

# CHILD PARTICIPATION IN IRELAND

Report on the development of a collection of good  
practice case studies on children and young  
people's participation in decision-making

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## Introduction

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) undertook a review of practice and innovation in child and youth participation during 2019 and 2020 (yet to be published due to Covid-19 delays). As part of the review, a survey was circulated seeking examples of good practice in Ireland, with a view to publishing approximately 10 good practice case studies as an appendix to the review. The response to the survey was overwhelming with more than 140 responses from organisations throughout the country.

UNICEF held discussions with Government regarding the overlap between the DCEDIY review and its own (UNICEF) proposed research mapping formal participation spaces in Ireland. UNICEF and the DCEDIY took a decision to form a partnership to explore the publication of a collection of the case studies that were not to be included in the Department's review and new case studies from organisations that had attended DCEDIY child participation training. The DCEDIY agreed that the UNICEF collection of case studies should link with its review to provide a more comprehensive national picture of child participation in Ireland, rather than two stand-alone documents. The DCEDIY undertook to publish the UNICEF collection of case studies on its Hub na nÓg website. Hub na nÓg is the DCEDIY's national centre of excellence on children and young people's participation in decision-making.

The objective of linking the work of DCEDIY and UNICEF was to commission the development of a collection of case studies illustrating how children and young people are involved in decision-making at international, national, regional, local and organisations level. The collection would include case studies from a wide range of sectors and organisations, including policymakers, social work services, family support services, youth services, disability services, early years, schools, mental health, health, youth justice, arts and culture and other services for seldom heard children and young people. Both the DCEDIY and UNICEF believed that such a collection would be immensely useful to organisations wishing to involve children and young people in decision-making in Ireland and throughout the EU.

UNICEF appointed a child and youth rights specialist in a consultancy role to lead a piece of research on developing the collection of case studies. It was agreed that the Research Officer in Hub na nÓg would collaborate with the consultant in developing the collection.

## Methodology

The consultant proposed the following methodological approach to the development of the collection of case studies:

1. The development of two draft templates to support organisations to complete a case study by responding to questions and prompts based on the guidance and checklists in the *National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (2021).
2. The conducting of focus groups of policymakers, practitioners, and service providers to review the drafts templates and seek their suggestions on the most effective content and layout of the templates.
3. Finalisation of templates based on feedback from focus group participants.
4. A review of the case studies that were submitted as part of the DCEDIY's review of practice but were not included in the final DCEDIY review. From these case studies, the consultant proposed to identify a



list of case studies that meet a good practice standard to be supported to bring their submissions to publication standard.

5. Invitations to approximately 40 organisations to complete a case study template using material from the case study they submitted as part of the DCEDIY review of practice and innovation.
6. Invitations to approximately 20 organisations that had attended DCEDIY - Hub na nÓg child participation training to submit a case study using the relevant template.
7. Follow up with all organisations invited to submit case studies.
8. Review, formatting and editing of case studies submitted.
9. Online meetings with those who submitted case studies to bring their submissions to a good practice publication standard.
10. Finalisation of case studies for publication.

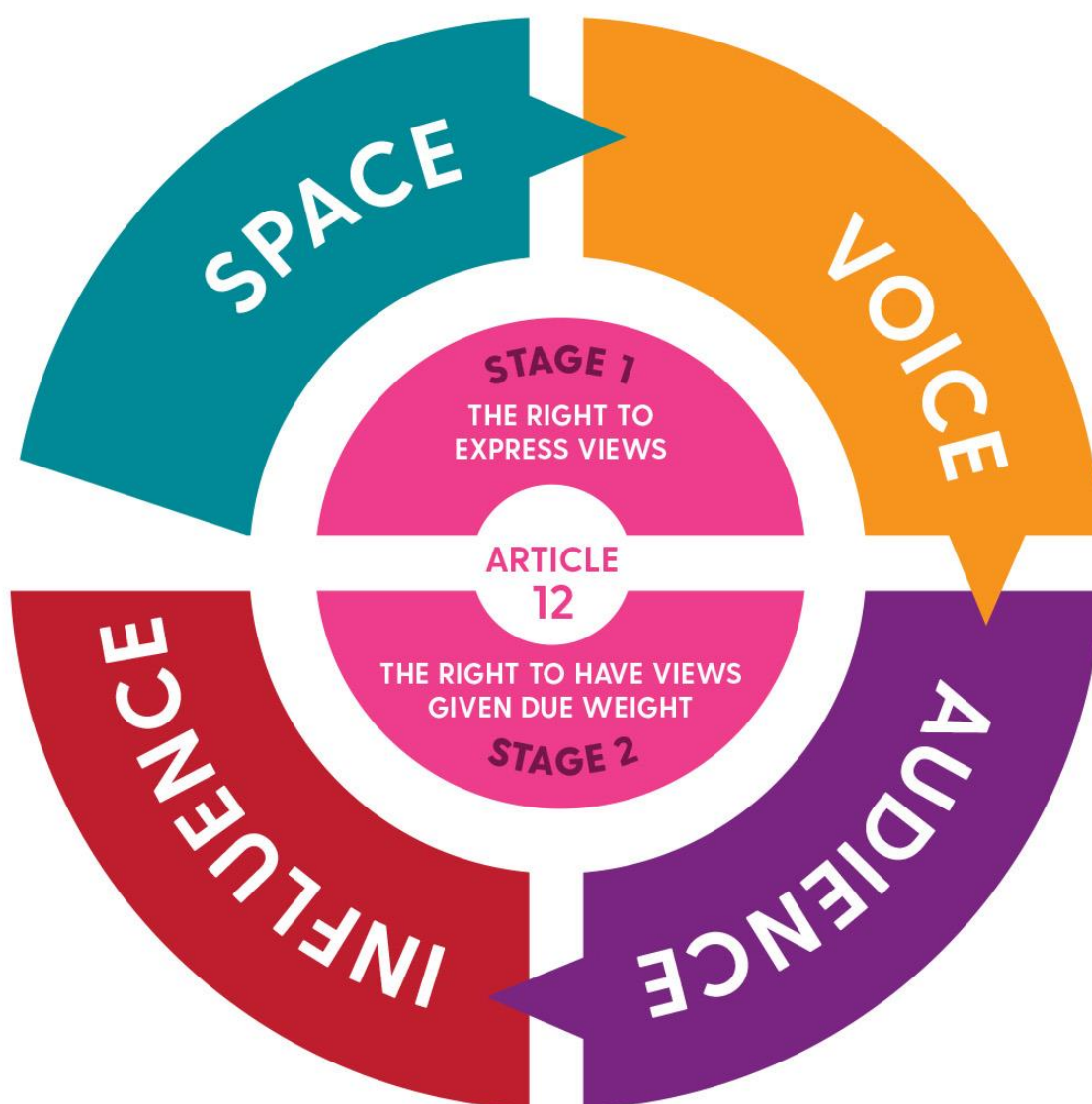
### **1. The development of case study templates based on the National Participation Framework**

The consultant proposed the development of two draft templates to support organisations to complete a case study by responding to questions and prompts based on the guidance and checklists in the *National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (2021) [Framework]. The Framework was developed by the DCEDIY in collaboration with Professor Laura Lundy.

The Framework (2021) is based on the Lundy model of participation and outlines approaches to involving children and young people in decision-making in everyday settings and spaces, and in the development of policies and other initiatives using planning and everyday spaces checklists. The Lundy model, planning checklist and everyday spaces checklist are illustrated below.

# Lundy Model

This model provides a pathway to help conceptualise Article 12 of the UNCRC. It focuses on four distinct, albeit interrelated, elements. The four elements have a rational chronological order.





# Planning Checklist

This checklist guides you on how to listen to children and young people and involve them in decision-making when you are developing policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation at national, local and organisational level.

You should inform children and young people that they have the right to a voice in decision-making and that you will take their views seriously.



# Everyday Spaces Checklist

This checklist is designed as a guide to help you ensure that children and young people have a voice in decision-making. It can be applied in many everyday situations including in classrooms, hospitals, childcare settings, child and youth services, youth and sports clubs, youth projects, arts and creative initiatives and other spaces.

Please do not use this checklist for developing policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation – use the Planning Checklist on page 18.

Please make sure that the ways you involve children and young people in decision-making are age-appropriate and accessible for all, whether in person or online.



The consultant collaborated with Professor Laura Lundy and developed two draft templates to support organisations to complete case studies based on the questions in the planning and everyday spaces checklists:

- a) A template seeking information on how organisations involve children and young people in decision-making in their everyday practice; and
- b) A template seeking information on how organisations involve children and young people in decision-making on specific projects, initiatives, policies, programmes, research or legislation.

## **2. Focus groups to review the drafts templates**

The consultant issued invitations to individuals whose organisations had submitted case studies to the DCEDIY review of practice to take part in one of two focus groups: one with practitioners that involve children and young people in decision-making in their everyday practice (disability services, early years settings, schools, youth services etc.) and another with organisations that involve children and young people in the development of policies, programmes, services and other initiatives (mental health services, children's services, social work services, youth services etc.). The purpose of the focus group sessions was to review the drafts templates and seek suggestions on the most effective content and layout of the templates. Those who agreed to take part in the focus groups were sent the relevant template in advance of the focus group and asked to consider its effectiveness. Two focus groups were conducted by the consultant and the Hub na nÓg senior research officer, which proved to be immensely valuable. Participants had a significant number of suggested design, text, and layout changes, all of which were taken on board in revised drafts.

## **3. Finalisation of templates based on feedback from focus group participants**

The consultant brought the revised drafts to a further meeting with Professor Lundy to review the feedback from the focus groups and finalise the case study templates, to ensure they met the highest standard of a child rights approach to participation in decision-making. The process of developing the templates outlined above was time consuming but has resulted in two case study templates that will be used by the DCEDIY on the Hub na nÓg website as a means of collecting further case studies. Professor Laura Lundy believes that these templates will be very useful in her own work and could be used in EU and other countries to seek good practice child and youth participation case studies from a wide variety of sectors. The final planning template is in Appendix 1 and the final everyday spaces template is in Appendix 2.

## **4. Identification of a list of case studies that meet a good practice standard**

The consultant reviewed the case studies that were not to be included in the DCEDIY's review of practice and innovation. A list of 40 case studies that meet a good practice standard was identified to be invited to bring their case study submissions to publication standard, in keeping with guidance in the Framework (2021).

## **5. Invitation to organisations that had completed case studies as part of the DCEDIY review of practice and innovation**

The consultant invited the 40 organisations that had submitted case studies as part of the DCEDIY review of practice and innovation to take part in the UNICEF research and complete the relevant template





(planning or everyday spaces) using material from their original case study. Organisations were given a three-week deadline for completion of case studies.

## **6. Invitation to organisations that attended DCEDIY - Hub na nÓg child participation training**

The consultant invited 20 organisations that had attended DCEDIY - Hub na nÓg child participation training in the previous six months to take part in the UNICEF research and submit a case study using either the planning or everyday spaces template. Organisations were given a three-week deadline for completion of case studies.

## **7. Follow up with organisations invited to submit case studies**

Of the 60 organisations invited to submit case studies, approximately 35 expressed an interest in collaborating with the process. The consultant undertook a process of following up with all 35 organisations. Organisations participating in the research were given a three-week deadline for completion of case studies. A very small number of organisations submitted case studies within the three-week deadline citing challenges such as illness with Covid-19, workload constraints, difficulties in finding time to complete the template and some confusion about completing the template. The consultant offered phone conversations or online meetings to research participants who were struggling to fully comprehend the process, and these proved very useful. The follow up process was very time-consuming. At a certain point in June 2022, the consultant took a decision to work on the 27 case studies on which drafts had been submitted and to cease follow up with other potential participants.

## **8. Review, restructuring and editing of case studies**

The consultant undertook a process of reviewing, editing, and restructuring the case studies that were submitted. The case studies demonstrated some excellent practice, but 23 of the 28 case studies needed significant restructuring, further information, and clarification of the content submitted. The consultant restructured and edited all case studies using tracked comments and questions and returned them to participant organisations.

## **9. Online meetings to bring case studies to a good practice publication standard**

The consultant invited 23 research participants to attend individual zoom meetings to discuss the edited version of their case study. The online meetings with participants were immensely valuable for the consultant. Participants also noted, both verbally and in writing, how helpful they found the meetings. The discussion between the consultant and participants revealed the following challenges:

- Several participant organisations strongly believe in the need to involve children and young people in decision-making and are making significant progress in doing this but lack knowledge and experience in implementing rights-based participation.
- Several participant organisations struggle to understand the practice of involving children and young people in decision-making in their everyday practice and are more familiar with involving them in decision-making in specific policies, programmes or projects.
- Several participants were confused about the meaning of some of the prompts in the templates.
- A significant number of participants are practitioners who work in a hands-on and practical way with children and young people. Completing reports, case studies and other drafting projects are not a normal part of their role.

- The completion of a written case study is very time-consuming and is rarely a priority given the pressure under which most organisations operate.

## 10. Finalisation of case studies

The consultant finalised all case studies and returned them to individual participants for sign-off. A sample of seven planning case studies is in Appendix 3 of this report. A sample of three everyday spaces case studies is in Appendix 4 of this report.

## Publication of the collection of case studies

The case studies will be published in a report to UNICEF and the EU. The collection will subsequently be formatted and published online in a section of the Hub na nÓg website of the DCEDIY dedicated to the *UNICEF – EU – DCEDIY Collection of Case Studies*. The case study collection will be promoted on the homepage of the Hub na nÓg site and a link to the collection will also be created on the UNICEF site.

## Learning from this research project

The process of undertaking this research was very time-consuming and required significantly more email, phone and zoom interaction between the researcher and participants than was anticipated. Approximately 50% of participants needed multiple interactions to support them to complete a final case study. However, the process of conducting online zoom discussions with participants enabled the researcher to discover the following:

- The templates require revisions to make them easier to understand and complete.
- Some important and interesting facts about the case studies were not included in the written versions submitted by research participants but emerged in the discussion between the researcher and participants.
- When participants did not understand a prompt or question in the template, the researcher could explain it and glean additional information to enhance the case study.
- Practitioners were often more comfortable telling the story than writing the story.

Evidence on good practice regarding children’s participation in decision-making in services, policy and practice is relatively sparse. It is hoped that the final case studies included in the collection and the availability of case study templates will greatly assist in building a stronger evidence base.

## Proposed follow up

The consultant proposes the follow-up outlined below:

- The templates need to be revised based on the learning from this research project.
- Consideration should be given to piloting a process of audio interviews with policymakers, practitioners and service providers using the prompts and questions from the case study templates. The recorded interviews could be written up as case studies.
- Further studies on developing collections of case studies should include more realistic timeframes.

## References

*National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021).

The Lundy model of participation is available at:

<https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub na nOg-LundyModel.pdf>.

The planning, evaluation and everyday spaces checklists are available at:

<https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub na nOg-planning checklist.pdf>

<https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub na nOg-evaluation checklist.pdf>

<https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub na nOg-everyday spaces checklist-2.pdf>



## Appendix 1: Planning template

### Case study template for a project or initiative that involved children and/or young people in decision-making

#### 1) Background information

- Name the specific project or initiative on which you involved children/young people in decision-making
  - What topic were you looking for their views on?
  - What was the reason you wanted their views?
  - Who were the decision-maker/s that facilitated and listened to their views?
  - Who were the decision-maker/s responsible for acting on their views (if different from above)?
  - Please give the age profile of the children or young people
- g) Please give other relevant information about the children or young people (e.g. disability, ethnic background, social disadvantage, etc.)

#### 2) The story of how you gave space, voice, audience and influence to children and young people on the project or initiative

- Please write your case study as a story using the guidelines (things to consider) outlined below under space, voice, audience and influence
- You may find it helpful to look at Lundy's Model of Participation ([https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub\\_na\\_nOg-LundyModel.pdf](https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub_na_nOg-LundyModel.pdf))
- If possible or relevant, use anonymised quotes from children and young people throughout your story

### SPACE

In your story, include details of the space or setting where you sought the views of children or young people using the things to consider below as a guideline:

Things to consider	The story of what happened
Tell us about the space or setting where you got their views (this may include online settings)	
How you identified the children and young people to be involved	
How you involved those who were directly affected by the topic	
How early in the process they were involved in decision-making	
How the process was inclusive and accessible	
How you made sure they felt safe to express their views	
How you continued to involve them throughout the decision-making process	

### VOICE





**In your story, include details on how you gave them a voice using the things to consider below as a guideline:**

Things to consider	The story of what happened
How you informed children/young people about the topics on which you wanted their views	
How you made sure they knew their views would be taken seriously	
How you informed them about level of influence they could have on decision-making	
The method/s you used to get their views and why those methods were chosen	
How you made sure they could identify topics they wanted to discuss	
Please describe the topics and issues they raised	

## AUDIENCE

**In your story, include details of how you made sure that there was an audience (decision-makers) for their views using the things to consider below as a guideline:**

Things to consider	The story of what happened
How you developed a report or record of the children and young people's views	
How you checked back with them that their views were accurately represented	
How you involved the decision-makers who are responsible for influencing change (other than yourself)	
At what point you involved decision makers other than yourself in the process	
How you and other decision-makers showed your commitment to listening to, and acting on children/young people's views	
How you supported children/young people to play a role in communicating their own views to decision-makers	

## INFLUENCE



**In your story, include details of how you ensured that children and young people's views were taken seriously using the things to consider below as a guideline:**

Things to consider	The story of what happened
How children or young people were given updates at key points in the development of the service, policy, plan, or project on which they gave their views	
How their views were acted on by the appropriate decision-makers (what happened to their views)	
Whether you continually checked back with children and young people about the ways you used their views with decision-makers (if possible or appropriate)	
How they were given full and age-appropriate feedback explaining how their views were used (or not) and the reasons for decisions taken	
How you enabled them to evaluate the process throughout	
Give an overview of what the children/young people said in the evaluation	

## IMPACT

**What changes were made because of children/young people giving their views**

### 3) The learning for your organisation or project

1. Describe the key learning for your organisation/other organisations from the process and outcome (end result) of involving children or young people in this case study
2. Looking back, how did the final outcome compare with your initial assumptions and those of other decision-makers involved in the process?
3. What worked well?
4. If you were doing it again, is there anything you would do differently?

## Appendix 2: Everyday Spaces Template

### Case study template for involving children and young people in decision-making in everyday spaces

#### 1) Background information

- a) Name the setting/s or space/s in which you engage with children/young people
- b) Are you the person who is responsible for listening to the views of children or young people in this everyday space? Yes/No
- c) Are there other people (either in the room or not in the room) who are responsible for acting on the views of children or young people in this everyday space? Yes/No
- d) If you answered 'Yes' to question c), please name the role/s and responsibilities of other decision-makers responsible for acting on the views of children or young people
- e) Please give the age profile of the children or young people
- f) Please give other relevant information about the children or young people (e.g. disability, ethnic background, social disadvantage, etc.)

#### 2) The story of how you give space, voice, audience and influence to children and young people in the place or space you meet them

Please write this case study as the story of how you give children or young people a voice in decision-making every time you meet them

#### SPACE

Include information on how you make sure that the space is safe and inclusive for children/young people to give their views freely

Remember the 'space' includes online and face-to-face environments. Please describe any challenges you meet about children/young people feeling safe to speak up either online or in face-to-face settings. Please also describe the benefits of working with children/young people online and in face-to-face settings.

Things to consider	The story of how you do it
How you make sure that children and young people feel safe to express their views	
How you allow enough time to listen to and hear their views	
How you make sure that all children or young people are heard	

## VOICE

Include information on how you facilitate or enable children or young people to express their views freely

Things to consider	The story of how you do it
How you support children and young people to give their views and be heard	
How they can raise things that matter to them	
How you offer them different ways of giving their views	

## AUDIENCE

The 'audience' is the worker or decision-maker who works with children/young people and has a responsibility to listen to and act on their views. The 'audience' can also be other decision-makers who are in the room or who have responsibility to act on children/young people's views.

Include information on how you make sure their views are listened to

Things to consider	The story of how you do it
How you show children and young people that you are ready and willing to listen to views	
How you make sure that they understand what you can do with their views	

## INFLUENCE

Include information on how you make sure their views are acted on

Things to consider	The story of how you do it
How they know the level of influence they can have	
How you give them feedback	
How you share with them the impact of their views on decisions	
How you explain the reasons for decisions taken	

## IMPACT

What changes were made in the space or setting because of children/young people giving their views?



## Appendix 3: A sample of seven planning case studies

### 1. The voice of children who experienced childhood domestic violence and abuse

**How Barnardos involved children and young people who experienced childhood domestic violence and abuse in service and policy decision-making**

#### 1) Background information

**The project on which we involved children and young people in decision-making**

Empower Kids

**The topic on which we were looking for their views**

Childhood domestic violence and abuse

**The reason we wanted their views**

We wanted to raise awareness and understanding of the specific experiences and needs of children and young people who experience domestic violence and abuse (DVA). There is a need to give these 'seldom heard' voices the opportunity in terms of the use of Space, Voice, Audience and Influence, to shape the development and delivery of frontline services addressing their needs. Encouraging children and young people in this way is crucial to ensuring services and policies are fit for purpose. While there is a lot of research available on the impact of DVA on children, we wanted to understand more about their own lived experience.

- We wanted children and young people to feel included, have had their experiences validated and their expertise recognised.
- We wanted to facilitate children and young people to give voice to their experiences and advise on how to better respond to their needs.
- We wanted to support a better understanding among service providers and policy makers about children and young people's experiences, and enhanced collaboration in responding.
- We wanted to empower children and young people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse to feed into the development of a shared understanding of childhood domestic violence and abuse.

**The decision-makers that facilitated and listened to their views**

At Barnardos, Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse (CDVA) project, we facilitated a multi-agency project participation project. Where 13 individual DSGBV support services volunteered to become part of the Empower Kids project and engage children and young people in their service through their keyworker system. The Empower Kids project team member services are: Cope Domestic Violence service Galway, Adapt domestic abuse services, Mayo women's support services, Longford women's link, Meath Domestic violence service, Daughters of Charity – Dublin Safer families, Women's aid Dundalk, EPIC, Saoirse Domestic Violence services and Cuan Saor Domestic Violence service. Barnardos TLC KIDZ projects across North Tipp, Limerick/Clare, Cavan/Monaghan.

**The decision-maker/s responsible for acting on their views**

All members services of the Empower Kids project – which is facilitated by Barnardos.



## The age of the children and young people

7 – 20+ years old.

### Other relevant information about the children or young people (e.g. disability, ethnic background, social disadvantage, etc.)

All 30 children and young people had lived with domestic violence and abuse. At the time of their participation, they were engaged with a support service – either a community based Barnardos domestic violence/abuse service or a specialist domestic violence/abuse service.

There was a mix of both male/female children/young people.

## 2) How we gave space, voice, audience and influence to children and young people

### SPACE: How we ensured a safe and inclusive space to hear the views of children and young people

Things we considered	What we did
The space or setting where we got their views (this may include online settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We decided to engage children and young people in an environment that promoted physical and emotional safety at all times.</li><li>• We also felt due to the trauma that the children and young people may have experienced, a familiar environment was key in creating this safe space, typically this was in the service they engaged with regularly or in their family home.</li></ul>
How we identified the children and young people to be involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Each support service engaged in the Empower Kids project initially identified children and young people who may be suitable for this work.</li><li>• We then took time to assess their suitability so that their participation did not compromise their physical or emotional safety in any way.</li></ul>
How we involved those who were directly affected by the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We engaged support services who work directly with children who have lived with domestic violence and abuse in the participation project.</li><li>• Each individual support service identified suitable children and young people for assessment and together we engaged over 30 children and young people who have lived with domestic violence and abuse in this consultation process.</li></ul>
How early in the process they were involved in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We involved the children and young people in decision making once they were engaged in the project after the initial consultation phase.</li><li>• This began at the creative output process, where we gathered their views and ideas to create the brief for the animation and poster.</li><li>• More recently they have been involved in the deciding the direction of the work for 2022.</li></ul>
How the process was inclusive and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We felt the best way to engage this cohort of seldom heard children and young people, was to facilitate their access</li></ul>

	<p>either in their local area service or in the comfort of their own home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They already had a relationship with their keyworker, so this transition from support work to participation work, was seamless for many.</li> <li>• We gave extra time and attention to be as inclusive to the individual needs of the children and young people as possible.</li> </ul>
How we made sure they felt safe to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We used a multi-agency approach, where all support workers had a specific expertise in the complexities and dynamics of domestic violence and abuse. This allowed us to ensure that safety and risk was always to the forefront of this participation work.</li> <li>• We gave ample time in the early individual sessions reassuring them, creating safety/trust and answering any questions they had in as open and transparent way as possible.</li> </ul>

### VOICE: How we gave children and young people a voice in decisions

Things we considered	What we did
How we informed children and young people about the topics on which we wanted their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We identified with the children and young people that there is a lack of understanding of the lived experience and needs of childhood domestic violence and abuse nationwide.</li> <li>• Each individual support worker used materials such as age-appropriate information videos and handouts with the children and young people to fully inform them of the topic on which we wanted their views and the purpose of the work itself.</li> </ul>
How we made sure they knew their views would be taken seriously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We ensured each child/young person was aware of the purpose of the work, that it was their right to be heard and listen too, and that we were all working collaboratively to raise the visibility of childhood domestic violence at a local, regional and national level.</li> <li>• We felt it was important that we fostered a culture of respect for the true, honest, and accurate views of the children/young people who engaged in the process throughout this work.</li> <li>• We were transparent about what was happening at all times.</li> </ul>
How we informed them about level of influence they could have on decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the onset, we wanted all the children and young people involved to feel included, have their experiences validated and their expertise recognised.</li> <li>• We let them know that everything they said would be taken seriously, that it would contribute to create a better understanding among service providers and policy makers</li> </ul>

	about children and young people's experiences of domestic violence and abuse.
The methods we used to get their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We designed open ended questions and vignettes for the children and young people to feedback on a certain topic.</li> <li>• Depending on the individual child/young person, each individual support worker, selected from the following list of engagement tools to allow them to express their opinions and give feedback for those open-ended questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Confidence building exercises: Know who you are, me me me, and me tree.</li> <li>➤ Creating space Ice breakers: listen and learn, clapping game, draw what your partner tells you</li> <li>➤ Facilitating voice: Placemat exercise, body art, lifelines, top ten, identity/wish boxes</li> <li>➤ Closure: mindfulness and regulation exercises, affirmation cards</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
How we made sure they could identify topics they wanted to discuss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throughout both years, we kept the questions and topics very open and broad so that children and young people could choose what to feedback into the process.</li> <li>• In 2020: We asked children/YP what domestic violence and abuse looks like to them.</li> <li>• In 2021: The theme for the engagement process, was "What matters for children and young people who live with Domestic Violence and Abuse" – as a result of keeping it broad, common themes naturally emerged throughout all the feedback and the children and young people involved had ownership and control over what they wanted to contribute.</li> </ul>
Please describe the topics and issues they raised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The children and young people provided us with a narrative about their lived experience of domestic violence and abuse. They gave us insight into the trauma of domestic violence and abuse, the impact on their day to day lives and their sense of agency as a whole.</li> <li>• The children/young people identified the important role of their non-offending parent (mother in this case), their teachers/ schools, gardai and how they viewed their relationship with their parent who chooses to abuse. Having them held accountable was important to them and that this can take many forms.</li> <li>• The importance of being involved in decisions that affect their lives was another prominent theme, and they provided valuable guidance to professionals to respond to children/young people living with domestic violence and abuse.</li> </ul>



## AUDIENCE: How we made sure that there was an audience (decision-makers) for children and young people's views

Things we considered	What we did
How we developed a report or record of the children and young people's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children involved helped us develop a more in-depth understanding of their lived experience. And we have created a children's definition of childhood domestic violence and abuse.</li> <li>We also created multimedia outputs with the children and young people to capture their views and present to the public: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Animation called 'The Impact of Domestic Violence and Abuse on Children'</li> <li>Animation called 'Hear me See me Keep me safe'</li> <li>Infographic called 'Our Rights – Your Responsibilities'</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>All multimedia outputs are available on the Barnardos website: <a href="https://www.barnardos.ie/our-services/childhood-domestic-violence-and-abuse/cdva-practioners-resources/cdva-what-children-young-people-have-to-say">https://www.barnardos.ie/our-services/childhood-domestic-violence-and-abuse/cdva-practioners-resources/cdva-what-children-young-people-have-to-say</a></p>
How we checked back with them that their views were accurately represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We regularly checked in (and continue to check in) with the children and young people involved on how their views were taken and if it was a true and accurate reflection of what they had said.</li> <li>Before any product is launched or goes public, all the children and young people involved have a last look over the final version, to ensure that it is reflective of their lived experience of domestic violence and abuse.</li> </ul>
How we involved the decision-makers who are responsible for influencing change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During this work, each local area organisation in Empower Kids project involved their own local area decision makers in raising awareness of the lived experience of children and young people who have lived with domestic violence and abuse.</li> <li>At a national level, we engaged decision makers through our childhood domestic violence and abuse national advisory group and the childhood domestic violence and abuse community of practice.</li> <li>We also engaged with national services that the children and young people deemed important in their consultation, such as schools via the NCCA (National Council for curriculum and assessment), TUSLA (Child and family agency), ICGP (Irish college of general practitioners), Gardai (through the special protective units) and the Department of Justice (through the</li> </ul>

	consultation for the 3 <sup>rd</sup> National Strategy for Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence).
At what point we involved decision makers other than yourself in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We grew this project from discussions with and suggestions from the interagency collaborative networks that we are involved in at a local, regional, and national level.</li> <li>• These are the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse National Advisory Committee and the Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Community of Practice.</li> </ul>
How we and other decision-makers showed our commitment to listening to, and acting on children and young people's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The children's views have been central to the work to date. We strived at all times to keep them unfiltered.</li> <li>• The views of the children and young people have continuously shaped the themes emerging, the work plan for Barnardos CDVA project, the outputs for the Empower Kids project, and the course or direction of the work of the project going forward.</li> <li>• The children have received an email from the Minister for Justice to congratulate them on the powerful animations they have produced to date.</li> <li>• We keep the children and young people updated on the impact of their work, through regular update videos.</li> </ul>
How we supported children and young people to play a role in communicating their own views to decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are at the early stages of this work. To date, we facilitate the children and young people's views through 1:1 engagement sessions with their keyworkers. This is then channelled through the Barnardos Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project to reach decision makers.</li> <li>• We have begun discussions with the children and young people about setting up a child and youth advisory panel for childhood domestic violence and abuse to create a more direct link between the children and young people themselves and decision makers.</li> </ul>

### **INFLUENCE: How we made sure that children and young people's views were taken seriously**

Things we considered	What we did
How children or young people were given updates at key points in the development of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We created regular update videos from the National Coordinator of the CDVA project which were shared by the individual support services with the children and young people.</li> </ul>
How their views were acted on by the appropriate decision-makers (what happened to their views)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) commissioned a webinar centred on the voice of and recommendations from children and young people who have lived with Domestic violence and abuse.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is available to all teachers for both the primary and secondary curriculum.</li> <li>• The Irish college of General Practitioners (ICGP) is hosting the resources made by the children and young people alongside their domestic violence guidelines for GP's.</li> <li>• The 3<sup>rd</sup> National Strategy for DSGBV (domestic sexual and gender-based violence) has just been released, and already we can see the views of the children and young people reflected in the strategy. For example, strengthening the voices of the child in court proceedings.</li> </ul>
How we continually checked back with children and young people about the ways we used their views with decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over time, we are aware that some children and young people may for their own reasons, disengage in the work.</li> <li>• However, this is not reflective of their commitment, more to do with their current circumstances. So, we do keep those who are engaged up to date as much as possible and they are aware of all developments.</li> <li>• We try to have a continuing working relationship with the children and young people, and they are engaged in projects during the year.</li> </ul>
How they were given full and age-appropriate feedback explaining how their views were used (or not) and the reasons for decisions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We keep the children and young people up to date on how their views were taken, where their information has reached throughout the process.</li> <li>• We do this through their individual engagement sessions, and we create update videos to ensure the children and young people are clear on the impact of their views on decisions taken.</li> </ul>
How we enabled them to evaluate the process throughout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They participated in 1:1 engagement sessions with their individual keyworkers giving us feedback on the process.</li> <li>• We have created a children's voices video with their feedback.</li> </ul>
What the children and young people said in the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "It felt better doing this, that I felt heard, and that I can make a difference – even if I was little"</li> <li>• "I know I'm not in that place anymore, and the effect of it, this is a good way to get it out"</li> <li>• "You know no different, you think it's normal, I like helping people – I know I am doing something good"</li> <li>• "It is good that they are listening to our voice"</li> <li>• "I wanted to do this and I know it might have be difficult, and hard, but if it helps someone else, then it's worth it, If it can stop a person like me hurting like I did"</li> <li>• "I'm so proud of it, and my shield, all I wanted to do is to make others happy and safe"</li> <li>• "It's good to have a voice in something, we don't have a voice in much things"</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I found it good because I can help other children”</li> <li>• “Every age child has different experiences - It’s never too late to share our experiences”</li> <li>• “There was a lot in the animation but that it was good to see it there especially around school”</li> <li>• “I’m glad I took part in it cos now others out there know that other families go through this and they know now they aren’t alone”</li> </ul>
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## IMPACT

### What changes were made because of children/young people giving their views?

- We were asked to support the children and young people involved in the Empower kids project, to give their input to Ireland’s 3rd National DSGBV (Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence) Strategy and to comment on the initial draft strategy itself.
- We collaborated with the Department of Justice to create a child friendly infographic of the objectives in the draft strategy, using relevant child friendly language, illustrations and colour.
- We then consulted with the children and young people to hear their feedback on the draft strategy and to hear any other recommendations they have. We called this submission ‘I would like to give ideas for Ireland’ – based on one of the feedback comments.
- The Strategy has just been released in June 2022, and the work of the Empower Kids project has been acknowledged as valued contributors. We feel we can also see the vision of the children and young people in the new Strategy, for example strengthening the voices of the child in court proceedings, enhanced safety in communities, provision of therapeutic services for children and young people and recognition of the child as a victim in their own right.
- In the implementation plan, we are also delighted to see that the Strategy will continue to be informed by the voice of the child.

We also included the views of the Empower Kids children and young people in submissions for the:

- Family Law Strategy Consultation
- Public Consultation on the next Government Policy Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland

The important role that schools and teachers, play and could play in their lives of children and young people living with domestic violence and abuse featured strongly throughout this work. We reached out to the Department of Education’s NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment) and we were commissioned by the NCCA to create a webinar which is hosted on the NCCA’s website and accessible to all primary and post primary teachers. This webinar is focused on the work of the Empower kids project, in particular the animation ‘Hear me See me Keep me safe’ and the infographic Our Rights – Your Responsibilities. This can be viewed <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/SPHE/SPHE-RSE-toolkit/Preparation-for-Teaching/>



### 3) The learning for our organisation

#### **The key learning for our organisation from the process and outcome (end result) of involving children or young people in this initiative**

- This was a very empowering process for all those involved. Key learning from members of the Empower Kids project, have been:
  - Creating the right environment to nurture participation from onset.
  - Giving time to explaining everything to the children/young people involved so they were clear about the process, the commitment, and their potential for influence.
  - How children and young people were ready to talk to us and tell their story. They were just waiting for the right person to do so at the right time
  - The importance of asking children their opinions on matters that affect them.
  - Giving children and young people any creative means to convey their message.
- Getting the balance right between data protection and consent from parents. We have gone through a journey with consent and getting that balance of the parent/YP being fully informed and not putting off families by the complex language of data protection.
- For this project, we assessed and engaged children/yp who were in recovery from childhood domestic violence and abuse. However, we feel that a very important piece of this process, is giving voice to children/young people who are living in crisis. They have every much a right to participate and be heard, and it is up to us to create the right conditions to facilitate this to happen. These are the current conversations that the project is having right now.
- We have had feedback from both the children and young people themselves in terms of what this work means for them, and their parents. It has been very positive in terms of supporting their healing/recovery from domestic violence and abuse and building their confidence/self-esteem.
- According to the children and young people, one of the most significant motivating factors to be involved in this work was to help other families/children.
- As a result, they have decided the theme for the next project, is a leaflet or poster of advice for other children from children. Some suggestions of the name of this so far are: 'Me to you' 'We walked in your shoes' ...

#### **Looking back, how did the final outcome compare with our initial assumptions and those of other decision-makers involved in the process?**

The final output exceeded anyone's expectations. The feedback from the children and young people themselves was exceptional, it was so moving, powerful and a voice that is very much seldom heard. The weight of this task to accurately represent their voices, was at times daunting but one which all support services and the Barnardos CDVA project took very seriously and treated with respect at all times. We continue as a group of professionals to create opportunities to create 'audience' and 'influence' for the work of the 30 children and young people who have engaged in the Empower kids project to date.

#### **What worked well?**

Engaging children on a 1:1 basis. Each child had the opportunity to feed into the project, had the opportunity to do so in their own time, in their own environment and supported to do so in their own unique way.



- Collaboration between services. The multi-agency aspect of this project worked so well. Having the skills and expertise of the agencies involved in the project was key to its success from the onset. We worked well together as a team, and everybody is very committed to elevate the voices of the children and young people living with domestic violence and abuse.

#### **If we were doing it again, is there anything we would do differently?**

- Engaging children in the production and co design of the engagement materials earlier on in the project.
- Supporting children to engage who are living in crisis and getting that balance right. To date the children and young people who have engaged in the project, are all post separation and living in a safe and stable home environment. We want to reach out to and engage children and young people who are living in crisis, or in refuge. We feel these children also have a lot to contribute and have a right to be heard. We are piloting this in our next project, keeping their safety and emotional needs to the forefront at all times.
- We are also working together towards setting up a child and youth panel but will still maintain the individual consultation aspect of this work to ensure seldom heard children are heard.

**All resources created by the children to date can be found:**

<https://www.barnardos.ie/our-services/childhood-domestic-violence-and-abuse/cdva-practioners-resources/cdva-what-children-young-people-have-to-say>

\*The Empower Kids project team member services are: Cope Domestic Violence service Galway, Adapt domestic abuse services, Mayo women's support services, Longford women's link, Meath Domestic violence service, Daughters of Charity – Dublin Safer families, Women's aid Dundalk, EPIC, Saoirse Domestic Violence services and Cuan Saor Domestic Violence service. Barnardos TLC KIDZ projects across North Tipp, Limerick/Clare, Cavan/Monaghan.

## 2. The voice of young people in the national juvenile detention programme

**How young participants in Garda Youth Diversion Projects (juvenile diversion projects) were involved in decision-making in a review of the National Diversion Programme**

### 1) Background information

The Garda Youth Diversion Programme (GYDP) is a community-based multi-agency initiative, which seeks to divert young people who have become involved in crime or anti-social behaviour. During 2018, the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS) engaged in a review of the national GYDP. As part of this process, IYJS wanted to get the views of young people who are part of Garda Youth Diversion Projects.

The IYJS approached the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) and asked for its help in seeking the views of young people to inform the review. The DCEDIY gave responsibility for developing and conducting this consultation to Hub na nÓg, its centre of excellence on children and young people's participation in decision-making. IYJS established a steering committee to oversee the consultations with representatives from the DCEDIY, Hub na nÓg and organisations that deliver GYPD Projects, funded by IYJS.

#### **The project on which we involved young people in decision-making**

The IYJS wanted the views of young people in Garda Youth Diversion Projects around the country to inform a national review of the Garda Youth Diversion Programme (GYDP). Hub na nÓg led on involving young people in the GYDP review and implemented a three-stage approach:

- Stage 1: Established an advisory group of young people from GYDPs nationwide to work with the Hub in developing consultation questions and methodologies
- Stage 2: Conducted seven consultations with young people from GYDPs nationwide
- Stage 3: Shared the views of young people

#### **The topic on which we were looking for their views**

What works well and what needs to be changed in GYDPs

#### **The reason we wanted their views**

To inform a revised Youth Diversion Project model and funding agreements for organisations that manage Diversion Projects

#### **The decision-makers that facilitated and listened to their views**

The Hub na nÓg team who conducted the consultation process with young people

#### **The decision-maker/s responsible for acting on their views**

The IYJS

#### **The age profile of the children and young people**

13 – 21 years

#### **Other relevant information about the children or young people (e.g. disability, ethnic background, social disadvantage, etc.)**

All the young people in the Advisory Group and in the consultations were current or former participants in Garda Youth Diversion Projects.



## 2) How we gave space, voice, audience and influence to young people

### SPACE: How we ensured a safe and inclusive space to hear the views of children and young people

Things we considered	What we did
The space or setting where we got their views (this may include online settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We held the meetings of the Advisory Group and the seven consultations in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth</li> <li>We ensured that the rooms we used for these sessions were appropriately and comfortably laid out</li> <li>We provided snacks and pizza</li> <li>We explained to the young people that the reason we were using the DECDIY building was because of the importance of the issue and of their voice to the process</li> </ul>
How you identified the children and young people to be involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth justice workers on the consultation oversight group advised on recruitment of young people for both the advisory group and the consultations and collaborated with the IYJS and Hub na nOg on recruitment</li> <li>Staff from the IYJS collaborated with the Hub na nÓg team in planning the recruitment of young people for the advisory group with the help of youth justice workers working in GYDPS</li> <li>IYJS staff also recruited young people for the seven consultations with the help of youth justice workers working in GYDPS</li> </ul>
How you involved those who were directly affected by the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We worked exclusively with GYPD Projects and the consultation oversight group in seeking the involvement of young people in this process</li> </ul>
How early in the process they were involved in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The six young people on the Advisory Group were involved from the very start and informed all aspects of the consultation process and the recruitment process</li> </ul>
How the process was inclusive and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We ensured that young people from all parts of the country were involved both in the Advisory Group and in the subsequent consultations with the help of GYPD Projects and the consultation oversight group</li> <li>The IYJS paid the travel expenses of all young people and the youth justice workers who accompanied them to the DECDIY</li> <li>Seven consultations were conducted in the DECDIY in Dublin (six for current GYPD youth participants and one for former GYPD youth participants). Young participants attended from all over Ireland</li> <li>There was a maximum of eight participants at each consultation with three facilitators to ensure that all young people would be supported to be heard</li> <li>In both the advisory group and at the consultations, a number of young people struggled with literacy and concentration and</li> </ul>

	<p>facilitators worked one-to-one with these young people to support them to express their views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young members of the advisory group attended each consultation and explained the process to other young people</li> </ul>
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### VOICE: How we gave young people a voice in decisions

Things we considered	What we did
How we informed young people about the topics on which we wanted their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Head of the IYJS attended the first meeting of the Advisory Group and explained the review process and stressed how interested he was in hearing and acting on the views of young GYDP participants in this process</li> <li>• The Hub na nÓg team explained the role of the Advisory Group was to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pilot the draft consultation methodology and work with the Hub on refining and improving it.</li> <li>○ Advise on the best approach to recruiting other young people for the consultations.</li> <li>○ Attend (individually or in pairs) the consultations and explain the process to other young people in a youth-friendly way.</li> <li>○ Work with the Hub Team to develop a youth version of the consultation report.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
How we made sure they knew their views would be taken seriously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Head of the IYJS, other IYJS staff and the Hub na nÓg Team repeatedly reminded young people on the Advisory Group and at the consultations that the IYJS was committed to taking their views seriously</li> </ul>
How we informed them about level of influence they could have on decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Head of the IYJS and the Hub na nÓg Team were honest with the young people on the Advisory Group and at the consultations that the views of many stakeholders were being sought, but that the views of young people would be taken seriously and acted on where possible and appropriate.</li> <li>• Young members of the advisory group attended each consultation and explained the process to young people and assured them that their views would be taken seriously.</li> </ul>
The methods we used to get their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A series of methods were piloted with the Advisory Group and following the feedback at the pilot, we used the methods outlined below at the seven consultations.</li> <li>• The methods ensured space, voice audience and influence, and enabled the young people to be active and engaged, as outlined below: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Welcome</b> by Advisory Group (Why you are here. What IYJS want to find out.)</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

2. **Introductions:** In pairs, young people shared their name, where they were from and what they would do if they won the lotto. They were then asked to introduce their partner to the full group.

1. **What are the best things about my project?**

In small groups, young people were facilitated to discuss their views and complete individual A4 lifelines (designed sheets with blank speech bubbles). All groups came together with their individual lifelines and were facilitated to write their ideas on an A2 poster designed like a brick wall with the title 'The best things about my project'.

2. **What works well and what does not work well in GYDP projects?**

a) Two sticky purple walls (6-foot x 8-foot facilitation sheets) were mounted with these questions:

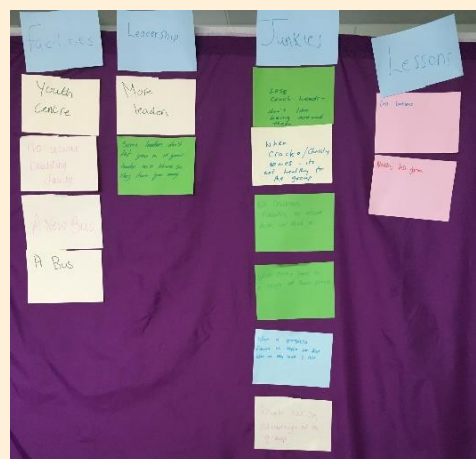
Wall 1: What works well to help young people avoid being in trouble?

Wall 2: What does not work well to help young people avoid being in trouble?

b) Young people wrote their answers on A5 coloured paper (one idea per page). Facilitators supported young people and scribed for those who did not want to write. Both walls were full of ideas.

3. **Categorising their ideas**

Young people were asked to categorise their ideas, by moving similar ideas (A5 coloured pages) into groups/categories and naming each category until all ideas were listed under named categories/issues that work well and that don't work well in GYDP projects.




4. **Getting more information about their ideas**



	<p>Each category was written on individual A3 landscape templates, designed like jotter pages, with two questions: ‘what works well?’ and ‘what should be changed or improved?’ Young people moved around the room in groups of 2 or 3 and wrote their ideas about every category, supported by facilitators. At the end of the process, very detailed suggestions and ideas were listed under each category.</p> <p><b>5. Evaluation:</b> Young people completed a one-page evaluation from the draft National Participation Framework that asked them how they had been given space, voice, audience, and influence during the consultation.</p>
How we made sure they could identify topics they wanted to discuss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The methodology was designed to provide blue sky thinking to the young people based on two open questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What works well to help young people avoid being in trouble?</li> <li>○ What does not work well to help young people avoid being in trouble?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The responses to those questions provided the content for deeper discussions, suggestions and identification of priorities.</li> </ul>
Please describe the topics and issues they raised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A wide range of issues were raised by young people which were compiled in a consultation report <a href="https://ipo.gov.ie/Report-of-Consultations-with-Young-People-on-Garda-Youth-Diversion-Projects.pdf">Report-of-Consultations-with-Young-People-on-Garda-Youth-Diversion-Projects.pdf (ipo.gov.ie)</a></li> <li>• Among the key findings was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ According to young people the best things about their projects were Youth Justice Workers followed by trips, activities, facilities, meeting new people and making new friends, learning new things and developing new skills, drop-ins, courses, positive and youth-friendly environment, programmes and education and employment support.</li> <li>○ Young people felt one meeting a week was not enough time to help them stay out of trouble and suggested there should be more set times per week as well as more drop-in times.</li> <li>○ Young people also felt projects should be open at weekends as this is the time young people are most likely to get into trouble.</li> <li>○ The distance young people have to travel to projects can also impact on attendance, with young people in rural areas having further to travel.</li> <li>○ Some young people called for larger and more modern facilities for their project with better resources, equipment and a drop-in facility such as a youth café.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>


## AUDIENCE: How we made sure that there was an audience (decision-makers) for young people's views

Things we considered	What we did
How we developed a report or record of the young people's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The IYJS commissioned a report writer who attended the meetings of the advisory groups and each of the seven consultations and compiled a report of the young people's views</li> <li>The Advisory Group worked with the Hub Team to develop a youth version of the consultation report.</li> <li>The advisory group suggested an activity pack for young people in GYDPs to be used by youth justice workers.</li> <li>The activity pack outlines the key findings from the consultations on A4 and A3 posters and provides space for young people in GYDPs to add their own ideas. It also outlines the fact that the IYJS used the views of young people to inform a revised GYDP model and revisions to the workplan and funding arrangements for organisations who deliver projects on behalf of IYJS.</li> <li>Activity packs were sent to all GYDPs nationwide to give feedback to young people about the consultation findings and about how their views were used.</li> </ul> 
How we checked back with them that their views were accurately represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Advisory Group met five times over the six-month timeframe of the consultation process, and we conducted a dedicated session to feedback the draft finding from the report of the consultations.</li> <li>At this session, we checked that their views and those of other young people were accurately represented.</li> </ul>
How we involved the decision-makers who are responsible for influencing change (other than yourself)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The IYJS requested the consultation process in the first place so were partners with the Hub team throughout the process and were involved at every stage of the consultation process</li> <li>The head of the IYJS attended the first meeting of the Advisory Group to assure the young people of the commitment of the IYJS</li> </ul>
At what point we involved decision makers other than yourself in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As noted above, the IYJS requested the consultation process in the first place so were involved from the start</li> </ul>
How we and other decision-makers showed our commitment to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Hub team always started every session (advisory group meeting or consultation) by stating the commitment of the team</li> </ul>

listening to, and acting on young people's views	<p>to ensuring that the views of young people would be taken seriously</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the IYJS team were actively involved in doing the recruitment for the advisory group and for the consultations and in attending meetings and consultations</li> <li>• The IYJS assigned a budget to the consultation process to ensure that the travel expenses of all young people and accompanying youth justice workers were paid</li> </ul>
How we supported young people to play a role in communicating their own views to decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An unexpected opportunity arose during the consultation process. The IYJS decided to hold a first ever National Youth Justice Conference some months after the consultations.</li> <li>• The IYJS asked the Hub team if the young people on the Advisory Group could be supported to speak at the conference. The Hub team fully believed in the capacity of these young people and undertook to work with them to prepare for this opportunity.</li> <li>• Five members of the Advisory Group spoke about their involvement in the group and outlined the finding from the consultations at the first National Irish Youth Justice Conference in November 2018, attended by the Minister for Justice and over 300 policymakers, Gardaí, youth justice workers and other senior stakeholders. Their participation in the conference was supported and facilitated by the Hub Team.</li> </ul>

### **INFLUENCE: How we made sure that children and young people's views were taken seriously**

Things we considered	What we did
How young people were given updates at key points in the development of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Advisory Group met five times over the six-month timeframe of the consultation process, and we conducted a dedicated session to feedback the draft finding from the report of the consultations.</li> <li>• At this session, we checked that their views and those of other young people were accurately represented.</li> <li>• At later meetings, we updated them on decisions being taken by IYJS based on the consultation findings.</li> </ul>
How their views were acted on by the appropriate decision-makers (what happened to their views)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The views of the young people informed:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) a revised Youth Diversion Project model</li> <li>2) a revised annual work plan and funding agreement for organisations that manage Diversion Projects</li> <li>3) the National Youth Justice Strategy published in 2021</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Whether we continually checked back with children and young people about the ways you used their views with decision-makers (if possible or appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We updated the Advisory Group on decisions being taken by IYJS at every meeting.</li> </ul>

<p>How they were given full and age-appropriate feedback explaining how their views were used (or not) and the reasons for decisions taken</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The youth activity pack developed by the Advisory Group outlines the key findings from the consultations on A4 and A3 posters and provides space for young people in GYDPs to add their own ideas. It also outlines the fact that the IYJS used the views of young people to inform a revised GYDP model and revisions to the workplan and funding arrangements for organisations who deliver projects on behalf of IYJS.</li> <li>• Activity packs were sent to all GYDPs nationwide to give feedback to young people about the consultation findings and about how their views were used.</li> </ul> 
<p>How we enabled them to evaluate the process throughout</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The young people on the Advisory Group completed an individual one-page evaluation form after every meeting <a href="https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub_na_nOg-Feedback-Form_group1.pdf">https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub_na_nOg-Feedback-Form_group1.pdf</a></li> <li>• This evaluation form explores how they were given space, voice, audience and influence</li> <li>• Every young person who attended the seven consultations also completed the same one-page evaluation form <a href="https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub_na_nOg-Feedback-Form_group1.pdf">https://hubnanog.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/5611-Hub_na_nOg-Feedback-Form_group1.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<p>What young people said in the evaluation</p>	<p>Some quotes from the members of the advisory group about their involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The advisory gave me a chance to meet sound culchies”</li> <li>• “Gave me lovely food...with jalapeños”</li> <li>• “Gave back info to leaders, so they get a better insight into what is working and not working”</li> <li>• “We came up with different methods that would work the best in the consultations”</li> <li>• “I realised how lucky I am for the facilities I have in my project”</li> </ul>

## **IMPACT**

### **The changes that were made because of young people giving their views**

The views of the young people informed:

- a revised Youth Diversion Project model
- a revised annual work plan and funding agreement for organisations that manage Diversion Projects
- the National Youth Justice Strategy published in 2021

## **3) The learning for the organisations involved in this initiative**

### **The key learning for the organisations involved in this consultation process**

- The learning for Hub na nÓg, the DECDIY and the IYJS was that seeking the views of young people who experience challenging life situations is complex and time consuming but extremely worthwhile. It requires cooperation across teams and organisations and a willingness to be flexible and adaptable.
- Time is of the essence – everything takes way longer than you think when consulting with young people.

### **Looking back, how did the final outcome compare with our initial assumptions?**

- The final outcome was far more impactful than anyone expected.
- Despite the challenges in recruiting young people and finding ways for youth justice workers to bring them to Dublin, the views expressed by the young people who attended the consultations were both powerful and practical.
- The opportunity for the six young people from the Advisory Group to speak at the first National Youth Justice Conference was the icing on the cake and something none of us would have predicted could happen when we embarked on the journey!

### **What worked well?**

- The cooperation and team working between the IYJS and Hub na nÓg was pivotal to the success of this process.
- The support and cooperation of youth justice workers in GYDPs.
- The establishment and running of the Advisory Group of young people ensured a youth focus on everything from the consultation methodology to the development of the youth activity pack as a form of feedback on the findings in the consultation report.
- The very practical suggestions received from young people about the things that work well and the things that would improve their projects.
- The spectacular performance of the six young people from the Advisory Group when they spoke at the first Youth Justice Conference and outlined the findings from the consultations with young people and spoke about their own experience of being involved. The feedback from conference participants on the young people's input was very positive.

### **If we were doing it again, what we would do differently?**

The timeframe for the consultation process was tight. It would have been very valuable to have had time to go around the county and conduct some consultations in GYDPs in the settings and spaces where the young people meet.



### 3. The voice of young people in a National Gallery of Ireland programme

#### How the National Gallery of Ireland involved young people in creating a brand for its Apollo Project

##### 1) Background information

###### The project on which we involved young people in decision-making

Apollo Project: young people's programmes at the National Gallery of Ireland

###### The topic on which we were looking for their views

Developing a brand identity for the Apollo Project

###### The reason we wanted their views

The Apollo Project is an initiative designed to create a long-term, sustainable programme for young people at the National Gallery of Ireland. The project's mission is to engage new audiences of young people with our collections and spaces through providing opportunities which focus on education, creativity and wellbeing. Our vision is to embed new strands by amplifying the role that young people play in them and in turn make them relevant and inclusive for everyone. The project aims to inspire and empower this age group by fostering confidence in their leadership skills, creative intelligence and ability to impact culture and art in Ireland.

It was essential that the Apollo Project had a distinctive brand, that was eye-catching and youth focused. We wanted young people to be involved in the co-production of the brand identity, to reflect the ethos of the Apollo Project, which is designed to create programmes and activities created by young people, for young people.

###### The decision-makers that facilitated and listened to their views

- Key staff at the Gallery, including: the Apollo Project Fellow; the Education Officer with responsibility for Teachers; Schools and Youth; the Head of Education; the Communications, Marketing and Digital Engagement Manager; the Director.
- Staff at DesignWorks, the external design agency responsible for creating the brand identity

###### The age profile of the young people

16 - 25 years

##### 2) How we gave space, voice, audience and influence to young people's views

###### SPACE: How we ensured a safe and inclusive space to hear the views of young people

Things we considered	What we did
The space or setting where we got their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An initial focus group took place in the Millennium Wing Studio at the National Gallery of Ireland. This is a flexible, accessible workshop space.</li><li>• A pizza lunch was provided for all participants.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further meetings took place in the Boardroom, a private, formal space, and at the offices of DesignWorks, a creative space.</li> </ul>
How we identified the young people to be involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people were invited to take part via an open call on Instagram, via youth centre partnerships, and young people who had previously attended and participated in programmes at the Gallery.</li> </ul>
How we involved those who were directly affected by the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child afford everyone the right freely to participate in cultural life and the arts.</li> <li>• The National Gallery of Ireland houses Ireland's national art collection, which belongs to the people of Ireland.</li> <li>• It is therefore crucial that young people have a say in their national cultural institution. We therefore ensured that a representative cross-section of young people with an interest in the arts were involved in the project.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How early in the process they were involved in decision-making</li> <li>• How we continued to involve them throughout the decision-making process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The young people were involved very early in the decision-making process.</li> <li>• The Gallery's Education Team appointed a designer who we had previously worked with, and who have a track record of inclusive collaboration.</li> <li>• DesignWorks organised the initial focus group to gather the views and ideas of young people in order to inform their initial designs.</li> <li>• Once the draft designs were ready, three young people joined the core decision-making team to choose the final design.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How the process was inclusive and accessible</li> <li>• How we made sure they felt safe to express their views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people from a range of diverse backgrounds were invited to participate in the initial focus group. This involved a number of different ways for them to express their views, including full-group and small-group discussion and visual collage.</li> <li>• The Apollo Fellow was the main point of contact with the young people and gave them 1:1 guidance and support throughout the whole process to ensure that they felt safe and comfortable in meetings with senior staff.</li> <li>• Senior staff ensured that their voices were given equal weight in all discussions.</li> </ul>

## VOICE: How we gave young people a voice in decisions

Things we considered	What we did
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How we informed the young people about the topics on which we wanted their views</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Apollo Fellow and Designers gave presentations on the Apollo Project aims for creating an inclusive programme for young people, and how a brand identity is created.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How we made sure they knew their views would be taken seriously</li> <li>How we informed them about level of influence they could have on decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-production with young people was embedded in the project. Young people were informed that their views and ideas would be used by the designers to shape the brand identity.</li> <li>Three young people were later involved directly in the decision-making process and their views were given equal weight in all conversations and decisions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The methods we used to get their views</li> <li>How we made sure they could identify topics they wanted to discuss</li> <li>The topics and issues they raised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the initial focus group, we used open discussion and creative collage-making to get the young people's views.</li> <li>We asked the young people key questions about their current perceptions of the Gallery. These included 'old stuff', 'creeped out', 'disconnect', 'elitist', 'not for me'. They wanted the Gallery to move towards being 'comfortable', 'personal', 'more understanding'.</li> <li>We then asked the young people to create collages in small groups that included words and images of their vision for the Apollo Project and then present their ideas to the full group. This activity gave the young people freedom to identify topics and issues they wanted to discuss. A visual methodology connected with the creative nature of the project and allowed young people to express themselves in different ways.</li> <li>Later, we invited three young people to join the decision-making team to feed-back directly to the designers and sign off on the final designs.</li> </ul>



## AUDIENCE: How we made sure that there was an audience (decision-makers) for young people's views

Things we considered	What we did
How you developed a report or record of the children and young people's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people's views were recorded via the visual collage formats.</li> <li>These were collated by DesignWorks and used to influence their draft designs.</li> </ul>
How you checked back with them that their views were accurately represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DesignWorks then presented draft and final designs to a group of decision-makers, including three young people; Apollo Fellow; Education Officer with responsibility for Teachers, Schools and Youth; Head of Education; Communications, Marketing and Digital Engagement Manager; and the Director.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How you involved the decision-makers who are responsible for influencing change (other than yourself)</li> <li>At what point you involved decision makers other than yourself in the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decision-makers from the education department were involved from the very start, with senior decision-makers involved once the designers had created their draft designs.</li> </ul>
How you and other decision-makers showed your commitment to listening to, and acting on children/young people's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We showed our commitment to listening to and acting on young people's views by including them as equals in the decision-making process.</li> <li>By having the young people at the table, the decision-makers could hear and consider their views directly, and at all times their ideas and opinions were given equal weight.</li> </ul>
How you supported children/young people to play a role in communicating their own views to decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Apollo Fellow worked with the young people on a one-on-one basis to ensure that they felt supported throughout the process to feel confident and comfortable in expressing their views in what might have been an intimidating environment.</li> </ul>

## INFLUENCE: How we made sure that young people's views were taken seriously

Things we considered	What we did
How young people were given updates at key points in the development of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After the initial focus group, three young people joined the decision-making team for developing the brand identity, and therefore their views had immediate influence.</li> <li>The young people who attended the focus group were kept informed by the Apollo Fellow, and the final design was shared with them when the Apollo Project was publicly launched.</li> <li>The design of the Apollo brand was the first step in co-creating programming for young people at the National Gallery of Ireland.</li> </ul>
How their views were acted on by the appropriate decision-makers	
How we gave feedback explaining how their views were used and the reasons for decisions taken	

## IMPACT

### What changes were made because of young people giving their views?

A brand identity for the Apollo Project was created that successfully embodied the ideas and views of young people. The design concept selected (Figure 3) was created by a young person at DesignWorks, and is dynamic, vibrant and adaptable, effectively reaching new audiences via digital platforms including the Apollo Project's dedicated Instagram account. This was established in October 2019 and has its own unique tone of voice separate from the Gallery's main account. There is a huge difference in engagement with young people between when we did and did not have a social media platform and our own Apollo branding. Reaching young people in this way has positively impacted the project.

## 3) The learning for our organisation

### The key learning for our organisation from the process and outcome of involving young people in this project

- This case study is just one example of how we have included the voices of young people in decision-making as part of the wider Apollo Project at the National Gallery of Ireland. We learned that co-production with young people is effective, important and helps to create more relevant and engaging content, programmes, and outcomes for both the Gallery and young people themselves.
- Young people should be involved from the very beginning and be given training and support to ensure that they feel confident and comfortable giving their views and ideas.
- To have the Director sitting at the table with the young people was particularly significant. Often, feedback from young people would be filtered via evaluation reports or passed on through the education team. In this case both *audience* and short-term *influence* were immediate, with the ultimate decision-maker in the room, who was prioritising the voices of the young people when signing off on the final design. However, it is important to note that *space* and *voice* had been developed prior to this meeting. The young people had begun to build a relationship with the Gallery, and the Apollo Fellow in particular. She had worked with them to ensure that they felt confident and comfortable in expressing their views, and they knew that what could potentially be an intimidating situation was a safe space for them to express themselves.
- This example demonstrates the potential impact that young people can have on the organisation in the long-term, however in order for their *influence* to be sustained, we need to put structures in place to create a forum for ongoing direct dialogue with decision-makers

### Looking back, how did the final outcome compare with our initial assumptions and those of other decision-makers involved in the process?

The education team was confident that this process would be effective in creating a distinct brand identity that was co-produced with young people. However, expectations from other staff in the Gallery may have been different. The key decision-makers were very impressed with the young people and how they communicated, which has absolutely helped to pave the way for future initiatives.

### What worked well?



- Involving young people from the very beginning
- Ensuring that decision-makers at all levels worked directly with the young people, so their voices weren't filtered by other adults

**If we were doing it again, is there anything we would do differently?**

- Created a more structured way to feed back the final outcomes to the young people from the initial focus group
- Conducted evaluation with the young people involved in the process to ascertain how they felt involved in the decision-making process.





## 4. Young voices in the EU Youth Strategy 2019 – 2027

### How young people contributed to the development of a new EU Youth Strategy 2019 – 2027 through Young Voices – EU Youth Dialogue

#### 1) Background information

Young Voices - EU Youth Dialogue (Young Voices) creates opportunities for young people, bringing them into the policy-making process at a national and European level, which has the following objectives:

- **A space to grow and develop capacity to influence.** The programme facilitates quality opportunities and experiences at a personal, community and societal level. This impacts at both an individual level in terms of personal growth and builds capacity to influence in wider social and political contexts.
- **A place where key skills are fostered and developed.** A key strategy is building the capacity of young people to facilitate meaningful participation in the decision-making space. The model also recognises the expertise of young people and the skills and commitment they bring to the process.
- **Young Voices strives to achieve long-term outcomes.** Understanding the role of voice in addressing inequality and taking action is a core part of the Young Voices process. The programme creates key platforms and opportunities to meet with decision-makers, building confidence in the process and instilling a capacity for long-term engagement in change-making.
- **Young Voices actively targets and supports diverse participation.** Participants of a recent evaluation of the programme identified the specific ways in which the programme has facilitated inclusion and, also how the programme has supported a deeper understanding on how to develop and practice an inclusive approach.
- **Young Voices is a model of youth democratic participation,** leveraged decision-making outcomes and engagement opportunities for young people at both a national and EU level. The programme is a formative space for understanding policy and supports young people to see themselves as co-designers of policy process and outcomes.



#### The initiative on which we involved young people in decision-making

Young Voices - EU Youth Dialogue

#### The topic on which we wanted their views

The EU Youth Strategy – input into the development of the new EU Youth Strategy 2019 – 2027

#### The reason we wanted their views

The EU Youth Strategy should contribute to realising the vision that young people have for Europe. Young people should have an influence on the policy affecting their lives.

#### The decision-makers that facilitated and listened to their views

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) leads out on the engagement of young people in the EU Youth Dialogue process in Ireland, overseen by the National Working Group on EU Youth Dialogue. This working group is chaired by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEIY) and includes young people, NYCI, Leargas and Maynooth University. Young people from this process at a national level went on to form part of the delegation from Ireland to the EU Youth Conference during cycle 6 of the EU Youth Dialogue process. This delegation included representatives from DCEIY and joined delegations from all member states in Europe and young people from INGYOs. The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs joined the young people at the EU Youth Conference. Together the young people and decision makers developed recommendations and input, such as the EU Youth Goals, for a new EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027.

### **The decision-makers responsible for acting on their views**

The recommendations from the EU Youth Conference went to the Youth Working Parties who prepared the draft policy for the European youth ministers who adopted the EU Youth Strategy, including the recommendations developed through the process by young people, in the form of the European Youth Goals. At a national level the young people engaged in the EU Youth Dialogue process presented to the policy consortium on Children and Young People, as part of the implementation structure of the Children and Young People's youth policy framework Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF).

### **The age profile of the young people**

15-30 years old. In terms of the young people who were involved in the consultations, we were mindful of the importance and value of engaging with a range of young people that reflected the picture of youth in Ireland.

### **Other relevant information about the young people (e.g. disability, ethnic background, social disadvantage, etc.)**


We worked closely with the equality and intercultural programme in NYCI and used communication channels such as these, available to NYCI and the pre-existing positive profile of Young Voices ensuring that our invitations to participate are met with enthusiasm across a wide spectrum of young people in Ireland. 712 young people participated in all the consultation events, focus groups and surveys in Ireland. Of these, 471 young people participated in large consultation events and focus groups and 241 young people completed the online survey. In relation to gender, 416 (58.5%) participants were female, 263 (36.9%) were male, 3 (0.4%) identified their gender as 'other' and the gender of 30 (4.2%) young people was unknown. As regards age, 36 (5.1%) young people were aged 15 years and under, 288 (40.4%) were aged 16 – 18 years, 164 (23%) were aged 19 – 25 years, 39 (5.5%) were aged 26 – 30 years and the age of 185 (26%) was unknown. young Travellers, young people from ethnic minorities, LGBTI+ young people, rural young people, young people with disabilities, young students, young people in care, young refugees and asylum seekers, undocumented young people and, overall, a diverse and dynamic range of young people living in Ireland. The young people that went on to represent the consultation process at the EU Youth Conference were young people had experience of physical disability, alternative pathways to education and the selection process of the EU Youth delegates ensured a gender balance and geographical representation.

## 2) How we gave space, voice, audience and influence to young people's views

### SPACE: How we listened to young people in a safe, inclusive space

Things we considered	What we did
The space or setting where we got their views	We worked together with young people and youth workers to set up the space as a safe place to share experiences and engage diverse voices.
How we identified young people to be involved	There were open calls to attend a Youth Event to NYCI member organisations and through NYCI's social media and e-bulletin communication channels, 4, 890 subscribers. We also engage young people that have been involved in the project in past events and work closely with the NYCI equality and intercultural programme. We reached out to non-organised youth, we partnered with the Making Links project to ensure that we were engaging the most marginalised young people. The National Youth Council of Ireland's (NYCI) Making Links Network brings together minority ethnic youth group leaders with little or no engagement with, or access to, the mainstream youth work sector in Ireland.
How we involved those who were directly affected by the topic	<p>We used varied methodologies such as larger events and smaller focus groups, an online survey and training/upskilling opportunities for young people.</p> <p>Particular attention is given in Young Voices – EU Youth Dialogue to the inclusion and engagement of diverse youth voices in decision-making.</p> <p><i>"It's shown me the channels in youth work where young people can influence policy and bigger decisions. But even then, coming from a working-class area shows that, just because you are from a working-class area doesn't mean that you can't travel to different parts of Europe and have your voice heard as well."</i> (Youth participant)</p> <p>The presence of people whose circumstances were very different to their own, led to specific outcomes and in some cases, raised a new level of understanding and awareness on inclusion. For example, one young person said that <i>"I would really tie the presence of young refugees and asylum seekers at Young Voices to the Second Level Students Union (ISSU) picking up that issue, and then running regional events for about two years on that issue. So, like, it's very good at highlighting minority issues to other young people"</i>. (Youth participant, aged 23)</p>
How early in the process they were involved in decision-making	Young people were engaged in the process from planning to implementation. Young people are involved in the oversight committee of the young voices – EU Youth Dialogue and there is a

	<p>smaller core group that we worked with over the years who co design and co facilitate at the events.</p> <p><i>“When I came to Young Voices, and I mean that is the best way possible. It made it be ours. It was our process; structured dialogue actually became something that I would tell people about because I felt a certain ownership over it”.</i> (Youth participant, aged 20)</p>
How the process was inclusive and accessible	<p>We are very mindful of inclusion and accessibility in young voices, working with the NYCI Intercultural and equality programme and incorporating, the 8 steps to inclusive youth work resource, ensuring quality inclusion practice into the process (<a href="https://www.youth.ie/documents/8-steps-to-inclusive-youth-work-planning-templates-guide/">https://www.youth.ie/documents/8-steps-to-inclusive-youth-work-planning-templates-guide/</a>).</p> <p>Along with reaching out to the youth work sector, we engaged young people through the NYCI Making Links programme to engage youth and community leaders from minority ethnic backgrounds who are not engaged due to capacity issues with the youth sector. We reached out to organisations working with young people with disabilities.</p> <p>“So, for me, it was just absolutely mind opening meeting people, I would have never ever interacted with in my social bubble.” (Youth participant)</p> <p>We developed a report from the consultation that went to the Steering committee for the EU Youth Conferences and the EU Youth Dialogue process (<a href="https://www.youth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Full-Version-Report-on-Structured-Dialogue-Consultations-with-Young-People-in-Ireland_0.pdf">https://www.youth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Full-Version-Report-on-Structured-Dialogue-Consultations-with-Young-People-in-Ireland_0.pdf</a>), but also a more accessible, youth friendly version of the report (<a href="https://www.youth.ie/articles/were-here-hear-us-now-issues-and-recommendations/">https://www.youth.ie/articles/were-here-hear-us-now-issues-and-recommendations/</a>).</p>
How we made sure they felt safe to express their views	<p>We engaged with youth workers, youth leaders and community leaders so that they could engage with the young people on the topic before attending an event or focus group. We used a variety of methodologies and spaces to engage the young people, from larger events to smaller focus groups for those who wouldn't feel comfortable engaging in a large event. We also had an online survey. Also the methodologies during the events and focus groups gave were varied so that young people could engage through smaller groups, individually, using online activities using their mobiles such as Kahoots. We used a variety of methodologies also to take into account varied literacy abilities, using creative methodologies to collate the voice of the young people</p>

	participating. There was a graphic harvester, who captured the consultation with young people in a more visual and creative way.
How we continued to involve them throughout the decision-making process	It wasn't just a consultation - we also developed a space for young people to grow and develop capacity to influence. Upskilling of Young people – facilitation training at a changemakers academy. These young people went on to co facilitate at the youth events during the consultation. Supporting with presentation skills. We facilitated young people throughout the process to take the report from the consultation to implementation stage.
	

### VOICE: How we gave young people a voice in decision-making

Things we considered	What we did
How we informed young people about the topics on which we wanted their views	We did outreach prior to engaging the young people, engaging youth workers and youth leaders/activists and community leaders in the process. We also have a dedicated website ( <a href="https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/young-voices/">https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/young-voices/</a> ) with all the information on the Young Voices – EU Youth Dialogue process and the topic of the consultation for information.
How we made sure they knew their views would be taken seriously  How we informed them about level of influence they could have on decision-making	We made information about the process available and explained the process using visual, youth friendly graphics and videos to show the journey that their views/voice would take and their role in the process. Young people are engaged in the process from the steering group at a European level to the National working Groups and are part of the delegation to the EU Youth Conference, where they work together with decision makers from youth ministries and the EU commission to develop recommendations. At a national



	<p>level, the EU Youth Dialogue process is written into the implementation process for the <i>Children and Young People's Policy Framework</i> and young people from the Young Voices process can feedback to the Children and Young People's policy consortium, chaired by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. <a href="#">The National Youth Council</a> work to ensure young people have an opportunity to add their voice to decisions that affect young people, their youth organisations and their future.</p> <p><i>"Young Voices has consistently been a safe space for debate and input on matters related to youth within Ireland and the EU. It has made me realise that my voice matters when it comes to discussing policies and youth issues. Not only this, but they have facilitated these conversations with policymakers and government officials. I was kind of surprised about how interested they were at the beginning, but they wanted our inputs. It made me think differently about my future. It made me feel as if I had a greater stake in policies and potentially implementing policies at a national level on an EU level."</i> (Youth participant)</p>
<p>The methods we used to get their views</p>	<p>The questions for the consultation process were developed by young people at an EU Youth Conference at the beginning of the cycle. Three young people attended this as part of the delegation from Ireland, selected from an event exploring the topic of the theme for cycle 6 of the EU Youth Dialogue process "Youth in Europe, what next?".</p> <p>For the consultation we varied the space and setting, engaging young people through large events and smaller focus groups and an online survey. The nature of the spaces and groups consulted had an impact on the approaches to the consultation questions. For example, the delivery of a consultation at the SDG Youth Summit with over 200 young people in the Aviva Stadium differed compared to a consultation in a youth centre with 15 young people. The key challenge was to maintain the integrity of the questions while at the same time support young people to connect with them and offer answers, insights and analysis based on their own understandings, perceptions and lived experiences.</p> <p>Key consultation methodologies used included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 large youth events</li> <li>• Small group discussions</li> <li>• Focus groups with young people</li> <li>• Large group discussions</li> <li>• Kahoot poll</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timelines, e.g. past, present and future job competencies needed</li> <li>• 5-point plans, e.g. on how digital technology will increase participation of young people in politics • Sticky dot voting on a statement, e.g. using Likert scale</li> <li>• Post card writing exercise, e.g. Dear Europe, in order to cope with stressful situations and times of crisis we need...</li> <li>• Letter writing exercise, e.g. writing to politicians, policy makers</li> </ul>
How we made sure they could identify topics they wanted to discuss	The EU Youth Dialogue process includes an exploration, consultation and implementation phase. In the exploration phase young people identify the topics that they want to discuss and young people from this phase from all over Europe go to an EU Youth Conference to develop the guiding questions for the consultation phase of the process
The topics and issues they raised	<p>The European Youth Goals came about through the EU Youth Dialogue process. They are the outcome of the sixth cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue – Youth in Europe: What’s next? which took place in 2017/2018. There are 11 youth goals, which were chosen by young people from across Europe. The 11 European Youth Goals identify cross-sectoral areas that affect young people’s lives and where they feel that change is needed. The 11 Goals emerged cover a diverse range of thematic areas such as connecting young people to the EU, mental health and wellbeing, gender equality, rural youth, and quality employment. The Goals represent the concerns and issues of priority for young people from across Europe. 50,000 young people, including young people from Ireland, participated in a collaborative consultation with policy makers.</p> <p><b>Summary Report</b> <a href="#">Youth In Europe What Next Sd Cycle Vi Consultation Report Summary - National Youth Council of Ireland</a></p> <p>Themes identified by young people in the Structured Dialogue Cycle VI were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coping with stress and times of crisis</li> <li>• Overcoming discrimination and inequality</li> <li>• Getting the knowledge and skills we need from education</li> <li>• Preparing for future types of work</li> <li>• Influencing democratic and societal decision-making</li> </ul>

## AUDIENCE: How we made sure there was an audience (decision-makers) for young people’s views

Things we considered	What we did
How we developed a report or record of the young people’s views	We captured what the young people feedback during the consultation both in person and online and developed a full report



	<p>which went to the European Steering Committee and influenced the agenda for the EU Youth Conference, where the young people developed the EU Youth Goals which were included in the EU Youth Strategy (<a href="https://www.youth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Full-Version-Report-on-Structured-Dialogue-Consultations-with-Young-People-in-Ireland_0.pdf">https://www.youth.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Full-Version-Report-on-Structured-Dialogue-Consultations-with-Young-People-in-Ireland_0.pdf</a>).</p> <p>We also developed a youth friendly summary <a href="#">report</a></p> <p>We did an evaluation at the events and worked with young people from the process on an <a href="#">Evaluation report of the young voices process 2111210 nyci this-is-young-voices (19).pdf</a></p>
How we checked back with them that their views were accurately represented	We continued to engage young people beyond the consultation phase into the Implementation phase. Young People look at the outputs from the cycle, the recommendations, in this case the European Youth Goals and prioritise what they would like to work on achieving and we work with the young people on the implementation stage, an ongoing process.
How we involved the decision-makers who are responsible for influencing change (other than ourselves)	<p>The opportunity to directly engage with policy makers has been a strategic focus for many young people in building confidence in using their voice, reflecting again the commitment of young people to affecting change, something that the Young Voices programme explicitly recognises and channels.</p> <p><i>“It was that whole idea of sharing the space with policymakers, that I was very interested in that, rather than just sitting, and talking with other young people, because I had done that a lot more”. (Female youth participant)</i></p> <p><i>“The big factor for me was the discussions that we would have on impact on a governmental level. And that’s huge. I suppose, from my point of view and in the situation as somebody who has a disability, I suppose, I feel like this has grown from my involvement with Young Voices and I’ve become aware that I am in a position that I can speak up for those that can’t speak up for themselves. The phrase I like to use is chasing progress, so you always know that it’s kind of progressing somewhere, and like it’s given me experiences, that I’ve never had before”. (Youth participant, aged 23)</i></p>
At what point we involved decision makers other than ourselves	The decision makers were involved in with young people in the co design of the process at national and European level and young people came together with decision makers at the EU Youth conferences to develop the recommendations for the EU Youth Strategy together. The decision makers adopted the EU Youth

	Goals that were developed by the young people into the EU Youth Strategy at the Council of Ministers meeting and also met with the young people to discuss the implementation of the recommendations and the EU Youth Strategy.
How we and other decision-makers showed our commitment to listening to, and acting on young people's views	<p>The National Youth Council of Ireland leads out on the implementation of the Young Voices programme and engagement of young people in the EU Youth Dialogue process on behalf of the National Working Group on EU Youth Dialogue, chaired by DCEDIY.</p> <p>Young Voices-EU Youth Dialogue is a process that actively engages with young people's capacity to influence decision making spaces under the framework provided via Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures National Policy framework for children and young people (BOBF) and the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, which aims to "Engage, Connect, Empower" young people. It is not just a consultation with young people but goes further bringing the decision makers and young people together to work on recommendations on policy affecting young people together. These recommendations can be adopted as resolutions by the council of youth ministers at a European level.</p> <p>Decision makers from DCYA (now DCEDIY) engage in the process, chairing the working group and joining the delegation with young people to the EU Youth Conferences...<i>"Yeah...cause you start to see the impact it makes especially when you have the staff of DCYA asking what we think as young people on the piece of work that they're hoping to do in the future. I think they come, they listen but they also hear what you have to say and take that on board going back because they recognise that a lot of the young people that will be at the Young Voices will also be young people that will be at their local youth clubs that'll be using the different funding streams or programmes that they're developing. (Youth participant, aged 22)."</i></p>
How we supported young people to play a role in communicating their own views to decision-makers	<p>We put a lot of emphasis on Young Voices – EU Youth Dialogue being a space to grow and develop capacity to influence and a place where key skills are fostered and developed for young people. The Young Voices team have implemented a focused approach to training for young people, specifically offering facilitation, advocacy, social media and technical skills and mentoring training both for in person and online contexts. Supporting skills development in this way is seen as a key strategy in building the capacity of young people for meaningful participation in decision making space.</p>

	<p>We developed a space as a place where individuals recognised a process of personal development and a space to foster key skills in this area, as well as a growing appreciation of a responsibility to engage with wider social and political issues.</p> <p><i>“Where I’ve implemented change is with the facilitation training. I got the chance to facilitate a group myself in [ a regional town] last September, which was amazing and such an amazing opportunity and I have a meeting tonight with Jigsaw27, for the mental health consultation, where Jean Marie<sup>28</sup> recommended me to co-facilitate as well. I wouldn’t have gotten that opportunity if I hadn’t been for Young Voices and so yeah, they definitely helped a lot in terms of my own personal life and making change and implementing change”. (Youth participant, aged 20).</i></p> <p><i>“Public speaking would have been something I was really afraid of. And I remember going in and somebody or a few people from the group would have to get up and present, ....it used to terrify me. And then as I went to more meetings, I became more comfortable with this and it kind of became natural and normal to talk about what we’ve been discussing and stuff. So that was a big skill”. (Youth participant, age 20).</i></p>
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## INFLUENCE: How we made sure that people’s views were taken seriously

Things we considered	What we did
How young people were given updates at key points in the process	There were regular meetings with the young people that were representing the output from the Young Voices events at a European level. We had Young Voices events where young people were updated on the process and the young people presented what had happened at the EU Youth Conferences. Young people involved in the process were given the opportunity to apply for the EU Youth Conferences and were updated by email with a youth friendly report and invites to follow up events.
How their views were acted on by the appropriate decision-makers	We captured the young people’s views through a national process and developed a report which in turn influenced the agenda of the EU Youth Conference, where the young people were joined by decision makers and together, they decided to develop EU Youth Goals which were included in the EU Youth Strategy.
Whether we continually checked back with young people about the ways we used their views with decision-makers	Some of the young people developed the EU Youth Goals together with the decision makers and fed back to all the young people involved by email and through presentations at the follow up Young Voices EU Youth Dialogue events. The young people then

	got an opportunity to join an implementation group to continue working on the EU Youth Goals implementation at a national and European level.
How they were given full and age-appropriate feedback explaining how their views were used (or not) and the reasons for decisions taken	Through follow up events and disseminating a youth friendly <a href="#">summary report</a> and a dedicated website on the young voices – EU Youth Dialogue report. A young person involved in the process was interviewed for a written case study in an evaluation report and also for <a href="#">a video on their experience</a> by Leargas
How we enabled them to evaluate the process throughout	We did evaluations at the events and also through interviews with young people involved in the process.
What young people said in the evaluation	<p><b>Recommendations by young people from the <a href="#">Evaluation</a></b> <b>A place at the table:</b> Young people see themselves as having a key role in policymaking and therefore, need channels and platforms to facilitate this as at a national level, linked to existing and emerging platforms of representation. For example, their strategic engagement with Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures was an acknowledgment of their expertise and right to be consulted on policies directly affecting them. As work is ongoing on a successor strategy to Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures, young people from Young Voices – EU Youth Dialogue should be consulted on the framework development and the strategies emerging from the framework on participation and youth work.</p> <p><b>Maintain status within BOBF:</b> A related recommendation is that the Young Voices-EU Youth Dialogue process should remain in the implementation infrastructure of the new Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures framework. This is to ensure a meaningful dialogue between Young Voices and policy-makers - namely The Children and Young People’s Policy Consortium and the BOBF Advisory Council.</p> <p><b>Value the contributions at national and EU levels:</b> The relationship between the Irish and European policy arena, realised through the EU Youth Dialogue forum, is considered by the youth participants as a vital mechanism to ensure youth issues are represented. It is also a space to build connectivity, wider social and political capital. The value of the EU Youth Dialogue space should be formally recognised as a successful model of youth democratic engagement within the Irish context.</p> <p><b>Model of effective practice for participation:</b> The participation strategies within the Young Voices space are seen by participants as a key strength of the programme. It is a space that recognises the necessity of consulting with the specific expertise of young people and understands them as having a key political role to play. The model should be adapted by other networks and fora, particularly in terms of a democratic participation model, as a</p>

	<p>framework for youth work engagement and for broader participation objectives.</p> <p><b>Model of effective practice for inclusion:</b> Understanding the lived experience of inclusion was cited by many of the young people consulted as a feature of their engagement with the programme. This model of inclusive engagement should be adapted by other networks and fora, committed to targeting the inclusion of those who are vulnerable or affected by discrimination, including intersectional discrimination. The need for dedicated youth participation spaces that progress policy issues for minority ethnic groups was also identified.</p> <p><b>Outreach to youth groups:</b> For young people who might not be accessing the Young Voices space, outreach has always been a part of the approach, specifically in a relationship-building context. Participants see the potential for this to be built on and enhanced, with further potential to equip the youth-led dimension of the programme. This corresponds with a commitment to continuing to build a responsive inclusion practice.</p> <p><b>Resourcing the evolution of Young Voices:</b> Young people participating in this evaluation see Young Voices as a unique platform to facilitate the youth voice. Dedicated long-term funding and a dedicated programme to support Young Voices to continue to build a youth-led space, would support an evolution to an independent youth-led space over time, offering a unique and dedicated</p>
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## IMPACT

### What changes were made because of young people giving their views?

Young people were directly involved in the development of the EU Youth Strategy and policy that affects them. They created the EU Youth Goals in the EU Youth Strategy; they were able to set the agenda for what policy makers should be working on. The EU Youth Dialogue and the work of the youth ministry representatives at a EU level is now based on what the young people felt was important.

*“Like as it was an 18-month process, but ultimately what it came down to was 10 people in a room per goal with all this data, from 18 months drafting the goal. So, to be able to look through that document and to realize that that conversation fed into this process, and I think the most rewarding part is to know that sentences that I’ve written are an appendix to a European Union document, and that those sentences are things that they got directly informed from the Young Voices spaces”. (Youth participant, aged 23)*

Being involved in the Young Voices – EU Youth Dialogue process was hugely impactful for the young people. A young person who is differently abled and attended the EU Youth Conference as a representative for the young people involved in the process at a national level, spoke about how his





confidence has grown in the process and his understanding of his responsibility to advocate for others who are also left behind: *“It did give me a sense of sense of confidence. In relation to being heard and what I say does make a difference and it counts because it feels like people with disabilities are ghosts in society. And unfortunately, that’s still true. But being a part of something like Young Voices and the National Youth Council, because it’s something that I’m passionate about, it makes a bigger impact than just me and I suppose that’s what I’m all about. Like, if I can advance myself. Great. And that’s why I want to do it. But if I can do that while bringing other people with me, I will. Especially if they might be in in similar situations as myself”.* (Youth participant, aged 23)

### Amplifying Youth Voice

A young person from a minority ethnic background sees the space as important as a platform for youth voice, and the necessity of spaces which actively support youth engagement:

*“Well, I thank you guys for making something like that, because if it wasn’t for you guys. I will actually never speak up on media about the issues that young people are affected by, and I think it’s a really great thing you create, because it is important for our voices to be heard and having hope that things will change. So yeah, thanks.”* (Female youth participant, aged 20)

Greater understanding of their role in bringing about positive change. The impact of the work of the NWG through the Young Voices programme cannot be understated. The uniquely dynamic approach to the work undertaken gives maximum potential to the impact on all levels. A young person who attends a Young Voices event for the first time will be fully connected to the scope of the work and objectives by the end of the day. They will have felt that their contribution was valued and their participation worthwhile. A young person who has ongoing engagement with Young Voices will be presented with other opportunities that will link directly to the EU Youth Dialogue work but also may find its relevance in a government initiative or a local event in their own area.

*“One of the events we had in Wicklow was a ‘Change Makers Academy’. We had a two-night retreat in Wicklow. It was more like we were challenged and inspired to be change makers in our little spaces. I still remember that event, and it stood out for me because I remember them saying to us that ‘you are the change in the community, you are the change in your space. You don’t have to be the Taoiseach. You don’t have to be a Councillor to start creating that change. You can put the change in your little space’ those words actually are still with me for me that was really, really big. Because I constantly remind myself that, ‘you’re a change maker and you can create change wherever you are, with whatever you have’”.* (Female youth participant, aged 27)

## 3) The learning for our organisation

### The key learning for our organisation from the process and outcome of involving young people in this initiative

We need to give young people time for reflection on the process so that it can continue to evolve.

### Looking back, how did the final outcome compare with our initial assumptions and those of other decision-makers involved in the process?



The final outcome was more tangible than my initial assumptions – policy development takes a long time so it was great for the young people involved to be part of policy development by young people, co designing with decision makers that resulted in something tangible in a relatively short amount of time.

### **What worked well?**

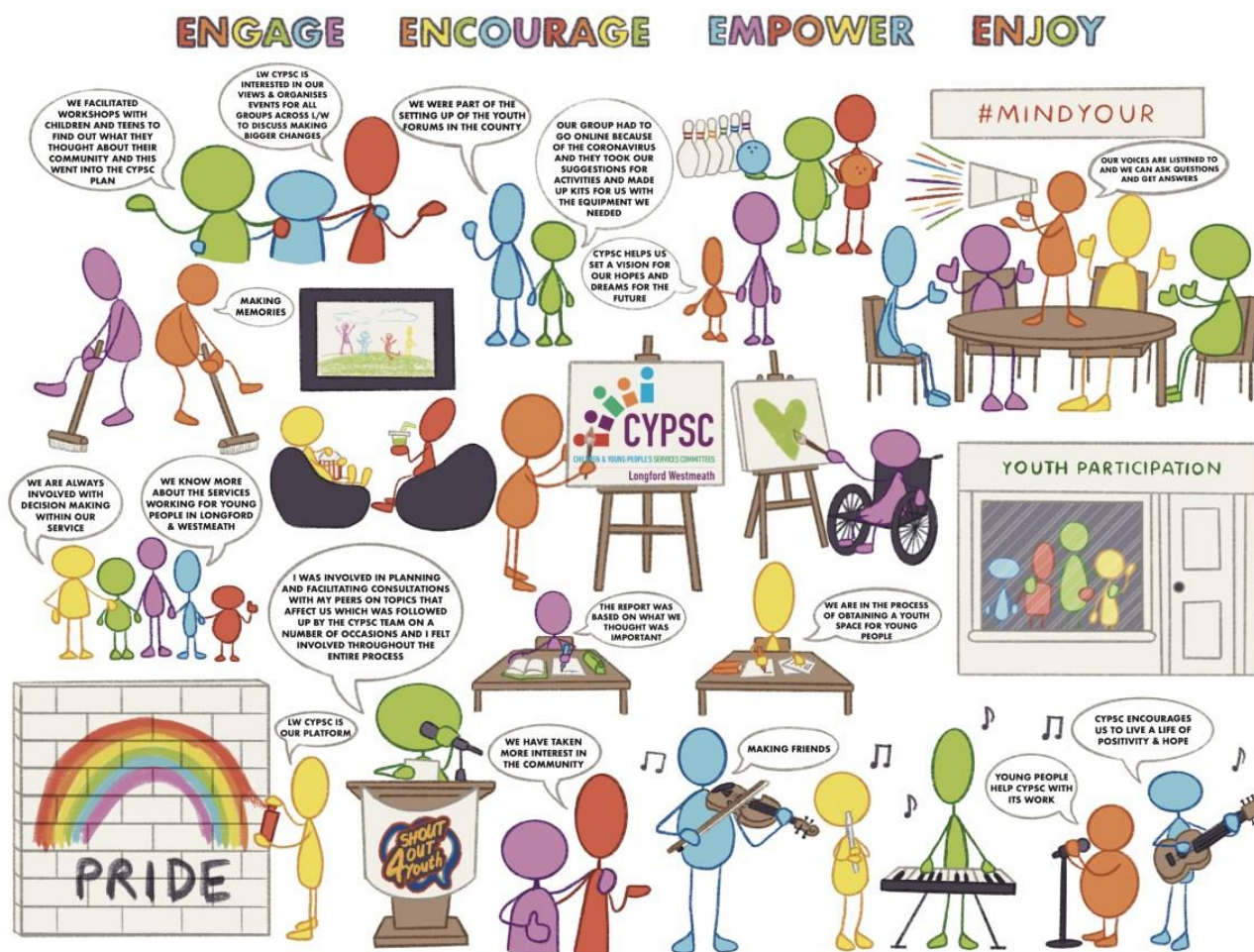
Young Voices typically meets three of four times a year in full plenary where large groups of up to 100 young people gather centrally in Dublin. Alongside these are a variety of other supplementary and complementary forms of engagement such as the residential and training opportunities for the young people involved. Building a youth leadership model that can provide a space for young people to grow in confidence in skills over time has been a core strategy of Young Voices, using a youth work model and recognising the time that this takes, not having a structure to the process that is too constrictive, instead one that lets the young people engage when they can and if they aren't able to make events for a while that's fine and they are always welcome back works well.

### **If we were doing it again, is there anything we would do differently?**

We would ensure more engagement at a local level and more outreach with youth workers so that they see their role in youth voice and youth participation and are inspired to get involved. Capacity is always an issue but since then we have developed a [youth empowerment youth participation resource](#) that young people and youth workers can use and training to go with this. The set of 42 cards serves as a tool for guiding the process of pursuing change and highlighting key elements along the way such as the importance of connection among young people, with the wider community and with decision makers. The wonderfully creative deck of cards also shines a light on the action dimension of changemaking and they remind young people about the value of empowerment, representation and how the change you aim for should always be about making a real difference.

## 5. Young voices on improving local child and youth services

How children and young people in Longford and Westmeath were involved in decision-making on improving local child and youth services



LW CYPSC Youth Forum Consultation 2020, Direct Quotes taken from Children and Young People

### 1) Background information

#### The project on which we involved young people in decision-making

Longford Westmeath Children and Young People's Services Committee (LW CYPSC) Child and Youth Participation Project. Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) are a key structure, established by Government, to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people (0 – 24 years) in every county in Ireland. Each CYPSC brings together statutory, community and voluntary organisations at a local level to ensure effective interagency co-ordination and collaboration to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people.

#### The topic on which we were looking for their views

Longford Westmeath Children and Young People's Services Committee (LW CYPSC) was seeking information on what was important to the children and young people of Longford and Westmeath and what they would like to see improved or changed in their local child and youth services

#### The reason we wanted their views

The Longford Westmeath CYPSC appreciate greatly the value of consulting with and including the voice and opinions of children and young people. One of the main priorities for the LW CYPSC is to create opportunities for children and young people to be involved in influencing, shaping, designing, and contributing to policy and the development of services and programmes within the two counties of Longford and Westmeath. The initial aim of the consultations was to include the voice of children and young people in the development of the LW CYPSC Children and Young People's Plan thus in turn informing service development in Longford and Westmeath.

### **The decision-makers that facilitated, listened to and acted on their views**

The statutory, community and voluntary agencies that are members of Longford Westmeath Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC). LW CYPSC is a CYPSC that incorporates children and young people's services across two counties (Longford and Westmeath).

### **The age profile of the children and young people**

3 – 24 years

### **Information about the children and young people (e.g. disability, ethnic background, social disadvantage, etc.)**

Approximately 400 children and young people were consulted during this process. The participants for the workshops were from a range of settings including community crèches, primary schools, secondary schools, youth services/projects, sports organisations, and family resource centres. The consultation was open to all children and young people and included inputs from young people living in socio disadvantaged areas, from travelling community, ethnic minorities, young people with disabilities and chronic health conditions, young people experiencing mental health issues, early school leavers, young people who identify as LGBTI, refugees and young people who have been bereaved.

## **2) How we gave space, voice, audience and influence to children and young people**

### **SPACE: How we ensured a safe and inclusive space to hear the views of young people**

Things we considered	What we did
The space or setting where we got their views (this may include online settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because of the wide age range, two workshop styles were developed and there were two age categories.</li> <li>The 3 – 12-year-old workshops consisted of visual consultations incorporating art, dialogue and self-expression. These workshops took place in their familiar settings of creche/ primary school and was completed by creative means to fully allow the children to express themselves over a number of workshops.</li> <li>The 12 – 24-year-old workshops were facilitated fully by the young people themselves in an agenda style format using the World Café style consultation. The youth workers were available on site however were not part of the consultations, so this provided a safe space for</li> </ul>

	the young people to openly discuss and record their feedback.
How we identified the children and young people to be involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and Young People engaging with the various CYPSC member organisations were invited to participate in the consultation.</li> </ul>
How we involved those who were directly affected by the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As this was a general consultation based on the five national outcomes for children and young people from <i>Better Outcome Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People</i> the invitation to participate was fully inclusive of all young people.</li> </ul>
How early in the process they were involved in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Longford and Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg (child and youth councils) were involved in designing the older age group workshops by developing a series of questions under each of the five national outcomes.</li> <li>Using a World Café Style, the Comhairle members facilitated the workshops, and the questions guided the young people's discussions on the strengths and gaps under each of the national outcome areas.</li> <li>The Comhairle also assisted in deciding what ice breaker games would be used during the event and what was needed to make the space inviting and a place for the young people to feel safe.</li> <li>Music chosen by the young people was played on speakers, the young people were MC for the workshops and a photo booth was used at the initial consultations and subsequent events with the young people so as to bring an element of fun whilst also capturing the day.</li> </ul>
How the process was inclusive and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LW CYPSC established a Child and Youth Participation multi-agency subgroup to oversee the active participation and consultation with children and young people.</li> <li>The subgroup comprises of representation from the following agencies: Family Resource Centres (FRC) Longford/Westmeath, Tusla, Longford County Childcare Committee, Foróige, Barnardos, Youth Work Ireland Midlands, Longford and Westmeath Comhairle na Nóg, Westmeath Local Community Development Committee and Westmeath County Council, Longford Community Development Committee, Longford County Council and Longford Women's Link (Domestic Violence Service).</li> <li>The wide range of services directly involved in engaging with the young people and overseeing the project</li> </ul>



	<p>ensured a wide reach of young people were included and involved in the consultation.</p>
How we made sure they felt safe to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The workshops took place in familiar settings.</li> <li>• For the younger age groups the workshops were adapted to suit each setting and the children led the direction of each discussion.</li> <li>• The facilitation of the 12 – 24-year workshops by the youth themselves allowed a safe space for the young people to discuss and share their views, whilst knowing a staff/ youth worker was nearby if they needed them.</li> </ul>
How we continued to involve them throughout the decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the workshops and consultations, in which the young people were actively involved throughout the process with their respective organisations, the LW CYPSC compiled all of the feedback received from the children and young people into a <a href="#">report and a summary video of the initial consultations is available HERE.</a></li> <li>• The report and video informed the development of the LW CYPSC Plan, which was completed and published in April 2020. The full plan can be read <a href="#">HERE.</a></li> <li>• The LW CYPSC have continued to engage with children and young people since the initial consultations in 2017 and have received multiple Investing in Children Awards for their participation work with children and Young People.</li> <li>• Following the success of the initial consultations and young people and the wealth of information received, the LW CYPSC decided to bring together a number of the children and young people who were involved in the initial consultations to meet and work alongside the LW CYPSC members.</li> <li>• A further event was held in November 2018, which brought together, over 100 children and young people, with members of the LW CYPSC and its subgroups.</li> <li>• The event was entitled “Shout Out 4 Youth” and it provided the young people with an opportunity to meet the members of the CYPSC, the National CYPSC Coordinator, members of the TUSLA PPFS Regional Management Team and other child and family professionals. A summary video clip of the Shout Out 4 Youth event can be viewed <a href="#">here.</a></li> <li>• Much feedback was gathered from the Shout Out 4 Youth 2018 event, and it was clear that the young</li> </ul>



	<p>people of Longford and Westmeath wanted to remain actively involved with their local CYPSC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This led to the formation of five CYPSC Youth Forums in Longford and Westmeath in September 2019, which are the first of its kind in the country.</li> <li>• The young people were actively involved in their establishment, and the forum members all came together on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019 to decide what the CYPSC Youth Forums would look like. They chose the use of multiple-choice voting system to develop their Terms of Reference. Youth facilitators were trained by the CYPSC Subgroup to lead out a workshop, examining what the five national outcomes are and how these drive the work of the CYPSC. A video summary of the Shout Out 4 Youth 2019 event can be viewed <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>• The CYPSC Youth forums work alongside the LW CYPSC to implement the CYPSC action plan, albeit on an age-appropriate level.</li> <li>• The forums create a direct link between the LW CYPSC and the children and young people of Longford and Westmeath and although the establishment of these groups is still very much in infancy stages, the LW CYPSC are looking forward to engaging in further work alongside the LW CYPSC Youth Forums and also look forward to their further development in the coming months and years.</li> </ul>
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### VOICE: How we gave young people a voice in decisions

Things we considered	What we did
How we informed children/young people about the topics on which we wanted their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The workshops were based on the five national outcomes from <i>Better Outcome Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People</i>.</li> <li>• The consultation was developed using age-appropriate questions posed in the workshops.</li> <li>• We used the assistance of an Art Therapist for the younger age group and the youth facilitators were provided with guidance and training by the youth organisations prior to the workshops.</li> </ul>
How we made sure they knew their views would be taken seriously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consultations influenced the development of the CYPSC Children and Young People's Plan. In addition,</li> </ul>

	<p>immediate changes were made by the local services based on the feedback of the consultations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For example, some of the younger age group expressed how important pets and animals were to them, so the local Family Resource Centre arranged to have a pet farm visit the centre and invited the young people along to spend time with the animals.</li> <li>• Another example was that the young people said that they would like CYPSC Youth Forums established in Longford and Westmeath which the CYPSC promptly developed.</li> <li>• The young people knew their views were taken seriously because they saw real and tangible results from the feedback they provided during the consultations.</li> </ul>
How we informed them about level of influence they could have on decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the young people and that of the CYPSC was explained with the assistance of the local youth services and organisations.</li> <li>• In recent years the young people themselves have made videos for other young people in the two counties to explain what the CYPSC and CYPSC youth forums are, <a href="#">this video</a> was shown at youth events to inform other young people joining the youth forums what CYPSC is and the level of influence the young people have on decision – making by engaging with the CYPSC.</li> </ul>
The method/s we used to get their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the younger age group, two workshops took place with an Art Therapist, who introduced the concept of the CYPSC and the national outcomes in an age-appropriate manner and the wish to hear the children's voice and opinions.</li> <li>• The first workshop explored questions about the children:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who are you?</li> <li>2. What are your interests?</li> <li>3. What do you like best - play, hobbies, art etc.?</li> <li>4. What do you like most about your community?</li> <li>5. What do you not like about your community?</li> <li>6. What would you change if you had a choice?</li> </ol> </li> <li>• The second workshop explored the issues below:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who is in your family</li> <li>2. Where do you live? Why is it a good/not so good place to live in?</li> <li>3. What are you good at? What are your dreams?</li> <li>4. What would you like to do when you grow up?</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>5. Who or what will help you reach your dreams?</p> <p>6. Do you feel you have a voice in your community and why is that helpful?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the older young people's consultations, the youth facilitators developed their own questions at the planning stage, which explored the positives of their home county and what needed to change or improve.</li> <li>Some of the questions were as follows:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What makes Co. Longford/Westmeath a good place for young people to live and grow up in?</li> <li>What does not make Co. Longford/Westmeath a good place for young people to live and grow up in?</li> <li>What services or facilities would you put into Co. Longford/Westmeath to make it a better place for young people to live and grow up in?</li> <li>What can be put in place in Co. Longford/Westmeath to ensure that the five national outcomes for children and young people can be achieved?</li> </ol> </li> <li>Stars were given to the young people to prioritize their identified issues</li> </ul>
How we made sure they could identify topics they wanted to discuss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The methodologies outlined above ensured that children and young people had opportunities to raise and discuss issues and concerns that mattered to them.</li> </ul>
Please describe the topics and issues they raised	<p>A full report containing all of the Information and Topics raised is available <a href="#">HERE</a></p> <p>Some examples of topics/ issues raised include:</p> <p>3 – 12 Years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family, grandparents, siblings</li> <li>Pets</li> <li>Teachers</li> <li>Environment</li> <li>Clean water</li> <li>Me</li> <li>Neighbours</li> <li>Sports</li> <li>Community</li> <li>Playing</li> <li>The earth</li> <li>Friendships</li> <li>Love</li> </ul>

12 – 24years:

- Increase in the number of youth activities that will enhance the health of young people
- Increase in number of youth mental health services.
- Increase and improve education relating to healthy eating, nutrition, cooking and diet.
- Increase the opportunities for young people to engage in life skills and volunteering programmes
- Increase Garda presence on streets and give Gardaí more power.
- A safe community and environment for young people to grow.
- Increase focus on teaching young people practical skills which are transferrable to careers including money management
- Increase availability of information for children and young people on services
- Increase opportunity for children and young people to participate and be represented on relevant committees
- Increase education and awareness of different cultures



#### AUDIENCE: How we made sure that there was an audience (decision-makers) for young people's views

Things we considered	What we did
How we developed a report or record of the children and young people's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An Art Therapist compiled a report based on the consultations and art works completed by the children.</li><li>• The information gathered at the World Café style workshops was collated and a report containing the information from all workshops was collated and is available <a href="#">here</a>.</li><li>• In addition to the written report, a videographer visited a number of the workshops (both the younger and older</li></ul>

	<p>age groups) and compiled a video for the CYPSC capturing how the consultation took place and the outcomes. This video can be viewed <a href="#">HERE</a></p>
How we checked back with them that their views were accurately represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before the report was finalised, the draft report was shared with the older age group 12 – 24-year-olds to ensure that the information captured reflected the information provided in the workshops.</li> <li>• The video also provided a truly accurate “voice” of the children and was viewed by the CYPSC.</li> </ul>
How we involved the decision-makers who are responsible for influencing change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the very beginning this project was a collaboration in the truest sense, with input from the CYPSC and multiple agencies throughout every phase and stage of the participation project.</li> </ul>
At what point we involved decision makers other than yourself in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This participation project was initiated at a CYPSC meeting during which we decided that we wanted to get the views of children and young people to inform the children and young people’s plan. The CYPSC is comprised of the main statutory, community and voluntary service providers and Senior Managers of Child, Youth and Family Services in Longford and Westmeath.</li> </ul>
How you and other decision-makers showed your commitment to listening to, and acting on children/young people’s views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the initial consultation process, the CYPSC Coordinator attended workshops. She informed the young people how important and valued their opinions are by the LW CYPSC, and how the CYPSC will include their input into future planning of services and projects in Longford and Westmeath.</li> <li>• Initially this consultation was planned to be a once – off consultation to provide a voice and input from children and young people into the CYPSC three-year strategic plan. It became apparent during the consultations that the children and young people were keen to continue working with the CYPSC and youth forums were established.</li> <li>• At a follow-up consultation event, Shout Out 4 Youth 2018, the young people who had participated in the 2017 consultations were invited to meet with CYPSC members.</li> <li>• The CYPSC Chairperson addressed the young people at this follow up event, thanking them for their contributions and highlighting some of the changes that had already begun to take place because of their participation in the 2017 consultation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An initiative called “Our Voice Our Wellbeing” was conducted in the summer of 2021 and the CYPSC Youth Forums participated.</li> <li>• The actions taken by the CYPSC in the years since the initial consultations (establishment of the CYPSC youth Forums, further multiple youth events and CYPSC consultations with children and young people, and changes within local services) have shown the children and young people that the service providers have heard what they have said and that the children and young people are in fact bringing about change and enhancing youth services.</li> </ul>
How we supported children/young people to play a role in communicating their own views to decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LW CYPSC supported the children and young people to play a role in communicating their own views to decision-makers by compiling the information gathered by the young people into a report which was reviewed by the CYPSC and used to inform the development of the LW CYPSC Children and Young People's Plan.</li> <li>• We also had a videographer present at all of the workshops (younger and older age groups), and a short video was put together highlighting both the process but also capturing some of the main key points.</li> <li>• This video was shown at the CYPSC meeting and assisted the children in communicating their views to the CYPSC members.</li> <li>• At the follow up event in 2018, the young people were invited to speak at this event, where CYPSC members were also present.</li> <li>• The young people spoke about their experiences of the consultations and about the changes they would like to see in their local child and youth services.</li> <li>• Finally, through the establishment of the LW CYPSC Youth Forums (which are hosted by CYPSC member organisations).</li> </ul>

### INFLUENCE: How we made sure that young people's views were taken seriously

Things we considered	What we did
How children and young people were given updates at key points in the development of the plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the initial consultations, a number of further events were organised to bring children and young people together with CYPSC members, where continued planning and consultations have taken place.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The formation of the CYPSC Youth Forums in Longford and Westmeath (hosted by local services) also provide the young people with regular updates on the work of the CYPSC.</li> </ul>
How their views were acted on by the appropriate decision-makers (what happened to their views)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The views greatly shaped and informed the development of the CYPSC three-year Children and Young People's Plan and the development of numerous actions under the Five National Outcomes.</li> </ul>
How we continually checked back with children and young people about the ways we used their views with decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children and young people were initially kept updated by the local services and youth groups in which engage.</li> <li>Once the CYPSC Youth Forums were established, the young people were updated at forum meetings.</li> <li>The CYPSC Child and Youth Participation Subgroup oversaw the Forums and acted as a direct link with the Forums.</li> </ul>
How they were given full and age-appropriate feedback explaining how their views were used (or not) and the reasons for decisions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verbal and written age-appropriate feedback was provided to children and young people by the services that they were engaged with prior to the consultation and through the CYPSC Youth Forums.</li> </ul>
How we enabled them to evaluate the process throughout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The young people have maintained a high level of active participation with the CYPSC since the initial consultation.</li> <li>The CYPSC has continually evaluated how we consult with the forums and continue to work towards enhancing the youth forums further and their work with the CYPSC going forward.</li> </ul>
What children and young people said in the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LW CYPSC Child and Youth Participation project was evaluated by the <i>Investing In Children Award</i>.</li> <li>In the evaluation, the young people spoke about how they were able to act as peer facilitators and discuss the outcomes with lots of children and young people.</li> <li><i>One young person said: "It worked really well with young people leading on the discussion about things as young people felt more comfortable talking to other young people and more could be done".</i></li> <li>They said that children and young people could speak openly with other peers and felt supported by the CYPSC and its partners to achieve this.</li> </ul>

## IMPACT

### What changes were made because of children/young people giving their views?

The biggest change as a direct result of this project has been the establishment of CYPSC Youth Forums across Longford and Westmeath and the continued engagement between the LW CYPSC with children and young people. The young people have a direct input into the local child and youth services in Longford Westmeath and an input into LW CYPSC programmes e.g. assisted in the development of the '[Our Voice Our Wellbeing](#)' project which was rolled out in the Summer of 2021 across the five CYPSC Youth Forums with over 70 young people in attendance.

Topics covered included:

#MindYour Mind – Self Care

#MindYour Selfie – Internet Safety

#MindYour Mate – First Aid

#MindYour Bounceability – Responses/Resilience

#MindYour Body – Sexual health/consent

#MindYour Future – Life skills, actions now affecting future self.

#MindYour – Evaluation and becoming Youth Health Ambassadors in the local community

LW CYPSC Child and Youth Participation

Report: <https://www.cypsc.ie/fileupload/Documents/Resources/Longford%20Westmeath/LW%20CYPSC%20CYP%20Project%20Final%20Report%20May%202018.pdf>

LW CYPSC Summary Video of initial Consultations: <https://youtu.be/l3MZhm8WK48>

LW CYPSC Children and Young People's

Plan: <https://www.cypsc.ie/fileupload/Documents/Resources/Longford%20Westmeath/Longford%20Westmeath%20CYPSC%20CYPP%202020%20-%202022.pdf>

## 3) The learning for our organisation

### The key learning for your organisation from the process and outcome (end result) of involving children and young people in our work

- The LW CYPSC has learned first-hand the true value of consulting with children and young people.
- The CYPSC is currently conducting a post Covid Consultation, the feedback of which will assist the LW CYPSC Youth Forums determine their agenda for the remainder of 2022 to address key challenges that have presented for the young people in Longford and Westmeath.
- It is envisaged that the CYPSC Youth Forums will then present the findings and their projects to the CYPSC in the coming months.
- The CYPSC Youth Forums are an integral part of the LW CYPSC structure that will continue to inform and enhance the work of the CYPSC within Child, Youth and Family Services across Longford and Westmeath.

## **Looking back, how did the final outcome compare with our initial assumptions and those of other decision-makers involved in the process?**

This “Child and Youth Participation Project” was initially a once – off consultation with multiple groups of children and young people across the two counties so as to inform the development of the CYPSC plan. However, it quickly became apparent to the CYPSC that there is true value in continuous consultation and working alongside the young people accessing services so as to continue to enhance service provision in Longford and Westmeath.

## **What worked well?**

The key to the success of this initiative was the formation of the Child and Youth Participation CYPSC Subgroup and how well the subgroup collaboratively worked together from the beginning, the members of which all individually and collectively have a true vision of the importance and value of consulting with and working alongside children and young people.

## **If we were doing it again, is there anything we would do differently?**

This project/ initiative has been a journey, both for the CYPSC, the participation subgroup and for the young people. Many challenges have arisen along the way, and this journey has been slow at times. However, working together has brought about the formation of CYPSC youth forums and an excellent foundation of youth participatory practice across child, youth and family services in Longford and Westmeath. We look forward to the continued work and development of LW CYPSC Youth Forums into the future.

For ease of accessing videos/ journey of this initiative, please find below the links to the various videos most of which were referred to above:

[LW CYPSC Consultation Summary Video 2017](#)

[LW CYPSC Shout Out 4 Youth Event 2018](#)

[What is CYPSC? Video by CYPSC Youth Forums 2019](#)

LW [CYPSC Shout Out 4 Youth Event – Launch of CYPSC Youth Forums 2019](#)

[LW CYPSC ‘Our Voice Our Wellbeing’ Promo Video 2021#MINDYOUR](#)

[LW CYPSC ‘Our Voice Our Wellbeing’ 2021 Summary Video #MINDYOUR](#)



## 6. The voice of children in a community garden

**How Kerry Local Creative Youth Partnership involved children in a lunchtime and after school garden project in a primary school**

### 1) Background information

#### **The project on which we involved children in decision-making**

The Children's Garden Project was led by Kerry Local Creative Youth Partnership at Kerry Education and Training Board as a lunchtime and after-school project on the grounds of Presentation Primary School Tralee, Castle Street, Tralee. From the outset there was an understanding about the importance of child and youth voice. The school was part of the Creative Schools Programme, so they had a strong interest and understanding of child participation in decision-making. The LCYP Coordinator proposed establishing a small consultation group of children to work with the school and LCYP on the project in addition to all children in the school being involved. The children's consultation group played a particular role in the early stages of the project and continued to be involved throughout. The LCYP Coordinator contracted a Creative Facilitator with design, construction, and woodworking skills to work with children in an after-school group and at lunchtimes with children in the school.

#### **The topic on which we wanted children's views**

Their creative ideas for the design of a children's garden.

#### **The reason we wanted their views**

As a lunchtime and after-school project, it was essential that the children's ideas were integrated into the design and planning and development of the garden.

#### **The decision-makers that facilitated and listened to their views**

The Creative Youth Co-Ordinator of Kerry Local Creative Youth Partnership at Kerry ETB facilitated the initial consultation with the children's consultation group. Ongoing facilitation with all children in the school was led by the professional creative facilitator, Donnchadha O'Connor, who was assigned to the project, with support from class teachers and from the School Principal, John Hickey. The Creative Youth Co-Ordinator of Kerry Local Creative Youth Partnership wrote a report of the initial consultation with the children's consultation group and contracted the Creative Facilitator to use the findings from the report and work directly with the children in the school on the project.

#### **The age profile of the children**

The children's consultation group was comprised of six second class students, aged 8. COVID-19 Protocols and guidance prevented the merging of ages and classes. All children in the school were involved in the development of the garden.

#### **Other relevant information about the children (e.g. disability, ethnic background, social disadvantage, etc.)**

The six children in the consultation group included an ethnic, ability and confidence mix. They were representative of a typical class in the school.

### 2) How we gave children space, voice, audience and influence

#### **SPACE: How we listened to children in a safe, inclusive space**



Things we considered	What we did
The space or setting where we got their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We considered ensuring the right space for the initial consultation the six children in the consultation group. We chose to arrange the meeting in the actual garden, as we needed to be in the space to discuss how it might be best designed.</li> <li>• The Creative Facilitator chose a time that there would be peace and time to reflect, uninterrupted by noise and other students on the move. Wooden log stools were laid out in the round, in the garden setting so that we could all be together, COVID safe and in the outdoors. We worked at the same height, the facilitator also sitting on a low stool in the midst of the group. The children found this exciting, we ensured it did not 'feel' like a classroom setting.</li> <li>• Each participant had a clipboard and pencil...this made everyone feel equally important. The tone was one of fun but with a purpose, their enthusiasm was evident from the outset.</li> </ul>
How we identified the children to be involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school identified a group that would be representative of a typical classroom makeup, different cultures, different abilities, different backgrounds. This was deliberate so that we could maintain an inclusivity in our approach to the consultation.</li> <li>• The consultation group played a central role in the project, but all children in the school had the opportunity to contribute to suggestions for the garden project.</li> </ul>
How we involved those who were directly affected by the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project was focussed on including all students in the school in the design of a garden.</li> <li>• The Creative Facilitator worked with children during school lunchtimes and in after-school club sessions. COVID-19 guidelines were in place, so all workshops took place outside in tolerable weathers.</li> <li>• It became a whole school community initiative with every class taking part.</li> </ul>
How early in the process they were involved in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The children in the school had frequently and repeatedly asked for a garden in the school.</li> <li>• The children's consultation group were consulted at the outset on this idea.</li> <li>• They worked with the Principal to pick the best location for a garden.</li> <li>• The initial consultation provided the key ingredients that helped towards building a workplan for the project.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project was a learning opportunity about design and planting and a multi-functional creative, garden space evolved that can be used during school, after-school, by parents and babies out for walks and school drop-off, and for events and planting projects.</li> </ul>
How the process was inclusive and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The initial consultation and the entire project took place in a space that is fully accessible.</li> <li>All views were welcomed and children from every class in the school took part.</li> </ul>
How we made sure they felt safe to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The space was made safe and private, and the Creative Facilitator briefed the children's consultation group about the fact that the Creative Youth Co-Ordinator would visit the school and asked if they would like to take part in a consultation session.</li> <li>The Co-Ordinator ensured that the participants knew why they were being consulted and what would be done with their views and opinions. An icebreaker that was fun was used to build trust and a sense of togetherness in the group, so that everyone felt safe.</li> </ul>
How we continued to involve them throughout the decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children's remained involved throughout the decision-making process. When participants experienced challenges and problems, they were resolved through discussion, and the children were great problem-solvers, as the project rolled out.</li> </ul>

### VOICE: How we gave children a voice in decision-making

Things we considered	What we did
How we informed children about the topics on which we wanted their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Creative Facilitator provided age-appropriate explanations about garden design, and children were asked how they felt about taking part in a consultation.</li> <li>Language and hard words were adapted where they needed to be. We were keen to ensure everyone felt included.</li> <li>These discussions included questions about what children do in gardens and how they see gardens.</li> </ul>
How we made sure they knew their views would be taken seriously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children were told that their views would be valued and taken seriously by the school and the Creative Youth Co-Ordinator.</li> <li>We introduced a process for gathering views which included notetaking, drawings and photography. These aspects added a seriousness to the recording of the consultation.</li> </ul>



<p>How we informed them about level of influence they could have on decision-making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We informed the children what would happen to their ideas, asking them to think through the more hard-to-realise views, especially where the design budget had limitations.</li> <li>• We were careful not to promise something that could not be achieved. It was important to strike a balance between imagination, break-through ideas and the realities of cost.</li> <li>• We knew one suggestion, a request to include a zip line, that it would be impossible to include, the group rallied around the child who suggested it, saying they could all do that activity in their local park.</li> </ul>
<p>The methods we used to get their views</p>	<p>The focus of the consultation with the children's consultation group was to seek children's blue-sky ideas for a children's garden which would be a space where after-school projects could happen, where day lessons could be delivered, but essentially a creative design project for children to enjoy. A consultation methodology was developed as follows which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Introduction</li> <li>• An Icebreaker</li> <li>• Seeking the children's views on two topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The creative things they liked making or doing</li> <li>○ The creative things should be in the garden</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Small group work where ideas were considered in pairs.</li> <li>• Larger group work where we looked and decided on common ideas and key ideas. Time was allowed so that the children could look at the actual garden ensuring topics such as safety, things to do, what we can see, what could we make etc., these were all easily understood questions and topics of interest that came about very naturally in the session.</li> <li>• We used included notetaking, drawings and photography in gathering their views.</li> <li>• Finally, we gave the children information about the next steps in the project.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to the initial consultation with the children's consultation group, children from all classes in the school were regularly brought to the garden space to seek their views on the project as it developed.</p>
<p>How we made sure they could identify topics they wanted to discuss</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The methodology outlined above ensured that children had multiple opportunities to identify topics they wanted to discuss.</li> </ul>

The topics and issues they raised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The overwhelming response to the space was that the garden needed to be a place that would make them smile and one in which they could have fun.</li> <li>• They knew the difference between a garden and a playground, and they loved the idea of sharing it with others.</li> <li>• They were most keen to see people in the garden, that it would have special features such as furniture.</li> <li>• They were keen to make a giant heart for the garden that would represent the care and love they had for each other in the school. This will be represented in a mural as part of the ongoing project in 2023.</li> </ul>
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### AUDIENCE: How we made sure that there was an audience (decision-makers) for the children's views

Things we considered	What we did
How we developed a report or record of the children's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A report was written and shared with the school Principal and Creative Facilitator.</li> <li>• A meeting was held with the children's consultation group to discuss the findings and how ideas would be incorporated and worked through.</li> </ul>
How we checked back with them that their views were accurately represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The children's consultation group were included in workshops and work on the project continues.</li> <li>• The garden is always being worked on and new views are formed about it every day.</li> </ul>
How we involved the decision-makers who are responsible for influencing change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal and other decision-makers in the school were involved from the start and at the heart of the planning for the project.</li> </ul>
At what point we involved decision makers in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the outset all decision-makers were involved.</li> </ul>
How we and other decision-makers showed our commitment to listening to, and acting on children's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal and other decision-makers ensured that the ideas the children worked on were of their own design.</li> <li>• All planting was done by the children, and they decided how they wanted to decorate the garden, from rock insects, wooden furniture to positivity stones.</li> <li>• As gardens are never finished, they grow and die, the children find uses for the plants they are growing, they think about food and food from different countries that they have planted. As it is a seasonal garden, the children's views are worked on continuously in the project. There is strong sense of sustainability to the project, as it lives on in the daily lives of not only the after-school group, but the core school population also.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was a project to benefit everyone, including parents and caregivers, who also use the garden, especially to entertain younger children.</li> </ul>
How we supported children to play a role in communicating their own views to decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children in the school were involved at all stages and frequently communicated their views to the Creative Facilitator, the Principal and the LCYP Coordinator.</li> </ul>

### INFLUENCE: How we made sure children's views were taken seriously

Things we considered	What we did
How children were given updates at key points in the development of the garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children in the school were given regular updates on progress in developing the garden.</li> <li>They all participated in its development at class level and took on responsibilities as part of class teams, and in groups in the after-school sessions.</li> </ul>
How their views were acted on by the appropriate decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Their views were recorded and incorporated into the workplan for the project.</li> <li>As the project is ongoing, opinions are still being sought from children about next stage solutions.</li> </ul>
How we continually checked back with children and young people about the ways you used their views with decision-makers (if possible or appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children were active participants in the project and had a great sense of inclusion.</li> </ul>
How they were given full and age-appropriate feedback explaining how their views were used (or not) and the reasons for decisions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Principal and Creative Facilitator kept the group informed and they are aware of any ongoing work continuing in the garden.</li> </ul>
How we enabled them to evaluate the process throughout	<p>The sessions with the children's consultation group were all evaluated. The initial consultation asked three key questions to inform the feedback:</p> <p>Did you enjoy this activity?  Yes <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/>      Maybe <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Did you get to share your ideas?  Yes <input type="checkbox"/>      No <input type="checkbox"/>      Maybe <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>How should we change the session to make it better?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These questions were core to all sessions and very important in nurturing and expressing child voice.</li> <li>Positive feedback was also received about the development of the project, from the children and the school community.</li> </ul>

What the children said in the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All six initial evaluations from the first consultation session were very positive. A 100% rating for the enjoyment of the activity and 100% agreement that they got to share their ideas.</li> <li>• There was no feedback that anything could have been done to make the session better.</li> <li>• Words like 'perfect;' and 'don't' were used to answer the question 'How should we change the session to make it better'.</li> </ul>
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## IMPACT

### The changes that were made because of children giving their views

A wide range of garden elements and features were developed, some of which have yet to be finished and installed as the project is ongoing. The children's consultation group chose the following items to feature in the garden, some of which have already happened and some of which are planned.

#### Already happened:

- A pink tree, a blue tree and other coloured trees will feature in a proposed mural
- Drawings of were incorporated on Perspex glass
- A tree with a seat has been installed
- Proper seats and proper tables with rainbow colours and other small furniture was made as part of the workshop sessions
- Lots of flowers and colour
- Lots of pinecones were included and painted
- A place for the homework club, which is used all the time
- A little fairy garden and fairy decorations
- A place they can plant things and wear wellingtons
- A table full of flowers
- A little tree with a bench

#### Will happen in the future:

1. A mural that will feature something that represents pride in their school, a rainbow, a sun, clouds and other ideas
2. A roof will be installed in 2023 so people can come in when it is raining
3. Lights will be incorporated into an awning for the garden that is planned for 2022, so they can use the garden in the evening
4. Something that would allow a swing or something they could climb to look down at the garden is under consideration but has yet been realised
5. Stars in the garden, which will feature in the light for the awning or in the mural
6. A structure that can be climbed but that grows stuff in a vertical way, a tree house was mentioned, which may be part of the next stage

### 3) The learning for the project and school

#### **The key learning for our project and school from the process and outcome (end result) of involving children in decision-making**

One of our key learnings was the fact that consulting with children in a very open way resulted in them displaying highly creative, blue-sky thinking. They saw the voids in the space and not just the ground and the fences, they had clear views about what should overhang, be on top of the garden. The space comprises a stage area, an outdoor class including blackboard and seats, raised beds for growing fruit and vegetables, and a sensory area. Another learning was how happy it made the children to share their views, to be listened to and how passionate they became about the garden project for their afterschool and for school. Their sense of pride in their school and after-school was overwhelming, the project already meant a lot to them. There was such delight to know how capable the children were of taking an idea and going through a design process to get to an eventual outcome. The results were excellent. 'It made us aware that children's voice should, be more affirmed every day in the school and after-school', John Hickey, Principal.

#### **Looking back, how did the final outcome compare with our initial assumptions?**

The results excelled all expectations. Initially much thought was given to set structures but through consultation with the children, as users of the space, it became obvious that it needed to be an adaptable space, that can 'house' activity and that it was not just for learning, but also for fun, a place within the grounds of the school, that children could go to.

#### **What worked well?**

The setting for workshops, the schedule and the practical involvement of the initial children's consultation group who shared their views. This allowed for a momentum to build and for feedback to be continuous. There was a high ambition within the project that every child in the school would take part. Working through lunchtime and after-school club sessions achieved this and the garden has born two seasons of crops and flowers. Crops will come out every year which is such a positive. Perennials, fruit and herbs for years to come will flourish and the seasonal nature of the garden is of huge interest to the children. They have become more environmentally aware of bees, insects, pollinators and all the elements of garden management because they planted and watched enthusiastically as the garden grew. The inclusion of a small stage area has allowed for performances and recitals, and this had added a very strong element to the garden. As everything is accessible to toddlers and Mum's with babies, the community have enjoyed the garden as a space full of curiosity and changing interest across seasons.

The project is ongoing in the life of the school and some aspects require additional funding which is still under consideration. There is a love for the garden by the children, and it has born, fruit, vegetables, and flowers, and acted as space for drama, music and fun. The children remain involved in the progression of the garden, and it acts as a community space for other schools to use, which has been an added bonus.

#### **If we were doing it again, what we would do differently**

I would have liked more time to set up the children's consultation group as an advisory group to work with the school throughout the entire project. I would give more time and consideration to the role of this group, as the nature of the project, while long term and ongoing offers great opportunities for ongoing child and youth voice participation.

## 7. Young voices on a website for the national child and family agency

How a youth led national project led to the development of Changing Futures: Tusla's child and youth website

### 1) Background information

#### The project on which we involved young people in decision-making

We wanted children and young people's views on how Tusla could respond to their needs. The consultations with children and young people led to the development of [www.changingfutures.ie](http://www.changingfutures.ie), a youth led national project, created and developed entirely by young people with lived experience of Tusla services. The *Changing Futures* website has information about Tusla and gives children and young people an easy way to make direct contact with Tusla.



#### The topic on which we were looking for their views

We wanted the views of children and young people on what Tusla could do for them. At the initial consultation, which was called an Agenda Day™, the children and young people decided they wanted more child friendly information about Tusla services by creating a dedicated website with short videos of staff explaining their role and not too much text.

#### The reason we wanted their views

We wanted to better serve the needs of children and young people.

#### The decision-makers that facilitated and listened to their views

The Tusla Senior Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Manager and Senior Child & Family Support (CFSN) Co-ordinator were initially responsible listening and acting on the wishes of young people. The local Tusla area was asked to scale up the initiative to a national website in April 2017. Therefore, the decision-makers (Audience) changed from being the local inter-agency committee to the Tusla National Office. In September 2017, we arranged for a local college, Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT) to assign a website design class project for Changing Futures with the young people's research group as the 'client'. By the end of 2017 the class had created 14 designs and the research group chose their favourite.

#### The age profile of the children and young people

The children and young people we consulted with were aged 8 to 17 years old facilitated by young adults in their early 20s all with lived experience of Tusla services.

### 2) How we gave space, voice, audience and influence to children and young people





## SPACE: How we ensured a safe and inclusive space to hear the views of children and young people

Things we considered	What we did
The space or setting where we got their views (this may include online settings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In May 2016, Tusla in Dublin Southeast/Wicklow held an Agenda Day™ with over 40 children known to our local services, aged 8 to 17 years. This was an ‘adult free space’ and the facilitators were young adults with lived experience of Tusla. We used a local accessible youth centre for our Agenda Days™.</li> <li>We used the family room in local community-based family support service for subsequent Research Group meetings. Each research group session started with pizza and an increasingly competitive game of ‘Dobble’. If you haven’t played it you really should!</li> </ul>
How we identified the children and young people to be involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We identified children and young people for the Agenda Days via the member organisations of our two local multi-agency PPFS Steering Committees and the local Tusla social work department staff.</li> <li>We contacted other Tusla child participation projects across the country for our regional consultations.</li> </ul>
How we involved those who were directly affected by the topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We approached children and young people with lived experience of Tusla services for our Agenda Days™, research group and regional consultations.</li> </ul>
How early in the process they were involved in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children and young people were involved from the beginning when we decided to hold an Agenda Day™ to ask them what they wanted before completing our child participation funding application.</li> <li>We held two follow up Agenda Days™ to give feedback and explore the concept of a website specifically for young people with information about Tusla services.</li> </ul>
How the process was inclusive and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We issued an open invitation to children and young people known to our services for the Agenda Days™, research group and regional consultations</li> </ul>
How we made sure they felt safe to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By having young adult facilitators with lived experience of Tusla services and asking their key workers to prepare them for the Agenda Days™.</li> </ul>
How we continued to involve them throughout the decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We held follow up Agenda Days™ and formed a research group to ensure continued involvement.</li> <li>The routine of the research group session with pizza and a game of ‘Dobble’ became an essential part of the group coming together over the three years they worked on the project.</li> <li>We also thought it was important to acknowledge the time and work the research group contributed to the project and gave them vouchers or small cash payments for each session they attended.</li> <li>We also tried to maintain group cohesion by having regular fun days out.</li> </ul>


## VOICE: How we gave children and young people a voice in decisions



Things we considered	What we did
How we informed children/young people about the topics on which we wanted their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In May 2016, Tusla in Dublin South East/Wicklow held an Agenda Day™ with over 40 children known to our local services, aged 8 to 17 years.</li> <li>• We decided to ask an open question of the children and young people so as not to influence their decisions.</li> <li>• They all had experience of their families receiving a service, so we informed them that we wanted to know: “What do you want from Tusla?”</li> </ul>
How we made sure they knew their views would be taken seriously	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We created a research group from the Agenda Day™ participants to act as the key decision-makers for driving the suggestions that would arise from the Agenda Day and the remainder of the project.</li> <li>• We facilitated them to report back to the local committee and later the national oversight committee (when the project became a national website).</li> <li>• The Senior CFSN Co-ordinator facilitated the process and the research group met over 100 times.</li> </ul>
How we informed them about level of influence they could have on decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We promised to keep the research group as the decision makers in all aspects of the process.</li> <li>• We also explained the limits of their decision making e.g. the website could be separate from the Tusla website but must be managed/owned by Tusla.</li> </ul>
The method/s we used to get their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We got their views through Agenda Days™ and regional consultations which were young person led.</li> <li>• The children and young people were asked an open question about what Tusla could do for them.</li> <li>• A research group selected at the Agenda Day™ as the key decision makers throughout the project.</li> <li>• The Agenda Day™ started by welcoming the children/young people with pizza and refreshments.</li> <li>• The young adult facilitators then did ‘ice breakers’ before beginning the consultation based on our open question: “What do you want from Tusla?”.</li> <li>• The participants all joined a small group with a young adult facilitator working with each.</li> <li>• We provided arts and crafts materials so that the children and young people had the choice to express their views in words and pictures.</li> <li>• Each facilitator summarised the feedback from each group.</li> <li>• The research group started by looking at design issues like the name, logo, colours, images and layout.</li> </ul>
How we made sure they could identify topics they wanted to discuss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consultation methods used at the Agenda Days™ ensured that there was space for children and young people to raise issues that mattered to them.</li> </ul>
Please describe the topics and issues they raised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The children and young people at the Agenda Days™ decided they wanted more child friendly information about Tusla services by creating a dedicated website with short videos of staff explaining their role and not too much text.</li> <li>• The research group suggested video clips of staff explaining what they do and not too much text. They decided to call the website ‘Changing Futures’.</li> </ul>

## AUDIENCE: How we made sure that there was an audience (decision-makers) for children and young people's views

Things we considered	What we did
How we developed a report or record of the children and young people's views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The website is a record of the young people's views in action including the secure contact page for young people to message Tusla social work duty teams around the country.</li> </ul>
How we checked back with them that their views were accurately represented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The research group were key decision-makers and were asked for their input at regular meetings, given feedback on the ways their views were being represented and kept informed of all decisions and developments in the project.</li> <li>In addition to the regular meetings of the research group, we conducted follow up Agenda Days™ and regional consultations throughout the process. As the content and design of the website developed, we consulted on it with over 150 children and young people from around the country.</li> </ul>
How we involved the decision-makers who are responsible for influencing change (other than yourself)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Tusla Senior Prevention, Partnership &amp; Family Support (PPFS) Manager and Senior Child &amp; Family Support (CFSN) Co-ordinator were initially responsible for acting on the wishes of the young people.</li> <li>The local Tusla area was asked to scale up the initiative to a national website in April 2017. Therefore, the 'Audience' changed from being the local inter-agency committee to Tusla National Office. In September 2017, we arranged for a local college IADT to assign a website design class project for Changing Futures with the research group as the 'client'. By the end of 2017 the class had created 14 designs and the research group chose their favourite.</li> <li>We met with the local services but then met with Tusla's national operations team to seek approval for building the website. Tusla's national lead for PPFS gave us additional funding following her attendance with Laura Lundy at a workshop input by the young adult facilitators about Agenda Days™ at Tusla's national child participation conference in 2017. The research group presented to Tusla's national child participation conference in 2018 which Tusla's CEO and COO attended. They then gave formal approval for the website build.</li> </ul>
At what point we involved decision makers other than yourself in the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Tusla Senior Prevention, Partnership &amp; Family Support (PPFS) Manager and Senior Child &amp; Family Support (CFSN) Co-ordinator were involved in this initiative from the start.</li> <li>The national lead for PPFS asked us to scale up the project to a national website and gave us additional funding. Tusla's national operations team got involved once the website concept was ready to be built.</li> </ul>
How we and other decision-makers showed our	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tusla National Office agreed to an innovative approach for us to chair a national oversight committee where the research group could present</li> </ul>

commitment to listening to, and acting on children/young people's views	<p>their views to all directorates together. Ordinarily, we would have to go to each part of the organisation separately for any new policy or initiative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tulsa senior managers listened to the research group, approved the website build and attended the launch with the Minister for Children in March 2019. They also gave approval for the development of a secure contact page on the website so any child can now contact their local social work team</li> </ul>
How we supported children/young people to play a role in communicating their own views to decision-makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The research group reported back to the local committee and later to the national oversight committee. Tusla's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) agreed to set up a national oversight committee so the research group could present their views at one forum with all Tusla directorates present.</li> <li>We launched the website on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019 as a celebration of all the work the research group had done. The website went live that day. We wanted to 'go large' for the young people so we booked Dublin Castle and invited the Minister for Children to formally launch the website. We made sure half the 300 audience were young people; the research group were centre stage and there were minimal adult speeches. 'Fighting Words' worked with the research group to script and rehearse their 'spoken' story telling for the launch. It was a fantastic day, with the young people's personal stories stealing the show and hardly a dry in the house.</li> </ul>
	

## INFLUENCE: How we made sure that children and young people's views were taken seriously

Things we considered	What we did
How children and young people were given updates at key points in the development of the website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to the regular meetings of the research group, we conducted follow up Agenda Days™ and regional consultations throughout the process.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the content and design of the website developed, we consulted on it with over 150 children and young people from around the country.</li> </ul>
How their views were acted on by the appropriate decision-makers (what happened to their views)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The website went live in March 2019 carrying all the design and content suggestions made by young people. We made sure that the young people telling their stories on the website represented the diversity of Irish society e.g. regional accents and young people of colour.</li> <li>The third website page for younger children aged 6 to 9 years went live on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020. This complemented the original two pages for 10- to 15-year-olds and 16- to 18-year-olds. Part of the original request from the young people was to provide a child friendly way for children and young people to contact Tusla directly.</li> <li>A secure child friendly 'Get in Touch' contact page went live in September 2021. These messages go straight to the young person's local social work team. The 'Futures Feed' news page was also designed to host and promote other child and youth participation work within Tusla.</li> <li>This content is added periodically and includes videos on domestic abuse and children's rights.</li> </ul>
Whether we continually checked back with children and young people about the ways we used their views with decision-makers (if possible or appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The research group were regularly involved in meetings with key Tusla decision-makers.</li> <li>Tusla staff also represented their views directly to Tusla's Chief Operations Manager (COO) and CEO when the research group could not attend meetings.</li> </ul>
How they were given full and age-appropriate feedback explaining how their views were used (or not) and the reasons for decisions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people were given feedback at the follow up Agenda Days™, and regional consultations, in addition to the continued engagement by Tusla decision-makers with the research group.</li> </ul>
How we enabled them to evaluate the process throughout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Investing in Children award process includes a review assessment, which was the formal method we used to allow the young people to evaluate their involvement.</li> </ul>
What the children and young people said in the evaluation	<p>Comments from young people during 'Investing in Children' Award Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About Agenda Days™: "There was pizza, there were loads of games, really fun because it was chilled and relaxed, it was easier to talk to young people facilitators. We wanted to have an adult free zone."</li> <li>About the website development : "The agenda group could not get all the work done, we needed a research group to do all the work, we have a country theme and a city theme [on the website design] to include everyone, we wanted different age groups, we wanted to know exactly what they do [Tusla staff], we had to write stuff because there wasn't much out there, we had to check what they</li> </ul>

were up to, that it was what we wanted [web design students], the winner had listened to exactly what we said, you have a week to relax, next week a meeting, then a week to relax, people come when they can come, no pressure [research group meetings], after the conference we are definitely going to Tayto Park.”

## IMPACT

### What changes were made because of children/young people giving their views?

Tusla now has a national website with information on its services for young people by young people. Tusla have also created a secure way for children and young people to directly contact their local duty social work team. We are not aware that any other national social services organisation has either of these nationally available facilities for children and young people.

## 3) The learning for our organisation

### The key learning for our organisation from the process and outcome (end result) of involving children or young people in this initiative

Children and young people can be trusted to express their views and identify what they want. As adults and professionals, we can let go of the idea that we know best what children need. When we ask children and young people for their opinions, they tell us clearly. Since undertaking this project the principle of asking children and young people has become integral to how we work with children and young people, and it always throws up surprising results.

Some of our key learnings:

- Before you make any decisions about an initiative, start by asking children and trust their ability to speak for themselves. Use adult-free spaces to consult with children and young people and trust the young adult facilitators’ lived experiences will help the young people say what they want.
- Make the process fun. If it’s going to be meaningful it will be about group relationships and individual personal development for the young people, as much as the overall task.
- You need a ‘champion’ with 1:1, groupwork and project management skills to facilitate the process. They must be given the time to do things properly: process, task and relationships are equally important.
- Protect the children and young people as the decision makers throughout. Recognise their expertise about their own lived experience, including some financial reward for giving their time.
- Keep a feedback loop with the children and young people. Tell them what you can’t do as well as what you can do.
- Engage with the senior decision makers in your organisation as soon as you have a proposal which demonstrates the value of your idea.
- Keep your promises and celebrate at the end.

**Looking back, how did the final outcome compare with our initial assumptions and those of other decision-makers involved in the process?**



The children and young people as decision makers wanted child friendly information in the form of short video clips and not too much text and this is what we were able to deliver. The staff involved were not experienced in producing a website, but we were able to deliver. Tusla national office provided the additional funding required but the main challenge was keeping the process child friendly.

### **What worked well?**

A Tusla national oversight committee helped the young people have their views heard in one place rather than have to navigate the complex national office structures. Working with young adults in IADT to design the website and film the content worked well because the research group could relate to them easily and it kept the idea of young people being able to do these things themselves with some adult support. The local Senior PPFS Manager and Senior CFSN Co-ordinator were responsible for acting on the views of the young people and more importantly for protecting them as decision makers in the process once it became a national project when it could easily have been 'taken over' by Tusla's more senior structures. Having the Senior CFSN Co-ordinator as a 'champion' to drive the project was essential. The task would not have been completed without a dedicated staff member with both the social work skills to facilitate the process for the young people but also the time and technical and project management skills to co-ordinate the building of a website.

### **What the young people involved in research group said about the process:**

"Hey! We are the young people behind the Changing Futures website. We all come from different backgrounds, but we share the same experience of getting help from Tusla. It's these experiences that have shaped the website. Tusla realised the importance of this website and gave us full control. We came up with everything from the name, logo, colours, design, images and layout. We spent lots of time writing and rewriting the language and tackled lots of big scary words like "access" and "care plan" because when you understand the words, they aren't that scary anymore. We made lots of videos and they are a big part of this website because we feel young people are more likely to get their information from watching videos. We filmed workers from Tusla that explained their roles in child-friendly way. We filmed lots of young people that have a positive experience of being involved with Tusla too - this is the best part of the website because it shows other young people that getting support is OK. We really believe that giving young people information empowers them to be more involved in making decisions about their own lives and we hope this website will be a tool to help this."

Two Irish Times articles interviewing the young people:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/i-ve-had-25-social-workers-it-s-a-terrible-system-1.2707060>

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/people-think-all-children-using-social-services-are-bad-1.3809758>

### **If we were doing it again, is there anything we would do differently?**

When we asked the open question about what young people wanted from Tusla at the first Agenda Day™ we did not realise the journey we were entering. The dedication of the Senior CFSN Co-ordinator to the project was immeasurable. She met with the research group over 100 times over a 3-year period. We have debated whether we should have looked for more staff resources from Tusla's national office to undertake this work. However, keeping the co-ordination of a national project at local level, ensured that the



research group's role as decision makers could be fully protected. So, while this was an onerous task for a local area it worked from a child and youth participation point of view.

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## Appendix 4: A sample of three everyday spaces case studies

### 1. The voice of children in Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) inspections

**How the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) hears the views of children and young people during inspections of children's residential centres, foster care and child protection and welfare services, detention and special care units**

#### 1) Background information

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) meet with children and young people during inspections of children's residential centres, foster care and child protection and welfare services, detention and special care units. HIQA consults children and young people as part of its everyday practice on inspection. Although this is routine practice, over the course of the COVID-19 restrictions, there have been some changes to our routine practices. In May 2020, during COVID-19 restrictions, we contacted children in statutory residential care and special care by phone over a two-week period in May 2020 to ask children to describe their experience of COVID-19 restrictions and the services they were receiving during this time. We conducted an art competition for children and young people in statutory residential care and secure care (including special care and detention) where we asked children to tell us about how they were being creative or had shown or experienced a kindness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2020, while we have had some face-to-face contact with children and young people, we also have contacted them through telephone, video-calls and sought their views by questionnaire.

Individual HIQA inspectors are responsible for listening to the views of children or young people in the care settings where they live or in child protection services in the community. Other inspectors may also meet with and interact with children and young people during inspections. Inspection methodologies for residential, detention, special care, foster care and child protection inspections have a built-in component for participation and consultation with children and young people who have experienced these services. This happens through questionnaires, face to face contact, phone contact and contact via other electronic mechanisms such as video calls. When we have face-to-face contact with children and young people, we use some of the Hub na nÓg<sup>1</sup> methods such as clouds tools, body maps, table mat activity and templates to draw on using pens and markers.

The decision-makers who are responsible for acting on the views of children or young people are HIQA inspectors and staff and managers from inspected services.

HIQA inspectors meet and consult with children and young people from the age of six to obtain their views about the service being provided to them.

The children and young people we meet and consult with are from a variety of backgrounds. Given the role of HIQA regarding inspecting social service provision, children and young people have often experienced adversity in some shape or form. This could include child abuse or neglect, social disadvantage, parent substance abuse or domestic violence.

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<sup>1</sup> Hub na nÓg is a national centre of excellence on children and young people's participation in decision-making

## 2) How we give space, voice, audience and influence to children and young people during inspections

### SPACE: How we listen to children and young people in a safe, inclusive space

Things we consider	How we do it
How we make sure that children and young people feel safe to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have had mixed experiences of using online settings as some children have been reluctant to speak using video calls –whereas others are very comfortable with it.</li> <li>In both an online setting and face-to-face settings, we initially explain to children what our role is and how the information they share will be used. At the outset, children are advised if concerns for their well-being/safety come up, we will have to share information with their Social Worker.</li> <li>Children are given the opportunity to ask questions before we start our direct work with them.</li> </ul>
How we allow enough time to listen to and hear their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is part of our methodology and using time to engage with children and young people to listen to their views is a central part of our inspections.</li> </ul>
How we make sure that all children or young people are heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people choose the location within the premises or if they would prefer phone/other electronic contact</li> </ul>

### VOICE: How we give children and young people a voice in decision-making

Things we consider	How we do it
How we support children and young people to give their views and be heard	Children and young people choose the location within the premises or if they would prefer phone/other electronic contact.
How they can raise things that matter to them	<p>Inspectors let children and young people know that we want to hear about their views and experiences of the service.</p> <p>We ensure they feel heard by always asking near the end of the conversation if there was anything else they would like to share.</p> <p>We also go through what we have recorded/or what they have drawn/written – so that we are all clear on their views.</p>
How we offer them different ways of giving their views	Various tools are used such as conversation, questionnaires, focus groups, body maps, clouds tool and art and crafts, depending on what best meets the child's needs and preferences.

### AUDIENCE: How we make sure there is an audience (decision-makers) for children and young people's views

Things we consider	How we do it
How we show children and young people that you are ready and willing to listen to views	<p>We meet them at the pre-arranged time and let them know how important it is for me to listen to their views about things which impact them.</p> <p>If children or young people raise any issues, the inspector clarifies with them if they would like the inspector to take any actions on their behalf (for example, individual children have raised that they wanted their social worker to visit more and they gave consent for this information to be shared with their social worker).</p>
How we make sure that they understand what you can do with their views	We advise children and young people at the start of conversations as well as repeating at the end when thanking them for sharing their views with me.

### INFLUENCE: How we take children and young people's views seriously

Things we consider	How we do it
How they know the level of influence they can have	We explain to children and young people that their views and experiences are included in all of our inspection reports, which not only are provided to the service we are inspecting but are published.
How we give them feedback	<p>We send thank you cards to children and young people when possible.</p> <p>Many services share published reports with children and young people.</p>
How you share with them the impact of their views on decisions	<p>In addition to individual inspection reports that highlight the views of children using services, an overview report on the inspection and monitoring of children's services is published on an annual basis.</p> <p>The overview report presents the collective views of children as well as the individual voices of children and comments on overall improvements in services.</p> <p>Last year HIQA used social media through child friendly infographics and videos to provide information on general findings, as well as children's experiences of services.</p>
How we explain the reasons for decisions taken	<p>We explain our role and remit when we begin conversations with children and young people, so they are clear about what we do.</p> <p>They are aware that their views and experiences are included in our inspection reports.</p>

## IMPACT



## **The changes that have been made because of children and young people giving their views**

Inspections impact on the services provided to children, young people and their families. As obtaining children and young people's views are a crucial part of our inspections, their views are heard by the service as well as the public. Over the course of our inspections, some children have spoken to us about how they contribute to their own plan of care. While other children have told us that they are involved in 'children's groups' or attend children's meetings which have influenced how the service provides information to children and is operated. For example, on one inspection, children were involved in developing an information booklet for children in care.

Children and young people's views are also taken into consideration when we in HIQA are developing our processes relating to how we engage with children. For example, in 2021 our team developed new children's questionnaires and piloted these with children. We received feedback from children about the language and format of the questionnaires. As a result of their feedback, some changes were made to the questionnaires to make them more children/young person friendly. We also used different questionnaires depending on the age of child or young person.



## 2. The involvement of Traveller children in decision-making

How Tipperary Rural Traveller Project (TRTP) involves Traveller children in decision-making as part of their family learning programme

### 1) Background information

Tipperary Rural Traveller Project (TRTP) works with the Traveller community to address such key issues as health and accommodation and to promote and protect Traveller culture. Irish Travellers are a formally recognised ethnic minority group with their own language and culture. TRTP was set up to:

- Promote self-determination, self-esteem, and leadership amongst the Traveller community
- Ensure equal access to quality services, facilities and progression opportunities for members of the Traveller community through advocating with and behalf of Travellers, promoting equality and human rights
- Positively promote and protect Traveller culture through building capacity in the Traveller community and awareness in the settled community

In recent years, TRTP has undertaken actions to address the issue of Mental Health in the Traveller community, to promote Traveller culture and to challenge prejudice, and to counter the barriers and challenges faced by Traveller children in the mainstream school system.

TRTP engages with children through Outreach visits, Family resource settings, Youthwork settings, Library settings, Outdoor events organised by us in children's Halting sites, such as Santa Visits, The Wish Tree, Outdoor Summer Camps and Picnic trips to local Historical sites.

This case study tells the story of how our Traveller Family Learning Programme gives children and young people a voice in decision-making in the programme. The Traveller Family Learning Programme is delivered by Education Peer Support Workers and aims to support children and their families so that children can reach their potential in the education system. In the Programme, the Education Peer Support Workers listen to and hear children's needs in a culturally appropriate way.

The children who take part in the Traveller Family Learning Programme are aged 4 to 14. However, we engage with Traveller children from when they are infants to adulthood in the broad range of our work within our organisation. All the children in our programme are from a Traveller background.

### 2) How we give space, voice, audience and influence to children and young people in the programme

**SPACE: How we listen to children and young people in a safe, inclusive space**

Things we consider	How we do it
How we make sure that children and young people feel safe to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The children are surrounded by people from their own community and other non-Traveller TRTP staff that have earned the trust of the Traveller community they work with and for.</li><li>• Our organisation is a Traveller led project with a mostly Traveller staff so that those non-Travellers that work in TRTP come to a deep and nuanced understanding of Traveller people.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The children can see clearly that the adults working with them in our programme have a cultural sensitivity and a strong sense of listening to hear the Traveller child that so often is silenced.</li> <li>Evidence of stories children have shared with us gives us a clear indication of how safe they feel with us.</li> </ul>
How we allow enough time to listen to and hear their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have a three-fold approach to our programme – Literacy, Culture and Wellbeing; this structure ensures that we plan our sessions so that there is time for children to tell their story of their day at school and we actively encourage them to share their thoughts on how they feel.</li> <li>We have Mindfulness and Wellbeing exercises for children from junior infants so that they grow up with a developed Emotional Literacy through our programme.</li> </ul>
How we make sure that all children or young people are heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We always ensure a good adult to child ratio in our programme to allow for those rich and relaxed one to one time with each child.</li> <li>Our staff value the importance of encouraging children to speak out.</li> <li>We have Circle time where children take turns to speak out also and we tailor this so that it is not overwhelming, and it is adapted to the age and the comfort level of each individual child</li> </ul>

### VOICE: How we give children and young people a voice in decision-making

Things we consider	How we do it
How we support children and young people to give their views and be heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We encourage the unique and authentic voice of the Traveller child's voice at every session through a variety of methods within a programme that is led out by Traveller Education Peer Support Workers; these methods include drama games, storytelling, circle and group games, asking children for their views.</li> <li>Sometimes we start sessions with a question mark on the white board and we explore different topics e.g., Food choices, Trips out, new resources they would like included.</li> </ul>
How they can raise things that matter to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sometimes children raise issues in a one-to-one discussion, and we can explore how we can support really listening to that child.</li> <li>On other occasions we prompt discussions on issues that matter to the children for example how the school yard feels for them.</li> <li>Artwork often brings up concerns the children have we find, for example accommodation pressures.</li> </ul>
How we offer them different ways of giving their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We use a technique of two groups participating in different activities and one member from each group reporting back on what the group did; we find this builds confidence in speaking and sharing views with group interaction.</li> <li>We have a large variety of group games that encourage smaller group discussions that then feed into the larger group.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A show of hands is a simple tool we use often to show views in a non-confrontational way. Sometimes we use different spaces in the room to show preference.</li> </ul>
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## AUDIENCE: How we make sure there is an audience (decision-makers) for children and young people's views

Things we consider	How we do it
How we show children and young people that we are ready and willing to listen to views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We take note of the views they share in written form very often. We always acknowledge views shared. We encourage the children to always share their views.</li> <li>• We constantly let the children know that we hold high hopes for them in a broad sense, we encourage them to dream big and not to be held back by other people's views. We tell the children we believe in them and that each one of them is precious.</li> <li>• We have designed a programme that is flexible enough to allow the children to be heard in a way that allows for whatever story or stories emerge. We find the children in our groups are fantastic orators and have strong will with clear views of their own but sadly often keep these views to themselves in the school environment where they are from a minority group.</li> <li>• In our sessions children open up and tell us so much of their thoughts and ideas – this is something we treat with the greatest respect and confidence.</li> <li>• Irish Society in general does not hold high expectations of Traveller children, our programme strives to switch that narrative around. We teach the children to celebrate their identity and be proud every day of being an Irish Traveller child with a fascinating and rich culture and identity.</li> </ul>
How we make sure that they understand what we can do with their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We feedback to the children what we are going to do to support their views in a real open and transparent way.</li> </ul>

## INFLUENCE: How we take children and young people's views seriously

Things we consider	How we do it
How they know the level of influence they can have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We tell them openly and honestly what we can do, letting them know that certain things take some time to plan and some budgeting to cover the cost such as our planned trip to Fota Island Wildlife Park which came from a child not knowing what colour a flamingo was and asking to go to see one.</li> <li>• Other things such as a preference for green rather than red grapes we can do quickly and easily, and they see how we consider their wishes when we alter our lunch shopping.</li> </ul>

How we give them feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We usually give them feedback through two-way discussion.</li> </ul>
How we share with them the impact of their views on decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are very open about how we address their views in our planning and operations explaining to them about safety and our duty of care in a way that is respectful.</li> <li>• We let the children know how much we value their opinions and how much we enjoy learning from them.</li> <li>• We encourage the children to problem solve and think creatively.</li> </ul>
How we explain the reasons for decisions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We explain our decisions and the reasons for them in a thorough and respectful way while encouraging the children to question us further.</li> <li>• We tease out the process we went through to arrive at decisions and in this way the children really hear how central to the process they were.</li> </ul>

## IMPACT

### What changes were made in the space or setting because of children and young people giving their views?

The views of children and young people have resulted in them having a say on choosing the food we provide, the resources we purchase and where we plan to go on outings. We rent the space we use so we are not currently in a position to explore physical changes to the settings we work in.

## 3. Involvement of children and young people in decision making in a Community Circus

How children and young people are involved in decision-making in Galway Community Circus



## 1) Background information

Galway Community Circus (formerly Galway Circus Project) was set up in 2002 by a group of circus artists and teachers who wanted to bring the creative, physical and non-competitive art of circus to the young people of Galway. Focusing on the [youth circus](#) model, Galway Community Circus (GCC) started hosting mixed skills circus classes for young people. GCC also offered opportunities for international youth exchanges so members could travel and meet other youth circus members from circus schools around Europe and bring the joy of circus to schools, festivals and communities outside of Galway. 20 years later, Galway Community Circus has an annual membership of 400 young people from diverse backgrounds, and still participates in international exchanges and community outreach.

Galway Community Circus is a circus school but is also a [social enterprise](#). We exist to not only bring the joy of circus to Galway, but to improve the lives of our local community. Galway Community Circus was created to meet the needs of our local children and young people by offering a non-competitive, physical and creative activity in a safe and welcoming space. Our philosophy is 'circus for all', and we use the circus arts to teach young people, including those who are disadvantaged, at-risk and vulnerable, the tools to develop self-confidence, resilience and social skills while tapping into strengths and hidden talents. On an annual basis, Galway community circus, provides a platform for the Circus' youth membership to take ownership of decision making on the annual programme in which they participate.

### **The decision-makers that facilitate and listen to their views**

The key decision-makers are the child and youth participants of the weekly classes at Galway Community Circus. Other important facilitators toward decision makers include class tutors and professional artists in residency, who act as a bridge between the involved children and management/board of directors to ensure the decisions that the children and young people make reach every corner of the organisation. Galway Community Circus also has a current youth circus member on the board of directors.

### **The age profile of the children and young people**

0 to 25 years old

### **Other relevant information about the children and young people (e.g. disability, ethnic background, social disadvantage, etc.)**

There are six classes, one for 0-4years, one for 5-7years, one for 8-11years, one for 12-14 years, one for 15-17 years and one for 18-25 years. The young people attending the classes came from various backgrounds and circumstances. 170 people engaged in Galway Community Circus's 2022 consultation. This happened through an in-person youth consultation weekend, membership surveys, parents/guardians' surveys and targeted surveys for minority groups, members and non-members. The annual consultation was co-designed with and by young people. Consultations also happen within each class attended throughout the year. Consultations also happen within each class attended throughout the year. This case study describes how children and young people have a voice in decision-making in their classes and in decisions about our programmes and our organisation.

## 2) How we give space, voice, audience and influence to children and young people

### **SPACE: How we listen to children and young people in a safe, inclusive space**



Things we consider	How we do it
How we make sure that children and young people feel safe to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We meet and work with children and young people in the Circus building. The Circus provides a welcoming, safe, and warm environment.</li> <li>• We show our values on youth voices in posters, communications and more.</li> <li>• In Circus classes, a “group contract” is created with the participants at the start of the year, one we all agree on and respect. In these contracts the class decide on how they want to be treated, how they will treat one another and anything of specific interest to them within the coming term. This includes items such as electives (Specific Circus Skills that the majority want to focus on) Team building, social events and anything else that they feel like highlighting.</li> <li>• This contract becomes a benchmark for our tutors in creating plans within the organisation’s curriculum that supports the delivery of the children and young people’s ideas.</li> </ul>
How we allow enough time to listen to and hear their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the Circus we have a suggestion box and comments boards available for anyone who wants to share their views anonymously.</li> <li>• We have circle time at the beginning and end of each class, where youth can express themselves and make decisions on their participation in a safe and supportive environment.</li> <li>• We encourage our youth members to participate in Circus youth-led directives.</li> </ul>
How we make sure that all children or young people are heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people are consulted in all matters that relate to their participation within Galway Community Circus.</li> <li>• The Circus’s strategic plans are always created alongside an in-depth youth consultation, ensuring our membership and community’s youth voice is heard.</li> <li>• The Circus provides multiple avenues for youth voice to be heard, including circle time, idea or suggestion boxes, e-motion boards, surveys, games and age-appropriate activities and consultations.</li> </ul>



## VOICE: How we give children and young people a voice in decision-making

Things we consider	How we do it
How we support children and young people to give their views and be heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Circus seeks the views of our young members and acts on their suggestions, either immediately or over a period of time.</li> <li>• Young people are always involved in the creation of the Circus's strategic plan through an in-depth youth consultation.</li> <li>• Youth voice is also supported through a youth circus member being on the board of directors.</li> <li>• The Circus also supports children and young people to give their views and be heard through youth-led initiatives such as Scratch Night and the Youth Circus Forum/Collective a platform for youth led initiatives is facilitated by GCC.</li> </ul>
How they can raise things that matter to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In every class, GCC do check-ins adapted to the age: "How do you feel? What would you like to change?"</li> <li>• We have a Youth Forum/Collective, which allows members meet to contribute to program development and voice things that matter to them.</li> <li>• Through these avenues they can also get more involved with the Circus on an organisational level.</li> <li>• The Circus values are based on human rights, especially that of the rights of the child. We encourage members emphatically and in a non-judgmental way to voice their opinions and ideas and provide multiple avenues for them to do so.</li> <li>• At the end of every class throughout the Circus Term there is Circle time. This is where the young people voice what they like, what they did not like and give general feedback to tutors so that ownership of the classes remains with the young people and tutors have all the relevant information to adjust and develop where needed.</li> </ul>
How we offer them different ways of giving their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutors always take the time to share the class plan with the young people in circle time, where it is decided what will be done in the classes.</li> <li>• We promote participation in circus productions, concept, development, and delivery and have multiple avenues for youth voice to be heard, including circle time, idea or suggestion boxes, e-motion boards, surveys, games and age-appropriate activities and consultations.</li> <li>• We have created an "e-motion board", a creative and fun way for youth members to anonymously express how they feel at the Circus.</li> <li>• Our artists in residency support the voice of children and young people through new creative processes and innovative evaluation processes.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having artists in residence working with them supports young people to think of questions and ideas that they may not have thought of with their regular tutors.</li> </ul>
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## AUDIENCE: How we make sure there is an audience (decision-makers) for children and young people's views

Things we consider	How we do it
How we show children and young people that we are ready and willing to listen to views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the Circus we provide a welcoming and warm environment and a comfortable and safe space.</li> <li>• During classes we encourage and empower our members to speak up.</li> <li>• A suggestion box and comment boards are available for anonymous contribution.</li> <li>• During the weekly classes, students communicate easily with tutors, that is because in all the classes we create a comfortable and open space for the youth to communicate with us and with each other.</li> <li>• Preparation for shows is done within classes. The tutors facilitate the young people to make decisions about forthcoming shows and ensure that the young people know they are ready and willing to listen to them any time during the class.</li> <li>• This trust is built because the tutors actively listen to the membership openly and empathetically.</li> <li>• During open circle at the beginning of the class, a space is created to share and ask whatever may be on the young person's mind.</li> <li>• Then the class was divided into smaller groups, by disciplines or by teamwork, which ever they had decided on and they continued to develop the performance.</li> </ul>
How we make sure that they understand what we can do with their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutors act as a link between youth and the administration of the Circus – youth voices always travel up!</li> <li>• After the annual youth consultation, we create a report that's available online.</li> <li>• We have an amazing communications team who share what we do on our digital platforms.</li> <li>• We tell the young people directly and quickly about the impact their opinions make.</li> </ul>

## INFLUENCE: How we take children and young people's views seriously

Things we consider	How we do it
How they know the level of influence they can have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We aim to have transparent communication with our members. Our policy is based on the rights of the child</li> </ul>

	<p>and their power to make decisions on things that directly affect them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We remind our members in every class how important it is to share their views and to speak up!</li> </ul>
How we give them feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We give our youth members feedback in a safe and non-judgmental environment through circle time, games and age-appropriate activities.</li> <li>• We check in with the members regularly to make sure they know that their voice matters.</li> <li>• We tell them directly what their input has affected.</li> <li>• After they present a performance, work backstage, do costumes, hair and makeup or were a vital audience member, they receive feedback from their peers and from the tutors and administrative team.</li> </ul>
How we share with them the impact of their views on decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our aim is that the young people see the direct impact of their decisions in a timely manner through text, email and via our website and social media platforms.</li> <li>• Direct communication is also done in classes and at Circus Social events.</li> <li>• The youth circus member on the board of directors acts as a link between their voices and the decisions taken.</li> </ul>
How we explain the reasons for decisions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tutors create a safe and open space to discuss decisions taken and explain the decision taken and why.</li> <li>• The tutors always try to do their best to support the young people in their decisions, being optimistic but also realistic about the possibilities.</li> <li>• We share decisions taken and why openly with them and create a platform for the involved youth to feedback on their understanding of this and if they have any objections or solutions.</li> </ul>



*Simon, an artist in residence, facilitating an activity with children and young people*



*Simon, an artist in residence, training young people as trainers*

## IMPACT

### **What changes are made in the space or setting because of children and young people giving their views?**

As part of Galway Community Circus' in house processes, youth participation in decision-making on items that directly affect them is key to the development and learning of the young people involved within the organisation. This is part of the everyday of Galway Community Circus. The children and young people feel safe and are confident in telling the organisation their views around this event because they are included in all show decisions and can see the immediate effect of their opinions on the development of the show. Changes within our space continually happen based on the feedback of our membership and this is something that keeps us as adults on our toes and thinking outside the confines of a 9-5 brain. It is our experience, that children and young people will always bring varied experiences, insightful ideas and plenty of enthusiasm if given the opportunity to voice their opinions when decisions are being made that affect them.