

Benefits of listening to the voice of children and young people and taking participation seriously

Involving children and young people in the decision-making process benefits us all where everyone including; small community groups, churches, statutory youth providers, schools and colleges, the Police, housing providers, Local Councils, Governments etc. can reap the benefits. Here are some of the benefits:

Meeting needs

- By listening to children and young people and acting upon their comments means that there is far less chance of delivering something they do not want
- Greater ownership
- Children and Young people's participation helps to create greater ownership. They are more likely to be interested in something succeeding, if they have helped to shape and create it.

Provides learning opportunities

- Children and young people's participation benefits adult leaders as their views and ideas can offer a different perspective
- Adults and children / young people working together are more likely to find solutions that meet different needs. This type of shared learning experience can enrich all involved,
- Adults will learn more about their organisation or community by listening to children / young people's experiences of it.
- Participation can often provide an opportunity for children / young people who are marginalized or who don't usually 'fit in' to have a voice.
- Through the process of participation children and young people have the opportunity to learn and develop new skills. These skills can enable them to have the confidence to take more of an active part in decisions in the future and in the decisions they take about their own lives.
- Increased participation amongst children and young people also helps to increase self-esteem and self-confidence.

Benefits to your organisation / the community

- Involving children and young people in decision-making and in active participation sends out the message that they are a valued part of your organisation / community, with a role to play and a contribution to make. This helps to create a greater sense of belonging that can promote mutual respect and better communication between generations.
- Participation in decision making gives children and young people the message that their opinions and needs are important.
- Children and young people are the experts on the services they receive and are the best people to be involved in decisions about what should be provided.
- Services get the benefits of using young people as a resource, rather than treating them as a burden.

- Children and young people feel valued and are able to learn about their responsibilities as well as their rights.

Ideas for hearing the voice of children and young people Planning

- It is good practice to involve children in sharing their ideas about the activities that are being planned or selected. It is important that children are also involved in the evaluation process.

Open consultations and Questionnaires

- Talk with a wide variety of children to get a view on how they see your organisation. It is good to have two or three open questions, or a simple questionnaire.
- Questionnaires can be a useful way of getting children opinions on a particular issue. Questionnaires need to be kept short and interesting, using things like tick boxes, word circling, pictures and symbols.

Discussion, focus groups and open meetings

- Group interviews or discussions of about eight to ten children / young people can enable them to talk about their issues, attitudes, choices and ideas to do with your organisation.
- Open meetings with a larger group of children / young people can provide a way of inviting views about an issue that effects them (meetings can be completely open or by invitation- only)
- Be aware that this type of open meeting can be harder to manage. Youth forum / youth council/young people's panel/ youth PCC reps / youth synods.
- Organised youth / children's councils (including school councils), panels, discussion groups etc. are a way of bringing together children /young people to regularly discuss issues that affect them and their lives. These can then be fed into other bodies via youth reps.
- Always make it clear what the purpose of the meeting is and agree roles and responsibilities.
- Never make promises that cannot be fulfilled.

Meetings that would not usually include children / young people may need to adapt or change venue to better enable the inclusion of children / young people

Drawings, artwork, design, model building, role play, play, games, drama, story and multimedia

- Children / young people can be asked to draw, paint, build a Lego model or produce other artwork to express their views on a certain topic or idea.
- Using methods such as; play, drama, Godly play, video animation, video diaries, photography projects etc. can be an effective way of children / young 9 people expressing their views. Multimedia presentations can be an effective way of children / young people sharing their ideas and views in a more succinct way.

Newsletters and Websites

- Newsletters and websites can be designed exclusively for and by children / young people.



However, they may need monitoring and support from adults. Websites must be covered by an effective ITC policy.

This policy was adopted on	Signed on behalf of the nursery	Date for review
<i>September 2022</i>	<i>Emilia Olkowska</i>	<i>September 2023</i>