



YOUNG VOICES
IN DECISION-MAKING

Toolkit for including children

from birth to 5 years
in participation in
decision-making



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1

Introduction

This toolkit is about how to listen to babies, toddlers and young children and involve them in decision-making on matters that affect their lives.

It contains guidance, advice and examples of good practice on involving children in decision-making for professionals and practitioners who work with babies, toddlers and children under the age of five. Throughout the toolkit, babies, infants, toddlers and young children under the age of five are referred to as 'children', and their stage of life is referred to as 'early childhood'.

All children under the age of 18 have the right to a voice in decisions that affect their lives under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).ⁱ Ireland is one of 196 countries that has ratified the UNCRC. This means that all Irish government departments, State agencies and publicly funded organisations that work with children must recognise all children, including the very youngest children, as independent rights holders and must implement children's rights in the UNCRC.

Article 12 of the UNCRC ensures children the right to have their views heard and taken seriously on matters that affect their lives. Ireland has also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).ⁱⁱ Article 7 of the UNCRPD ensures children the right to be heard and notes that children with disabilities must be given support to be heard and taken seriously. Under Article 12 of the UNCRC, adults who work with children must listen to, hear and act on children's views in ways that make sure all their other UNCRC rights are respected.

At national level, *Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2023-2028)* promises that all the rights of children will be implemented.ⁱⁱⁱ The Government's *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan (2024-2028)* includes actions for government departments, State agencies and organisations that receive public funding on involving children under five years in decision-making.^{iv} The *First 5: Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028)* and its accompanying action plan are also informed by the views of children and have actions for government departments and State agencies on involving children under five years in decision-making.^v



Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ensures children the right to have their views heard and taken seriously on matters that affect their lives.



2

Who can use the toolkit?

The toolkit can be used by all those who work with and support young children and is particularly useful for those who work with children in a professional role.

We hope it will be used by early years educators, Junior Infant teachers, healthcare professionals, social workers, parents, childminders, social care workers, early intervention practitioners, organisations that provide sports, dance, gym and other classes to children and in any other place or space where adults work directly with babies, toddlers and young children. The toolkit recommends that early years educators, primary school teachers, social care professionals, paediatric and healthcare practitioners, sports coaches, dance and other tutors and others who plan to involve babies, toddlers and very young children in decision-making refer to expertise and guidance from within their own fields of practice as well as following good practice in children and young people's participation in decision-making.^{vi}

The toolkit highlights the importance of ensuring that the views of pre-verbal, non-speaking and verbal children are listened to, heard and acted on using methods that are in keeping with the developmental stages of early childhood. Adults need to respect all children as individuals with rights, build on children's abilities, interests, experiences, cultures, and backgrounds and take account of additional needs or supports children may need to participate in decision-making as fully as possible.^{vii}

We encourage users of this toolkit to learn from and try the exciting and child-friendly approaches for involving young children in decision-making described in the good practice examples. But, most importantly, don't be afraid to adapt these approaches to your own setting or service and to make them your own. We hope the toolkit will inspire you to find ways to involve children in decision-making in everything you do with them from day to day.

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3

How was the toolkit developed?

The toolkit is based on the Government's *National Framework on the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making* [Participation Framework], which uses the Committee on the Rights of the Child nine principles of quality child participation.^{viii}

The Participation Framework gives practical advice and guidance on how to listen to children's views and take them seriously and is based on the Lundy Model of Participation. This toolkit should be used alongside the Framework.

The toolkit is informed by the ways that babies, toddlers and young children took part in decision-making in the good practice examples on pages 16-67. These examples are based on interviews with early years educators, professionals and other adults who work with children. They tell the stories of real children who were encouraged and supported by adults to use their agency to take part in decision-making in ways that influenced their lives and environments in a variety of settings. The stories are told in the words of those who were interviewed.

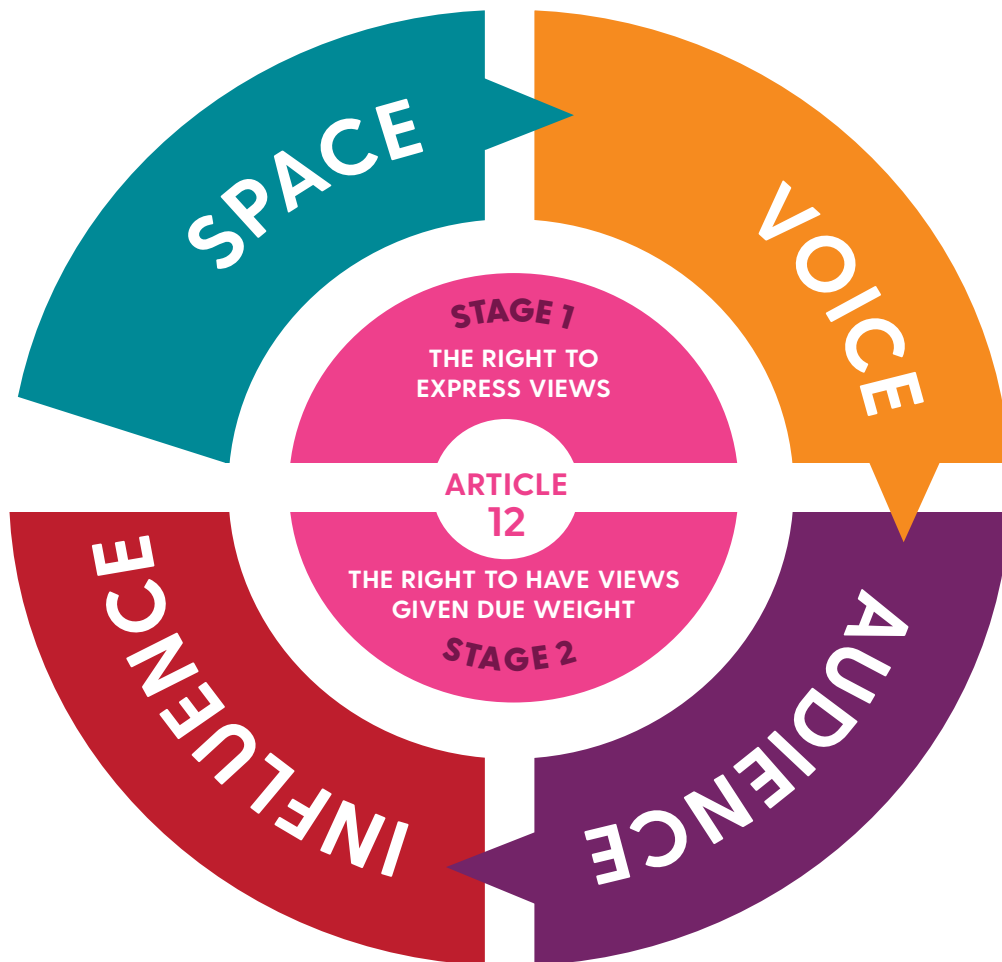
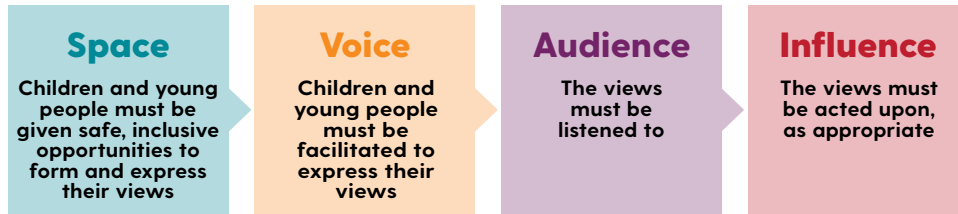
The toolkit is also informed by a literature review on methodologies for consulting children from birth to five years that was overseen by an Early Years Working Group, made up of early years educators and specialists.^{ix}

The toolkit is informed by the ways that babies, toddlers and young children took part in decision-making in the good practice examples.



Lundy Model

This model provides a pathway to help conceptualise Article 12 of the UNCRC. It focuses on four distinct, albeit interrelated, elements. The four elements have a rational chronological order.



Everyday Spaces Checklist

This checklist is designed as a guide to help you ensure that children and young people have a voice in decision-making. It can be applied in many everyday situations including in classrooms, hospitals, childcare settings, child and youth services, youth and sports clubs, youth projects, arts and creative initiatives and other spaces.

Please do not use this checklist for developing policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation – use the Planning Checklist on page 18.

Please make sure that the ways you involve children and young people in decision-making are age-appropriate and accessible for all, whether in person or online.



The Participation Framework has an Everyday Spaces Checklist. This Checklist is a reflective tool to support practitioners to ensure that they are listening to babies, toddlers and young children in a rights-based way. All practitioners should use the Checklist every time they meet or work with individual children or groups of children.

4

Good practice guidance

This guidance comes from many sources, including the *Participation Framework*, *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*^x, *Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*^{xi} and recommendations from early years educators and specialists.

Professionals and practitioners should involve children in decision-making during early childhood using a child-rights-based approach that is present in all aspects of their work with children. Some of the key guidance from these sources includes:

- Children’s participation in decision-making should be an approach or way you work in the everyday activities of your service or practice. You should also involve children in decisions about programmes, policies, or plans when this is relevant.
- Recognise the fact that every child is unique.
- Provide support to children to enable the development of their skills and capacities.
- Prioritise small group work.
- Use slow and relational approaches.^{xii}
- Enable children to make choices and decisions and change their minds.
- Respect different ways of working and engagement to meet the needs of children.

This toolkit primarily focuses on what children’s participation in decision-making is, but it is important to understand what it is not. It is not handing over power to children but involving children in decision-making as fully as possible. Children are not the only experts in their own lives – adults also have expertise in children’s lives, and this combined expertise enables better decisions to be made. It is also not allowing children to do things that are harmful or unsafe or that violate their other rights. Children are entitled to have decisions made with their best interests as a primary consideration. Giving due weight to children’s views does not necessarily or always mean doing or achieving what children want. An effective way to give due weight to the views of children is to give them information, respect and acknowledge what they want and discuss the safest, realistic and best decision/s with them.^{xiii} It is important to be transparent in explaining to children what is and is not possible and the reasons why decisions are taken^{xiv}.

The toolkit acknowledges the importance of adult-child relationships in early childhood. Adults play a critical role in supporting and contributing to children’s participation in decision-making in early childhood. Some of the ways that adults can do this are illustrated in the good practice examples.



Adults play a critical role in supporting and contributing to children’s participation in decision-making in early childhood.



Tips for good practice

Here are top tips to help you involve children in decision-making. These tips come from the children and adults whose stories are outlined in the good practice examples (pages 16 to 67), early years educators and specialists, and key messages from the Participation Framework.

- 1 Make it part of everything you do:** Build the involvement of children in decision-making into everything you do and make it a central approach in your professional practice every day. Create spaces where children feel safe to express their views and have them acted on.^{xv}

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice examples, numbers 1, 2, 8, 10 and 16.

- 2 Keep it real:** Be in the here and now. Young children make decisions based on how they feel, what they think and what they want to do in real time on live and concrete happenings in their lives.^{xvi}

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice example numbers 3, 6, 7, 8, 12 and 17.

- 3 Support children:** Make sure that you and other key adults support and contribute to children's participation in decision-making. Relationships with trusted adults are a cornerstone of early childhood and participation in decision-making should be viewed as an interdependent process between adults and young children.^{xvii} This process should be based on adults building fair and respectful relationships with children.

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice examples, numbers 1, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 17.

- 4 Allow time:** Invite children to participate in decision-making using slow approaches in which they are interacting with trusted adults over time. Very young children need time to give their views and positive interaction with adults while giving their views.^{xviii}

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice example numbers 1, 7, 10, 12, 13, 16 and 17.

- 5 Respect children's differences:** Be inclusive and responsive to the individual stage of development, ability, needs (including additional needs), views and interests of each child so that all children can take part in decision-making. It is important to take account of individual variations in the capacities of children of the same age and of their ways of reacting to situations.^{xix} Be aware of the evolving capacities of children noted in Article 5 of the UNCRC, which refers to processes of maturing and learning as children gradually develop knowledge, competencies and understanding, including understanding their rights and how they can be realised.^{xx}

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice example numbers 7, 11, 14 and 15.

- 6 Vary methods:** Use a variety of methods and approaches to involve children in decision-making to enable individual children to contribute in ways that suit their personality, interests and stage of development. Children may give their views on one decision using a lot of different methods or ways. Young children may be pre-verbal or choose not to speak, and it is essential we listen to the many ways that they can communicate their views.

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice example numbers 1, 8, 9, 10 and 12.

- 7 Offer children choices:** Give children the choice to take part in decision-making or not to take part and remember that silence and non-participation are forms of decision-making. The opportunity to choose not to participate in decision-making is critical to a true understanding of child rights.^{xxi}

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice example numbers 1, 2, 6, 14, 15 and 17.



Use these good practice tips in your work with children aged 0-5 years.

- 8 Use observation:** Use observation to translate the views of very young children. The good practice examples on pages 16-67 illustrate ways that early year's educators and other practitioners used observation to record children's views and reactions so they could translate and act on children's views.^{xxii}

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice example numbers 1, 5, 8, 11 and 16.

- 9 Seek children's blue sky thinking:** Get children's own original views and thoughts rather than giving them the opinions of other people, which can limit their thinking. Remember there is always a power imbalance between children and adults and children are likely to be strongly influenced by adult views.

There are examples of ways to do this in case the good practice example numbers 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12 and 13.

- 10 Use children's strengths:** Use children's own knowledge and experience in the ways you involve them in decision-making. Always use methods that enable children to give their views in ways that respect their competence, skills and understanding.

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice example numbers 4, 5, 8, 9 and 14.

- 11 Translate children's views:** Avoid placing adult interpretations on children's views, drawings and other ways they communicate. Ask them what they mean when possible and write children's ideas on post its or the back of their drawings rather than interpreting or guessing what children mean.^{xxiii}

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice example numbers 8, 10, 12 and 13.

- 12 Give feedback to children:** Children have a right to be given feedback on what happened to their views. Sometimes children's suggestions cannot be acted on or implemented, and it is important they know why. Lundy has proposed [a model of 'Four Fs' to guide decision-makers on how to give effective feedback](#) to children after their views have been heard. In this model feedback to children must be full, friendly, fast, and followed-up.^{xxiv}

There are examples of ways to do this in the good practice example numbers 4, 7, 9, 11, 15 and 17.

- 13 Check it's working:** Evaluate the ways you involve children in decision-making to check if and how well those methods are working. Use verbal and non-verbal ways to discover if the participation methods you use are effectively giving children a voice in decision-making and if children enjoy those methods. It is also important to self-evaluate and get the views of your colleagues about how well participation methods are working.

There are examples of ways to evaluate in the good practice example numbers 1, 5, 8, 10, 14 and 16.

- 14 Reflect on your practice:** Use the Everyday Spaces Checklist every day to reflect on your own practice and support you to build children's participation in decision-making into every part of your work and daily routine.

- 15 Seek further guidance:** Read and use the guidance from the Participation Framework and guidance from your own sector.

5

Feedback and evaluation

Children need to know what happens to their views and opinions and as an adult, you need to know how effectively you are involving them in decision-making.

Here are three important things to do when you are including children in decision-making:

- 1.** Give feedback to children about what happens to their views and opinions.
- 2.** Get feedback from children about the ways you involve them in decision-making.
- 3.** Evaluate the ways you involve them in decision-making.

You will find suggestions and guidance on all three of these in the good practice examples on pages 13-50 of this Toolkit and in the Participation Framework.



6

Good practice examples

The good practice examples in this section illustrate how children from birth to 5 years participated in decision-making in different ways in different settings.

We strongly encourage you to read all the good practice examples to discover simple, effective and child-friendly ways for children to take part in decision-making.

- | | | | |
|----------|---|------------------------------|------|
| A | The voice of children in decisions in early learning and care services | Good Practice Examples 1-9 | p.16 |
| B | The voice of children in decisions in a primary school | Good Practice Example 10 | p.42 |
| C | The voice of babies and non-speaking children about their healthcare needs in a hospital setting | Good Practice Example 11 | p.45 |
| D | The voice of young children in the development of policy and services | Good Practice Examples 12-13 | p.48 |
| E | The voice of young children in sporting activities | Good Practice Examples 14-15 | p.57 |
| F | How parents can involve babies, toddlers and young children in decision-making | Good Practice Examples 16-17 | p.63 |

A

The voice of children in decisions in early learning and care services

1

How babies, toddlers and young children had voice in decision-making in the design and delivery of a dance curriculum

Limerick-Clare Local Creative Youth Partnership partnered with two early learning and care (ELC) services in Limerick city (Childworld and Nursery Times) to explore how babies, toddlers, and young children can have a voice in decision-making in the design and delivery of a six-week dance curriculum. In Childworld, there were fourteen babies and toddlers in the room (aged six months to 24 months) and eight educators. In Nursery Times, there were seven babies and toddlers in the room (aged 12 months to 14 months) and four educators. The dance curriculum was delivered by a professional dance artist and facilitator, who was contracted to undertake the pilot by Limerick-Clare Local Creative Youth Partnership (LCYP).

How the dance facilitator created the conditions for babies, toddlers, and young children to have a voice in decision-making

In both ELC services, the dance facilitator led each dance session. The educators took part in the dancing and movements with the children throughout each session when possible. Both services had toys and play equipment around the room which gave the children the opportunity to choose to do other activities during the dance sessions.

The dance facilitator planned the first dance session in each service by getting feedback from educators on the music and songs that the children like. She also used her own experience of facilitating dance with older children. After the first session, the dance facilitator planned the content of the sessions through:

- a. planning and preparation before each dance session.
- b. using a range of methods to listen to, observe and act on the voice of children during each dance session.
- c. discussions with educators and recording observations after each dance session.

**a. Planning and preparation before each dance session**

The dance facilitator developed the curriculum for each weekly dance session, based on her own observations of how the children participated in decision-making and what they enjoyed from the previous dance session; the notes she completed after each dance session; and the feedback from educators on their observations and translation of the children's views. With the use of the above material she:

- added movements into the next session that she observed the children enjoying.
- selected music that the children had enjoyed or had been listening to throughout the previous week.

- changed the order of the curriculum for each session so the children could experience movements and music that they liked at the start of the session.
 - planned familiar music for every session, like 'The Wheels on the Bus' because she observed that familiar music relaxed the children and enabled them to express their views.
- b. Using a range of methods to listen to, observe and act on the voice of babies, toddlers, and young children during each dance session**
- The dance facilitator created a safe space and a welcoming environment and started each dance session by inviting the children into a circle.
 - Educators also took part in the sessions and engaged with children in whatever ways the children chose (e.g. carrying a child, holding a child's hand, staying beside a child, dancing with a child).
 - Throughout each session, the facilitator asked children for their favourite songs, called out song options, observed the movements and song children liked, observed children's body language and reactions, modelled and copied the movements of individual children, invited children to join in, enabled children to do other things in the room and communicated with educators.
- c. Discussions with educators after each dance session**
- The facilitator asked the educators what worked best after each session.
 - She asked for their observations of the children and translations of what they observed, including what parts of the session the children enjoyed and didn't enjoy.
 - She asked educators for suggestions about songs and music the children enjoyed and what to add or change for the next session.

How the babies, toddlers and young children were ensured Space, Voice, Audience and Influence

Space

- The children were heard in a safe and familiar space (the preschool), and their familiar and trusted educators took part in every dance session with them.
- The dance facilitator and educators listened to and always observed their views during each dance session.
- The dance facilitator made sure that all children were heard by having a variety of ways for them to communicate and the freedom to choose to participate or not. Educators shared their observations with the dance facilitator about how effectively children were being heard.

Voice

- The dance facilitator provided support for children to communicate and be heard by encouraging them to share their views. The educators interacted with and connected with each child to ensure that they were supported to share their views.
- The dance facilitator regularly asked for the children's views about songs and movements. Children could also show the dance facilitator (in words, gestures, or actions) which dances and music they liked and did not like.
- The dance facilitator and educators provided a range of methods for children to give their views, share their feelings and choose if, how and when to take part in the dance sessions.

Audience

- The practice of the dance facilitator and educators was to tell and show the children through their words and body language how they were ready and willing to always listen to them.
- The children were an 'audience' with a key role in decision-making about the dance curriculum throughout each dance session and from week to week. The dance facilitator and educators were also an 'audience' who ensured that children's views were listened to and acted on.

Influence

- The children were given the opportunity to give their views at any time. The observations of the dance facilitator and educators on the aspects of each session that the children enjoyed and didn't enjoy were also acted on.
- The dance facilitator gave feedback to children in a variety of ways, including observing movements made by individual children and telling the children she was going to copy that child's movements.
- The impact of their views on decision-making was shared with the children through the continuous changes and adaptations made by the dance facilitator.
- The dance facilitator explained to the children in words and actions that the music and movements they chose were being included in each session.

2 Work in progress signs: How children make choices about when to finish an activity or a game

Crossroads and Killygordon Community Playgroup is a part-time morning service. The children are aged two years and eight months to five years and are in two rooms.

- At the start of each year, the educators make laminated 'Work in Progress' signs for the children in both playrooms.
- During Circle Time, educators explain to the children that these are signs that a child can put on a game, drawing or other activity if they need to take a break, go to the toilet, or have a snack. The sign indicates that they have not finished the activity and that no one should touch their work while they are away.
- They invite the children to decorate the signs with stickers or to draw on them.
- The signs are put in a special shelf or box and the children can take a sign any time they need one.
- Educators encourage children to use the work in progress signs, which can stay on an activity or toy for as long as children want. If toys or activities are very popular, educators encourage children to take turns and use 3- or 5-minute timers to negotiate a finishing up time with children.

How the children are given Space, Voice, Audience and Influence on when to finish an activity or a game



Space

- The children feel safe to express their views because the educators invite them to use the work in progress signs when they want or need to take a break from an activity or a game.
- Educators listen to children's requests for a work in progress sign throughout the day.
- All children are invited to use the work in progress signs whenever they want, and if a child is playing with a game or toy for a long time, educators will use a timer to negotiate with the child so other children can play with that game.

Voice

- Educators encourage children to use the work in progress signs and make sure they support those who might struggle to get a turn with a game or activity.
- Children know that they can ask for or take out a work in progress sign if they need to go to the toilet, have a snack or go for a nap.
- Children can indicate that they want the work in progress sign by asking for a sign, or by taking a sign from the shelf.

Audience

- The educators show the children that they are ready and willing to listen to their views about when to finish a game or activity by encouraging the option of using the work in progress signs.
- The educators discuss with children that they can use a work in progress sign at any time, but that sometimes they need to enable other children to get a turn with games and activities by agreeing on a time limit.

Influence

- Children know how to be in control of when to finish an activity or game by using the work in progress signs.
- Educators give feedback to children by negotiating with those who are playing with a toy or game for a long time when other children would like to play with the same toy or game. This way, all children get an equal chance to play games or activities.
- Children know about the impact of their decisions because they can make choices about when to finish games and activities.
- If other children would like to play with a particular toy or game, it may be necessary for the educators to negotiate with children and support turn-taking. The child suggests a three- or five-minute time limit to finish up, and the educator sets a timer.



3 Enabling children to choose the clothes they wear in an outdoor preschool

Willow Outdoor Preschool is a part-time service for children aged two years and eight months to five years and six months, in which children spend their time outdoors. Parents who choose this preschool are aware that their children will spend their time outdoors and will often be muddy at the end of the day. When children start in the preschool, educators give guidelines to parents about the type of clothes that are suitable for the preschool environment. Parents are asked to ensure that children arrive every day in clothes suitable for the weather and to bring extra clothes, which are kept in individual baskets.

The outdoor space has several covered areas, a polytunnel which is floored, a playhouse and other sheltered areas. The preschool also has an indoor centre with a fully equipped classroom, which they use on days with very bad weather.

The educators believe it is important to enable children to make decisions in the preschool, including what clothes they want to wear. When it is raining, educators give children choices, for example the choice of taking shelter or putting on a raincoat. If a child tells an educator that she/he is cold, the educator asks the child what they want to do about being cold. Children usually say they want to put on more clothes, so educators suggest they get more clothes from their baskets. If a child says she/he is too hot, the educator will ask the child what they want to do, and they usually say they want to take off their coat or jumper, which the educator supports.

The educators note that the parents trust them in their approach to early learning and care.



How the children are ensured Space, Voice, Audience and Influence in choosing what clothes to wear

Space

- The children feel safe to express their views because the educators enable them to decide what clothes to wear.
- The practice of educators is to continuously ask children what they want to wear and listen to children's clothing choices, which often change throughout the day.
- All children are invited by educators to decide what clothes they want to wear.

Voice

- Educators support children in the clothing choices and decisions they make.
- Children know that they can make choices about their clothing and either change their clothes themselves or ask educators if they need or want to change their clothes.
- Children can tell educators if they are too hot or cold and educators ask them what they want to do. Children also put on or take off their own clothes whenever they want.
- When it is raining, educators give children a choice of putting on a coat or taking shelter.

Audience

- The educators show the children that they are ready and willing to listen to their views by enabling them to choose the clothes they want to wear or want to take off throughout the day.
- The educators make it clear to children that they support and encourage children to make their own clothing choices.
- When it is raining, educators give children choices.

Influence

- Children know they can make choices because educators act on their views.
- Educators give children constant feedback about their right to choose what clothes to wear.
- Educators give children options to choose from when it's raining.
- Children know about the impact of their decisions because they make daily choices about their own clothing.

4 How children can make decisions on their own meal choices

St Margaret's Preschool is a morning service for children aged two years and 10 months to five years.

The preschool provides breakfast and lunch for the children every day, based on their own choices, decided at weekly discussion meetings.

- Each key worker has a weekly discussion with the children in her/his group about their favourite foods and meals at home. The educators put photographs of a variety of foods and real fruits and vegetables on the tables to encourage children to make healthy choices and try different foods.
- During these discussions, many children said that they do not like several foods placed on one dinner or breakfast plate. They told educators that they like to eat meat without potatoes or stew without vegetables. They also said they like to be able to choose exactly the foods they want on their plate at any meal.
- At the end of the discussion in each group, children are invited to decide what meal choices they want for breakfast and dinner the following week.
- Every Friday, the preschool develops a menu for the following week based on the choices the children made in their group discussions. The choices from every group are included as there are a range of foods available for breakfast and two main course dinner choices every day in addition to vegetables, fruit, and other foods (see below).



The breakfast foods chosen by children are put on a trolley every day and include cereals, toast, scrambled eggs, fruit, yoghurt, crackers, and cheese.

The children pick whatever foods they want, put them on their plates and pour their own milk or water.

The dinner foods chosen by children are put on a trolley every day and include:

- Two main course choices each day (pasta, stew, fish, chicken curry, etc.) without added potatoes or vegetables.

- All other foods are laid out individually:
 - Sauces for pasta, fish, or meat
 - Potatoes
 - Vegetables
 - Crackers
 - Cheese
 - Rainbow dish of fruit

The children pick whatever foods they want, put them on their plates and pour their own milk or water.



Feedback sessions

- Educators take pictures of what the children ate and hold a discussion with the children about what they liked or did not like.
- They also relate the foods to stories to encourage children to give their views.
- Educators observe what they like and don't like eating because they eat with the children. They feed their observations back to children, which often prompts discussions about additional foods being added to the daily choices.

How the children are ensured Space, Voice, Audience and Influence in choosing their meals

Space

- The children feel safe to express their views because the educators let them decide what they want to eat at each meal.
- Educators have weekly discussions and a feedback session with children about their meal preferences and choices.
- Educators listen to and act on all children's views about their weekly menu choices.

Voice

- Educators encourage children to share their views on foods they like to eat.
- Children can discuss anything they want about their food tastes and choices at the weekly discussion and at the feedback session.
- Educators use group discussion, photos of food and food related stories to encourage children to give their views.

Audience

- The educators show the children that they are ready and willing to listen to their views by having weekly discussions and feedback sessions and by enabling them to choose whatever food they want at each meal.
- The educators share their observations about the foods children liked and didn't like.
- The educators develop weekly menus based on the children's choices and preferences.

Influence

- Children know they have a choice about what they eat at each meal and of the food choices made available on the weekly menu because educators act on their views.
- At the weekly feedback session children are asked what foods they liked and did not like, and educators share their observations on what children liked and did not like eating.
- Children know about the impact of their decisions because they can make choices about what to eat at each meal and what foods will be on the weekly menu.
- Educators hold weekly discussions and feedback sessions with the children at which they explain that the menus are based on the children's likes and choices.

5 How children are ensured a voice on when to eat and what to eat at snack time

Crossroads and Killygordon Community Playgroup is part-time, morning service. The children are aged two years and eight months to five years and are in two rooms. At the start of each year, there is an open day for parents at which the educators explain their healthy eating policy and the practice of enabling children to make their own eating choices from a daily snack platter. They invite parents to bring in fruit, baked goods, and other healthy foods every day, which is cut up and divided into large snack platters.

Throughout the month of September, the snack time practice is explained to children every day during group time and again when they are at the snack table. Educators explain to the children that they will be invited to take turns having their snack and that everyone will get a snack. They point out that if a child is playing a game or doing an activity, they don't have to stop but can get their snack later.

In each playroom, there are three snack times, and children can choose which one to take part in.

- The first snack time is at approximately 11am.
- If the children indicate they are hungry, the first snack time will be earlier.
- An educator in each room serves the snacks helped by the child, who is the 'helper of the week'.
- At approximately 11am, an educator asks which children would like to eat at the first snack session.
- If more than six or seven children want to eat at the same time, the educators negotiate with the children and point out that they can sit down and start their snack time when any of the first group of children has finished.
- If a child does not speak up, educators will talk to the child and find out when they would like to eat.



- The children who have picked the first snack time wash their hands and go to a board that is divided into two zones (green and yellow). The name, handprint and photo of each child are on the green side of the board. Each child takes her/his name from the green side and moves it to the yellow side so the educators know which children have eaten their snack.
- The children get a plate and a cup and sit down with the educator.
- They pour their own milk or water and choose whatever food they want from the platter.
- The children choose how long to stay at the table, after which they put their cups and plates in a basin.
- If a child is eating little or nothing during snack time, the educators will consult with the parents and ask if there is any other food the child would like. This often results in parents bringing in food that the child likes and will eat.
- At the end of each day, the children reflect on everything they did, and educators ask what they liked and if there is anything they want to change or do differently the next day. They sometimes suggest having the snack time outside.
- Educators note that it usually takes a few months for children to get used to the snack time practice, after which they embrace the practice of choosing when to eat and what to eat.



How the children are ensured Space, Voice, Audience and Influence on when to eat and what to eat at their snack time

Space

- The children feel safe to express their views because the educators let them decide when they want to snack and what they want to eat.
- Educators are open to being asked by children for the snack time throughout the morning.
- Educators invite all children to decide when they want to eat their snack and what food to pick from the snack platter.
- Educators encourage children to take turns and enable everyone to get their first snack from time to time.

Voice

- Educators make it clear to children that they can decide when to eat their snacks and what to eat.
- Children know that they can ask educators for snack time when they are hungry, pick their own snack time slot, choose whatever food they want from the platter and raise anything they want at the daily reflection.
- Children can indicate that they want to eat either verbally or through behaviours that show they are hungry.
- Educators ensure that all voices are heard and acted on, including those who don't speak up.

Audience

- Educators show the children that they are ready and willing to listen to their views by having a flexible snack time with different time slots and a daily reflection session.
- Educators make it clear to children that snack time will happen whenever the children ask for it and that they can eat what they like.
- Educators show they are listening to children's views and observing their actions by consulting with parents on foods that children like.

Influence

- Children know they are in control of when they eat and what they eat because educators act on their views.
- At the reflection session every day, educators ask children if there is anything they want to change or do differently, and their views are acted on.
- Children know about the impact of their decisions because they can make choices about when to eat and what to eat.
- Educators negotiate with children if too many of them want to eat at the same time, encourage turn taking and explain why they can't all sit at the one time. They also let the children know that the requests they make at the daily reflection session will be acted on.
- Educators consult with parents to ensure that children are offered foods that they like.

6 Children choosing their weekly jobs in a pre-school

The educators in a preschool room observed that from about the age of about three years, children love doing small jobs to help, such as putting crayons out, putting cups out and helping the teacher at the printer. The educators decided to introduce the idea of children choosing the jobs they like doing during circle time.

- The educators asked the children if they would like to pick their own jobs every week, and they were very enthusiastic about this.
- This led to a discussion during which children named different jobs they like doing.
- The educators invited the children to take part in designing a job chart on which educators wrote all the jobs children like doing.
- Each child decorated their own name on a small, coloured card, and each decorated a different job for the chart, which was stuck on little coloured pocket slots (see below). Educators helped and supported children who wanted help.
- Once the chart was done, they had complete control over what jobs they wanted to do and could slot their name into their job of choice.
- Each week, the children chose a different job, and they could swap jobs with their friends if they wanted. Children can also choose not to have a job.
- The educators also facilitated a buddy system on some jobs if two children wanted the same job.
- Some weeks, children would come up with new jobs for the chart, and the educators added them.



How the children were ensured Space, Voice, Audience and Influence

Space

- The children felt safe to express their views because they were in a familiar environment with trusted educators.
- Each child was able to take as much time as they liked decorating their own name, designing part of the job chart and choosing the job they wanted to do for the week.
- All children's choices were acted on in an inclusive way.

Voice

- Children who needed support to decorate the chart and make choices about their jobs were offered that support by educators.
- Children were able to suggest any jobs they like for the jobs chart and were encouraged to add new jobs from week to week. They could also choose to buddy with another child to do a particular job.
- Children were offered different ways of giving their views by either putting their name/s into the slot with their job of choice or asking an educator to do this for them.

Audience

- Educators showed they were ready and willing to listen to children's views by enabling children to make their own choices about decorating the jobs chart, picking weekly jobs, swapping jobs with friends, buddying with friends and adding new jobs to the chart.
- Educators told the children that they could make their own choices about decorating the jobs chart, choosing weekly jobs and adding new jobs to the chart.

Influence

- Children knew they were having an influence because educators listened to and acted on their job chart design choices and their weekly job choices.
- The children were given feedback by the educators acting on their decisions.
- Children could see the impact of their decisions and choices because the educators enabled them to decorate the jobs chart, pick weekly jobs, swap jobs, buddy-up for jobs and add new jobs.
- Children themselves were the key decision-makers as no-one else influenced their choices about decorating the jobs chart, picking weekly jobs, swapping jobs, buddying up for jobs and adding new jobs.

7 Ensuring children can choose how to say 'hello' and 'goodbye'

Sineád was an early year's educator in a preschool. She noticed that children were sometimes uncomfortable with the way educators welcomed them to the preschool or said goodbye to them. She saw that children have different preferences about how they like to be welcomed and how they like to say goodbye. She also observed that the same child might like different ways of saying hello and goodbye from day to day.

- She asked the verbal children to tell her all the ways they like to say hello and goodbye and observed the preferences of the pre-verbal and early verbal children.
- She regularly asks children if they want to add new ways to the poster of saying hello and goodbye.
- She made two big posters with pictures of the children's preferences. These posters are on the door on the way in and out of the preschool, and each child chooses their individual preference when they arrive and when they are leaving.
- Children have a variety of ways of indicating their choice. They can choose for themselves by pointing to their preference, they can tell educators what way they want to be greeted, or they can ask an educator, parent or carer to help them choose their preference.

How the children are ensured Space, Voice, Audience and Influence

Space

- The children feel safe to express their views because they can choose the way they want to say hello and goodbye.
- Each child can take as much time as they like choosing which way they want to say hello and goodbye.
- All children's choices are acted on in an inclusive way.



Voice

- Children who need support to choose how to say hello or goodbye are supported by educators, parents or carers.
- Children can ask to have other ways of saying hello and goodbye added to the choices on the charts.
- Children are offered different ways of giving their views by either pointing to their choice, asking an adult to point for them or telling educators their choice.

Audience

- Educators show they are ready and willing to listen to children's views by enabling children to make their own choices about how to say hello and goodbye every day.
- Educators make sure that children are told or shown that they can make their own choice about how to say hello and goodbye.

Influence

- Children know that they are having an influence because educators listen to and act on their daily choices about how they want to say hello and goodbye.
- The children are given feedback by educators because the educators act on the daily decisions children make about how they want to say hello and goodbye.
- Children can see the impact of their views on how to say hello and goodbye and know they can change their minds from the morning to the evening and from one day to the next.
- Children themselves are the key decision-makers as no-one else influences their choices about how to say hello and goodbye.

8 The use of multiple methods to involve children in decision-making on a fair and safe approach to enabling risky and adventurous play

Kilcloon Early Years Preschool undertook a pilot using multiple methods to involve children in decision-making. There were twenty-two children in the pre-school room (fifteen boys and seven girls). The children were aged two years and eight months to three years and six months. The educators in Kilcloon Early Years Preschool prioritise the voice of the child in their daily practice using a play based emergent curriculum.

How the preschool decided to pilot the use of multiple methods to get the views of children

Some children were playing in a risky and adventurous way in the cosy corner inside the preschool. One of the educators explained to the children that the cosy corner is where children come to rest and look through books and that there is not enough space inside to play this way. This conversation led to one of the boys asking: "Can we play roughly when we are outside (words of the child)?" The preschool staff decided to act on the little boy's wishes and pilot the use of multiple methods to get the views of children on a fair and safe approach to enabling risky and adventurous play.

How the educators gave children a voice in decision-making on risky and adventurous play

The educators used a collection of interconnected methods to give children a voice on risky and adventurous play and ensure that their views were acted on, as outlined below:

1. Group conference (discussions with all children in the room);
2. Documentation in pictures (photos taken by children and educators);
3. Facial and body awareness emoji game;
4. Children's drawings;
5. One to one discussion;
6. Observations of educators.

The educators used these methods with children on a regular basis to check back with the children and make sure that they were happy with their own decisions about risky and adventurous play.

1. Group conference about the idea of the pilot

- At the start of the pilot, the educators held a discussion with the children about the request for risky and adventurous play.
- The discussion included the views of those who like risky and adventurous play and those who do not.
- Some children do not like risky and adventurous play, and some children do not like noise. These children had their views heard and acted on through the availability of quiet areas both in their indoor room (cosy corner) and in the garden (fairy garden). In these areas, the children agreed that there would be no risky and adventurous play.


- The children suggested that there should be rules and made up their own initial rules for the risky and adventurous play.
- The children agreed that risky and adventurous play should only happen on the grass area of the outdoor space.

2. Documentation in pictures

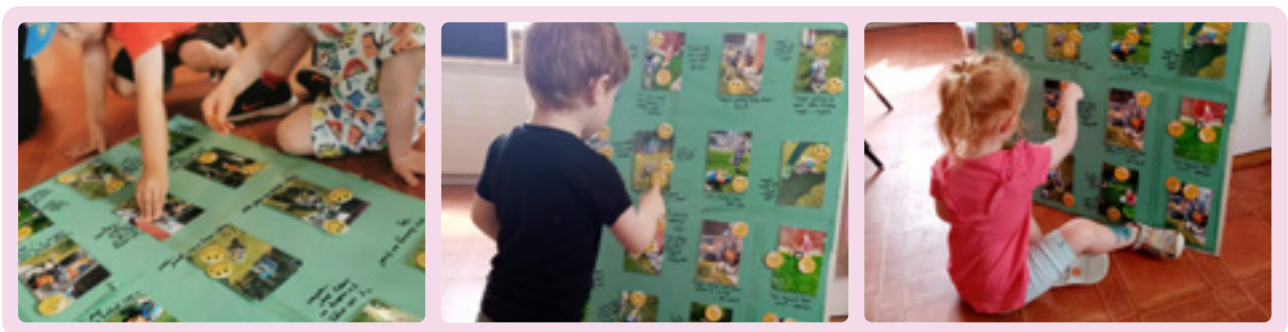
- The children and educators took photos of real time risky and adventurous play activity.
- New photos were taken on a regular basis, as children’s games and how they like to interact changed all the time.



3. Facial and body awareness emoji game

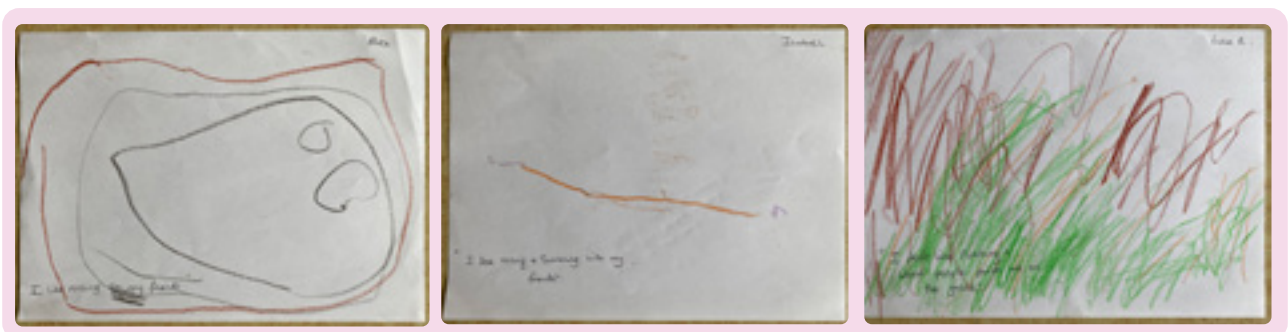
- All the photos were printed.
- The children were given smiley, blank and sad face stickers and invited to stick whatever emoji they wanted on each photo. 
- The children divided the photos into happy, sad, and unsure bundles.
- Some photos had a variety of emojis on them, so the children made a bundle of photos that didn’t fit in the happy, sad, and unsure bundles.
- The photos with emojis were stuck on a big photo board.
- The children looked at the photos and accompanying emojis, and the educator facilitated discussion by asking questions such as:
 - What’s happening in the photos?
 - What do you see in the children’s faces in the photos?
 - What are children doing with their bodies in the photos?
 - What do you think children are feeling in the photos?
- These questions generated discussions about how children can play in a safe and inclusive way.

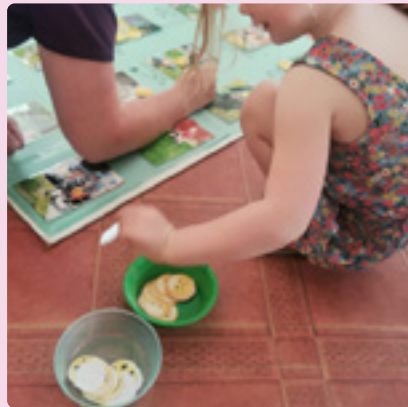
- The educator wrote the exact views of each child beside the emojis they stuck on each photo on the board.
- The educators allowed this to be a daily evolving process that enabled children to take photos off the board at any time and change their emoji if they had changed their minds about a particular form of play.
- Children were invited to take new photos on a regular basis to ensure that they were always able to express their views about risky and adventurous play.
- Copies of the photos were left in a box that was available to children all the time so they could continuously give their views about the kind of play they like and don't like.



4. Using children's drawings to make the rules for risky and adventurous play

- From the beginning, the children had suggested that there should be rules for risky and adventurous play.
- They made up their own rules for risky and adventurous play and changed them on a regular basis, based on the views they expressed on the photo board.
- They did drawings of the rules they agreed, and the educators wrote the children's exact words on each drawing.
- The drawings with the rules for risky and adventurous play were stuck on the walls.





5. One to one informal conversation

- Some children didn't like to talk in the big group when they were playing the emoji game, although all children shared their views by using emojis on the photos.
- The educators found moments throughout the day to discuss the photos and emojis with those children and give them the opportunity to have their views heard. Individual children often said things like, 'I liked it when we played roughly today' (words of a child) or 'I never like playing rough' (words of a child).
- Other children often joined in these informal conversations and took part in problem solving.



6. Observations of educators

- The educators observed the children during outdoor play time.
- At different times during the day and at the end of the day, the educators reflected on and kept notes and observations on what was working well and what needed problem solving.
- The educators positively reinforced the rules and gave feedback to children to support and encourage their social and emotional development, problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
- Such discussions often led to children suggesting some change in the rules.
- The children needed the opportunity to change the rules regularly because they couldn't imagine what works and does not work unless it is live, happening and real.

How the children are ensured Space, Voice, Audience and Influence

Space

- The children were heard in a safe and familiar space (the preschool).
- Educators listened to their views through a variety of consultation methods throughout each day.
- Educators made sure that all children were heard by having a variety of ways for them to communicate, including one-on-one informal conversations.

Voice

- Educators provided support for children to be heard.
- Children could raise their views on risky and adventurous play at any time they liked and could change their minds about how they liked to play.
- Educators provided a range of methods for children to give their views and share their feelings.

Audience

- The practice of the educators was to tell and show children how they were ready and willing to always listen to them.
- The children were an 'audience' with a key role in decision-making about risky and adventurous play in addition to the educators being the 'audience' who ensured that decisions taken were in the best interests of all the children.

Influence

- The children knew that they made the rules about risky and adventurous play in their own words and could change the rules at any time. The observations of the educators noted that the children needed the opportunity to change the rules regularly because they couldn't envisage what works and does not work unless it was live, happening and concrete.
- The children gave feedback to each other on their views and feelings during the process of documenting risky and adventurous play in photographs, playing the emoji game and making the rules.
- Educators showed children the impact of their decisions by enabling them to make their own rules, writing the rules in children's own words, and regularly offering them the opportunity to revisit the rules.
- Children explained to each other the reasons they were taking certain decisions through the process of group conferencing, the emoji game, making the rules and changing the rules. Educators also explained the reasons for some decisions that were taken.

9 How children in an after-school service are involved in decision-making

Kidz@Play is an early learning and care service and has full daycare, preschool and after school services for babies, toddlers and young children. This example is about how the youngest after-school children (four and five-year-olds) are involved in decision-making in Kidz@Play. There is a loose schedule or routine for after-school children, but this is moveable.

- When the children arrive after school, they sit wherever they like in the dining room area. They can choose a hot meal or toasted sandwiches and soup, depending on their own and their parents' preferences. Children can choose how they want their food served, as a lot of children don't like sauces on food. Children are offered choices from a varied menu and a colourful fruit tray that regularly changes and are asked for feedback about the foods on offer.
- After eating, children usually want to play and are invited to make choices about the way they play.
- The environment is set up based on consultations conducted with afterschool children on what they would like to do and what equipment they would like. One of the main things they asked for was a 'couch' to relax on a comfortable seat after a day on school chairs. The couch was bought, and a relaxing area was set up with blankets, throws, cushions and sensory toys.
- The environment is set up into areas of interest, which have moveable dividers so any number of children can play in them. Children can choose to play wherever they want (home corner, arts and crafts, sand, water and other sensory and messy play, indoor construction such as Lego, board games, outdoor free play, outdoor ball games and equipment, story time). Educators became aware of the importance of sensory and messy play for afterschool children by listening to and acting on their views.
- Children want to be outdoors as much as possible, and educators enable them to make choices about what they do outdoors. For example, following building work in the preschool, the afterschool children asked if they could use shovels and wheelbarrows to transfer spare gravel into a large gravel pit to play with, and the educators supported this request.
- Children choose when to do homework based on discussions with the children, parents and teachers. There is a space for homework with educators to support the children. Older children also often help younger children with homework.



- 'Rules', 'inclusion' and 'behaviour' are developed in consultation with the children, educators and parents in line with health and safety and anti-bullying policies. Children are asked to discuss how to include new children, how the environment and resources can be cared for and how disagreements between children can be resolved in a collaborative and non-judgemental way. The 'rules' of inclusion are visible for the children and discussed with them.
- Children are also consulted on many other aspects of the afterschool and offered voting options such as names in jars. These aspects include:
 - The books they want to read
 - Toys and other resources
 - Special events and parties
 - Movies



How children in Kidz@Play are given Space, Voice, Audience and Influence

Space

- Children feel safe to express their views because they are in a familiar environment in which their views are sought on a regular basis.
- Educators in the service are very committed to listening and acting on children's views and prioritise allowing time to listen to children.
- All children are heard through the many ways they are offered to share their views.

Voice

- The educators prioritise hearing children's views and make sure that they are offered chances to give their views on all aspects of the after-school session.
- Children raise things that matter to them all the time, such as how they want to play, the things they want in the environment and when they want to do homework.
- Educators enable children to give their views through consultations, making daily food and play choices and voting on activities and events.

Audience

- Children know that educators are always ready and willing to listen to them because this is the daily practice of the educators.
- Educators explain when children's views cannot be acted on because of safety concerns or other limitations, such as sticking to the agreed rules of inclusion or bullying policy.

Influence

- Children know how much influence they can have because they are involved in decisions about all aspects of the service, such as the bullying policy, the rules of inclusion, daily activities and the set-up of the environment.
- Children are given regular feedback by educators and can see the impact of their views on decisions by their views being acted on when possible.
- Educators explain the reasons for decisions that are taken based on things such as health and safety, inclusion and resolution of disagreements.



B**The voice of children in a Junior Infants classroom****10****How children take part in decision-making in a Junior Infants classroom**

A Junior Infants teacher in St. Oliver Plunkett's National School gives the children in her class a voice in decision-making as often as possible. The junior infant children are new to school and very young, so this happens in very simple yet effective ways. The voice of the child in decisions-making is established in this teacher's class from the very first day of school.

On the first day of school, she gives each child an individual school teddy that they leave in school. These teddies can be used as breathing buddies when children are upset, story buddies during story time, and to help them have a voice in decision-making.

On the first day of term, she invites the children to sit in a circle and explains that they will have a morning check-in at the start of every day and a check-out at the end of every school day. She introduces the idea of a 'speaking object' at the beginning of every meeting and the children choose what object will become the 'speaking object'. Only the child holding the object may speak, so every child has a chance to have their voice heard.

The morning check-in meeting is used as an emotion check in and for the children to discuss and make decisions about:

- Which book do they want to read?
- Which movement break do they want?
- Which movie will they watch during lunchtime?
- Which play station will they play at during play-based learning time?

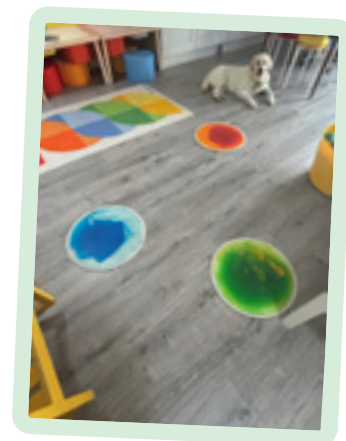
The afternoon check-out meeting is used as an emotion check in and for the children to:

- Reflect on the day and share their views.
- Suggest any changes they want in the classroom.
- Address things that happened during the day (explained below).

If a child wants to discuss an issue during the school day and the teacher or another child cannot listen respectfully due to classwork, being outside, not having the time etc., a note is written on the 'to be discussed' board. The teacher explains to the children that issues written on the 'to be discussed board' will be addressed during the check-out meeting to avoid the child feeling unheard or disrespected.

As the year progresses, the teacher introduces more ways of empowering the children to have a voice in decisions made in Junior Infants.

1. When choosing which book they will read, the children can place their school teddy beside the book of their choice.
2. The teacher uses coloured mats for the children to vote on which movement break they would like to experience during the day. The teacher gives them a variety of options, for example, 'children who would like to do Cosmic Yoga stand on the green mat, the children who would like to do a Go Noodle dance can stand on the yellow mat', etc.
3. She uses pegs with the children's names for them to vote on where they would like to play. For example, children who would like to play on the small world station peg their names on the red ribbon, children who would like to play with the water peg their names on the yellow ribbon, etc.
4. Another voting method is to put the children's names on lollipop sticks which can be placed in coloured buckets representing different activities or stories – e.g. if a child wants to pick Peter Pan as the story, they put their lollipop stick in the red bucket.
5. The teacher also uses sticky dots for children to vote, or drawing smiley faces, or the interactive whiteboard on which children can move pictures and names with their fingers.



The children often make very practical suggestions about how their voices can be heard in the classroom. These suggestions are always heard and implemented as much as possible.

How the children are ensured Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence

Space

- Children feel safe to express their views because the teacher starts the new term by explaining that they will have daily morning check-in and evening check-out meetings during which they can share their views in a safe way using a speaking object.
- The teacher allows enough time to listen to and hear children's views by having many ways for them to do this each day, such as check-in and check-out meetings, using their teddies to indicate what they want, a variety of voting methods and a discussion board.
- The teacher makes sure all children are heard by using listening and decision-making approaches that meet different children's needs.

Voice

- Children are provided with support to give their views through a variety of decision-making methods and the use of the discussion board, which ensures that no child's views are disrespected.
- Children can raise things that matter to them at many stages each day, including the check-in and check-out meetings, the use of the discussion board and the invitation to make practical suggestions about ways to have their voices heard in the classroom.
- Children are offered a variety of ways of giving their views, which the teacher builds on as the year progresses.

Audience

- The teacher shows the children that she is ready and willing to listen to them by using open body language, talking to children in age-appropriate ways, the availability of many ways for them to a voice in decision-making and acting on their views.
- Throughout each day, the teacher explains to the children what she can do about any requests they make or things they raise.

Influence

- Children know how much influence they can have on decisions because the teacher offers them choices about what book to read, what movie to watch or what activity to do. She also invites them to make practical suggestions about other ways to have their voices heard and acts on the suggestions they make, where possible.
- Children are given feedback at the daily check-out meeting and are given the opportunity to give the teacher feedback about what they liked and did not like.
- The teacher shares the impact of their views on decisions by explaining that all children can express their views throughout the day but that some days, their top decisions or choices will not be voted for.
- The teacher explains the reasons for decisions taken, which is often the result of a vote by all the children. She sometimes must explain to children that their views cannot be acted for reasons of safety, time or resources.

C

The voice of babies and non-speaking children about their healthcare needs in a hospital setting

11

How infants¹ and non-speaking children are involved in decision-making about their healthcare needs in emergency departments that treat children.

When an infant or non-speaking child presents with their parents or carers at the Emergency Department, the triage nurse will assess the infant or child using the following steps:

1. Take a history or account of the problem from the parent/guardian. The nurse will also ask the parent/carer if they think the child is in pain or uncomfortable.
2. Assess the vital signs of the infant or child.
3. Use the r-FLACC Scale [(F) Face, (L) Legs, (A) Activity, (C) Cry, (C) Consolability], a behavioural observational pain scale tool, to analyse the behaviour of the infant or non-speaking child and determine if she/he is calm, comfortable, responsive and alert. This scale is used for children up to six years of age and children with cognitive impairment^{xxv}.

(REVISED) FLACC Scale SCORING

Categories	0	1	2
Face	No particular expression or smile.	Occasional grimace or frown, withdrawn, disinterested, Sad, appears worried.	Frequent to constant quivering chin, clenched jaw, distressed looking face, expression of fright/panic.
Legs	Normal position or relaxed; usual tone and motion to limbs.	Uneasy, restless, tense, occasional tremors.	Kicking, or legs drawn up, marked increase in spasticity, constant tremors, jerking.
Activity	Lying quietly, normal position, moves easily, regular, rhythmic respirations.	Squirming, shifting back and forth, tense, tense/guarded movements, mildly agitated, shallow/splinting respirations, intermittent sighs.	Arched, rigid or jerking, severe agitation, head banging, shivering, breath holding, gasping, severe splinting.
Cry	No cry (awake or asleep)	Moans or whimpers: occasional complaint, occasional verbal outbursts, constant grunting.	Crying steadily, screams or sobs, frequent complaints, repeated outbursts, constant grunting.
Consolability	Content, relaxed	Reassured by occasional touching, hugging, or being talked to: distractible.	Difficult to console or comfort, pushing caregiver away, resisting care or comfort measures.

Each of the five categories (F) Face; (L) Legs; (A) Activity; (C) Cry; (C) Consolability is scored from 0-2, which results in a total score between zero and ten.

References:

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Malviya, S., Vopel-Lewis, T. Burke, Merkel, S., Tait, A.R. (2006). The revised FLACC Observational Pain Tool: Improved Reliability and Validity for Pain Assessment in Children with Cognitive Impairment. (*Pediatric Anesthesia* 16: 258-265).

¹ Children under the age of 1 year are referred to as 'infants' in paediatric medical practice.

4. The triage nurse assigns a score for each category of the infant or child's behaviour and enters these scores into the triage computer system.
5. If the infant or child has a total score of 7-10, she/he is assigned a Category 2 rating, which means the infant or child will be seen by a doctor in under 10 minutes.
6. If the infant or child has a total score of 4-6 and there are no additional concerns, she/he is assigned a Category 3 rating, which means the infant or child will be seen by a doctor within one hour.
7. If the infant or child has a total score of 0-3 and there are no additional concerns, she/he is assigned a Category 4 rating, which means the infant or child will be seen by a doctor within two hours.

How the r-FLACC Scale enables infants and children to be given Space, Voice, Audience and Influence on decisions about their care in emergency departments in Irish hospitals

Space

- Infants and non-speaking children can feel safe to show how they feel because they are being assessed on the basis of their own actions and behaviour, on what their parents or guardians tell the triage nurse and on their vital signs.
- The nurse is listening to and observing all aspects of the child's behaviour by using the r-FLACC Scale.
- Every infant and non-speaking child is assessed by using the r-FLACC Scale.

Voice

- The triage nurse is supporting infants and non-speaking children to show how they feel by taking their actions and behaviour seriously.
- Infants and non-speaking children can act, react and behave in whatever way they feel while the nurse is assessing them using the r-FLACC Scale.
- Infants and non-speaking children can show how they feel in many different ways, crying, screaming, arching, kicking, smiling, being relaxed or calm, showing no expression and other ways.

Audience

- The triage nurse shows that she/her is ready and willing to take the actions and behaviour of the infant or non-speaking child seriously by using the r-FLACC Scale to assess their voice (how they feel).

Influence

- Infants and non-speaking children have significant influence on decisions being made about their healthcare needs, because the triage nurse uses the r-FLACC Scale to determine how urgently they need to be seen by a doctor, who administers and advocates for the child to be given analgesia.
- Infants and non-speaking children and their parents/guardians are given feedback on how soon they will be seen by a doctor on the basis of the r-FLACC Scale rating assigned to the infant or non-speaking child.
- Once the infant or non-speaking child is seen by a doctor, decisions about further treatment for the child will be explained to the parents/guardians.
- The r-FLACC Scale tool is also used to reassess children to ensure analgesia is effective and they are more comfortable.



D

The voice of young children in the development of policy and services

12

A Hub na nÓg multi-method approach to consult with 3-year-old children on what is important in their lives to inform policy decisions.

This good practice example outlines a multi-method approach to consulting with 3-year-old children on what's important in their lives to influence policy decisions being made by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

Hub na nÓg developed this methodology using good practice principles and approaches from this Toolkit and the Participation Framework. The consultation with 3-year-old children was conducted in an ELC service and facilitated by the ELC educators over the course of a week. This approach was adopted because of the importance of the relationship between children and ELC educators and of children feeling comfortable, safe and secure. Consent was sought from parents and guardians, and assent was sought from children. The children could choose to stop being involved in the consultation at any time.

Materials for the consultation:

- A puppet
- A4 coloured card
- Markers
- Instant cameras
- A pile of puppet photo tokens (to be made by the educator in advance)
- Building bricks
- Playdough
- Drawing materials
- Large wall space (on which the educator will create a 'Wall of Wonder')

Multiple methods to get children's views:

1. Group conference
2. A puppet (who photographs what children like)
3. Photographs
4. Building bricks
5. Playdough
6. Children's drawings
7. One to one discussion
8. Educators' notes and observations



Below is a description of how the consultation was carried out.

1. Group conference – using a puppet to discover things that children like

a. The educators introduced the topic to the children using a puppet, who arrived in a box:

- “This is ... (puppet), who has come to visit us for the week to find out all the things children like.”
- The educators explained the following to the children: “The puppet will send a list of the things children like to a writer, who will put them in a book. This book will be shared with adults/grownups who will make a plan about things children like. After the adults/grownups have made their plan, the puppet will come back and tell you what’s in their plan and what will happen about the things children like.”
- The educators checked that children understand what was explained.
- The educators asked the children: “Would anyone like to ask any questions?”

b. The educators explained that the puppet is from a magical land and knows nothing about children in Ireland. The puppet is full of wonder and has a camera to take photos of all the things that children like.

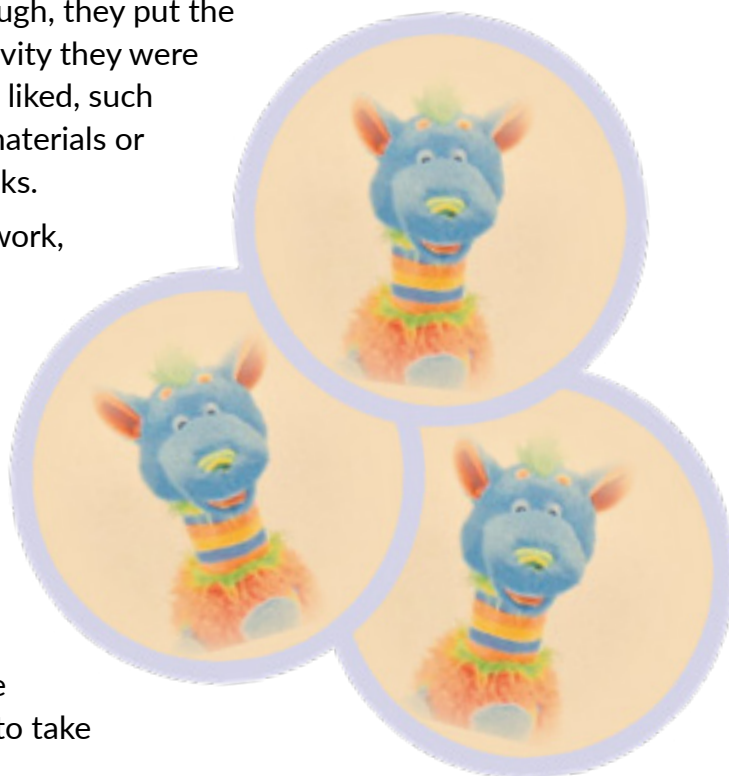
- Then educators asked the children: “Would anyone like to tell the puppet about something they like to do, to see, to play or to go to?” The educators used the puppet to ask the children the following questions:
 - I wonder what do you like?
 - I wonder what you like to do?
 - I wonder where you like to go?
 - I wonder what you like to play?
 - I wonder what’s your favourite thing?
- Educators took notes of what children said and of the themes they brought up, such as food, pets, or toys or whatever the children say that they like and want to tell the puppet about. They also kept a record of when children moved away from themes and started talking about new themes – for example, children started talking about food but then moved on to talking about toys. Educators wrote all the themes on individual-coloured cards, which were used later in the process.

2. Circle time

- Educators explained that every day for the rest of the week, the puppet would take photos of the things that the children like.
- They showed the children a pile of puppet photo tokens and explained that the children could use tokens to show the puppet the things they like by taking a token and putting the token beside something that they would like to show the puppet.
- Educators explained that the puppet had a camera and could take a photo of the things that children like, or they could tell the puppet about the things that they like.
- Educators put the puppet photo tokens on an easily accessible shelf.
- They explained to the children that on the last day of the puppet’s visit, all their photos and things they tell the puppet would be put on a Wall of Wonder.

3. Activities throughout the week

- Educators provided the children with access to playdough, building bricks, and drawing materials.
- They invited the children to choose whatever activities they like to show the puppet the things that they like.
- They invited the children to show the puppet the activities they liked doing by placing a token beside it.
- For example, if they liked the playdough, they put the token beside it, or they used the activity they were doing to show the puppet what they liked, such as drawing a dog with the drawing materials or building a park with the building bricks.
- If there was a token beside a child's work, game or activity, the puppet took a photo with the help of an educator.
- Educators invited the children to tell the educator or puppet what they made or drew or what they would like to show the puppet.
- The children were invited to talk to the puppet at any time during the day to tell them about the things they liked through one-to-one discussion. The children didn't have to take a puppet token if they chose not to.
- Educators offered the children support in choosing activities and using the tokens.
- Educators kept verbatim notes and descriptions of what children drew, built, and asked to take a photo of.
- They also asked children to give descriptions of what they drew, built or asked to take a photo of and any other information they wanted the puppet to know. (This was done writing the children's descriptions on post its and stapling the post its onto the back of each photo and drawing.)
- Educators used observation and translated the views of children through non-speaking communication to ensure different ways for communication were accommodated.



4. Wall of Wonder (WOW)

- On the last day of the consultation week, the educators created a space on the wall and made a sign called Wall of Wonder.
- They stuck the A4 coloured cards with the names of the themes identified by children on the Wall of Wonder with accompanying pictures/images representing each theme.
- They also stuck the children's photos on the Wall of Wonder.
- The children were invited to decide where they want to put their photos on the Wall of Wonder. They were asked to place their photos under the themes and the educators supported them with this. They also invited the children to put the photographs somewhere else on the board if they preferred.



5. When the week was over, the educators explained that the puppet would send the wall of wonder and all the photographs and notes about the things the children like to the adults making the plan. The educators explained that adults who will make the plan will look at everything the puppet sent them before they make the plan. After the adults have finished making their plan, the puppet will come back and tell the children what they put into their plan and what they didn't put into their plan. The puppet will explain the reasons why some of the things children like could not be put in the plan.

In this example, the DCEDIY commissioned a report writer to compile an objective record of all the things that the children like. All the notes recorded by the educators and the children's photographs were gathered and sent to the report writer.

How the children will be given Space, Voice, Audience and Influence

Space

- The children were heard in a safe and familiar space.
- Educators listened to and recorded children's views through various consultation methods throughout the day.
- Educators made sure that all children were heard by having a variety of ways for them to communicate and by observing and recording what children did and said.

Voice

- Educators provided support for children to take part in the methods to make sure they were heard.
- Children were invited to take part in any activities they wanted and to choose the activities on which they wanted to put tokens.
- Educators provided a range of methods for children to give their views and share their likes (group conference, photographs, playdough, building bricks, drawings, wall of wonder, observation and translation).

Audience

- Educators told the children verbally and showed them by their actions how they and the puppet were ready and willing to always listen to them.
- The educators explained to the children that their views would be put in a book to be given to adults to make a plan about what children like.

Influence

- The children knew how much influence they had because all the things they liked were photographed by the puppet or recorded in educator notes and sent to the policymakers to inform the development of a report.
- The children will be given feedback when the puppet returns to tell them what's in the report of the policymakers about children's likes.
- The puppet will tell them what the adults intend to do with all the things they said they like.
- The puppet will tell the children what they put into their plan and what they didn't put into their plan and explain the reasons why some of the things children like could not be put in the plan.

13 Listening to and acting on young children's lived experience of domestic violence and abuse

The purpose of the Barnardos *Empower Kids 0-5* project is to:

- hear what children aged 0-5 years tell us (in their own unique way) about their lived experiences of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) and;
- raise national and professional awareness about children's views and experiences of DVA and ensure children's views are considered in responding to DVA.

A multi-agency steering group was established by Barnardos to collaborate with Empower Kids 0-5. This steering group comprised front-line practitioners who work directly with children aged 0-5 years who experience DVA. The work of the group was informed by research and the expertise and networking capacity of its participants. The group decided to seek the views of children, parents, key workers and other professionals on the impact of DVA on babies and children from pregnancy to five years to influence decisions made about the lives of these children. During interviews and focus groups, parents, key workers and other professionals were asked to consider DVA from the perspective of a very young child. Participants were asked to talk about what the child said, what they saw the child doing, how the child behaved and how the child played. The project used the Mosaic approach which is a multi-method polyvocal (consisting of more than one voice) approach that brings together different perspectives to create with children an image of their worlds^{xxvi}.

This good practice example focuses specifically on how the views of children were gathered and acted on. Details about how parents and professionals' views were sought can be found at: <https://www.barnardos.ie/our-services/work-with-families/childhood-domestic-violence-abuse/cdva-practioners-resources/cdva-what-children-young-people-have-to-say/>.

How the views of children were gathered

- A short focus group was undertaken with Early Years Practitioners from four Pre-School Services that support children with complex needs, including those living with DVA. Each service was asked to invite a parent and their child aged 3-5 who experienced DVA to take part in the project.
- Parent consent and child assent were secured. Child assent was sought in an age-appropriate way using thumbs up and thumbs down illustrations (consent was seen as an ongoing process).
- The children's key workers sought the views of children using the *Draw and Talk Method* over two sessions. A guidance document was provided to key workers explaining how to do this.
- All children in the pre-schools were invited to participate in the art activity and draw pictures of 'about me', 'my family' and 'my home'. The key workers asked the children to explain their drawings and wrote the exact words of children on some of the drawings. Only the four children who were part of the *Empower Kids 0-5* DVA project had their drawings and voices shared (see below).



- The Barnardos *Empower Kids 0-5* project developed a feedback leaflet for the parents and children who took part in the Draw and Talk part of the project (see below). The feedback leaflet was sent to the early years educator key workers to share with children and parents.

LISTENING TO YOUNG CHILDREN PROJECT

You remember that yourself and your child were involved in a project to hear about the impact of domestic violence and abuse on children aged 0-5 years.

Other mothers and their children were also involved in this project from all around Ireland

Animation Launch

You have helped to create an animation about the impact of domestic violence on babies and young children

**Notice Me
Think About Me
Ask About Me**

Launch Date: Thursday June 13th
And available on YouTube after

Thank you for sharing your experiences

The Barnardos *Empower Kids 0-5* DVA project developed an animated video and a practice guidance document for professionals (see below) based on the views of children, parents and professionals called *Notice me, Think about me, Ask about me*. The video is a powerful description of the impact of DVA on babies in the womb, babies after birth, toddlers and young children. The guidance leaflet for professionals provides information about the impact of DVA on babies and young children and supports professionals to ask appropriate questions of parents and guidance on how to intervene to act on the needs of children. The video and guidance document are available at: <https://www.barnardos.ie/our-services/work-with-families/childhood-domestic-violence-abuse/cdva-practioners-resources/cdva-what-children-young-people-have-to-say/>

How the children who took part in the project were ensured Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence

Space

- Children felt safe expressing their views because they were asked for their consent and given the opportunity to participate in a safe, familiar setting (a slow and calm space) with their key workers with whom the children have established trusting relationships.
- The key workers allowed enough time to listen to and hear children's views over two sessions by using the Draw and Talk method to get their views on themselves, their home and their families.
- Key workers made sure all children in the project were heard by supporting the children to do the Draw and Talk method at their own pace. Children could and choose to draw and talk about all or some of the topics 'myself', 'my home' and/or 'my family'.

Voice

- Key workers provided support to children to give their views using the Draw and Talk method.
- Children could and did raise things that matter to them in their drawings and conversations with key workers on all three, two or one of the topics, 'myself', 'my home' and 'my family'.
- Key workers offered children a variety of ways of giving their views during the process of doing the Draw and Talk method.

Audience

- Key workers showed the children that they were ready and willing to listen by using open body language, talking to children in age-appropriate ways and inviting them to draw pictures about familiar things in their lives.
- Key workers explained to the children that their views and those of their parents would be used in the project.
- The key workers were the direct audience for the children. These workers then shared the children's drawings and views with the Barnardos *Empower Kids 0-5* CDVA project and the National Advisory Group for Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse.

Influence

- The Barnardos CDVA project developed a feedback leaflet that was sent to the children's key workers which explained what was happening to the children's views. The key workers shared this feedback with the children and parents involved in the project.
- The feedback leaflet explained to parents that Barnardos were developing an animation and guide for professionals to let them know the impact of DVA on children and babies and how the children's voices could be acted on.



E

The voice of young children in sporting activities

14

How 3-5-year-old children have a voice in decision-making in a gymnastics programme

GymTOTS explorers

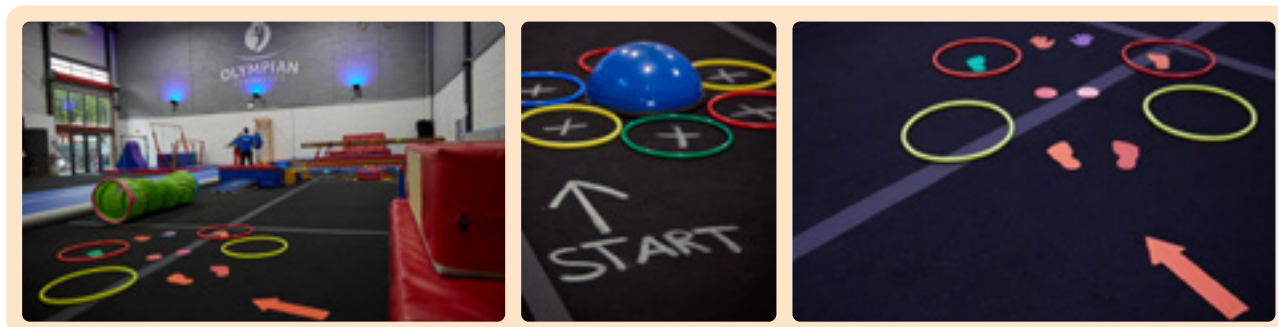
Olympian Gymnastics runs a GymTOTS programme for children aged 3-5 years called 'explorers'. In explorers' classes, each child attends the one-hour class alone. If children get upset at being separated from their parents, the coaches point out that the child can try the class for a few minutes, and if they are still upset, the coach can phone the parent. GymTOTS sessions use gymnastics and early childhood equipment. The structure of each class is:

Circle time – with all children in the class

There are coloured spots stuck on the floor around the room. Each child picks a spot and sits on it. Coaches start by asking children for their news or to share anything they want. Then one of the coaches reads a story, such as Jack and the Beanstalk, and the children do actions to accompany the story, such as chopping down the beanstalk. Children often lead the actions that accompany the story.

Group time – rotating through a circuit formation to all gym equipment

Children are divided into groups, and each group has the same coach every week, who knows and understands the needs of each child. Children can also try participating in a different group. The children rotate around the gym visiting the beams, bars, vaults, and floor. They follow the circuit with visual aids such as arrows, plastic hands and feet and stop spots. At each piece of equipment, coaches support and teach them to hop, jump, walk and learn skills. Children are free to take part in each activity or not to take part.

**Cool down session – with all children in the class**

At the end of the class, there is a cooldown session during which they sing songs. Each child is offered a fun stamp of participation. Those who want a stamp pick the colour and design of the stamp and where they want it – on their arm, leg, or hand.

How the children are given Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence

Space

- Coaches help children to feel safe by greeting them at the door and if the child has a favourite coach, they try to be there to welcome the child.
- Children feel safe to express their views because they know they can go to or contact their parents at any time.
- Circle time eases them into the class and allows them to feel safe to talk about whatever they want.
- Coaches make time to look at and give positive feedback to children when children want to show off something they are good at.
- Coaches work one-on-one with each child and support them go at their own pace through the gym equipment.

Voice

- At the start of each class, coaches ask children what they are excited to do or would like to do, and their views are acted on.
- Children can raise the things that matter to them. They can ask coaches for music and movements they like. They can also ask their parents to make requests to the coach.
- Children also show coaches what they want through their body language or actions, such as sitting down if they are tired or indicating they are afraid or want time away from the group.

Audience

- Coaches show they are ready and willing to listen to children by always using open body language and talking to children at their own level.
- Coaches talk to parents to encourage children to trust them.
- Coaches explain to children why they can't use certain equipment or do certain movements without support.

Influence

- Children know how much influence they can have because they are encouraged to adopt their own interpretation of movements – for example, when a coach asked a child to put their arms out straight, the child said, 'Oh, aeroplane arms'. Now the coaches use the child's expression in the class to explain straight arms.
- Coaches give feedback to children by checking with children if the music or the group is too loud, and if so, they often play a sleepy lion game where all children lie quietly. Coaches also give feedback to children through high-fives, fist bumps, words, and stickers, depending on the preference of the child.
- Coaches take children's feedback about what they like and don't like and adapt the classes accordingly.



15 How young children with additional needs are involved in decision-making in a GAA club

Ranelagh Rockets is a team in Ranelagh Gaels GAA club for five to 10-year-old children with additional needs. This is the story of how the club organisers make sure that the youngest five-year old children have a voice in decision-making on how they participate in the club.

Every child has an individual coach, all of whom are volunteers and many of whom are parents. The club has three professionals who offer voluntary support and advice, an Occupational Therapist, a Psychologist and a Special Education Teacher. These professionals give talks to the coaches and provide advice on engaging with children with additional needs as well as answering questions from coaches.

Before the children join the club

1. Parents are sent a social storybook about the Rockets to share with their child. The social story explains all about the club in pictures and language suitable for children with additional needs (link to social story). Here is one of the pages from the social story:
2. Parents are sent a communication passport template, which has several pages for the child and family to complete.
3. Parents are invited to bring the child to watch a club session to see if they would like it.
4. On the first day a child joins the Rockets club, parents and/or siblings can stay if the child wants that.



The routine in the Junior Rockets club every Saturday

- There is a routine to the sessions, but children are free to do what they want throughout the session. This can be accommodated because each child has their own individual coach.
- The session starts with a warmup of all 24 children and 24 coaches. They do stretches and running from one side of the pitch to the other. At the end of the warmup everyone stands in a circle, puts their hands in the middle and lifts their hands in the air saying 'Ranelagh Rockets'.
- Then all the children and coaches move in groups to one of four skills stations at the corners of the pitch, which are colour coded: blue (kicking), red (bouncing), yellow (running) and green (throwing).
- Each group has three minutes at every station, and then they move until they have been at all four stations.



- While at each station, children can choose to follow the actions and guidance of the coach or not. They are free to do whatever they like. Some children just sit and watch, some go to the nearby playground, and some join in and out of the activities. Coaches go with the flow of whatever their child wants to do.
- Each coach wears a lanyard with pictures of the different skills stuck on with Velcro. Children can either point to the picture or pull off the picture once they have completed each skill station.



The final part of the Rockets sessions is where all children take hold of a large colourful parachute, after which they are given a treat and go home. Coaches wear a lanyard showing pictures of this session (see below).

How 5-year-old children in Ranelagh Rockets GAA club are ensured Space, Voice, Audience and Influence

Space

- Children feel safe to express their views because they are with their parents. Other things that help them feel safe are that they have read or listened to the social story and have completed the communication passport about things they like and things they need help with before they join the Rockets.
- Each child has an individual coach who listens to and meets the needs of that child.
- All children are heard because coaches enable children to choose how they want to take part in the sessions.

Voice

- Individual coaches provide support to children and encourage them to express their views. The structure of the sessions enables children to give their views about how they want to take part.
- Children have the choice to follow the structure of the sessions or to decide to sit and watch or go to the nearby playground.
- Children can tell coaches their views, point to the pictures on coaches' lanyards or pull off pictures once they have completed each skill station.

Audience

- Coaches show they are ready and willing to listen to children by always being with the child and by using open communication.
- Coaches explain to children the extent to which they can act on their views.

Influence

- Children know they are having an influence on decisions because the structure of the sessions and the individual communication with coaches allows children to take part whatever way they like or opt out of taking part.
- Children are given feedback by coaches and see the impact of their views because those views are acted on.



F**How parents can involve babies, toddlers and young children in decision-making****16****How parents can involve babies, toddlers and young children in decision-making through the support of Tusla Family Support Baby and Toddler Groups**

Tusla Family Support practitioners in Cherry Orchard set up baby and toddler groups for children under the age of five years in Ballyfermot, Cherry Orchard and Clondalkin. These groups are drop-in, and parents can come whenever they like during the first five years of their child's life. They are attended by mothers or fathers and their very young children, and each session is for two to three hours.

Purpose of the baby and toddler groups

The purpose of the groups is to support parents to enable children to become confident communicators and learners and to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. The Family Support workers hold the sessions in big spaces to enable children to be involved in decision-making about their play and activity choices.

**What happens at each group session?**

Workers play and interact with babies and children as a way of modelling positive behaviours to parents to support them to listen to their children and act on children's views.

How the Family Support workers prioritise listening to children and acting on their views

- The family support workers offer massage to babies during which they observe, listen and attend to the babies' cues by stopping the massage if a baby is upset or indicates distress and model this for the parents. They encourage parents to observe and listen to the baby's cues, such as smiling, crying, stretching and wriggling, pointing out that these cues are how the baby expresses what she/he wants and likes.
- Toddlers and young children can choose to do whatever they like from a variety of play-based activities around the room, such as arts and crafts, sensory play, using different textures, playing with toys and other activities.

- Family support workers constantly observe the children's body language, expressions, behaviour and wishes and encourage parents to do the same.
- Family support workers model open communication and engagement with children at the child's level, including listening to and talking to children and encouraging parents to do this.
- Workers support children to learn and understand turn-taking with toys and activities and encourage parents to adopt this approach.
- Workers ask children for their views or observe their preferences in sourcing things like markers, pencils, pictures, stickers, chalk and other materials.
- Workers use observation to listen to the views of children with additional needs. For example, one little boy loves two specific jigsaws, and workers make sure to have those jigsaws available for him.
- To ensure that the groups are inclusive, workers make sure that sensory play is available and have spaces for children to enjoy quiet time. Here is a picture of their summer sensory corner beach theme:



How the babies and children are given Space, Voice, Audience and Influence

Space

- The children are heard in a safe and familiar space because they are with a parent, and most children attend on a regular basis.
- Family support workers make sure that all babies and children are heard by having a variety of ways for them to communicate, observing all children's wishes and needs and making the space inclusive for children of different ages and those with additional needs.
- Family Support workers model to parents the importance of a safe and inclusive space for children to be heard and support them to create this in their own lives.

Voice

- Family support workers provide support for all babies and children to be heard.
- Children can ask for or indicate things they want. Workers also observe the things they like or want and act on children's wishes where possible and appropriate.
- Family support workers offer babies and children many ways of giving their views, such as workers' observations of their actions, reactions and behaviour, children being able to choose activities to do or toys to play with, and children saying what they like or want.
- Family Support workers model to parents the importance of observing babies and children pick up cues and of offering them different ways to communicate their views.

Audience

- Family support workers show they are ready and willing to listen to children's views by attending to their body language, engaging with children at their own level and using open communication.
- Family support workers make sure that children are told or shown what can be done with their views, such as changing the snack time or creating quiet spaces.
- Family support workers model to parents the importance of body language, open communication and going down to the child's level to talk to or comfort them.

Influence

- Children know that they are having an influence in the group sessions because workers listen to and act on their views, such as ensuring that the little boy with additional needs can always play with his favourite jigsaws.
- The children are given feedback by workers all the time, such as acting on a baby's cues and stopping a massage when she/he seems upset or uncomfortable.
- Workers share with children the impact of their views by making changes to the group sessions or sourcing the arts and crafts materials they request or like.
- Family support workers regularly explain the reasons for decisions taken, such as encouraging and teaching children how to take turns so all children have their views respected and acted on.
- Family support workers model to parents the importance of respecting babies and children by listening to them and acting on their views when possible.



17 How parents can enable a toddler to make decisions at story time in the home

- Rachel and Jack read stories to their little girl Bonnie most days, but usually in the evening time. Bonnie knows she can ask for stories anytime she is with her parents.
- They often have limited time at story time, so they explain to Bonnie that there is enough time for her to choose two or three stories from her bookshelf, which is on her level.
- They make sure to leave enough time for Bonnie to choose the stories and for a parent to read the stories.
- Sometimes, she doesn't want to choose a story or seems tired, so they ask her if she would like a parent to choose a book instead.
- Bonnie knows the names of some books, so she sometimes asks for them by name instead of going to the bookshelf.
- She really enjoys choosing books, and Rachel or Jack read the titles of what she has chosen out loud.
- When she was younger, her parents gave her a few options of books to choose from. Now that she is older, they ask her if she would like to go to her bookshelf and pick two or three stories depending on how much time they have.
- She often chooses the same books day after day. Her parents remind her of that, but she usually asks to read it again.
- Bonnie sometimes asks for story time in different places, such as sitting on the floor, sitting on a parent's lap or on a chair and her parents act on her wishes if possible. If Bonnie's granny is reading the story, the granny explains that she can't sit on the floor.
- Rachel and Jack ask Bonnie if she would like to hold the book or turn the pages or for them to do this.
- Sometimes Bonnie likes Rachel or Jack to ask her to find characters from the story, such as 'Can you find the mouse?' or 'What does the lion say?', which allows her to be part of the storytelling.
- Once the stories have been read, Rachel or Jack will say goodbye or good night to the characters, so Bonnie knows it is the last story.
- Sometimes her parents suggest story time and Bonnie says she wants to play or do something else, which her parents accept.



How the toddler is ensured Space, Voice, Audience and Influence at storytime

Space

- Bonnie feels safe to express her views about what stories to read and where to read them because she does this with trusted adults, and they always let her choose.
- Bonnie's parents allow her enough time to choose stories and where to read them.

Voice

- Rachel and Joe support Bonnie to choose stories when she asks for or needs support.
- Bonnie can ask for her chosen stories and where to read them, but she can also choose to do something else during story time, and her parents support her choices when possible.
- Bonnie is offered different ways of giving her views, such as getting the books herself, a parent getting the books she chooses, a parent suggesting stories, holding the book, turning the pages and finding characters in the stories.

Audience

- Rachel and Jack show they are ready and willing to listen to Bonnie because they prioritise her views and choices during story time.
- Rachel, Jack and Bonnie's granny explain to Bonnie granny can't sit on the floor and that they only have a certain amount of time for story time. They help her understand that story time is over by saying goodnight or goodbye to the characters.

Influence

- Bonnie knows how much influence she has on decisions because her parents give her lots of choices but explain things that can't happen and how much time they have.
- Rachel and Jack give Bonnie feedback and the impact of her views by acting on her views when possible.
- Rachel and Jack explain the reasons for certain decisions, such as a granny not being able to sit on the floor and the amount of time available for story time.

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