



Building participation for policy design

"Practical Guidance on Consulting, Conducting Research and Working in Participative Ways With Children and Young People Experiencing Domestic Abuse" (S.G. 2009)

- Children's safety and wellbeing is paramount
- The engagement should be purposeful, and not token
- Children's participation and contributions should be valued
- Participants must have the opportunity to provide freely given and informed consent
- Researchers/facilitators should be mindful that children's responses may be influenced by 'care givers' and support staff. They may feel grateful for the support received and want to provide information those engaging them want to hear
- Researchers/facilitators should be open to the possibility that participation may not be in the children's interests and consider not going ahead with 'engagement' where safety and wellbeing is in doubt

Children and young people in a participation group facilitated by Enable, called Speak for Yourself, contributed to this framework by suggesting the key factors in involving children and young people in policy making was:

- Involve young people in local and national participation
- Bring young people together first for socialising and getting to know one another before consultation
- Hold consultations in nice venues with good food
- Hear their issues as well as enquire about pre-set issues
- Use various media, audio, video, talk shop, art, drama

The Highland Children's Forum plan consultations for policy design to meet the following criteria:

- Representational: including participants from all three areas of Highland with rural and urban experience; including children and young people across the equalities, age, gender, race, culture, ability, sexuality.
- Ethical: Informed consent gained, emphasis that participation at each stage is voluntary, confidentiality in the context of child protection explained
- Custom Built Format: Careful consideration with colleagues and children and young people themselves is given to decide what format is most appropriate.
- Holistic: children and young people seen as individuals, family members and citizens. In order to allow children to contribute without becoming distressed by their own circumstances, they could be asked to think in the third person rather than describe their own personal experience.
- Engaging and Expressive: The event and planned activities will be age appropriate, be accessible, offer variety and most importantly be fun.
- Rewarding: A rewarding activity/perk could be offered both to thank participants and to allow them to get to know other participants and build trust.
- Enhancing: It would be expected that participation would also raise children and young peoples' self-confidence and self-expression skills. Activities might include an opportunity for children/young people to gain other relevant skills.
- Supportive: Support should be arranged in advance to offer to any child/young person who requires it or whose participation on the day causes them to remember or disclose something distressing to them .
- Editing: Participating children and young people will be given the opportunity of assisting editing of a report before its publication.
- Feedback: All children and young people involved in the consultation will be provided with feedback about what will happen as a result of their participation.