

Child Participation Case study

How Involve Youth Project involves Traveller children and young people in decision-making in their day-to-day programmes and activities

1) Background information

a) The setting or space in which we engage with children/young people.

Involve Youth Project Meath is a Traveller¹ specific Youth Project. We provide fun programmes and activities for young people aged 8 - 25 years of age. The objectives of Involve are:

- To advocate equality and inclusivity for the Traveller community and provide educational and training programmes, initiatives and services that promote the participation and inclusion of the Traveller community in Irish society.
- To support Travellers accessing employment and creating opportunities for Travellers to avail of Training Programmes that would enhance their employability in society.

We have one project in Navan and another in Trim.

b) The decision makers who are responsible for listening to the views of children and young people

The decision makers responsible for listening to the views of children and young people and acting on their views are the Involve Coordinator, two Community Employment (CE) Youth Workers and a Youth Work assistant. The responsibilities of youth workers include involving young people in decision making.

c) The age profile of the children and young people

Aged 6 - 22

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

Involve Youth project specialises in working with children and young people from the Traveller Community. In our Trim centre, all the young people that attend our centre are Travellers. In our Navan centre, we also work with young people from low socio-economic backgrounds, and other ethnic backgrounds including Black Irish.

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 at

Things we considered	What we did
How we make sure that children and young people feel safe to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have a few things in place to ensure the young people feel safe to express their views.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We meet the young people in our own centre in Trim and in Navan we meet them in a local authority space. Both centres are on the sites where the young people live. • We make sure there is Traveller culture representation in the organisation. This includes imagery as well as having Traveller Staff on the team. This creates a feeling of safety for some Travellers as they can see representation of their community in the project and so they feel more willing to open up and express themselves. • Also having mixed gender staff is important as some young people will feel more comfortable opening up to someone who identifies as the same gender to them particularly within the Traveller community. <p>This is also why we have established a Girls Group because some females aren't allowed to engage in mixed groups once they reach a certain age. This Girls group allows a space for the girls to stay engaged in the project and feel safe to express their views.</p>
<p>How we allow enough time to listen to and hear their views</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people may share their views in a natural way during groups and activities. • Staff are expected to listen to these views in a respectful way while asking further questions to discover why they may or may not be enjoying this activity or programme in comparison to other programmes. • There is also a space within our evaluations of programmes to ensure there is a specific time designated to listening to the views of all the young people particularly because some young people may not share their opinions in the day to day running of programmes. <p>The purpose of the evaluation is to make sure all young people's voices are listened too, and they all have an opportunity to have an input for future programmes and activities.</p>
<p>How we make sure that all children or young people are heard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As mentioned above, the use of evaluations is one way we make sure all young people are heard. • Also, during team reflective practice and staff meetings staff share if any young people have given their views on particular programmes or activities and adaptations are made accordingly.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups are also used when we want a broader idea of activities and programmes, they would like to do within the youth project. • For the older groups social media and online platforms are also used including google forms and Facebook messenger. <p>If there are youth conferences or interesting opportunities coming up they are often shared on social media or through the messenger group to see if there is any interest in these.</p>
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VOICE: How we gave young people a voice in decisions

Things we considered	What we did
How we support children and young people to give their views and be heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responsibilities of youth workers include involving young people in decision making, which is addressed at the team's daily reflective practice after groups and within staff meetings. • We use group contracts designed by the young people with rules that would make the group/activity run smoothly and ensure that the space is safe, and everyone is respected. • Revisiting the group contract is needed at times to ensure the contract is remembered and maintained. All the young people and youth workers sign it when everyone agrees of the rules to show that the rules are for everyone and are reciprocated from staff to young people also. <p>We always encourage the young people to give suggestions on new programmes or activities and implement these where possible to demonstrate that we listen and value their inputs.</p>
How they can raise things that matter to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We like to design programmes which link with current topics or concerns that young people have. These may be from what we recognise in society in general or if the young people say things within groups that need to be focused on e.g. Smoking (Xhale programme), Mental health or Racism (Show Racism the Red Card) etc. • Other than that, we try to develop relationships that the young people feel safe and respected and comfortable to be able to share the things that matter to them most. Sometimes this can be challenging with the Traveller young people as some have a guard up regarding what they share out of fear of negative repercussions.

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	It happens naturally for the most part as the young people typically say openly whether they like the activity or not.
How we offer them different ways of giving their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The we offer them to give their views varies depends on the programme. • Sometimes their views are shared vocally and openly in group times. Other times they will talk to a staff member they feel comfortable with. • Other ways include within focus groups or evaluations and through group discussions. <p>We always encourage a space to share your opinions freely and respectfully.</p>

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 show children and young people that we are ready and willing to listen to views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptions are made to activities and programmes based on what the young people say about the activity done on that day. We implement the activities or suggestions that the young people have shared with us where possible. • For example, if they have said they would like to do more cooking programmes we try to facilitate this. <p>By doing these smaller things it shows they are being listened too and hopes that they will recognise this and therefore they will feel more comfortable opening up in other ways regarding their views.</p>
How we make sure that they understand what we can do with their views	By having open communication with the young people about what we can do regarding their views as well as what I mentioned before regarding implementing things that they have shared.

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

Things we considered	What we did
How they know the level of influence they can have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups and evaluations are completed after each programme has finished to get a breakdown of what parts of the programme were enjoyed best or least, whether they would like to do something like this again and how often they like this style of activity. • We inform them about the influence they have by having an open communication with the young people.



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	<p>We also offer opportunities to engage in national conferences including Young Voices with NYCI as well as Erasmus projects. Young people from our project designed the No Shame Campaign, which originated from an Erasmus project.</p>
How we give them feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We get the views of children and young people on our programmes through focus groups and evaluations. • We then give them verbal feedback on which of their suggestions are possible within the limits of child safeguarding, health and safety and budgets. <p>We have very good open communication with the young people and if we can act on their wishes and suggestions, we do so.</p>
How we share with them the impact of their views on decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We always let young people know what happened to their views. <p>For example, after Covid restrictions lifted, the young people wanted a residential camping trip, and we organised this trip for them.</p>
How we explain the reasons for decisions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We use open communication. • Being realistic sometimes impacts the results of decisions as young people sometimes have unrealistic expectations and a compromise needs to be agreed. <p>For example, young people wanted to have a six-week cycling programme. We did all the planning to organise this, but young people who had not attended for some time turned up on the day the programme was due to start. There were not enough bikes in our project for the project happen at that time. We promised the young people that we will look for extra funding to get more bikes.</p>

IMPACT

What changes were made because of children/young people giving their views? The Youth Space in Trim has many spaces which have been adapted by the young people because they wanted to make it more youth friendly. This includes wall murals designed by the young people from start to finish both inside and outside. There is also representation of the Traveller community around the youth club. They have said that this makes them feel accepted and welcome.

ⁱ Irish Travellers are a formally recognised minority ethnic group with their own language and culture

