

# Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making

Hub na nÓg

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth





**International context for children and young people's right to a voice in decision-making**





**United Nations  
Convention on the  
Rights of the Child  
(CRC)**

**UN adopted the CRC in 1989**

- Most ratified human rights convention
- Legally-binding international agreement
- Integrated framework of overlapping rights and obligations

**Ireland became a signatory to the CRC in 1992.**

A **‘State Party’ (SP)** is a country that has ratified a convention and is legally bound by its provisions.

Ireland submitted its most recent report on CRC implementation in February 2022



## CRC General principles

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has listed four General Principles, as critical to the realisation of all other rights:

- Elimination of discrimination (Article 2)
- The best interest of the child (Article 3)
- The right of the child to life, survival and development (Article 6)
- The right of the child to be heard (Article 12)

Each article of the Convention must be interpreted and implemented under the umbrella of the General Principles



# General Comment 12: Guidance on how to implement Article 12 (the right of children to a voice in decision-making)

## State Party obligations:

- Carefully listen to children's views
- Presume the child is competent
- Respect non-verbal forms of communication
- Child's level of understanding
- Right for children experiencing difficulties
- Provide training on Article 12



# Ireland's response to CRC criticism... (2000 – 2010)

National Children's Strategy (2000) – GOAL 1 – Listening to Children

Establishment of National Children's Office in 2001, which became a full Department (DCYA) in 2011 and DCEDIY in 2020

Building a children's participation infrastructure – setting up a Participation Unit, Comhairle na Óg and Dáil na Óg

Consultation with children and young people becoming an expected part of policy development and service delivery

# National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making (2015-2020)



- A commitment under **Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures (2014 – 2020)**.
- Gives children and young people a voice in their individual and collective lives everyday lives:
  - in their communities,
  - in formal and non-formal education,
  - on their health and wellbeing and,
  - in the courts and legal system.
- Whole of Government Strategy, including local authorities
- Expected to involve children in decision-making on policy, legislation, research, services and practice.



- Very broad range of policy areas are actively implementing the strategy
- Good spread across the age ranges
- Mix of methodological approaches
- Strong follow through to publication of findings and influence on policy
- Legislation, policy development, service provision, funding streams and review/evaluation/reporting all included in the focus of the participation





# National Participation Structures

## National Participation Office



## Hub na nÓg



## Participation Unit in DCEDIY



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,  
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige  
Department of Children, Equality,  
Disability, Integration and Youth

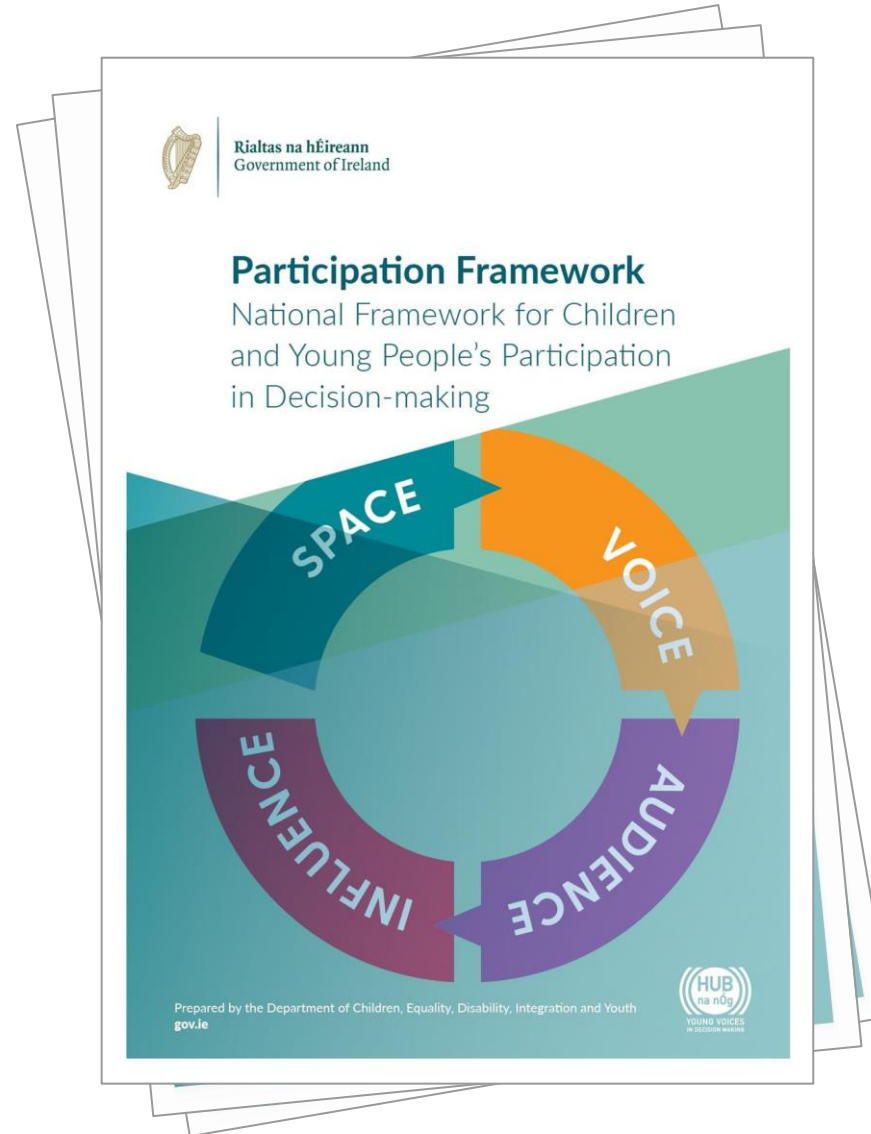


## National Participation Office

- Comhairle na nÓg
- Dáil na nÓg
- Comhairle na nÓg National Executive
- Seanad na nÓg
- National Youth Assembly of Ireland



# National Participation Framework



## What is the Participation Framework?

- Supports organisations to improve participation practice in a simple way.
- Grounded in UNCRC, UNCRPD, legislation and the Participation Strategy.

## Why is a Framework Needed?

- Lack of clarity about participation in decision-making.
- Need for guidance on using a rights-based approach.
- Poor understanding of the purpose of participation.
- Challenges in giving a voice in everyday spaces, services or activities.
- Need for national guidance.



## Participation with Purpose:

- Two interrelated factors:
  - the purpose of your organisation
  - the purpose of involving children and young people in decision-making
- Avoid getting stuck in the process of 'doing' participation
- Ensure that the purpose of participation is to give voice on:
  - day-to-day activities and practice
  - development of projects, programmes, services, policies that are central to the objectives of your organisation
- The intention should be that their views will influence an outcome or initiate change



## 9 Overarching Principles:

1. Transparent and Informative
2. Voluntary
3. Respectful
4. Relevant
5. Child Friendly
6. Inclusive (non discriminatory)
7. Supported by training
8. Safe and sensitive to risk
9. Accountable



# What is Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making?

- The right to a voice on decisions that affect them in everyday situations and strategic developments.
- Believing children and young people are capable of and have a right to agency.
- Knowing children and young people have unique perspectives that are as important and valuable as those of adults.
- Understanding children and young people are not only the future of society – they are their own present.
- Public policy would be improved if it focussed as much on their present lives as on their future as productive adults.
- Listening to children and young people is the key to understanding their present lives.



## What Participation in Decision-making is Not:

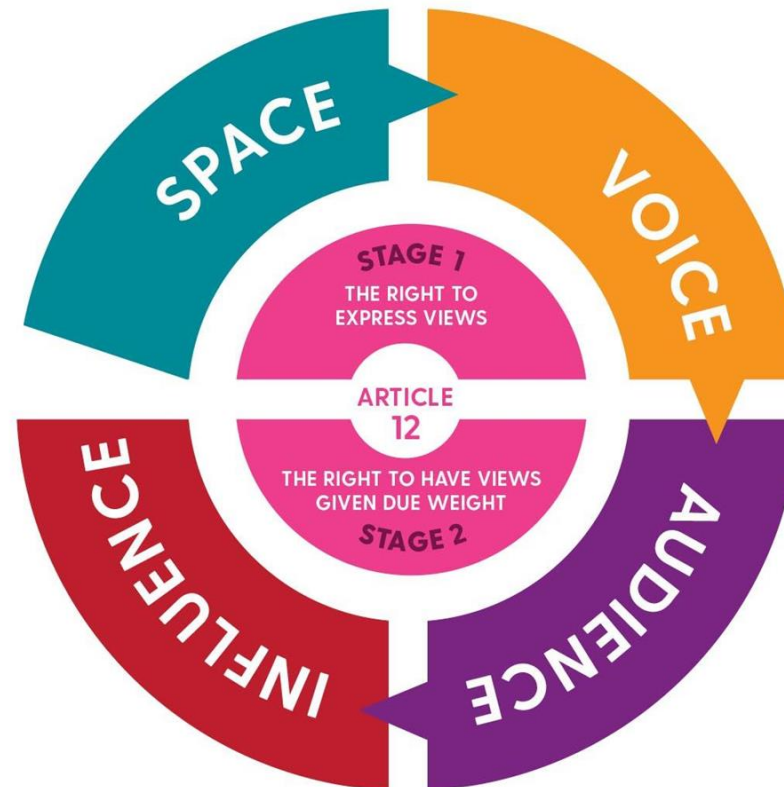
- Handing over complete power to children and young people
  - Instead it is giving due weight to their the views by acknowledging what they want and discussing the safest, most realistic and best decision(s) with them
- Believing that they are the only experts on their own lives
- Allowing them to do things that are unsafe or violate their other rights
  - Children and young people are entitled to have decisions made with their best interests as the primary consideration





# 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.



# Checklists and Feedback Forms Based on the Lundy Model:

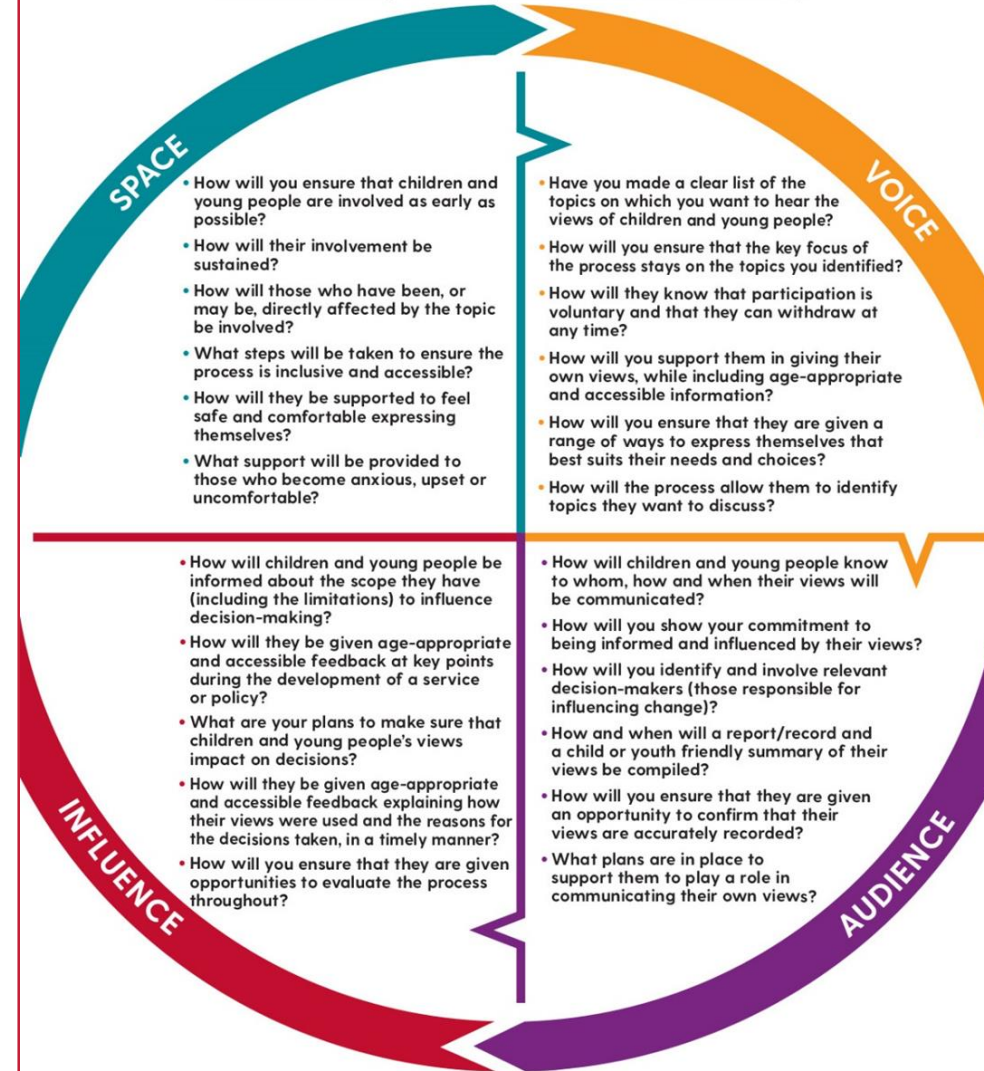
- Planning Checklist
- Evaluation Checklist
- Everyday Spaces Checklist
- Child and Youth Feedback Forms



# Planning Checklist

This checklist guides you on how to listen to children and young people and involve them in decision-making when you are developing policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation at national, local and organisational level.

You should inform children and young people that they have the right to a voice in decision-making and that you will take their views seriously.



## Capacity Building:

- Capacity Grants - Sectors
- Hub na nÓg Training
- Best Practice Case Studies
- Collaboration with Educators
- Collaboration in Research



# Consultations in the last 2 Years

- UNCRC/UNCRPD/UPR Review
- School Transport Review
- Anti-Bullying Plan for Schools
- Youth Homelessness Strategy
- Wearing of Masks in School during Covid 19
- Impact of Covid 19 on Youth Well-Being
- Climate Action Plan
- Environment Protection Agency Strategy
- Family Justice Strategy
- Review of Childcare Act
- Creative Ireland Strategy
- Successor Strategy to Better Outcomes Brighter Futures – Additional Seldom-Heard Cohorts



# Wearing of Masks in Primary Schools during Covid-19



# Review of the Family Justice Strategy



# Impact of Covid-19 on Youth Mental Health and Well Being





# Anti-Bullying Strategy for Schools



# Climate Action Plan



# Youth Led Participation National Policy Example – Youth Travel Card



<https://youtu.be/Vugc1ktyVDU>



# Everyday Context

<https://youtu.be/yltyfkafgBc>

