Involving children in decision making
→ Your quick, practical guide
Activities

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Planning Activity 1:
Butcher paper pictures

**Aim**
For participants to clarify and express visually their feelings on a particular issue.

**Do this with**
A group, 3 to 15 participants (aged 3 to 12 years)

**Good for**
Works best with affective/emotional stuff, like how participants feel about themselves, or friends, or school.

**Time**
30 minutes

**What you will need**
Butcher’s paper, textas, coloured pencils, crayons, magazines for pictures

**How to do it**
1. Decide the problem/issues you want to look at and turn the problem/issue into a question eg how can we ensure children are safe?
2. Split the larger group into small groups of 2 or 3 participants.
3. Explain that you want the children to find a space in the room and draw what you think is important to them about the topic ie yourself, friends, school, home.
4. Tell the children that ‘You can use words, draw pictures, stick down images, make a comic strip – whatever you want.’
5. Let the group work on their pictures. Remind them regularly of how much time they have left.
6. When the group has finished, get each small group, if they want to, to explain their picture to the larger group.
Planning Activity 2:
Word Tree

Aim
To explore concepts and preconceived notions about a topic or word

Do this with
A group of up to 20 participants (any age, aged 3 to 12 years)

Good for
This technique is best used as a lead into another activity - it is a good way of getting people to focus on a particular topic or idea

Time
30 minutes

What you will need
Butcher’s paper, textas, a pen and pencil for each participant

How to do it
1. Write the word or topic you wish to explore eg leadership, in the middle of a piece of butcher’s paper

2. Give participants a few minutes to think about what the word means to them and other words they associate with it (they can write their ideas on a piece of paper).

3. Go around the group asking for one word from each group member. Write the words eg communication, trust, friendship, strength etc on the butchers paper as branches of the Word tree. Some words may branch off other words - eg good voice and body language may branch off communication. You will need to judge this and discuss it with the group as you go. Keep asking for ideas from everyone in the group - words that are written up may give them new ideas.

4. Now you have a visual description of the groups ideas around the word.
Planning Activity 3: Balloon (Action Planning)

Aim
To help with the planning process for a project.

Do this with
A group of 4-8 people (aged 6 to 12 years)

Good for
Sorts out how the project will work and the practicalities such as people and resources needed for it to work. Some of the most creative approaches to planning can often be the most fun.

What you will need
Butcher paper, pens, post-it notes.

How to do it
1. Explain the aim of the group e.g. to plan a project or piece of work. The balloon represents the project of piece of work.
2. Then take each topic in turn.
3. Get participants to write or draw ideas on post-it notes and stick them on the relevant bit of the butcher paper.
4. Clarify ideas and group similar ones before moving on to the next topic.

Description of the diagram:
- On the balloon - issues and factors that will be needed for the proposal to fly what needs to be in place for the project to take off.
- In the basket - write the name of people or organisations who can help and support your aims or who needs to be on board.
- Ropes - what will hold it back, before the balloon/project has started?
- Clouds - what could push the balloon off course? (once the project has started)
- Making it fly - above the balloon write factors that will make things happen and work (e.g. commitment, enthusiasm)
Planning Activity 3: Balloon (Action Planning)

Involving children in decision making

Vision/ideas

Could blow project off course

Support

Could hold project down

Could blow project off course
Making it Happen Activity 1:
The run around game

Aim
To provide a way for children to explore a particular issue.

Do this with
A group of up to 30 participants (aged 3 to 8 years old).

Good for
An energetic group, involving everyone, finding out what children have learned about a particular issue.

Time
15 to 30 minutes, depending on how energetic and interested the group is.

What you will need
A large space where children can run about safely. Optional extra would be a pretend microphone (the children could make one from cardboard and paint it).

How to do it
1. Explain the aim of the activity and how to play the game. It is about getting their views on something in a fun way. Stress there is no right or wrong answers. As the game involves running about, you may need to set a few safety rules, such as 'be aware of others whilst running.'

2. Identify the issue the group will be working on (eg what we eat). Then think up a list of choices around the issue – cereals or toast, jam or vegemite, fruit or ice cream – get the children to think of some too.

3. Call out each set of choices one by one – so for example the first set might be jacket potatoes or chips – allocate one end of the room or space to jacket potatoes and the other end to chips. Ask the group to choose one and run to that end of the room.

4. Invite a child to be an interviewer and use the microphone to interview some of the children about why they made that choice. Encourage them to keep the interviews and answers short – a bit like television interviews in the street.

5. Go to the next set of choices until you have finished the list or the children have run out of steam. Keep changing the interviewers so that lots of children get a go.

TIPS
It is important to keep the game moving along quite fast so that there is lots of running about.

Some groups like to have a ‘Don't mind’ bit of the room or space for those who can’t decide what to choose.
Making it Happen Activity 2: The decision tree

Aim
To teach children about decision making and different options and consequences.

Do this with
A group of 10 to 15 participants (aged 3 to 12 years).

Good for
Finding out what children think about decision making.
Reviewing issues arising during the project and possible solutions.
Using the start of the project to help children identify a particular issue or difficulty and possible solutions.

Time
30 minutes to an hour (depending on the size and interest of the group).

What you will need
Large sheets of paper, coloured pencils, glue, post it notes.

How to do it
1. Explain the aim of the activity and how you will do it.
2. Draw a large tree on a sheet of paper with the group, showing the roots, trunk and leaves. The bigger the paper the better and it helps to get the group involved in doing the drawing.
3. Write the question at the top of the tree in such a way that it may be answered with either yes or no.
4. Below the question, write ‘yes’ on one side and ‘no’ on the other side.
5. Under the yes and no, have the children list all the possible consequences of each decision.
6. Have the children consider all the consequences and come to a decision.
7. In cases where the question is not a ‘yes/no’ use several branches for the different options and consequences listed for each.
8. Again, the consequences are carefully considered and a decision may be made.

TIPS
Instead of using words use pictures or drawings
Making it Happen Activity 3: Diamond Ranking

Aim
To put issues in priority order.

Do this with
Groups of 4 to 6 participants (aged 3 to 12 years).

Good for
Children to learn how to prioritise and to show them the importance of cooperation.

Time
15 to 30 minutes.

What you will need
Post it notes, A4 paper, pens, diamond formation drawn on butchers paper.

How to do it
1. Following an ideas storming discussion where nine ideas are selected to be priority ideas divide the group into smaller groups of 3 to 4 participants.

2. Ask each group to arrange their top nine ideas (they can add other ideas if the group decides they should be one of the nine and drop off one of the ideas from the large group) in a diamond formation with the priority at the top, two in 2nd, three in 3rd, two in 4th and their lowest at the bottom.

3. They need to get consensus as a group and can move the ideas around until they reach an order with which they all agree.

4. For consensus to work the group must understand that everyone must not have an objection. So the majority may agree, but if one person disagreed then this is not a consensus. The people disagreeing must remember that the aim is cooperation and not to be argumentative.

5. It might be useful to emphasise that ideas that come towards the bottom of the formation are the ninth most important issue overall and not the least.

(see following diagram)
Involving children in decision making

Making it Happen Activity 3: Diamond Ranking

Most important
Evaluation Activity 1:
Evaluation Targets

Aim
To get a quick and clear image of the success of a one-off activity.

Do this with
A group of up to 30 participants (aged 3 to 12 years).

Good for
Getting a quick response.
Giving a really clear picture of success.
Asking just a few questions.

Time
5 minutes.

What you will need
Some large sheets of paper, Blu-tack or masking tape, sticky dots, a felt tip pen.

How to do it
1. Decide on some questions about the session. For example:
   » Was it fun?
   » Did you get a go at everything?
   » Should we do this again?
   » Did you do an activity with a friend?

2. Write each question on a piece of paper – but keep them simple. On each piece of paper draw a target like a dartboard but keep it to four circles only: excellent, good, OK, boring. Place the paper on the wall, a table or the floor.

3. Give everyone some sticky dots and explain that the middle circle means they agree completely, the next one means it was nearly there, the next one means it was OK and the last one means absolutely no way do they agree with the question.

4. Ask everyone to put their dots on the circle they think best describes their answer to the question.

5. Thank everyone and tell them what you are going to do with the information.

6. Depending on the questions you ask, you could keep the target sheets (make sure you date them) and record change over a period of weeks, or just record what children did or didn’t like.
Evaluation Activity 1: Evaluation Targets

Were we on target?

- BORING
- OK
- GOOD
- EXCELLENT
Evaluation Activity 2: Space and Simple Ranking

Aim
To find out what is most and least important about an issue or project.

Do this with
A group of up to 20 participants (aged 3 to 12 years).

Good for
Groups who know each other quite well.

End of activity evaluation.
Getting a quick list of likes and dislikes.

Time
5 minutes each for space ranking and simple ranking.

What you will need
Large sheet of paper, pens, post it notes, chalk, Jelly beans, Photographs of activities, a large room or area for space ranking.

How to do it
This activity involves the group in deciding what they most or least like about something and can include explaining why they are putting it in that order. It can be done in a number of ways and you can adapt the way you do it to the preferences of the group you are working with, the time and space available.

» **Space ranking** – in a large room, playground or field tell the group that one side of the room is for ‘Yes’, the middle os for ‘not sure’ and the other end is for ‘no’. Ask the group a question such as ‘Should we do this activity again?’ or ‘Did everyone get a fair chance to have a go at today’s activity’ and ask them to stand in the part of the room that reflects their opinion. You can do this with all sorts of questions and answers but try not to make them controversial – this activity is for getting a quick, lively response, not an in-depth discussion. Why not ask the group what questions they would like to ask?

» **Simple ranking** – Give everyone some post-it notes and a pen. Decide what you want to find out about (for example, what people thought about a session or activity). Place a large piece of paper on a table with the following headings written (or drawn with smiley/neutral/sad faces):

One thing I liked; One thing that was ok; One thing I didn’t like

Ask children to write (or draw) something for each heading and place it on the piece of paper under the appropriate heading.

TIPS
Take care that you have enough space to this activity safely.
Evaluation Activity 3:
Jars of Importance

**Aim**
To provide a way for children to explore a particular issue or give feedback about a session or activity.

**Do this with**
A group of up to 30 participants divided into small groups of two or three children (aged 3 to 12 years old)

**Good for**
- Getting children to identify what is most important to them
- Keeping a visual reminder of what children think at a particular time

**Time**
20 to 30 minutes

**What you will need**
Large sheets of paper (flip chart size or bigger), Glue (a couple of glue sticks are good), Felt tipped pens, Scissors, A4 sheets of paper.

**How to do it**
1. Explain that the aim of the activity is for children to decide what they think about an issue (eg keeping healthy) or something that they have done (eg recent activity). Stress that there is no right or wrong answers - you just want to know what they think. Keep reminding the children of this throughout the activity. Organise the children into small groups of two or three.

2. Ask each small group to draw three large jars on a sheet of flip chart paper and label them:
   - Very important
   - Important
   - Not important

3. Put the sheets on a table, the floor or wall so that each small group can see and reach them.

4. On the A4 paper write a series of either comments about an issue (eg young carers) or responses to a question (eg what have we learned about how to keep healthy? Or what should the group do next term?). Make sure the writing is easy to read. You can prepare this bit of the activity before the group begins but you will need to ask the group for any comments that they would like to add. It can be very useful to invite the group to think up the comments themselves.
5. Cut the comments up so each comment is on a separate piece of paper.

6. Ask the groups to decide which jars they think each comment should go in and once agreed, they glue the comment to that jar. **The discussion among the group is very important** and you might want to keep a few notes about why the children think some comments should go in which jar.

7. With the whole group, look at the jars again and talk about them. **Is there anything missing?**

8. You can keep these jars to use in project evaluation, for example, to help identify issues to address in future planning or to display at events or keep as a portfolio of evidence about the work of the project and what children see as important. **The children might also want to leave them on display for a while.**

**TIPS**

You can prepare the sheets of paper with the jars drawn on them in advance if time is short.
Evaluation Activity 4: Stones in the Pond

**Aim**
To get feedback about a process

**Do this with**
A group of up to 30 participants - but will work with a large or small group

**Good for**
To get quick response to the process and then talk about the consequences of the feedback. Helps the children to look at the outcomes and what happens next

**Time**
20 minutes

**What you will need**
Post it notes, pens, large sheets of butcher’s paper

**How to do it**
1. Ask the children to visualise a pond on the floor.
2. Ask them to write ‘one thing they will take from today’ on a piece of paper (their stone), crush it up into a ball like a stone and take it in turns to toss their stone into the pond.
3. They can chose whether or not they want to tell others what they wrote.
4. After they’ve all tossed in their imaginary stones you can talk about the ripples that everyone’s actions can make.

**TIPS**
Take care that you have enough space to this activity safely.
Activities for helping children express their views

The following games may be used at various times to enable children to express their viewpoints. Children are not experienced at having opinions about specific topics and these games can help them to explore their feelings and verbalise their views.

**Circle with Chairs**

Everyone stands in a circle with enough chairs for participants minus one. One person who is in the middle makes a statement and those children who agree stand up and change chairs. The person in the middle tries to get a vacated chair which then leaves someone without, who then stands in the middle. This ‘new’ person in the middle makes a statement and the game progresses. If no one stands up, meaning no one agrees, people in the circle applaud because this shows their individuality.

**Leader of the Group**

Everyone stands in a circle with their eyes shut. One person explains that he/she will walk around the outside of the group and tap one or two individuals and those people will be the leaders. The person or people who have been tapped do not tell anyone, and everyone in the group has to guess who the leader is without verbal cues. Following the guessing, a second round is done and more people are tapped. Following the second round of guessing a discussion of what makes leaders and what qualities are needed to be leaders.

**Knots (10 to 20 minutes with up to 30 people)**

The aim is to encourage group communication and team work.

Ask the group to stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder. The circle should then put both hands in the air, so that they are pointing to the opposite side of the circle. Ask the group to take baby steps until the group gets smaller and smaller, they should grab someone else’s hands. Once everyone is holding another hand, ask the group to untangle themselves without breaking the chain.

It usually works best when the group work together and unchain themselves section by section.

**Famous People (20+ minutes, any number of people)**

The facilitator writes famous people on post it notes. Each child in the group has a post it notes on their backs (or forehead). The aim is to meet as many people and ask them one question about the person named on their back.
Activity Evaluation Form

(Please complete for each activity undertaken)

Organisation:

Activity:

Age of Children: No of Children:

Was the Guide useful? Yes / No

Why or Why Not?

Which activities did you choose to trial?

Why?

What were you hoping to achieve by the activity?

Did you achieve what you set out to do?

Is there anything that you would change or add to the activity?

What are the learnings from the activity for the organisation?

Thank you for undertaking the trial and completing the evaluation form.

Please return the evaluation form to:

(insert name of contact person and contact details)
### Trailing the Activities – Evaluation Feedback

As part of developing the kit the activities were trialled by community sector organisations who work with children under the age of 12 years. The organisations selected activities from planning, making it happen and evaluation sections and trialled them with different age groups. Following is the feedback from the trial.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>The Run Around Game</th>
<th>The Run Around Game</th>
<th>Butcher Paper Pictures</th>
<th>Word Tree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lady Gowrie, Lansdowne OSHC</td>
<td>Lady Gowrie Tasmania OSHC</td>
<td>Lady Gowrie, Mt Nelson OSHC</td>
<td>Lady Gowrie, Albuera Street OSHC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age of Children (years)</strong></td>
<td>4 to 12</td>
<td>6 to 8</td>
<td>5 to 10</td>
<td>8 to 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of children</strong></td>
<td>71</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No of Evaluation Form</strong></td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q1. Was the guide useful?</strong></td>
<td>71% Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why or Why Not?</strong></td>
<td>Instructions clear</td>
<td>Explained well activity, some of the activities I didn't really follow though may need some further or clearer explanations</td>
<td>Introduction bit too wordy but some good points. Good mix of activities - some a bit like school and could be made more for recreational leisure to suit age</td>
<td>It explains the theory behind the process and the rationale for it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q2. Activity – why?</strong></td>
<td>It looked fun &amp; a good way to get to know children</td>
<td>Used it for healthy food choices – it seemed fun way to gather evidence of current knowledge</td>
<td>Suited topic and group and was a good timeframe</td>
<td>Because I understood the purpose and process of the activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q3. What were you hoping to achieve by the activity?</strong></td>
<td>Have fun, get to know the children. Allow them to understand their choices – self discovery for them.</td>
<td>To see what understanding the children had about healthy options in order to then discuss menu suggestions for upcoming weeks</td>
<td>To have an open discussion about bullying and how this affects children, increase their knowledge of how to deal with it when it happens to them.</td>
<td>To gain insight into what was valued by children at vacation care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q4. Did you achieve it?</strong></td>
<td>Children did tend to follow their friends – good to know more about the children in a fun way</td>
<td>Yes, it was informative and helped focus the children to make very sensible suggestions for menu planning</td>
<td>Children lost interest quickly but I did reach objective</td>
<td>Yes, the children were forthcoming with their perception of their vacation care experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Q5. is there anything you would change or add to the activity?</strong></td>
<td>I think the microphone &amp; interviewing could be optional as it breaks up the activity</td>
<td>No, it worked really well and you could use it for lots of different topics</td>
<td>The children wanted to write sentences and it became more of a brainstorming session</td>
<td>No, this activity was short and sweet and achieved its goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Comments</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I didn’t find all the activities easy to understand – I made some notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Involving children in decision making

### Activity Booklet

#### Mind Stretchers (not an activity listed)

- Scots Early Learning Centre
- NewPIN Family Futures
- Ravenswood Child and Family Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Age of Children (years)</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>No of Evaluation Form</th>
<th>Q1. Was the guide useful?</th>
<th>Why or Why Not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scots Early Learning Centre</td>
<td>3 to 4</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>71% N</td>
<td>This is a project that started a month before we received the guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NewPIN Family Futures</td>
<td>3 to 5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Because it wasn’t age appropriate for our children who are all under the age of 5. We modified it to suit children’s ages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravenswood Child and Family Centre</td>
<td>4 to 5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>The actions were well explained – makes the process quite logical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2. Activity - why?</th>
<th>Q3. What were you hoping to achieve by the activity?</th>
<th>Q4. Did you achieve it?</th>
<th>Q5. Is there anything you would change or add to the activity?</th>
<th>Other Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As part of the EYLF and work by Claire Warden we were already implementing giving children a voice in decision making</td>
<td>To create a playground designed by children so that they would be able to enjoy creative play</td>
<td>Yes, the children enjoyed the experience and had lots of ideas. They enjoyed ‘reading’ the ‘big book’ they created while working on playground ideas</td>
<td>We only worked with children who came on one particular day. Due to its success we will extend this activity to add the voices of the children who attend the centre on the other four days.</td>
<td>That children place a different value on some things to adults i.e. the children see slides and swings as an important part of the playground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because it was able to be modified to our children’s ages</td>
<td>For the children to be able to express their feelings about various foods visually</td>
<td>Yes, we conducted the activity twice: the first time with the mums’ involvement and the second time without. When the children were allowed to choose for themselves they chose different foods to when their mum was present.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>For our cohort we didn’t do the interviewing by the children but the group facilitator asked some of the children why they had made the choice they had.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This activity was suited to our cohort</td>
<td>To get a decision from the children on what they would like set up for outside play</td>
<td>Yes, the children decided for that day that they wanted climbing and jumping equipment</td>
<td>You can add more items to the activity depending on the size of the group and what you want them to decide on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of good practice
Glossary
Reference list
Examples of good practice

Getting the Views of Children

Children from a primary school were involved in developing a video to give them a voice in their community. The project was developed in partnership with the local family support agency working with the primary school to involve parents and children together. Gains for the children were that they had a voice and influenced the project, self-determination for the children, social and political education and they became creators not just consumers.

Community Planning

A community organisation wanted to develop a strategic action plan about children’s participation in their organisation. They employed a youth worker to establish a reference group which included children that the organisation provided services for. One of the children co-chaired the meetings of the reference group. This allowed the children to develop leadership skills, improve self-determination and have a child friendly policy.

Looking at Child Focused Issues

Children co-facilitated with teachers workshops at their local school with different class rooms about cyber-bullying. From these sessions a brochure, which included guidelines and school policy, was produced for the school that the whole school community use.

The Commissioner for Children has a Children’s Consultative Council of children and young people across Tasmania. The groups are school representative councils that talk about relevant current issues that affect children. The SRCS consult with the wider school community about the issue. The views of the children are than documented in a report and forwarded to the Minister for Children. For one issue, tattoo and piercing legislation of children and young people under the age of 18, the report has informed the new legislation as to what is the appropriate age for children to be able to have a tattoo and piercing. Children are given the opportunity to express their views and develop leadership skills and see that there are outcomes resulting from their participation.
Developing a Creative Festival of Children

The aim of the event was to raise awareness and recognition of the diversity of children’s culture, children’s achievements and citizenship. Up to 40 children led the planning of the festival. Different organisations provided children with access to IT facilities, information, workshops and videos. Arts and creative activities were set up at the festival and children had an opportunity to try different art, music and physical activities throughout the festival.

Multicultural Statewide Youth Forum

Children and young people from a youth group of different cultural backgrounds co-facilitated a workshop for children and young people to celebrate & share cultures, identify & prioritizing issues and to create a positive image of multicultural young people in our communities.

This was a partnership project between a local council and the Multicultural Resource Centre and it was free for all young people participating. Children from different groups were contacted through their schools and youth groups to attend.

The outcomes from the workshop formed a report that was presented at the local council meeting and at the board of the multicultural centre. It gave the children an opportunity to work together, recognize the different cultures and to some positive stories about the children.
Local Council Consultations

Creating Child Friendly Urban Spaces – “Kids Allowed in Kingborough”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Kingston Main Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kingborough Council is currently designing an upgrade to the main street and this project has provided important material for consideration by Council’s engineers and designers. One of the goals of the main street upgrade is to create a more pedestrian friendly environment within a currently car dominated environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a step towards a ‘child friendly’ city paradigm, it was felt that children need to be consulted in a meaningful way. The “Kids Allowed in Kingborough” project used the arts as an innovative model for consulting with children (6 years and under). This target group have not traditionally been consulted about urban planning issues and yet they have very specific needs to ensure that urban spaces are made ‘child friendly’. While Council has a Youth Development team and Youth Participation Strategy, there was a need to be inclusive of children’s voices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| How many Children required | Up to 4 class groups of small groups of 4 to 6 supervised by their teachers. 90 in total were consulted. |
| Age of children | Between 4–6 years age |
| When | During the day – school day |
| Time to do Activity | 2 hours over a number of days with different groups of children. |
| Adults to be involved | School or child care centre support (teachers and parents) and relevant Council staff – approx. 5–6 adults. |
| Parents will need to give consent for the children to go on excursion. |
| Process | The Kids Allowed in Kingborough project was an initiative of Kingborough Council, supported by the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation to employ an artist to work collaboratively with children at local schools (kinder) and child care centres to explore the concept of a ‘child friendly place’. |
| The artist worked with groups of children 5 years and under to explore what a welcoming place feels and looks like, through drawings, discussions, paintings and clay work. Their ideas were interpreted into what a main street needs, to make it an interesting and welcoming place for children. The artist used those concepts to create a ‘pop-up’ art installation that was exhibited on the main street of Kingston for a day to showcase how these elements could transform an uninviting environment. |
| A concurrent photographic and children’s art exhibition was held at the Council Civic Centre which also demonstrated the concepts of a child friendly place. |
| Key stakeholders were invited to attend and hear children’s ideas on influencing future planning for urban spaces. |
Involving children in decision making

Potential Benefits & Outcomes

Project Objectives

» To enable children to provide a voice into Council’s planning of the main street in Kingston - this project promotes children’s active involvement in an issue that affects them e.g. creating a child friendly main street.

» To installation a ‘pop-up’ art work in the main street to enable key decision makers (planners, engineers, urban designers and developers) to view a main street design from a child's perspective.

» To provide parents, teachers and other care givers the opportunity to understand the importance of citizenship and the need for children to be able to participate in civic life and have their views considered in decision making processes.

» To affirm community citizenship and celebration by creating a sense of pride, community engagement, social inclusion and cohesion, as well as raising public awareness of issues for marginalised groups such as children.

Project Outcomes

» Following the visit to the main street, children were able to work closely with a professional artist to express their ideas on what would make the main street a better place - they did this through drawing, painting and clay work.

» Council’s urban planner participated in the field trips with the various groups of children to observe how they interacted with the street and was available to talk to the children and hear their ideas directly.

» The art works created by the children were displayed in an art exhibition in the Council Civic Centre as a way to show members of the community how the children were able to articulate their ideas.

» The pop-up art exhibition on the main street provided key stakeholders such as politicians (federal, state and local); local and state government representatives; developers and local business with a firsthand example of how the main street could be transformed into a more welcoming place for all people.

» To create the pop up art exhibition, the artist amplified the artwork that the children had made into larger than life images. When the children visited the exhibition, they were able to recognise their work which provided further recognition of their input and inspiration. Ultimately, this positive recognition could assist in creating more active citizens of the future.

» The artist, schools and child care centres have benefited from working with the Council in that they have established a partnership with the Council that could lead to further collaboration.

» By bringing the children to the main street during both the field visits and the pop up art exhibition was observing the change in the way other pedestrians and cars interacted with the street. There seemed to be greater consideration from motorists and pedestrians were less rushed with many willing to stop at the site and chat while they watched the children play.
As a result of the project:

» The Tasmanian Early Years Foundation supported the development of the “What a Child Friendly place needs” poster

» Artwork from the ‘pop-up’ art exhibition was used in the Hobart office window of the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation for a period of 3 months

» The project was showcased at the Creativity in the Early Years Conference in Launceston in March 2012

» A Kids Allowed ‘pop up’ shop has been set up at Channel Court Shopping Centre in an unused shop. The shop has been inspired by the “What a Child Friendly place needs” and a pilot project of art workshops held at the shop for children have been extremely popular.

### Potential Risks for the Children
Needs to provide time to get consent from the parents/guardians. Children to be allowed to choose to take part in the activity.

### Feedback to the Children
The children were able to see their ideas implemented in the pop up art exhibition. A professional artist amplified their artwork so they could see it larger than life on the main street. Their original artwork was on display in an art exhibition in the Council Civic Centre and a photographic exhibition of their participation was also exhibited.

The celebration of the project was catered with child friendly food and the children could see all the adults looking at their ideas. The Mayor and key guest speakers thanked the children for their input.
Glossary

Children
The document focuses on the age range of children up to the age of 12 years. However, the participation model and methodology can be adapted across a variety of age ranges.

Decision-making
The many ways that children can influence change directly or indirectly, using a variety of tools together including art, discussion, observation, writing.

Informed
Allowing children enough time to digest information and formulate their own opinions in order to contribute to decision-making.

Listening Culture
A listening culture is one in which listening to individual experiences and views are identified as a core feature of the setting’s approach and ethos. It involves practitioners and staff interacting respectively with young children and adults and documenting the listening process, including resultant change. It is an environment in which everyone values the importance of listening, are aware of and reflective about how they listen, and acknowledge and respond to experiences and views without discrimination.

We listen to young children for a number of reasons:
» It nurtures respectful and confident relationships
» It supports and enhances learning and sustained thinking
» It may reveal inequalities – makes sure the setting is fully inclusive
» It contributes to quality improvement.

Organisation
An organisation is a government or non-government organisation, profit or non-profit, that provides services to different groups within the community. In this case an organisation is an organisation that provides services to children under the age of 12 years.

Participation
Participation is interacting with children in ways that allow children to express their views and feelings, with the purpose of influencing decisions. It involves providing opportunities for children to take responsibility and feel a sense of ownership, leading to empowerment. Participation is much more than choosing which game to play.
Reference List


15. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2010). ‘Not Just a Phase: a guide to the participation of children and young people in health services.’ UK


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