, ongoing process, not a one-off event. A distinction needs to be made between 'consultation' where powerful people consult the powerless, and 'dialogue' where young people are seen as partners with a valid contribution to make to the design and delivery of services. To achieve 'Investing in Children' status, services will also have to demonstrate that this is an inclusive process and that some young people are not prevented from making a contribution.

Change

Dialogue should not be seen as an end in itself; dialogue must lead to change. Having invited young people to comment on how a service is provided we need to make sure young people are then able to influence its development. 'Investing in Children' services are those that have demonstrated that improvements have been made as a result of dialogue.

Criteria to Achieve Membership:

- You can demonstrate that you have dialogue with children and young people;
- You can show that changes have happened as a result of dialogue;
- Evidence is provided by children and young people who use the service.

Benefits of the 'Investing in Children Membership Award™'

- By seeking evidence from children and young people themselves, it shifts power to them. It provides an opportunity for children and young people to experience a sense of being active citizens.

- The process is progressive. Evaluation reports not only acknowledge and celebrate successful dialogue and change, they also contain recommendations for further work, which are then the subject of future appraisal. It gives direction for what your organisation is doing right and needs to do more.

- Shows all involved in the service that as an organisation you listen and act upon what young people tell you.

Why have Investing in Children Membership?

Investing in Children Membership gives national recognition for your good practice and active inclusion of children and young people in dialogue and change.

"We as children and young people are reassured when we visit somewhere and see an Investing in Children Award™ certificate that there will be someone there who actually listens to you and you will be able to put forward ideas." - Quote from a young person involved in this process.

How to apply for the Award:

Contact your Regional Participation and Partnership Officer or tusla.ie for more information.
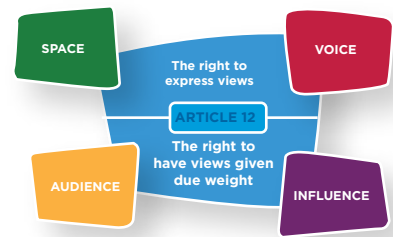
Research

Purpose:
To plan the involvement of children in a research project.

Approach:
Children can be involved in research:
- On both issues about children and young people and about other people's/adults' issues;
- As co-researchers and/or as peer researchers;
- On youth led or adult/youth led projects.

Getting Started:
Ensure you have organisational support and a budget to ensure that a group of young researchers is supported, given adequate time and resources.

A staff member will need to be given time to support the work of the children and will need a range of skills in facilitation, support, child welfare and participation and will need to be able to be flexible to the needs of the group in terms of leadership, co-ordination, gatekeeping, advocacy and support.

Develop an advisory group that includes an experienced researcher(s) and someone who has the capacity to act on the research findings.

Convene a group of interested children (using guidance in Conference/Seminar planning). This group may be involved over the full timeline of the research project or may dip in and out of the process at various stages. Be clear about options and terms of reference.

Hold an Initial Meeting to:
- Discuss and fine-tune the research topic;
- Brainstorm areas for investigation;
- Identify skills and resources that are needed;
- Create a project plan.

Come back to the group with parameters in terms of their suggestions. You will need to spend time on:

- Developing a consensus about, and shared understanding of, the research topic;
- What practical steps are involved – who, what, when, where, why and how?
- The safety of the children;
- The personal development and research skills training and support needs of the children;
- Developing and maintaining respectful relationships within the group.

Ensure that you are following guidance documents on child protection and on developing ethical research projects involving children.

Levels of Participation:

Generally, research involves selecting and defining a topic, articulating a specific research question, carrying out a literature review, selecting appropriate methods, carrying out fieldwork, data analysis, writing up and disseminating findings.

Children may want to take part at different levels in a research project. Involvement can include:

- Recruitment of participants;
- Choice of topic;
- Selection of methods;
- Fieldwork;
- Data analysis;
- Reporting and communication of findings;
- Action or monitoring of actions resulting from recommendations.

Ensure you have access to expertise on the topic area, the methods being used, and the best methods of communicating findings and influencing change.

Implementation and Dissemination:

Children and young people's participation does not have to stop when the research is complete. Be creative with your communication of research findings, matching your mode of communication to your target audiences. Involve children in reviewing what has been learned, what can be changed and in monitoring implementation of changes. Disseminate findings widely and in particular ensure children and young people who have an interest in the topic are furnished with the research results. Use social media in particular to release short and snappy findings over time. Involve children and young people in developing and monitoring a research strategy for your service. Become involved in initiatives such as Young Social Innovators where young people are already engaging in, and with, research.

Review of Research Findings with Children and Young People

|	
What we found out:	
Interesting:	
Surprising:	
Worrying:	
Rewarding:	
Who needs to hear what:	
What can we do something about: • Short term • Medium term • Long term	
What is going to happen next:	
Lessons learned:	
Ideas for future research:	

Governance

Purpose:

To provide guidance on how to involve children in organisational or project governance.

Approach:

- If you are bringing a child into an existing Board you will need to review how that Board currently operates and what needs to happen to make it a child-friendly environment. A sub-group should be set up to do this. Identify clear parameters, e.g. how much the existing Board is willing or able to change to accommodate inclusion of children.

- Explore with groups of children whether there is interest in participating in the Board and in what way and what level of involvement they would like to have.

- Speak to Boards in other organisations who have young people involved and see how they operate. Invite someone to present to your Board.

- Recruitment of children into the governance process can be done through papers, magazines, online, leaflets and flyers in children's locations, via voluntary organisations and support services. Face-to-face opportunities are the best for recruitment.

- Implement an appropriate induction and training process for adults and children (see below). Issues to consider include legal requirements, roles and responsibilities, voting rights, communication processes.

- Make sure child participants are not exposed to financial or legal risks.

- Regularly review the child's experience of participation on the Board.

Levels of participation include:

- Participation as a full Board member;

- Observers;

- Participation in a Reference Panel/Advisory Group who meet regularly with the Board;

- A standing item on the agenda of each meeting to address children's views on an issue that can be submitted to the Board.
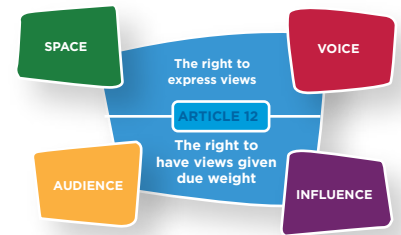
Tips for Induction of Young People onto the Board

- Have someone meet with the young person/people and give the following information in writing and orally:
  - o The history of the Board.
  - o Who is on it and what their areas of expertise are.
  - o How the Board operates at meetings – what is the style of communication, how do people generally dress, is food provided before/during/after? The Board should be open to revising some of their practices to be more youth friendly.
  - o Roles and responsibilities and voting rights.
  - o The parameters of the Board's work.
  - o Issues of confidentiality.
  - o Any legal issues.

- Go through the minutes of the last Board meeting to give a sense of how the Board meetings run.

- Introduce the young person to as many of the Board members in advance of the first Board meeting as possible.

- When creating the agenda for the next Board meeting, consider how it is drafted to allow for the inclusion of new members. More time may need to be allocated until members/observers become familiar with proceedings. Go through the agenda in advance with the young person/advisory panel. The young person/panel should be enabled to contribute to the agenda.

- In setting the time for Board meetings, take into account factors such as school times, holiday times, transport.

- Ensure all issues of access and any special needs have been addressed.

- Provide parents/guardians with all necessary information and contact details. Agree in advance the level of communication with parents/guardians and school.

Questions to evaluate young person's experience of taking part in Board meetings

1. How many Board meetings did you attend?

2. On a scale of 1-5, please rate how easy it is for you to do each of the following three things (where 5 means you found it very easy and 1 means you found it very hard and so on.)

    Understand what was happening in meetings
    1 - Very hard   2 - Hard   3 - Ok   4 -Easy   5 - Very easy

    Read Board documents
    1 - Very hard   2 - Hard   3 - Ok   4 -Easy   5 - Very easy

    Have your say
    1 - Very hard   2 - Hard   3 - Ok   4 -Easy   5 - Very easy

3. True or False (Mark 'T' or 'F' as appropriate in each of the boxes):

    ☐ I was well prepared for Board meetings;

    ☐ I found Board meetings boring;

    ☐ I got the same chance as everyone else to speak;

    ☐ There was no point to me being at Board meetings;

    ☐ I got enough support in the meeting to give my views.

4. Did you receive enough information about the four points listed below? Mark 'Yes' or 'No' as appropriate in each of the boxes provided.

    ☐ What would happen in the meetings;

    ☐ What your role was;

    ☐ How decisions got made;

    ☐ What happened next about decisions made.

5. What did you find particularly helpful?

6. What could have made the meetings better?

(Adapted from Association of Alaska School Boards, 2005)

Youth Advisory Board

Purpose:
To engage children in service planning, design, delivery and/or evaluation in a structured way that taps into existing mechanisms (the audience).

## Resources:
Planning, HR, training, budget, co-ordinator.

Approach:

Getting started:
- Be clear about why you are setting up the panel and how it will have influence;
- Panels cost money if they are to involve children in a meaningful and secure way, so identify a realistic budget before recruiting participants;
- Engage with colleagues and other organisations to recruit the right range of people for your panel;
- Identify resources to support the panel;
- Staff need to work with children to set out the panel's mission and purpose;
- Be flexible and open to review and adaptation as the organisation and the panel grow and change;
- Develop clear objectives and a work plan and agree how you will monitor progress and measure change - the panel should be proactive and not reactive;
- Ensure everyone including staff in the wider organisation are clear about where the panel fits into the organisation;
- Establish clear lines of accountability and communication to ensure that staff and the panel work well together - space is needed for genuine dialogue.

Training and Capacity Building:
- Invest time at the start in getting the panel to know each other, establish ways of working and developing solid relationships with staff and with each other. Residential opportunities are a good way to do this.
- Develop a programme of training and support. The panel should have at least one designated staff member that has dedicated time to co-ordinate and support the panel. They should have youth work and child protection experience. A second staff member should be available in their absence.
- Identify and provide the practical knowledge and skills that both staff and panel members need.
- Staff and children will have a huge amount of knowledge and expertise that can be shared in order to deepen everyone's knowledge and improve their skills.
- Be realistic: any training or capacity building needs to be tailored to individuals' needs and the work in question, and must be adequately resourced.
- Working with the youth panel should not be the sole responsibility of the co-ordinator. Staff in relevant services should also be expected to engage with and support the panel.
- Involve the panel members in as much of its own planning as possible, e.g., in drawing up a budget.
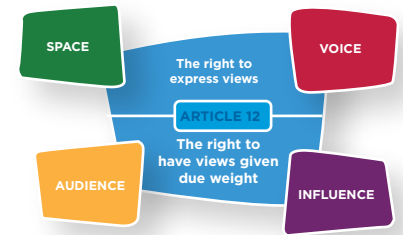
Making it Work:

- Use fun and innovative techniques to engage the children;

- Provide guidance and support but enable the children to set their own agenda and pace;

- Keep an eye on the pace and energy of the group and review or adapt in response to the group's needs;

- Ensure the panel is working on areas where they can; for example, influence change and ensure evidence of change is demonstrated through service reviews and evaluations;

- Consider using a range of methods of communication; for example, video diaries and vox pop.

Consider the following when setting up your youth advisory board

Why have a youth advisory board?

Purpose

Who needs to buy-in?

Useful contacts

To do list

Resources - people, finance and so on.

Child protection

Training: who, what, where, when?

Youth recruitment

Plain
English
Approved by NALA

Recruitment

Purpose:
To involve children in recruitment and selection.

Approach:

- Work with your HR department to develop an organisational policy for the involvement of children and young people in recruitment and selection, and on a training plan to support adults and young people.

- Consult with organisations and young people who have worked together on recruitment and selection.

- Bring together children and young people with relevant knowledge of the service for which the person is being recruited. Design a process that has a balance of fun and learning:

  o Start by supporting the children to get to know each other and the relevant adults that they will be working with.
  o Use games to demystify some of the language of the recruitment process, e.g. give the group a number of cards that describe the recruitment process. Get them to place them in the right order. Discuss what each stage means, how long it takes, who is involved etc.
  o Be clear about expectations, timescales and remuneration/expenses.
  o Be clear about the level of input into the decision making process - it can range from advising the adult panel, to directly contributing to an agreed percentage of the scores for the candidate. Make sure all relevant adults and children are clear about this from the outset.

- Provide specific training on issues of equality and diversity, confidentiality, essential and desirable skills, qualifications and experience.

- Consider involving children in the induction process for new staff.

Level of Involvement:
Level of involvement will depend on the type of process, the job in question, the understanding, interest and availability of the children and the resources available to support them. Children can be involved in all or any of the following:

- Identifying the need for a job;
- Writing the job description and advertisement;
- Short-listing;
- Contributing to an adult panel's questions or being a full participant on the interview panel;
- Meeting candidates informally and feeding into the assessment process.
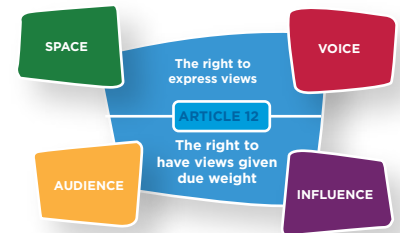
Recruitment Checklist

The following is a checklist of knowledge and skills that young people who receive training in recruitment and selection should cover:

☐ My link worker through the training and the recruitment process is: _____

☐ I know what an interview panel does.

☐ I can describe the skills an interviewer needs.

☐ My strengths are: _____

☐ My areas for development are: _____

☐ I know what the following mean:

- Prejudice;
- Stereotyping;
- Discrimination.

☐ I know how the following might affect how I decide which candidate is best:

- Prejudice;
- Stereotyping;
- Discrimination.

☐ I know how equal opportunities legislation affects recruitment.

☐ I know what the following are:

- A job description;
- A person specification.

☐ I know how to give feedback.

☐ I know how to receive feedback.

Useful Resource: 'Save the Children (2002): Involving Young People in the Recruitment of Staff, Volunteers and Mentors'.

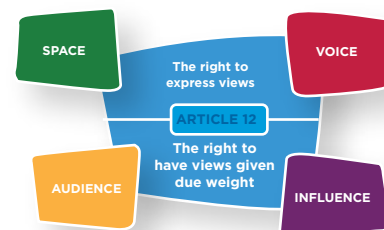## What's Changed from the Child's Perspective?

Following any engagement with children it is worth considering what has changed.

For Who	Listening (Space and Voice)	Action (Audience and Influence)
Me		
My family		
My school		
My service		
My community		

What's Changed - from the Service's Perspective?

Following any engagement with children it is worth considering what has changed.

For Who	Listening (Space and Voice)	Action (Audience and Influence)
The child/children		
The family		
The school		
The service		
The community		

Section 6: Additional Resources
6.1 A-Z of Participatory Methods

This toolkit has offered a variety of activities that can enhance participatory practice with children and young people. Outlined below is a wider listing of methods highlighting the range of possibilities available for working at individual and collective level. Professional expertise and possibly specific training will be needed to use the method within certain contexts.

Strategy	Features
Advocacy	Independent advocacy support to children and young people who need help having their voice heard on issues that are important to them.
'Agenda Days™' (Investing in Children).	Facilitation of space for children and young people to work out their own ideas using existing or newly gathered knowledge. Children and young people work together to develop the best arguments to put to the key adults on specific topics or issues. Children and young people led with expert support.
Apps	Apps exist and can be custom developed to enable children and young people find out about service and also communicate with their service e.g. Momo (mind of my own).
Art and drama	Can range from large scale community projects to small group activity. Useful for engaging children and young people reluctant to express views in writing or orally.
Blogging	Ongoing continuous dialogue through website. May be children and young people initiated. May need moderator. Can enable relationship building with people with common interests or goals.
Books	Children can be facilitated to create a scrapbook or a storybook about lives or about a particular issue. Also children's books can be used to engage with children on discussions on various topics.
Campaigns	Targeted. Can be innovative and creative. Message can be devised by the service or children and young people both together.
Celebrations	Providing children and young people with opportunities to celebrate their achievements. Mark the occasion or day by ceremony or festival; praise something publicly; demonstrate something good that has happened or a positive change. Varies in scale. Risk of slipping into tokenism for PR purposes. Focus should be on celebrating children and young people's impact on the service.

Strategy	Features
Communication Passport	A communication passport is a document or device that the child carries with them identifying their preferences for how to communicate and highlighting any communication challenges they face. More information at: http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk/
Commissioning	Children and young people become involved in assessing needs, identifying resources, priority setting, planning, procuring, monitoring, evaluation and learning. Can draw from children and young people and adults with experience of other strategies. Takes time and resources to build the capacity of children and young people and commissioners.
Communication prompts	Communication prompts are images that enable you to have better conversations with children, particularly those with communication difficulties. It provides a visual framework to help children express their views using a selection of communication symbols that cover a variety of topics. Commercial versions are available as paper and digital resources. e.g. Talking Mats.
Complaints/ feedback	Response to children and young people who have identified possible areas for service improvements. Requires organisational culture and staff understanding of how to respond.
Delphi technique	Formal process used to build consensus across people with potentially conflicting views. Generally done through a series of mailed surveys so relies on high level of literacy.
Evaluation	Involvement can range from consultation on level of satisfaction with service received to formal inclusion as stakeholders in service evaluations using a variety of carefully selected strategies.
Focus groups	Facilitated discussion with 6-8 people for 30 to 90 minutes. Interactions between participants can help explore issues rapidly and in-depth. Generally, focused on a specific issue.
Genograms	A genogram can be created in the traditional family tree structure or using coins, buttons, teddy bears or other odds and ends.

Governance	Involvement in organisational governance structures ranging from advisory to full participation on decision making bodies. Can have legal implications. Clarity on roles and responsibilities and appropriate support including mentoring, training and expenses.
Graffiti boards	During events or in certain service settings 'graffiti boards' can be set around the venue inviting children and young people to use words, symbols or drawings to convey their thoughts on what is and isn't working. Need ground rules. Review regularly and communicate to children and young people what impact their contributions have made.
In-depth Interviews	Qualitative interview providing a rich source of information from selected service users. Useful for exploring issues in depth.
Multi-media	Enabling children and young people to influence services using digital photos, videos and audio recordings, interactive maps, online surveys, online discussions, games. Engaging, fun, accessible and inclusive. Costs include time, expertise, equipment and tools. Process is as important as product. Can be confused with PR opportunity.
Nature Walks	Walking with children and young people in natural environments as a means to engaging in meaningful conversations.
Networking	Facilitation of relationship building between individuals and groups who have common interests or goals. Requires coordination and administrative support.
Outdoor activities	Support children and young people to take part in field trips e.g. fishing, kayaking, canoeing or hiking as an alternative to formal meetings or indoor discussions. Engaging in dialogue through activities can lead to more meaningful engagement for many children and young people.
Panels / References groups	Structured form of input into the service/organisation from invited children and young people. Requires fair and careful selection and ongoing preparation and support for adults and children and young people to avoid tokenism. Participants generally link with a particular constituency. Length of time needs to be long enough to have impact but not so long that it becomes institutionalised.

Partnership	Specified role for service user in shared decision making with service provider. Joint responsibility for process and outcomes.
Peer support groups	Facilitation of groups with shared experiences/common interests to come together to assist each other on their issues. Can be linked to committees/ groups as expert advisers.
Phone-ins/ messaging	Information gathering. Needs good publicity and administration.
Project groups	Can be all children and young people or mixed children and young people and adults. Generally initiated by the service to advise on specific issues or guide a project. Time and scope limited.
Public hearings	Instigated by service. Set terms of reference. Formal and potentially intimidating. Accountable.
Promotional materials and displays	Written. General or targeted. No dialogue. Can provide information on how children and young people can participate.
Reality box	Provide the child with a selection of arts and crafts and a shoebox asking them to depict within the box what is going on, e.g. in their family, school or community.
Recruitment	Involvement of children and young people in recruiting of staff ranging from advising on job description/advert, short-listing, input into panel questions, participating in interview panel, meeting candidates informally and feeding back views. Requires specific training and support.
Representatives on service/ advisory committees	Clear roles and terms of reference for all members of the committee. All members need to be clear of how to work in an inclusive and participatory way. Requires training and support. Suited to children and young people who are interested. May be linked to a reference panel structure.

Research	Can be involved as the focus of research, as research advisors, as peer researchers, as coresearchers. Can be involved at many levels including choice of topics, design of strategy, fieldwork, data analysis, dissemination of findings. Requires training and support.
Seminars and conferences	Including children and young people in meetings of 30+ invited people investigating a subject or issue in a planned manner. Success depends on level of participation of children and young people at every stage.
Submissions	Invited written or oral presentation of views. Useful for children and young people who are organised through representative organisations. Dialogue is limited. Can exclude a lot of children and young people.
Suggestion boxes	Easy to implement. Anonymous. Limited to those already motivated, with time and literacy skills.
Surveys	Agenda set by service, unless co-designed by children and young people. Limited scope. Quantifiable. Targeted. Written, on-line, telephone or face to face. Generally adult initiated but can be used by children and young people themselves.
User panels	Service user invited to focus on a specific issue or service. Structured. Time limited and task focused.
Workshops	Facilitated meeting of 8-12 children and young people. Sometimes with service providers. Participants selected on basis of skills, knowledge or experience. Task oriented.
World Café	The world café is a participatory technique to get people talking about issues that affect them in a relaxed collaborative café style. Children and young people can decide what for them constitutes a relaxed and collaborative environment.

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