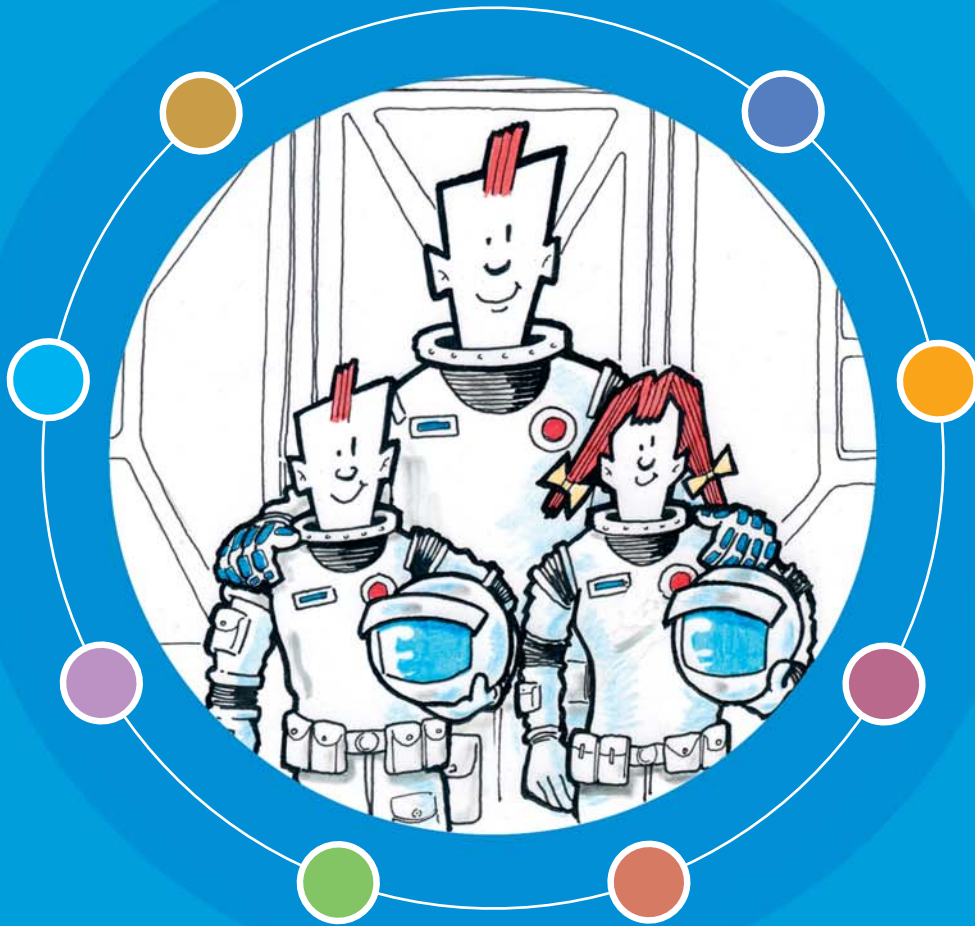


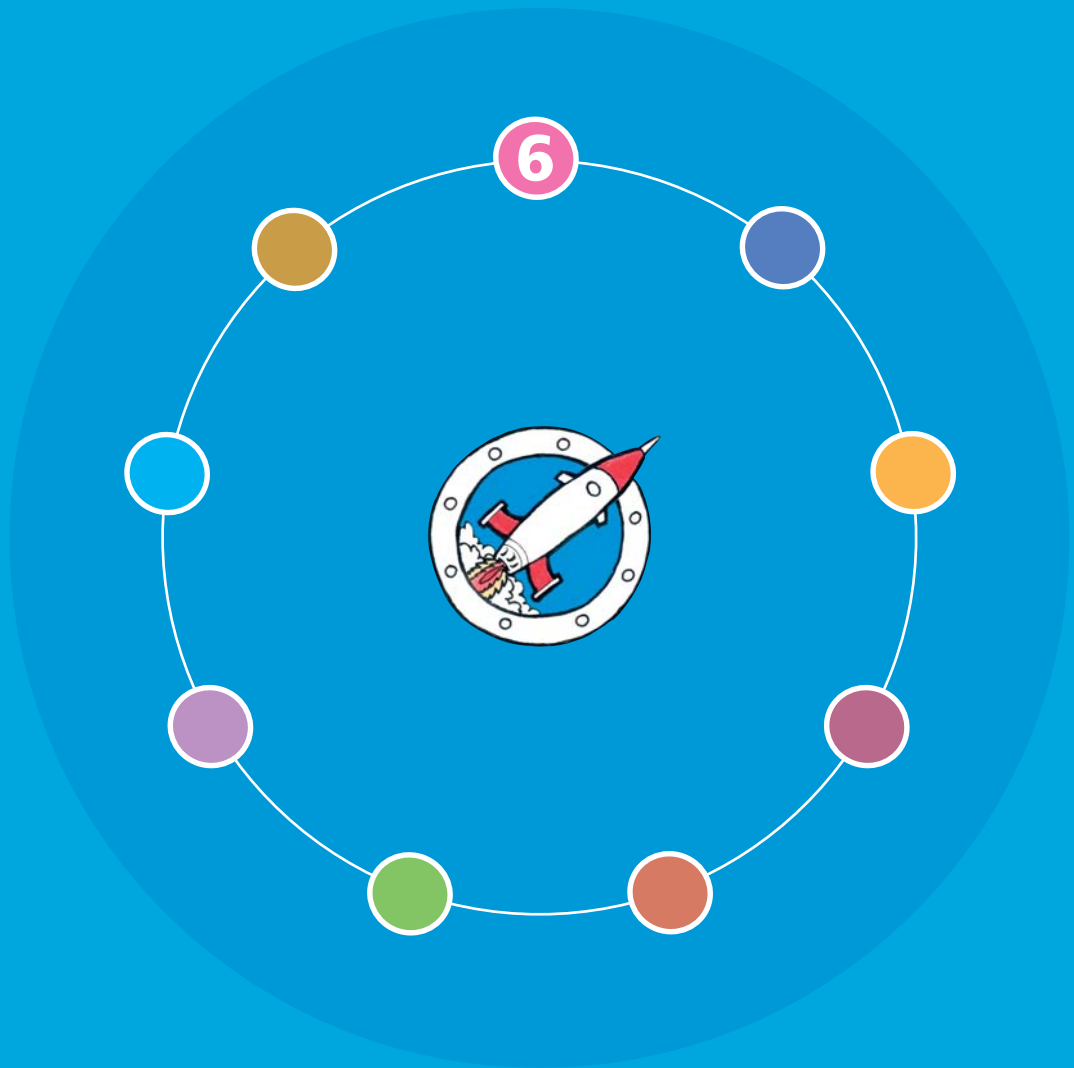


**GUIDES TO INCREASING PARTICIPATION
OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

6

WORKING WITH UNDER 11s





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? What will this guide tell me?

This guide considers the differences between working with younger children (aged under 11) and working with young people (11+). It describes some practical suggestions for effective work with this age group.

? What is different about participation work with Under 11s?

The underlying principles of participation do not alter when working with the younger age group. What is different *is* the children's physical, emotional and intellectual development stage. This impacts, for example, on their attention span.

? Can I adapt activities that work with older children?

Activities, tasks and games that are suitable for young people may need adaptation for use with younger children. This is a relatively straight-forward process, if you have a good understanding and knowledge of 'your' children. If you do *not* have this knowledge, talk to those who do – the teachers, early years workers or other adults and staff who regularly work with the children. Conversely, activities, tasks and games used with younger children can provide creative and imaginative ways of working with young people.

It is important to be realistic, as there is a limit to what can be achieved in a one-off session with under 11s. Much more can be achieved over a number of brief weekly sessions. And, as mentioned in **Guide 1: Introduction to Participation**:

Participation is a process not an event

? Who is involving younger children in participation?

The two main groups of adults engaging children in participation are:

those who already work with children (for example, as early years workers, teachers, after school workers, play workers, voluntary organisation workers, peers/young people) and want to increase their engagement and those who are working for organisations or agencies such as local authorities, Children's Partnerships or voluntary organisations and who want to carry out consultations or involve children in policy development and decision making.



The former group already have the key skills of how to communicate effectively with children and may be interested in the outline of participation in Wales, as provided in **Guide 1 Introduction to Participation** and in how to explain the reasons for and benefits of participation as in **Guide 2: Making the Case**.

The latter group are more familiar with the aims of participation work with children and young people, but may find the **'Nuts and Bolts'** techniques of how to work with a younger age group and specific **'Tools'** sections particularly relevant.

Using the skills of both of these two groups of people within an organisation and/or a local authority area can ensure that younger children are effectively involved in the policy and decision making processes.



Case Example 1: Children's Consultation Worker

As the number of consultation exercises being conducted in Wales increases, some areas are taking a more strategic approach. In Pembrokeshire the Children's Consultation Worker has developed links with schools and coordinates the needs of different organisations that want children's views. This reduces 'consultation fatigue' both for individual children and for the schools and other organisations that are being approached to assist in providing access to children.

Many Children and Young People's Partnerships and other organisations are employing participation officers to develop and lead on participation. Children in Wales has set up a Participation Practitioners' Network for Wales on behalf of the Participation Consortium so that practitioners can share information and best practice.

How to arrange access to a group of children

Obtaining access to a representative group of younger children with whom to consult on policy and decision making can be difficult. It is more complex than consulting with those currently involved in using services, such as those in an after school club or looked after children. For adults or workers who need to bring a group together, the two main options are:

to approach a school(s) or an organisation(s) already working with an appropriate group
or

to create a new group by approaching a large number of schools, children's organisations and finding volunteers.



To ensure wide representation, one option is to ask schools/organisations for children of a particular age/gender/etc and then encourage these to bring a 'friend'.

Working with children in a school setting can be an effective way of obtaining access to children. This option can reduce difficulties of obtaining parental consent if this is arranged via the school. It also removes transport problems and issues such as health and safety can be already covered by school policies. It may be possible to meet with the same group of children over several weeks or months. But there are limitations to this approach.

Children may behave differently in school to how they behave elsewhere. If taking part is seen as part of a school activity, it may reduce the options for a child to decline to participate. This would conflict with the ethics of voluntary participation. Also children may not want to discuss sensitive topics in the presence of children that they see regularly, or with teachers present. It is important to be aware of these limitations, when using schools to arrange access to children and, if necessary, take steps to deal with them.

Working in partnership with children's organisations can be an effective way of getting children's involvement. But it must be borne in mind that groups approached in this way may not be representative of all the children in an area. **See also Guide 7: Ensuring Inclusion.**

Bringing a group of children together, for example, for a specific participation activity or consultation exercise reduce the difficulties described above, but is generally more complex to arrange, more time consuming and more costly. **See Case Example 2** for a cost effective approach on a local authority wide basis.



Case Example 2: Monmouthshire Children's Council Event 2005

As a strategic response to the need to involve children in decision-making Monmouthshire Children and Young People's Partnerships Involvement Team organised an annual Children's Council Event inviting each Primary School to send four representatives from their School Council. The Event took place on 28th June 2005 and a total of 99 children aged 6–11 attended. These children were then involved in activities to enable their views to be obtained on four key issues that they had selected. These were Bullying, Play, Healthy Eating and Recycling. The children also had the opportunity to meet other children and have fun.



What are the benefits of involvement for younger children?

The skills required for involvement in participation are the same skills that all children gain as they grow up: to be able to communicate; to listen, to learn and to contribute; to understand others point of view and be able to express your own; to be able to negotiate; to be able to compromise; to cope with failure and to celebrate success.

The experience of involvement in consultations and other participation activities can enhance children's skills and increase self confidence. For a fuller discussion of the benefits of participation, see **Guide 2: Making the Case**.

Nuts & Bolts: Techniques



The main techniques used with under 11s are:

- Games and physical activities
- Art and craft activities
- Story telling
- Small group discussions
- Drama, role play, puppets
- One-to-one or peer interviewing

Through involvement in these activities children develop their skills to express their point of view, contribute to discussions and generate new ideas. This allows children to contribute positively and effectively to assist in developing local services for children and planning developments (See **Case Examples 3 and 4**).



Case Example 3: New Tredegar Integrated Children's Centre Caerphilly

The Integrated Children's Centre wanted input from children into the design of the cloakroom area of the new building. A model of a cloakroom was built to stimulate discussion of options. Children selected pictures and colours they liked from magazines and these led to a shortlist of the types of designs they would like to be used in the scheme.



Case Example 4: Mini Evaluators

This project was run by the Children's Fund Portsmouth and the SE Hampshire YMCA and Leisure Service. A number of children aged 9 to 13 were trained as 'Mini Evaluators' and then taken to another Playscheme to question children about the scheme, using a questionnaire they developed and obtain vox pop comments ('media interviews') and interview a manager. (See Resources for web reference).

There is an important role for observation of children, particularly with under 5s. With these younger children the role of non-verbal and preverbal communication is significant.

In addition to providing input into consultations, children can contribute in other ways, for example, as part of recruitment of staff through involvement in short listing or interviewing. Many children are developing their skills through involvement in school councils. This is a developing area with great potential.

The Welsh Assembly Government has made school councils statutory and has set up a School Councils Project to train and support schools in setting up and developing effective school councils. A website has been set up to support this work on www.schoolcouncilswales.org.uk

Nuts & Bolts: Building a relationship



Working in a participatory way day-by-day means that engaging children in policy and decision making needs to be part of the organisational culture. Acting as an 'external' person working with children that you don't know beforehand, calls for a slightly different approach to that of the adults who are routinely working with children and engaging them in policy changes and decision making. Time has to be spent building up the necessary level of trust, before other work can begin. Shorter consultations with under 11s will generally be more superficial. If the topic is a sensitive one, such as bullying, then this will be more difficult to carry out without a reasonable time period.



One option is to use an expert facilitator to support you. Another is to work closely with those workers who know the children you want to engage. Their expertise can help ensure that activities are pitched at the correct level of understanding and have a good balance between the physical, mental and emotional energy required.

For example, experienced staff make good use of the space available; use a corner for quiet area, sit the children on the floor cross-legged in a horse shoe/semicircle for discussions or make use of a large open space for a physical game to expend energy before a quiet art session. **See Case Example 5.**



Case Example 5: Brownies' Pow wow

The Girl Guide movement has always placed a strong emphasis on self-governance and developing decision-making skills. This occurs through the use of 'sixers' (children who lead a group of six), and the *Pow wow*.

'A Pack *Pow wow* can take place whenever there is something important to discuss, decide or share. It involves everyone from the pack from the newest Brownie to the most experienced leader. *Pow wows* are usually held with all the Brownies and leaders sitting in a circle. Whether on the floor or on chairs, it is helpful to have everyone on the same level.'

At a *Pow wow*, a Brownie is encouraged to:

'think for herself, help make decisions, ...learn to listen when someone else is speaking, speak so that others can hear, understand that everyone's opinion counts and should be given serious consideration and to accept majority decisions.'

See *Brownies section, Guiding Handbook series, Girl Guiding UK.*



Nuts & Bolts: Planning sessions



A well-planned session will have a range of types of activities, be well suited to the children’s abilities and interests and be fun to take part in. You must be confident enough to realise that when something is not working, you may need to alter your original plan. It is therefore imperative to have a back up Plan B. For example, see Tool Box for u11s in the **Tools** Section.

The basics of planning any session - introductions, agreeing ground rules, planning suitable breaks and a calm down or debrief session - are, if anything, more important the younger the age group. A suitable venue with appropriate space, equipment, secure boundaries and good toilet and refreshment facilities is also important.

The Guidelines provided in Table 1 are *only* Guidelines, and they are designed for those unfamiliar with work with u11s. An experienced worker will be able to cope with more children, manage minor difficulties and provide one to one support as required.

Table 1: Guidelines for planning sessions

	5 yrs	8yrs	11yrs
Minimum staff/adults	Two*	Two*	Two*
Group size: group discussion art activity physical activity	Up to 4 per helper Up to 4 per helper Up to 20 per group	Up to 6 per helper Up to 6 per helper Up to 25 per group	Up to 8 per helper Up to 8 per helper Up to 30 per group
Session length: group discussion art activity physical activity	Up to 30 mins Up to 45 mins Up to 45 mins	30 to 45 mins 30 to 60 mins 30 to 45 mins	30 to 60 mins 30 to 60 mins 30 to 45 mins
Introductions/ Warm up	Yes	Yes	Yes
Breaks	Frequent/ad hoc	Planned/regular	Planned/regular
Refreshments	Planned/regular	Planned/regular	Planned/regular
Calm down	Yes e.g. story and explain next steps	Yes e.g. quiet fun game and explain next steps	Yes, de-brief and explain next steps



*Note. If a session is being run with a group within another setting, such as a school or youth club, it may be possible for one staff member to take a small group out to a separate room, but a second responsible adult should always be available in the same premises.

If you are engaging a facilitator to run a session(s) on your behalf, being aware of the types of issues and problems that may arise can help to ensure that you obtain the results from the session that you require.

Nuts & Bolts: Consultations and other activities

Consulting children about existing services and future service planning



The outcomes of a consultation can include children's views, information on their concerns as well as generating solutions to problems or ideas for new developments. Whatever the aim, to obtain the most effective outcome the children need to be comfortable in the setting, excited or enthused by the information given to them and encouraged to participate.

It is important to be aware of the physical and mental ability of the group being consulted. Their confidence with strangers, their expectation of the event/session, their desire to help and how tired they are can all affect the outcome. But do not underestimate the strength of their views. For example, even very young children can have a strong sense of what is and what is not 'fair' and 'just'.

Be realistic in what can be achieved in one session with younger children. A few short sessions, will achieve much more than one long session, if this can be arranged. If not, try to get information on the same topic in different ways to engage as wide a range of the children as possible. See **Case Examples 6 and 7**.



Case Example 6: Designing an outdoor play space

Get the children to bring in pictures or take photos of places they like/don't like.
Get children to draw their ideal play space.
Show them photos of outdoor play items and get them to rate the best and the worse.
Visit a play area and get the children to put stars on the places they like best and crosses on the worst.
Discuss in small groups play places they have visited and enjoyed.
As a group make a model of an outdoor area.

Involvement in decision making in a daycare or early years setting

Discuss with managers and colleagues the aims of increasing participation within the setting. Agree new areas in which to find out the views of the children. For example, arrange a weekly feedback on activities or a discussion on where to go on trips away from the premises. Or include a section for the children's views in 'parent and carers' feedback forms.

Build on what is familiar to the children. For example, use circle time to discuss issues in a comfortable framework. Stretch the types of decisions that children can contribute to. Make sure that the children are given good feedback; both if their ideas have been taken forward or reasons why they have not.

Encourage participation by each member of the group. For example, use the 'cotton bud' technique (Save the Children 2002) to ensure the discussion is not dominated by a few (not appropriate for early years/day care however). Ensure that everyone has been given an opportunity to contribute; it is sometime necessary to ask a child for their view or a contribution directly.

With very young children, encourage them to give their views, listen to others and to learn to compromise. For example, when resolving a conflict over use of a toy. These skills will then develop over time and the children will learn to constructively participate in more complex decisions.



Case Example 7: What is a Community First Partnership?

A Trainee Participation Worker (TPW) aged under 25 years and working for Save the Children, worked with a group of children in Gilfach Goch, a Community First area. The aim was to help children in the area to understand what a Community First partnership was and how they could contribute to the Community First work. The TPW worked over some weeks with the children and they developed a booklet and puppet show, which described the role of the different members of the partnership. The booklet is now being distributed across all the Community First areas in Wales (See **Resources** for web reference).

Training to be involved in an interview process for staff

Before involving children in an interview process, they must be given training both to allow them to understand the whole interview process and to be fair to the candidates. For example, training should be provided in how to fairly question individuals, how to objectively provide feedback about any candidate, that they meet, formally or informally. Training may be required in how to conduct a formal interview as part of a panel and how to record comments for later scrutiny.

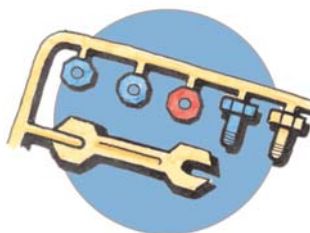
For more information see forthcoming Guide 11 Recruitment

Peer interviewing/peer led research

Children learn rapidly from experience and can be trained to act as interviewers or peer researchers. For example, the Children's Research Centre based at the Open University, trained seven Year 5 pupils to conduct their own research. A project based at Swansea University is also involving children and young people in evaluating the Children's Commissioner for Wales (See **Resources** for contact details for both projects).



Tools: Useful items with multiple uses



Toolbox for u11s

Obtain a large robust/colourful/portable toolbox and put in it a selection of the following basic items:

Stationery

Pens/pencils/felt tips
Paper
Scissors, stapler, sharpener, rubbers
Art/craft items e.g. old magazines, beads, wool, sequins etc

Paper plates
Blu tak/sellotape/glue sticks
Play doh
Coloured card
Selection of stickers

Toys/games/voting items

Skipping ropes
Pre made number cards 1 to 10 (e.g. to put on floor) and/or
Paper roll marked 1 to 10 (to put on wall).

Football
Frisbee
Hoops
Bean bags
Small balls

Music

Musical items/instruments
Children's music audiotape and tape recorder

Resource cards/books

Laminated cards with games/activities
Children's games books eg 'Spice it up'

Prizes

Balloons
Bubbles

Stickers
Coloured pencils

The above contents allow many alternatives/'Plan Bs' if a session does not go as originally planned, or if you need to cope with a larger/smaller group than expected.

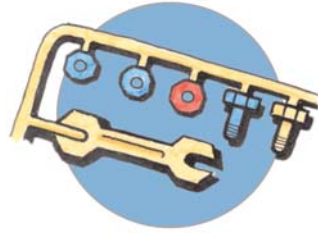
Physical activities, singing or music can all be used to change mood or enliven a group. Use coloured card and stapler for children to turn their ideas into a 'book' to display or take home.

The items can be used by adults/staff/helpers to carry out one to one or small group work or lead an impromptu 'warm up' or 'calm down' activity.

Add your own personal favourites and your enthusiasm... and you can cope with anything!



Tools: Making it work



A. Ground rules

Develop a written/drawn list of ground rules with the children early in the session. **See case example 8.** Include discussion of how breaking the rules will be dealt with by the group. Ensure it includes how adults should behave. Get the children to suggest rules/draw them/individually and as a group. Display them during the session e.g. on the wall.

OR

Bring some from previous/first session. Hide the list and get children to recall them and then display them on the wall.

OR

For an outdoor session, use pre-written cards and agree which ones to keep and which aren't useful, include some ridiculous ones (e.g. no riding elephants).

Use the usual involvement techniques; make it physical, make it visual, make it important and make it a group decision. Use all the senses.



Case Example 8: Toy sharing for under fives

In a group setting agree with children how to manage toy sharing. Explain that whoever is playing with a toy that someone else wants, is entitled to play with it. BUT that when they finish with it, they **MUST** offer it to the child who wanted it. Agree this rule with the group.

This is a simple rule that even very young children can understand. It encourages negotiation and a sense of responsibility. It also encourages communication between the children.

An added benefit is the amount of staff time it frees up not having to agree when one child should hand over a toy to another. Part of the reason it works is that children engrossed in play do not notice the passage of time, that a toy often loses its appeal when the other child goes off to play with something else and that a sense of 'fair play' is a basic emotion.



B. Health and Safety and Risk Assessments

Ensure appropriate risk assessments of the venue including access to fire exits, food preparation areas, toilet and hand washing facilities.

Ensure appropriate risk assessments of group size and staff ratios.

Access to emergency help e.g. access to telephones and back up out of hours.

Ensure appropriate parental consents and emergency contact details.

Registration of any activity with under 8s subject to regulations – get advice from...

C. Child Protection and Confidentiality

Ensure all adults are aware of all relevant agency child protection policies and of the limits to confidentiality. Ensure all know the contact number for out of hours child protection duty officers and that ground rules have been set regarding confidentiality and child protection with children. Provide parents and children with information on how to make a complaint.

D. Debrief

Take time to discuss how sessions have gone.

Ensure appropriate monitoring and evaluation can/does take place. For example, keep a log and record attendance and details of activities and any difficulties.

Explain what is going to happen next: next session, follow up and feed back.



FAQs



How do you work with children with limited writing skills?

Talk with them. Use drawing and artwork. Use physical props.

Example 1: Drawing out ideas and opinions.

Either ask the children to draw a picture on the topic. Talk to a child about their drawing and the adult can then write the child's words on the picture or in speech bubbles to glue on.

Or let them 'free write'. This is where the child 'writes' without worrying about spelling. Some children find this very freeing and they are able to express ideas and concepts they could not 'put into words' otherwise. The adult then asks the child to describe what they have written.

The children can then turn their writing or drawing into a little book giving it a cover of coloured paper and using staples.

Example 2: Basic voting methods.

Ask the children to choose between a range of options, give them each one or more beanbags to put onto the picture of their choice or in the hula-hoop representing the option they want. Or get them to draw a smiley face next to their choice on a list.

Or use thumb voting: 'thumb up = agree'; 'thumb across = want to discuss it more'; 'thumb down = disagree'. This way everyone votes together, and each child clearly has only one vote; rather than voting 'in series' which can be confusing.



How do you maintain children's interest in the topic?

You should have children who have agreed to participate. Ensure they are well informed and so understand what they are going to be asked to do.

Use items/props/film/puppet play to introduce the topic to be discussed.



Use a range of different activities and games during a session. Include warm up and calm down activities. Make it interesting, by making it visual and physical and with an outcome they can enjoy (e.g. a picture or 'booklet' to take home or a collage for the wall). Draw on their experience and what is important to them:

Remember when...? Did you see...? Have you...? Who has...?

Give positive feedback to children for their contributions. If they stray from the subject, be positive but bring them back to the topic.



I worry that the children will get bored and then get out of control

Good planning is the key. If you are new to this, don't be too ambitious. Make sure you have good back up plans agreed with other staff/adults. Work with small numbers of children. Find out what you can about their level of ability beforehand, to ensure that your activities are suitable. Other ideas are:

- Change the tone or speed of your voice.
- Ask a child who has lot concentration or finished quickly, to aid in the organisation e.g. collect up the crayons or hold up a picture.
- Organise activities in different size groups: individual, pairs, threes or larger groups. Mix abilities and attention spans, literacy levels within the groups.

Monitor progress of the groups: check they are on track, listen to their ideas and aid the discussion. Feedback: visually, model the idea, act it out or say it.

If the whole group's behaviour is deteriorating, alter the activity. Change the mood by having a more up beat or calmer activity (For example do some singing, go outside or have a refreshment break). If one group is struggling, if necessary, get one helper to take a smaller number of those that need more attention.



Checklist: Working with under 11s



Health and safety

- Has a health and safety risk assessment for use by under 11s of the venue been carried out?
- Has a health and safety risk assessment for under 11s any outdoor activities been carried out? Or activities away from the base venue?
- Have all issues raised by this been addressed?
- Are all adults aware of child protection guidance?
- Have all adults who require them had criminal records bureau checks?

Consent and information

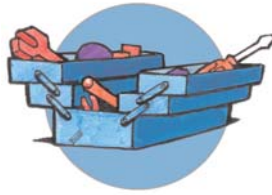
- Have you provided parents/teachers with written information?
- Have you obtained informed parental consent?
- Have you obtained written consent from the school/after school activity staff?
- Have you obtained informed consent from the children?

Ground rules: Have you planned to agree ground rules to cover...

- Behaviour?
- Respect for others?
- Confidentiality?
- Consequences of breaking ground rules?
- Right to refuse to participate?
- Having Fun; Being Happy
- Feeling Safe

Monitoring and evaluation...

- Have you arranged to monitor sessions, attendance and activities undertaken?
- Do you have a process to deal with problems, complaints, incidents etc?
- Have you included time for an evaluation of the process?



RESOURCES

*For signposts to general resources on Participation see **GUIDE 9: Resources and Support**.*

Organisations

Children's Commissioner for Wales
www.childcom.org.uk

Children's Research Centre, Open University
www.childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk/about.html

Dynamix
www.dynamix.ltd.uk

Guides
www.girlguiding.org.uk

Save the Children
www.savethechildren.org.uk

Scouts and Scout base
www.scoutbase.org.uk

Swansea University, Evaluation of Children's Commissioner.
For further details contact Nigel Thomas, Research Director, Dept. of Childhood Studies www.swansea.ac.uk

Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education www.coram.org.uk

Mini Evaluators, Children's Fund, Portsmouth
[www.ne-cf.org/localevaluation/core_files/fileDownload\(45\).doc](http://www.ne-cf.org/localevaluation/core_files/fileDownload(45).doc)



Tools Activities and Games

Save the Children and Dynamix, 2002, *Participation Spice it Up*, Save the Children.

Sleeping lions and many other games.

www.gameskidsplay.net

Fajerman L. Treseder P. and Connor J. 2004, *Children are Service Users Too Save the Children. Includes a selection of methods for consulting with children and young people.*

Dynamix *Happy Suns and Sad Sheep Dynamix.*
Currently only available as part of a training course.

Other Books

Fraser S. Lewis V. et al. (Eds) 2003, *Doing Research with Children and Young People*, Sage published in association with the Open University

Brownie Leaders Handbook Girl-guiding UK

Save the Children 2003, *Never Too Young: How Young Children Can Take Responsibility and Make Decisions*, Save the Children

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