

Child Participation Case study

How a family support service listens to and acts on the views of children during their engagement in a family support programme

1) Background information

- a) The Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service (DoCCFS) is a not-for-profit public service organisation. We provide a range of therapeutic supportive services to children and families based in the greater Dublin region. Our services include Family Centres, Pre Schools, Assessment Centres and a Gender, Sexual and Domestic Abuse Service. Our Family Centres offer a range of therapeutic supportive interventions to children up to the age of 18 years and their parents or carers. Our approach to working with families is needs led, strengths based, and solution focussed. Children who attend our services are referred by their parents, school, social workers and other agencies.
- a) This case study is an account of how Family Workers employed by the Daughters of Charity Child and Family Service (Arklow Springboard) work with a group of eight children aged 6-11 years who are experiencing difficulties through the medium of pottery, which was selected by the children themselves. Family Workers engage in and facilitate sessions therapeutic with these children and are responsible for listening to and acting on the views of children.

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">• The Family Worker commences by introducing herself/himself and by welcoming the children into the room.• The worker facilitates an icebreaker with the children to make sure they get to know one another's name and feel comfortable in the group <p>The worker creates an element of fun and relaxation.</p>
How we allow enough time to listen to and hear their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The worker asks the children for their suggestions for ways they talk and can listen to each other for a group contract and writes their ideas on a flip chart.• Time is given for each child to say what they see as important. <p>Having given time for sharing ground rules or a group contract, the worker/facilitator asks each child to see if they have anything to add and if their point is on the flip chart.</p>



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How we make sure that all children or young people are heard	Having given time for sharing ground rules the worker asks each child to see if they have anything to add and if their point is on the flip chart.
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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"> • With this group of children, the focus of the workers/facilitators is on a creativity. • Children are told the length of time and duration of the group. • The plan is given for the pottery group. • Children are told that they would be using clay and that they will show them how to make different things such as plates, mugs, bowls etc. <p>The children are encouraged to ask questions.</p>
How they can raise things that matter to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the group the facilitator speaks to children about what they are making on the day itself. The facilitator gives each child the tools required. • Children are encouraged to ask the facilitator questions about what they are doing. • Children are invited to make suggestions on what they want to create and how they want to create it. • The facilitator demonstrates what they are going to be making and shows them a completed item. • Children commence their work. • The Family Worker links in with each of the children to make sure they understand the instructions. • In this process the children ask questions as they work on the clay. <p>When a child is finding it difficult for example to shape the clay the facilitator tells the child that she will help him and encourages the child to continue with the work.</p>
How we offer them different ways of giving their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the group progresses, the worker/facilitator seeks views from the children as to how they are finding the activity. These views are listened to. For example, children are asked if they wish to have a different activity and how that can be facilitated.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the programme children are asked about a what summer activity they would like. <p>It is explained that pottery can be part of it or there could be an alternative activity.</p>
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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"> The worker shows that the children were listened to in how she interacts with them and wrote down what they said. <p>The worker makes sure to include all children</p>
How we make sure that they understand what we can do with their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In listening to the children, the worker explains what can happen as a result of their views. For example, the worker asked what healthy snacks they would like in the programme. <p>Children knew they were listened to when these were provided.</p>

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"> Feedback from the children is written down and shared with the team. <p>The suggestions made form the next planning stage</p>
How we give them feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are given feedback throughout the programme. <p>They are affirmed in the work they are doing.</p>
How you share with them the impact of their views on decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff talk to them about the decisions made. <p>In all groups the staff explain to the children that the current programme is a result of feedback from the current group of children and children who attended previously.</p>

IMPACT

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

The programme is very flexible and responsive to the views and needs of the children. So, changes to the programme happened on a weekly basis. The views of children are taken on board to help our staff prepare the next session or programme.