

Workshop Plan- participative ideas to demonstrate and promote participation with staff in children's services

Cherry pick from the ideas below as suitable for your group

1. Introduction – Introduce aim, Learning Outcomes
2. Setting the scene of inclusive involvement
3. Free range or battery chick – to consider the importance of involvement - Small group activity
4. Can of worms – to consider ethical issues of involving children and young people – pairs or group discussion
5. Snakes and Ladders – to consider what helps or hinders inclusive involvement
6. Snakes and ladders board- to consider different levels of participation
7. Hot Air Balloon – to begin to evaluate current involvement and identify ways of moving forward
8. Toolbox – to find out where to get good ideas from
9. Planning
10. Evaluation

Details:

1. Aim: To promote effective, inclusive involvement of children in personal plans, service evaluation and planning

Learning Outcomes

1. To recognise the importance of involvement
 2. To have awareness of ethical issues
 3. To feel more confident about inclusion of children who present challenges
 4. To understand the levels of participation
 5. To know where to find resources and ideas to get started
-
2. Introduce the importance of involving children and young people.

From: ["The Participation Charter"](#) (Partnership Works and Children and Young People's Participation Partnership)

- Participation is a right
- Children and young people are the best authorities on their own lives
- Participation depends on respect and honesty
- Participation must be accessible and inclusive
- Participation is dialogue to influence change
- Participation is built in
- Participation is everybody's responsibility
- Participation benefits everybody

The recent Concordat Agreement (2007) requires focus on outcomes for service users; many of these outcomes are subjective and the experience of the service user will be a necessary part of measuring their achievement.

The Crerar Review (2007) (reviewing the inspection and regulation of services) makes clear there is a responsibility of service providers to carry out self-evaluation using the voice of service users.

Listening to children is included in performance indicators across services (such as the Care Commission Standards 2005 and How Good is Our School? 2007)

(Reference can be made to the [Framework for Involvement tool](#)).

3. To demonstrate communication without language, split in to small groups by:

- i) give people a different animal (an animal per small group) to be and ask people to find others in their 'animal' group by making the animal sound.
- ii) give people different colours (e.g. with small coloured stickers on notes) and show the Makaton or BSL sign for each colour. They must find others in their group by making the sign.
- iii) give people different sports and get them to act out the movement to find others in their group
- iv).....? you get the idea

Once in small groups, provide each group with a large piece of paper with a newly hatched chick drawn in the middle. Remind people of the Jamie Oliver TV show. Lots of day old chicks on a conveyor belt, it was just your luck whether you were in a tray destined to be free range or one destined for battery life. So randomly allocate half the groups to be free range and half to be battery.

Thinking of their own life experience or the experience of the children using their service, write down what experiences are free range or battery depending on which group they are in.

Give everybody 5 minutes to write things down on their piece of paper.

Using a flipchart, gather the views from the groups considering the feelings raised in us about being free range or battery.

Round up using ideas presented by the group, about why it is important that we give children a locus of control in their lives, that they are offered choices about who to associate with, what to spend time on, when and what to eat from a healthy range of options, developing at own natural rate and so on - within a safe environment (free range or battery we need to keep the fox out).

4. Can of worms – to consider Ethical Issues- Pairs or group discussion

Use a clean, empty tin can and some pipe cleaners. Wiggle and bend the pipe cleaners to look like worms. Use stickers or luggage labels to attach a controversial or thought provoking statement to each worm.

From the discussion you would hope to derive some ethical principles of involvement:

- Everyone (from a new baby to someone with profound and complex needs) can express themselves in some way
- Informed consent is the ideal but to miss out children who do not understand why you are involving them denies the right to be heard to the most vulnerable people
- People who cannot consent can be involved by assent i.e. when they voluntarily take part in the activity or by being observed in their natural environment.
- While no one can represent another person's view point, if whole groups of children are under-represented you will not have a full picture (one woman cannot represent another, but we would not be happy with any poll taken where hardly anyone was female)
- Children have a right to privacy and confidentiality, but in the context of child protection.
- Expectations should be managed from the start, children should know what may or may not change from their involvement.
- Payment can be coercive especially for children who may be keen to please to 'earn' their reward. However, children's contribution should be valued through offering a good venue, snacks, materials and so on.
- Feedback to children should always include thanks for their contribution, sight of any final report, hard information about what will change as a result of their contribution and how this will be reviewed.
- A range of methods of expression need to be offered to children as language/literacy should not be a barrier
- A range of activities should be offered, children's contribution is voluntary and should be fun and interesting to the individuals taking part

Invite participants to consider statements individually or in pairs/small groups, then gather some of the ideas until all ethical issues have been discussed.

Examples of worm statements might be:

"It's hard to involve everybody equally, so it is OK to settle for the few."

"If someone can't give informed consent it is unethical to involve them."

"You can't consult children who can't express their views."

"People should be rewarded for their participation."

"No one can represent another person's view point, so you cannot get a representational group."

"Questionnaire is a quick, easy and efficient method of gathering views."

"You can ask children their view, but adults need to decide."

"Feedback to children should include thanks and a promise to take their views seriously."

"If you ask children what they want you raise an expectation that you can deliver it."

"Children should have the same right to confidentiality as adults."

"You can't ask or answer a question with art."

"To be methodical you need to use the same method with all the children"

5. Snakes and ladders - for this activity you might want to temporarily impair some of the participants. Use ear protectors to impair hearing, protective goggles with bubble wrap on them to impair sight, a wheelchair or other immobilisation to impair physical movement, a cap worn over the eyes while person has to repeatedly 'fiddle' throughout the session, joining/undoing paperclips or similar activity to impair socially +..... any other ideas?

We all know the rules of snakes and ladders, ladders help you get to the top, snakes make you slip away from your target. Consider in terms of inclusive involvement, what are the ladders and what are the snakes? Each group to come up with 3 or 4 of each.

Bring whole group together and agree the most important snakes and ladders for inclusive involvement.

6. Snakes and ladders board – give everyone one or two post-its. Number 1 on the board is when decisions are taken that affect you over which you have no say or control at all and number 100 is when you were fully informed and involved and able to take a decision which affected you. Write on post-its personal experiences of decisions taken which affected you and your level of involvement in those decisions. People who had

been temporarily impaired might comment on how that felt for them. Place your post-its on where you feel they should go on the scale of involvement. Discuss the [Participation Ladder](#) and [Treseder's circles](#).

7. Click here for a [Hot Air Balloon sheet](#). Think about your organisation wanting to take off on a journey influenced by the children who access it. What are the ropes holding you down? What partners do you want in the basket with you? What winds might blow you off course? What are the strands you will need to bring together to make the fabric of the balloon – things like manager commitment, staff support, opportunities, access, resources and so on. What are the sand bags, the policies & procedures which can hold you back, let you get blown away or provide sensible balance to ensure movement of the right direction and speed? This should show what needs to be done to get your organisation on that journey to participation.

8. Toolbox – what tools will you need in your toolbox to involve the children and young people you would like to involve? The Highland Children's Forum website toolbox of ideas and activities have been tried and tested as well as offering web links to other toolboxes. Discuss what options you could offer to engage your user group of children and young people.

9. Make a plan – it is a good idea to begin to involve children and young people in the first place in coming up with the policy and plan for involvement.

10. Evaluate your progress. There are several tools for evaluation available but [here is one](#) which is easy and quick to use.