



Dublin City South Children and Young People's Services Committee

Report of a Consultation with Local Services of Child and Youth Participation

2020

Introduction

This report details the findings of consultations with local services in the Dublin City South CYPSC area on models of support for child and youth participation.

About CYPSC

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) are a key structure identified by Government to plan and coordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. Their age remit spans all children and young people aged from 0 to 24 years. The purpose of CYPSCs is to ensure effective interagency coordination and collaboration to achieve the best outcomes for all children and young people in their area. For more information about Dublin City South CYPSC www.cypsc.ie/your-county-cypsc/dublin-city-south



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Section 1: Background

A consultation on models of support for child and youth participation was held by Dublin City South CYPSC in 2019. A presentation on models of best practice in child and youth participation was given by Sandra Roe, an independent Social Researcher specialising in child and youth participation. A consultation was then conducted with representatives from a number of child and youth services in the area to identify current child and youth participation practices and share best practice models.

Representatives from the following services were present at the consultation:

- *Barnardos*
- *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)*
- *Dublin City Council Planning Department*
- *Dublin City South CYPSC*
- *Familibase*
- *Tusla Children in Care Team*
- *Tusla Social Work Team*
- *Tusla School Completion Programme*

Section 2: Child and Youth Participation Policy context

This section provides an overview of the policy context of child and youth participation in Ireland.

Key youth policies

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014 – 2020) is the first overarching, cross government framework for children and young people aged 0 - 24 years of age in Ireland. Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures comprises a number of strategies, including:

- The National Youth Strategy (2015-2020)
- The National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making (2015-2020)
- First 5, A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019 - 2028)

Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSCs) have commitments in these strategies and report to DCYA on implementation on an annual basis.

Definition of participation

The National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making 2015 - 2020 defines participation as:

‘the process by which children and young people have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly’(DCYA, 2015a: 20).

This definition is consistent with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which underlies this strategy, and Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Under Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Framework and the National Strategy on Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making (2015 –2020), the importance of participation by children and young people is underscored as a key principle and practice in the development of all policies, services and initiatives that affect their lives.

National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making

Ireland's first National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making was launched in 2015. The strategy aims to address participation at a national, regional and local level.

The main elements of the national strategy are:

- The background and rationale for the participation of children and young people in decision-making
- The objectives of the strategy
- Definition, model and principles of children and young people's participation in decision-making
- The legal, policy and infrastructural supports to implement the strategy
- The Action Plan for the implementation of the strategy

The strategy focuses on the everyday lives of children and young people and the places and spaces in which they are entitled to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. Therefore, the strategy identifies the following objectives and priority areas for action:

- 1.** Children and young people will have a voice in decisions made in their local communities.
- 2.** Children and young people will have a voice in decision-making in early education, schools and the wider formal and non-formal education systems.
- 3.** Children and young people will have a voice in decisions that affect their health and well-being, including on the health and social services delivered to them.
- 4.** Children and young people will have a voice in the Courts and legal

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

- 5.** Promoting effective leadership to champion and promote participation of children and young people.
- 6.** Development of education and training for professionals working with and on behalf of children and young people.
- 7.** Mainstreaming the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation and research.

A key priority of the strategy is that seldom-heard children and young people are enabled to take part in decision-making. This is considered to be particularly critical in the case of children living in the care of the State or in receipt of child protection and welfare services.

Lundy's Model of Participation

The National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making is underpinned by Lundy's Model of Participation as the most appropriate to achieving its objectives. It outlines a set of core principles of participation. Lundy's Model of Participation is grounded in the UNCRC and focuses on a rights-based approach to involving children in decision-making (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Lundy's Model of Participation



This model provides a way of conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus decision-makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of the provision. The four elements have a rational chronological order:

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

Lundy's Voice Model Checklist for Participation

As part of the development of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, Lundy, in consultation with a strategy development sub-group comprised of representatives from Government departments and agencies, developed a checklist for participation (see Figure 2). This checklist aims to help organisations, working with and for children and young people, to comply with Article 12 of the UNCRC and ensure that children have the space to express their views; their voice is enabled; they have an audience for their views; and their views will have influence.

Figure 2: Lundy's Voice Model Checklist for Participation



Tusla Child and Youth Participation Strategy (2019 -2023)

Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, launched its Child and Youth Participation Strategy in 2019. Tusla's Child and Youth Participation Strategy is also underpinned by the Lundy Model of Participation.

The Strategy has a number of Principles for Participation (Tusla, 2019: 14-15) including:

- There is no age limit on the right of the child or young person to express her or his views freely. All children and young people, including those of pre-school age, school age and those who have left full-time education, have a right to be heard in all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
- The right of children and young people to participate applies without discrimination on any grounds such as race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, disability, birth, sexual orientation or other status.
- Consideration needs to be given to the notion of the evolving capacities of children and young people. As children and young people acquire more capacities, adults should encourage them to enjoy, to an increasing degree, their right to influence matters affecting them.
- Particular efforts should be made to enable participation of children and young people with fewer opportunities, including those who are vulnerable or affected by discrimination, including multiple discrimination.
- Parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and the development of the child and, as such, play a fundamental role in affirming and nurturing the child's right to participate, from birth onwards.

- In order to be able to participate meaningfully and genuinely, children and young people should be provided with all relevant information and offered adequate support for self-advocacy appropriate to their age and circumstances.
- If participation is to be effective, meaningful and sustainable, it needs to be understood as a process and not a one-off event and requires ongoing commitment in terms of time and resources.
- Children and young people who exercise their right to freely express their views must be protected from harm, including intimidation, reprisals, victimisation and violation of their right to privacy.
- Children and young people should always be fully informed of the scope of their participation, including the limitations on their involvement, the expected and actual outcomes of their participation and how their views were ultimately considered.
- In line with the General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC, all processes in which children and young people are heard should be transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant to children's lives, in child-friendly environments, inclusive (non-discriminatory), supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable. Member States should integrate these requirements into all legislative and other measures for the implementation of this recommendation.

Key Strategic Objectives

In its Child and Youth Participation Strategy, Tusla identifies five Key Strategic Objectives to further embed participation throughout the organisation. These objectives are underpinned by a series of activities in order to track progress.

The five Key Strategic Objectives are:

1. Structure: How we work

Tusla will continue to support and promote systems to further embed participatory practice across Tusla and Tusla-funded agencies.

2. Culture: How we think

Tusla will further develop an organisational culture of participatory practice, as well as systems to support this.

3. Connections: How we work together

Tusla will achieve shared goals, standards and competencies in participatory practice.

4. Processes: What can help us

Tusla will continue to develop new processes to support participatory practice.

5. Scale: Who has to do this

Tusla will continue to support all staff and staff in funded agencies in participatory practice.

Implementation Success Indicators

Tusla identifies a number of progress indicators for each activity under the five Key Strategic Objectives of the Child and Youth Participation Strategy. The aim of the indicators is to help measure the implementation of the Child and Youth Participation Strategy.

Structure Indicators – How we work	Tusla will continue to support and promote systems to embed participatory practice across Tusla and Tusla-funded agencies
Culture Indicators – How we think	Tusla will further develop an organisational culture of participatory practice, developing systems to support this
Connections Indicators – How we work together	Tusla will achieve shared goals, standards and competencies in participatory practice
Processes Indicators – What can help us do this?	Tusla will continue to develop new processes to support participatory practice
Scale Indicators – Who has to do this?	Tusla will continue to support all staff and staff in funded agencies in participatory practice
Impact Indicators – How we measure our progress	Tusla will develop a suite of outcome indicators to best reflect implementation of this strategy and its related objectives

Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit (2016)

The purpose of the Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit (2016: 1) is “to support Tusla staff to facilitate child and youth participatory practice at every level of Tusla and in every engagement with a child or young person.” The toolkit provides guidance in the application of the Lundy model of participation and examples of activities that can support participatory practice.

The Tusla toolkit contains a number of resources which could be useful for services in terms of measuring child and youth participation policies and practices. These include the ‘Making Every Connection Count’ questionnaire (2016: 110-113). The questionnaire provides checklists to help staff to review the child and youth participation aspect of their work. This includes senior management and those who do not work directly with children and young people on a regular basis.

The four areas of the questionnaire include:

- 1. Service Accessibility and Flexibility**, e.g. Our service has operational hours suitable for children and young people (e.g. after school, weekends).
- 2. Meeting with and dealing with queries from children and young people**, e.g. I greet children and young people warmly.
- 3. Staff in Services**, e.g. I consider all elements of space, voice, audience and influence in service planning.
- 4. Management of Services**, e.g. I consider all elements of space, voice, audience and influence in service planning.

Youth Advisory Panels, Groups, Committees and Councils

A Youth Advisory Panel, Group, Committee or Council is a body of young people appointed by one or more government departments, institutions, organisations or non-government organisations etc. to advise on issues of public policy or administrative actions which directly affect young people.

Inclusion of seldom-heard children and young people

According to DCYA (2015b: 18), in the development of an advisory group of children and young people, it is best practice to include seldom-heard children and young people. DCYA (2015b) also recommends the employment of a 'Children and Young People's Participation Officer', if possible, whose role is to organise and develop the advisory group of children and young people. However, it should be noted that seldom-heard children and young people often do not favour formal structures such as advisory panels (McEvoy, 2009; Bell *et al*, 2008).

Examples of Youth Advisory Panels, Groups, Committees and Councils:

Foróige's Youth Participation Advisory Committee

Foróige's Youth Participation Advisory Committee aims to plan, advise and evaluate children and young people's participation across the entire organisation. The committee is made up of young people, volunteers, youth workers and members of senior management. The young people are all members of children and young people's participation structures in their local Foróige club, project or service, and are elected to the committee by their peers and represent their own views as well as the young people from their own local area. The committee meets 4-5 times per year on a Saturday or for a full day (11am-4pm) during the holidays. Support is given to the young people to travel to the meetings and to ensure they fully understand all information given or discussed at the meetings.

Jigsaw Youth Advisory Panel

Jigsaw, The National Centre for Youth Mental Health (www.jigsaw.ie), has a Youth Advisory Panel. The Jigsaw Youth Advisory Panel consists of a team of volunteers aged between 16 and 25 who have an interest in young people's mental health across Ireland.

The main objectives of the of the Jigsaw YAP are to:

- raise awareness about youth mental health and why it needs to be taken seriously
- build awareness of how Jigsaw support young people and their communities
- best support young people with their mental health
- fundraise to support Jigsaw services

Ombudsman for Children Youth Advisory Panel

The Ombudsman for Children Office has had two Youth Advisory Panels (YAP) from 2004-2007, and another from 2007-2009 that helped inform and promote the work of the office. The Ombudsman for Children Youth Advisory Panels included a cross section of young people aged 12-17 years made and there was a long selection process to be on the panel.

The Ombudsman for Children Youth Advisory Panels helped in the following ways:

- To develop the OCO website
- To pilot the education workshops for groups
- To raise awareness of the Big Ballot
- To attend the conference at the European Network of Ombudpersons for Children (ENOC)
- To develop work experience opportunities for Transition Year students
- To be involved in the OCO's Connecting Communities project
- To be a presence at the Young Social Innovators (YSI)

The OCO Youth Advisory Panel provided a number of recommendations on how to recruit a panel of young people (OCO, 2012: 36):

1. Use a variety of ways to raise awareness among young people of the opportunity to get involved.
2. Give young people the information they need to understand what the panel's roles and work will be.
3. Make sure the age range of young people on your panel isn't too wide.
4. Use a fair and democratic way of selecting young people to take part.
5. Try to select young people who are interested in and will commit to participating.
6. Make sure you include young people from diverse backgrounds and living in different locations.

The NYCI Youth Advisory Group (YAG)

The NYCI Youth Advisory Group (YAG) was set up in 2004 to advise the Development Education programme on its work and to keep it relevant to Young People. The YAG is open to young people aged between 16-20 years of age involved in youth work from anywhere in the country. NYCI gains the benefit of a youth perspective and the young people benefit by being trained up in development education issues and working with like-minded people in a fun environment. The group meets three times a year. Regular meetings usually take place on Saturdays in Dublin city centre. Once a year a residential meeting is held for a weekend.

Section 3: Consultation Findings

This section of the report outlines the key findings on consultations conducted with services in the Dublin City South CYPSC area on child and youth participation.

Participation levels in local organisations

The consultation found that different services in the Dublin City South CYPSC area are at different stages in terms of child and youth participation practices, policies, procedures etc.

Buy-in from staff and management

It was acknowledged that participation work can be time consuming for staff in services when added to their existing workload. Many frontline staff are engaged in participation practices, however, they stated that it is difficult to change or influence policies and procedures within services.

Respondents identified the need for 'buy in' from senior management in services in relation to participation practice, policies, procedures etc. to ensure effective long-term participation. The need for participation 'champions' to further participation in an area was discussed. However, the consultation established that participation practices and processes need to be embedded into organisations so they are not dependent on individuals.

Participation structures

Respondents acknowledged that participation structures such as Comhairle na nÓg can work well but they also can be flawed. Overall, it was perceived that Comhairle na nÓg in the Dublin City South area is not representative of all young people in the area. It was suggested that some young people in the area need additional supports to engage in participation structures such as Comhairle na nÓg /Dail na nÓg and further work needs to be done to ensure there is a true representation of young people from the area on participation structures

Interagency cooperation

Respondents stated that interagency work on participation can be challenging and time-consuming. However, developing partnerships between different services, agencies and organisations was considered to be crucial in terms of participation.

[Lundy model of participation](#)

The majority of respondents were aware of the Lundy Model of Participation. The Lundy model was recognised as a model of best practice and was perceived as a useful framework for organisations to measure participation. Respondents felt it was important to link the Lundy model to child and youth participation in all local services. If all local services used the Lundy model, it would allow Dublin City South CYPSC to harvest information/research findings from local services with confidence in the methodologies being used.

[Audience](#)

The 'audience' aspect of the Lundy model was identified as being very important. Respondents felt it was important to ensure the right audiences are listening to children and young people. Audiences also have to be prepared to listen to young people who may have things to say that are difficult to hear about a service. In addition, services need to take on board constructive criticism from young people.

[Child and youth participation policies and practices in local services](#)

Local services were asked to detail their participation policies and practices which are detailed below.

Tusla:

Respondents felt that participation is strongly embedded in the work of Tusla. Tusla employees receive training on participation and the Lundy model. The voice of young people is heard in Tusla practices such as care reviews, care plans and Meitheals. Respondents stated that youth participation in decision-making has had a positive impact on young people who are Tusla service users. According to Tusla social workers, listening to young people in care has improved social work practice. Respondents from Tusla felt they have learned from other organisations such as EPIC in terms of participation policies and practices. For example, an information booklet developed by young people in care and EPIC was judged to be very effective in providing information to young people in care.

Barnardos:

Barnardos have a child and youth participation policy which is based on the Lundy model of participation and Barnardos employees are training in child and youth participation. Respondents believe Barnardos have an active case management process in which the views of young people are sought all the way through. Participation methodologies are adapted according to the needs and sensitivities of children and young people using services. According to respondents, children and young people's needs are paramount in terms of sharing their opinions/feedback, e.g. in case conferences. It was acknowledged that children, young people and families are given the opportunity to influence policy and change in Barnardos. Barnardos use creative ways to get the views of children and young people, e.g. comments/complaints box at review meetings to feed into assessments. Finally, Barnardos have engaged in participation consultations which have resulted in change within the organisation.

Familbase:

FamiliBase is a community based, not for profit organisation with charitable status that works with children, young people and families supported by a range of funders. Familibase actively engages in youth participation on an on-going basis. Young people involved in Familibase have a say in how programmes are run and developed, e.g. music and arts programmes. Familibase staff are familiar with the Lundy model and would like to use it across the service on a more consistent basis, e.g. in planning processes. The service engaged in participation consultations with young people in partnership with CAMHS as a result of young people presenting with various mental health issues in their youth service. The consultation created a forum for discussion and used participation methods such as art, videos, music lyrics for young people to have their voices heard.

CAMHS:

The local HSE Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have engaged in participation consultations with young people from Familibase and acted on young people's recommendations in terms of service delivery, waiting room areas, staff name badges etc. The service would like to build on these consultations and embed participation into their everyday practice. CAMHS have also consulted with services users of Linn Dara through a HSE questionnaire which had a good response and was a positive process. According to respondents, there is a willingness in CAMHS to listen to the voice of service users, e.g. children, young people and families.

School Completion Programme:

The School Completion Programme has worked with young people in one of the most disadvantaged schools in the area through a life coaching programme. This involved working with young people in the school for over 12 weeks, listening to the needs of young people and offering one-to-one support. The service also runs a step-up programme aimed at 6th year students in the area who are 'falling through the cracks.' According to respondents, participation programmes work best when schools are fully invested in them.

Dublin City Council Planning Department:

Dublin City Council are currently developing their Development Plan which will include consultations with young people in schools. Consultations were conducted by DCC with young men in the Cherry Orchard area on horse ownership and facilities as part of the new Dublin City Development Plan. The findings of these consultations were presented to the DCC Chamber and were included in the first draft of the Development Plan. DCC is also engaged with Dublin City Public Participation Network (PPN), a network that allows local authorities to connect with community groups etc.

Section 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

This section provides conclusions and recommendations based on the consultation findings.

The key child and youth participation needs of services

The consultation identified the key needs of services in terms of child and youth participation as training, information sharing and resources.

Training

The key need identified by services in the Dublin City South CYPSC area in terms of child and youth participation supports was training. This included training in the following areas:

- Best practice in child and youth participation in decision-making;
- Training for youth services, youth workers and their Boards of Management on youth participation;
- How to conduct participation with young people with additional needs, e.g. Autism;
- How to incorporate participation into everyday practice;
- How to conduct one off consultations with children and young people;
- How to develop participation structures.

Information sharing

Information sharing was also identified as being important in terms of supporting services in the field of child and youth participation. This includes information sharing on the needs of Dublin City South CYPSC in terms of child and youth participation. For example, identifying and sharing the child and youth participation needs and goals of Dublin City South CYPSC for the next three years with services in the area. Information sharing could also include bringing together local services to share information on child and youth participation, e.g. annual meetings or networking events where information on policy and practices can be shared between local services.

Resources

Finally, the need for resources to support services in terms of child and youth participation was highlighted. It was suggested that a range of information resources on child and youth participation could be made available to services, e.g. online resources available on the Dublin City South CYPSC website.

It was suggested that a number of child and youth participation resources could be adapted by services in the Dublin City South CYPSC area to support child and youth participation best practices. Suggested resources included:

- Lundy's Voice Model Checklist for Participation
- The Making Every Connection Count questionnaire- Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit

Next steps

The next steps for Dublin City South CYPSC include:

- Organising training on child and youth participation best practice for local services
- Sharing information on child and youth participation, e.g. organising information sharing meetings and networking opportunities related to child and youth participation
- Bringing together key resources on child and youth participation, e.g. online resources on the CYPSC website
- Developing a child and youth participation pilot project in the area involving local services

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