

Shaping the Future: Purposeful Participation with Children & Young People



*Pushing beyond listening to & hearing voice(s)
to purposeful child & youth participation*



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43-54

HOW THE CONVENTION WORKS

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

12



RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS

-
- States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the ***right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child***, the views of the child being given ***due weight*** in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
 - For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the ***opportunity to be heard*** in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law

Why is today important?

Recent report from OCO marking 20 years:

Overall young people (12-18yrs) don't feel their opinions are considered when decisions are being made about their lives

- 38% rarely
- 19% never

(OCO, 2024, Tomorrow Starts with Us)



Only 7% of young people think their opinions are considered by politicians and policy makers.



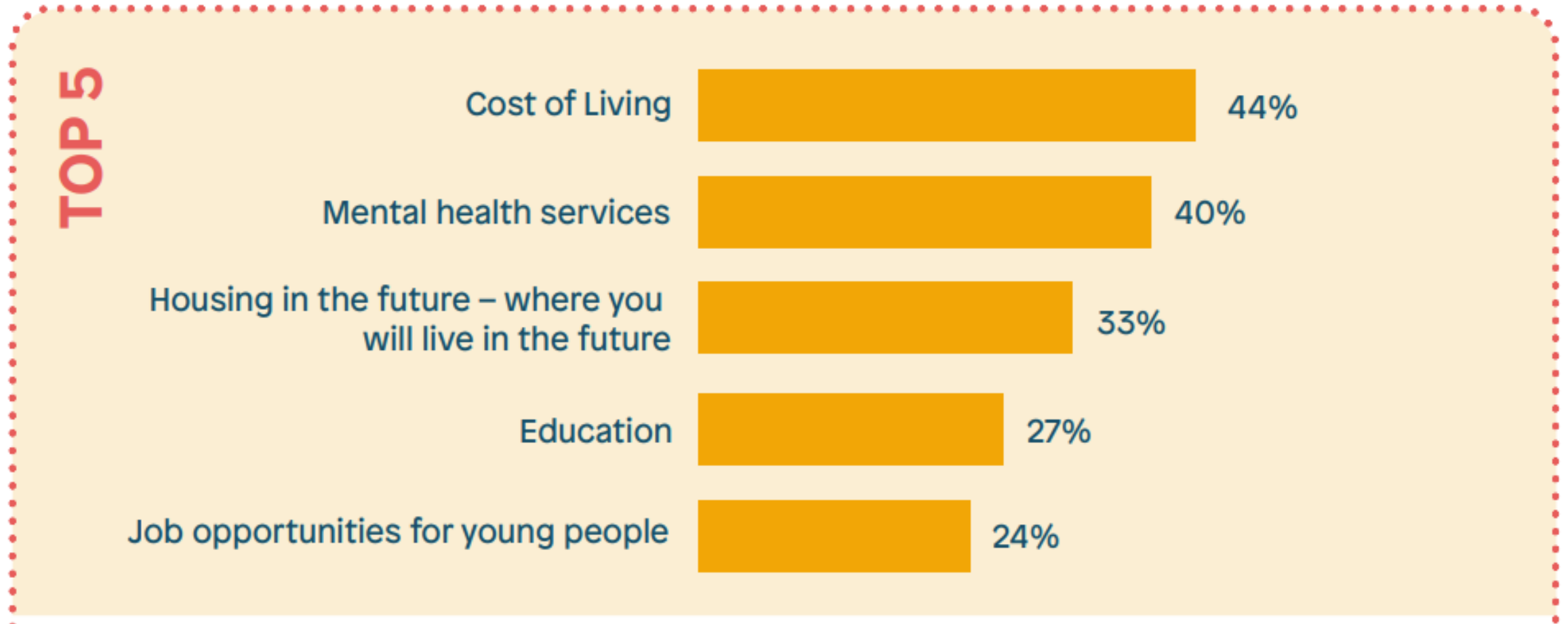
Seeking greater engagement

- 83% seeking more involvement in making decisions about schooling
- 36% rarely or never listened to in school
- 18% believe young people's opinions considered when making decisions about their lives

(OCO, 2024, Tomorrow Starts with Us)



Issues Impacting Young People



Children's Rights Alliance Report Card '24

Government Commitment, June 2020	2023	2024
Reform the childcare system	B+	A-
Establish a central agency, Childcare Ireland	C	C
Commence a free school books pilot	B	A-
Introduce national monitoring of reduced school days	B-	B
Ensure each child with a special educational need has an appropriate school place	C	B-
Undertake an independent assessment of the education inclusion pilot for Traveller and Roma children	D+	D+
End the admission of children to adult psychiatric units	E	E
Address food poverty in children	C+	B

Government Commitment, June 2020	2023	2024
Introduce a Public Health Obesity Act	D	D-
Reduce the number of homeless families	D-	D-
Develop a National Youth Homelessness Strategy	B	B-
End the Direct Provision system and replace it with a not-for-profit accommodation model	D	D
Create new pathways for long-term undocumented people and their children	B+	B
Enact the Harassment and Harmful Communications Bill	A	-
Enact the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill and establish an Online Safety Commissioner	A	A
Enact a Family Court Bill and build a new Family Court Building	C+	C-



UNCRC Definition of Child & Youth Participation

“ ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes.”

(UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009)

Defining Youth Participation

Embedded within the UNCRC

Rights-based approach focused on the individual

Important to consider the relational and contextual factors impacting youth participation & voice

(Horgan & Kennan, 2021)

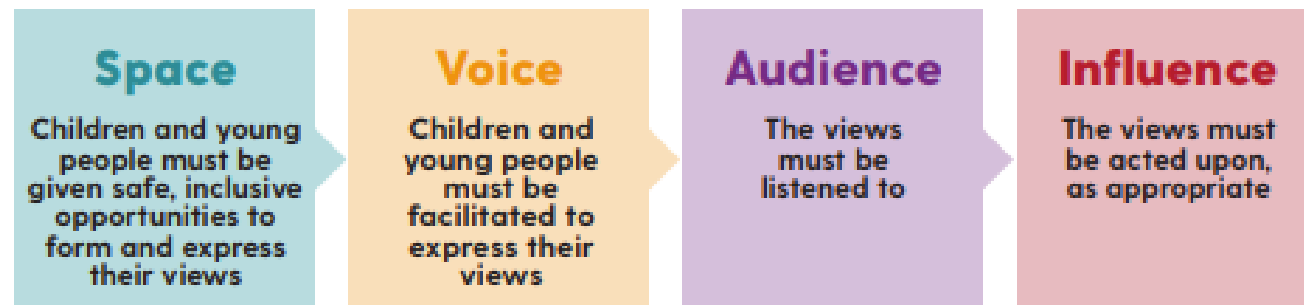
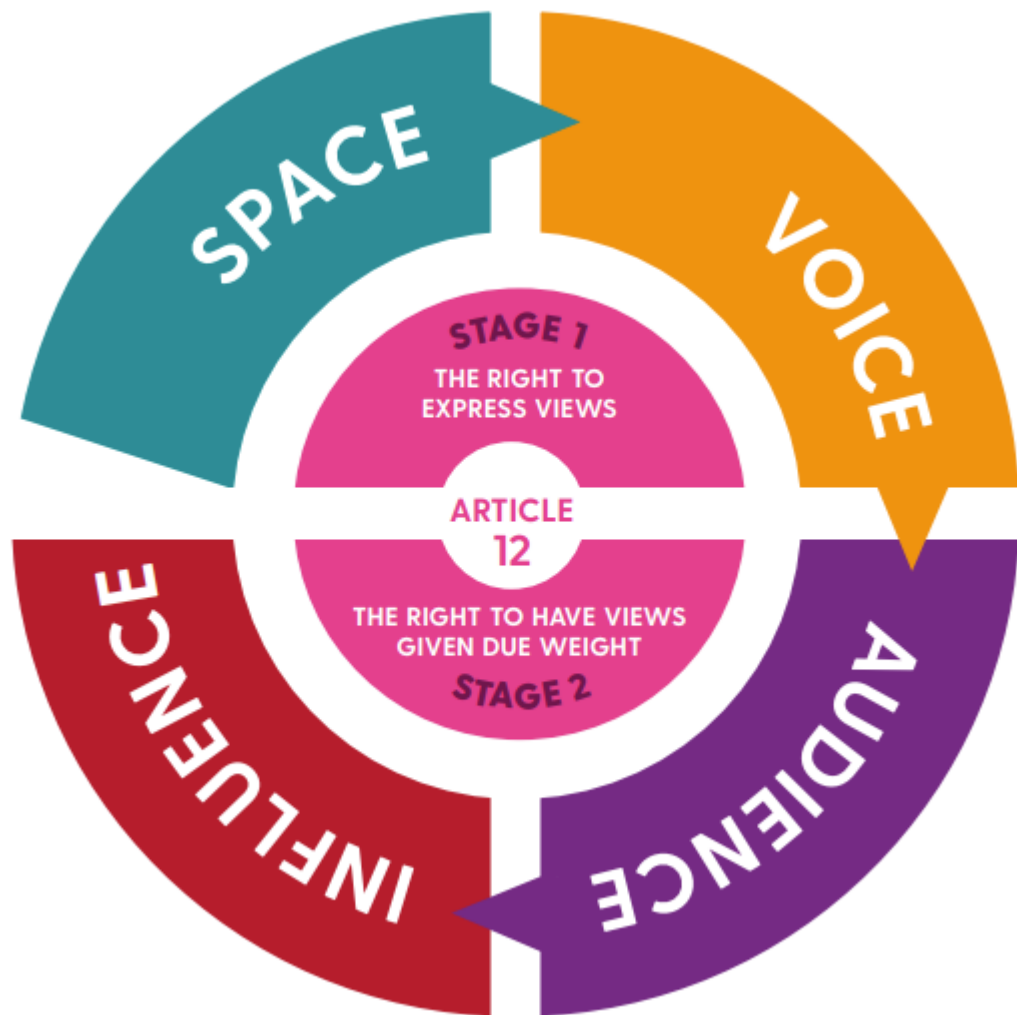
Participation with purpose – children are given genuine opportunity to influence outcomes

“Participation is always imperfect”

(Lundy, 2018)



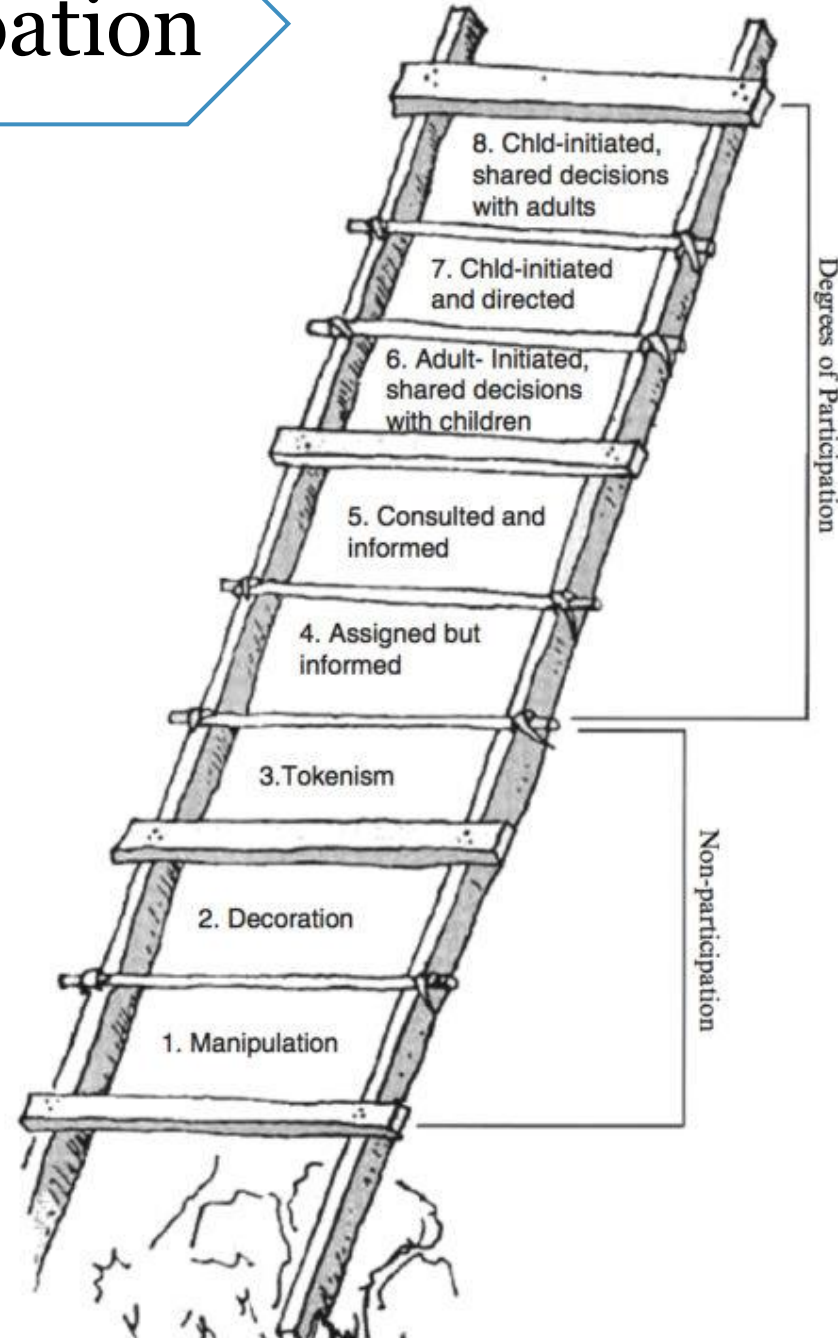
Lundy's Model



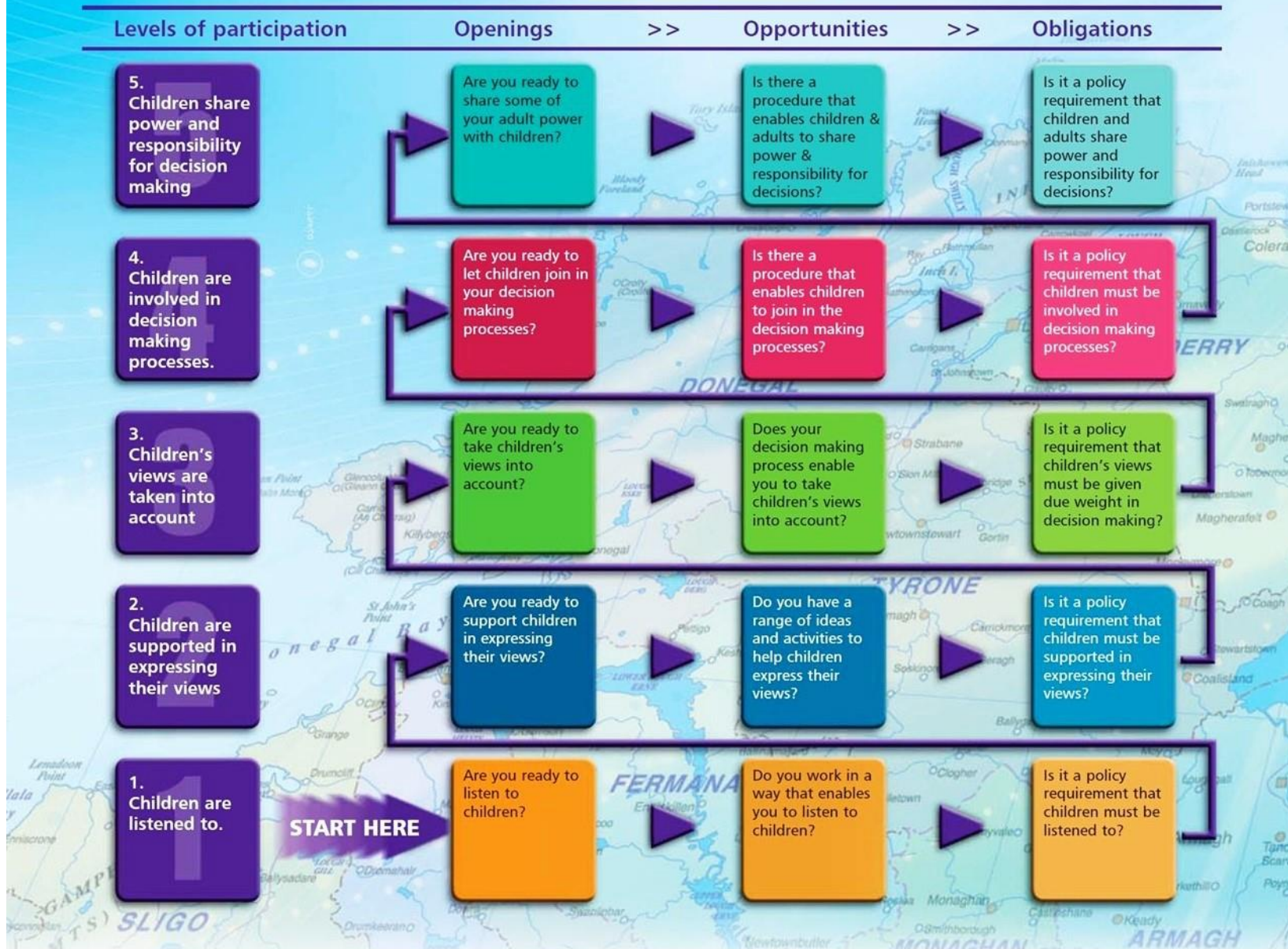
(Lundy, 2007)
(www.hubnanog.ie)

Hart's Ladder of Participation

The Ladder of Participation



Shier Pathways to Participation (2001)



EDUCARING FROM THE HEART

How to Nurture Your Wellbeing and
Rediscover Your Purpose in Education

DEIRDRE MCGILLICUDDY



A Speechmark Book



Empowering Voice(s)

Democratic approach to working with children/
young people by

Listening

Hearing

Acting Upon

EDUCARE Principles for Voice(s)/Participation are:

Valued

Openhearted

Inclusive

Collaborative

Enacted

Supported

(McGillicuddy, 2024)

Benefits of Participation for Young People

Creativity
& Critical
Thinking

Creativity
& Critical
Thinking

Enhanced
Relationships

Improved
collaboration &
communication
skills

Feeling
more
connected

Increased
Sense of
Agency

Capacity
for
decision
making

Enhanced
Self-Esteem
&
Confidence

Enhanced
Problem
Solving
Skills

Social
Awareness &
Responsibility

(Powell & Smith, 2009; NSW ACYP, 2015; van Bijleveld, Dedding & Bunders-Aelen, 2015)

Benefits of Participation for Organisations

New insights into
variety of issues

Development of more
effective policies &
practices

More accurate
decision making

Strengthen
relationships

Child/Young person
better embedded into
service

Inclusive &
responsive policy
making

More effective,
relevant & sustainable
public services

Benefits of Participation for Facilitators

A positive experience while feeling a sense of contributing to

- Enhancement of quality of service provision
- Child's sense of belonging
- Enhancing child's self-esteem
- Increasing empathy and sense of responsibility
- Promoting and implementing more democratic approaches in society and strengthening democracy



(Shier, 2001)



Benefits of Participation for Wider Society

- Greater community cohesion
- More vibrant local democracy
- Empowering and inspiring children and young people
- Better policies to directly meet needs of children/young people
 - Contributing to an enhanced community
 - More inclusive society
- Building a culture of enhanced protection for children/young people
 - Builds social cohesion and connection to local environment

(CoE, 2020; Badham & Wade, 2010; CCYP WA, 2009)

Irish Policy – Enabling Participation for Children & Young People



BETTER OUTCOMES BRIGHTER FUTURES

The national policy framework
for children & young people
2014 - 2020



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



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Participation Framework National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making



Prepared by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
gov.ie



Irish Policy – Enabling Participation for Children & Young People



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



National Policy Framework
for Children and Young People
2023-2028

Prepared by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
www.gov.ie/equality

ACTION 1 PARTICIPATION

NO.	OWNER	ACTION	TIMELINE
1.1	All Departments	Embed the voice of children and young people in decision-making and the development of policy, legislation and research.	2023-2028
1.2	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	Build capacity through the provision of training, education, resources and supports.	2023-2028
1.3	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth working with the Department of Rural and Community Development; Local Authorities; Department of Education	Embed the voice of children and young people in their communities.	2023-2028
1.4	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth working with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, the Gaeltacht, Sport and Media; Department of Education; Coimisiún na Meán	Embed the voice of children and young people in decision-making in education, health and social services, legal processes, and online.	2023-2028
1.5	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	Promote the voice of children and young people in decision-making in their homes.	2023-2028



Participation with purpose

- Two distinct but interrelated factors
 - purpose or objective of your organisation and
 - purpose or objective of involving children and young people in decision-making
- Give young people a voice on
 - (a) the everyday activities and practices or
 - (b) development of projects, programmes, services or policies
- Ongoing process
- Mutual respect – children as experts in their own lives; adults also holding expertise



Principles for Participation

- Transparent and informative
- Voluntary
- Respectful
- Relevant
- Child-friendly
- Inclusive
- Supported by training
- Safe and sensitive to risk
- Accountable


National Policy – DECDIY

Key Action Areas



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

- embed the voice of children and young people in decision-making and in the development of policy, legislation and research across government;
- build capacity across all sectors relevant to the lives of children and young people in order to include them in decision-making;
- promote the inclusion of children and young people in decision-making in their communities and in their homes;
- embed the voice of children and young people in decision-making in the education system;
- ensure that children and young people are included in decision-making in the health and social services that they receive;
- enable decision-making in court and in the courts system to include the voice of children and young people;
- support the safe, equitable participation of children and young people in decision-making online; and
- develop participation structures that are inclusive, accessible and safe for all children and young people, including those who need additional supports in order to engage and participate.



**Participation
of Children and
Young People in
Decision-making
ACTION PLAN
2024-2028**



Who participates is critically important.

Important to include seldom-heard voices in decision making

Among others, these include:

- LGBTI+ children and young people,
- Those with disabilities,
- Those from ethnic minorities,
- Traveller and Roma children and young people,
- Young carers

Barriers can include:

- Language barriers
- Access barriers (including digital access)
- Communication barriers
- Cultural barriers



Scoping Document on the Inclusion of Disabled Children and Young People in Participation in Decision-Making

Prepared by researchers from the School of Inclusive and Special Education, Institute of Education, Dublin City University for the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

October 2024
gov.ie

Key considerations

- Empowering children & young people through information & education
- Presume capacity to participate in decision-making
- Acknowledge individual identities and experiences
- Give children/young people choice
- Safe and inclusive spaces
- Inclusive language
- Predictability & familiarity
- Build trust and be open minded
- Be generous with your time
- Consider multiple ways of communicating

(Kazmierczak-Murray, O'Mahony & Carey, 2024)

Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023

Tusla Policy



Tusla's VISION
for Child and Youth Participation

Tusla is a champion of child and youth participation

Design and deliver supportive structures to ensure the participation of children and young people

Tusla's MISSION
for Child and Youth Participation

Tusla's AIM
for Child and Youth Participation

Every time a decision is taken that directly affects a child or young person, individually or collectively, their views are taken into consideration



Tusla – Supporting Participation

- Committed to developing participatory practice across all levels of the organization
- Website provides information, resources and supports to support child/youth participation
- <https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/tusla-child-and-youth-participation/>



Young Voices in Decision-making

Hub na nÓg is the national centre of excellence and coordination in children and young people's participation in decision making. We support government departments, state agencies, public service and non-government organisations in providing opportunities for children and young people to participate in decision-making, with a particular focus on those that are seldom-heard.

About Hub na nÓg

View Participation Framework

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.



Before you start involving children and young people in decision-making, please review the enabling factors on page 24.

Evaluation Checklist

This checklist is a guide for the self-evaluation and external evaluation of policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation at national, local and organisational level.



Closing the Loop - Lundy's 4 Fs Feedback process

Sufficiently full:

- Comprehensive feedback on decisions on why their views have/have not been accepted

Appropriately child-friendly:

- Feedback should be presented in a format and language children/young people understand

Fast:

- Giving feedback as soon as possible is critical

Followed-up:

- Providing ongoing feedback on progress regarding decisions made

Importance of Interagency Work

Ombudsman for children's key priority for the 34th Dáil Term

1. Take a more child centred approach across Government. This means fully incorporating the UNCRC into law and stop making excuses for lack of interagency cooperation. Agencies and department of the State must work better in the best interests of children.

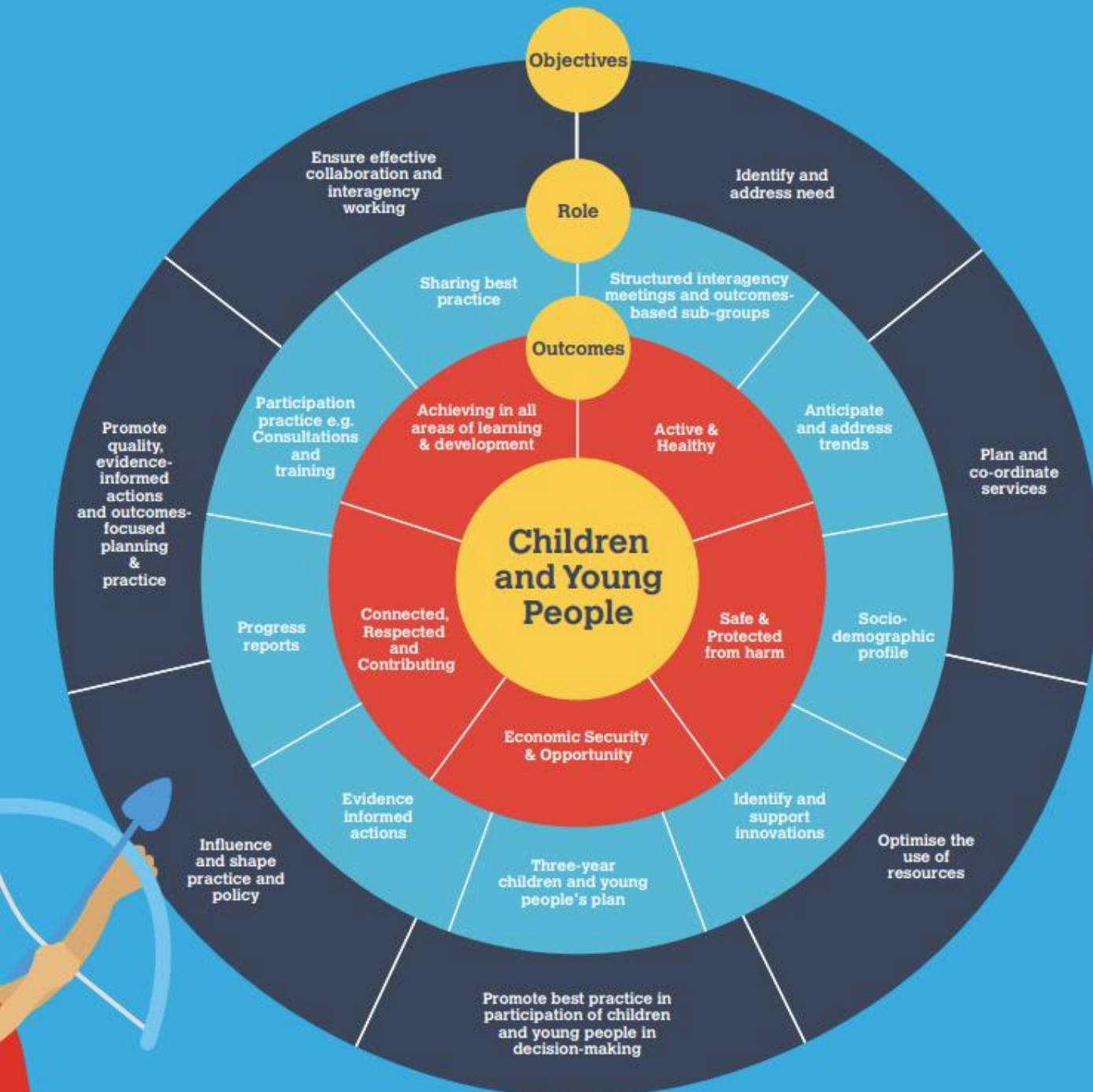
A call for the government to:

- Empower children to become involved in decision-making at all levels, respecting their views and ensuring their voices are heard.

(OCO Priorities for Children in the 34th Dáil Term, October 2024

<https://www.oco.ie/app/uploads/2024/10/OCO-Priorities-for-Children-in-the-34th-Dail-Term.pdf>)

Figure 3: Summary of objectives, role and outcomes of CYPSC



To Consider....

How can CYPSC enhance participation with purpose;

- placing it at the core of the work such as policy and strategy?

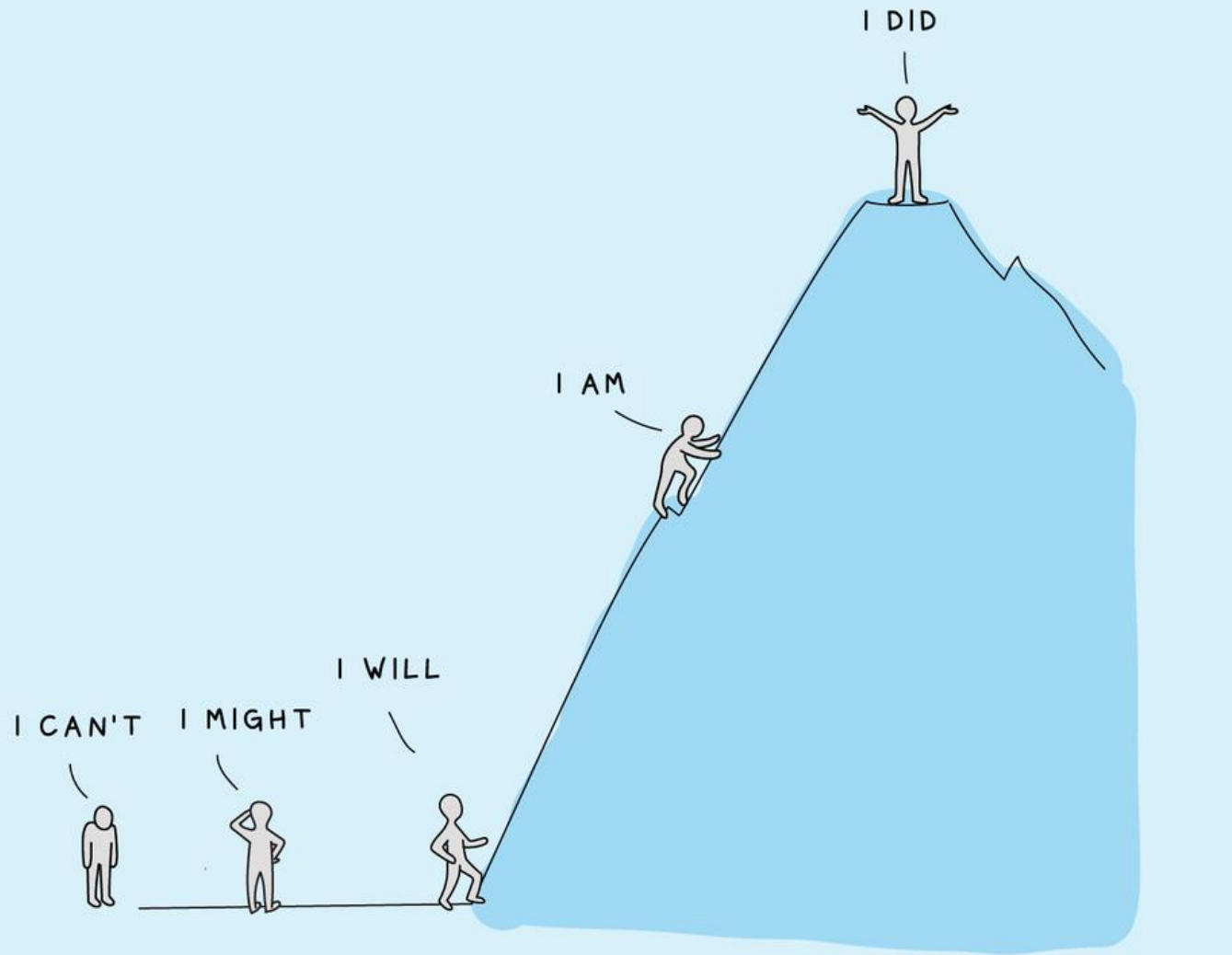
- foregrounding it as an everyday working principle with children & young people?

- evaluating the in/actioning of young peoples' voice(s)?

- providing feedback to children/young people?

- monitoring impact over time?

(CYPSC, 'Shared Vision, Next Steps' 2019–2024)



LIZ FOSSLIN

Invitation to set an intention...

What is your "will"?



Míle buíochas!

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