



# *Play Your Part*

## **Youth Worker Participation Toolkit**





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# Introduction

*Play Your Part* was a one-year pilot project led by PlayBoard NI and funded by the Education Authority (EA). The project aimed to support youth settings to embed a culture of effective participation and practice with children aged four to eight years. The project goal was to develop a training framework alongside a set of participatory tools to support youth workers to create an environment that ensures the views, opinions and the voices of children aged four to eight years are heard within youth settings.

This Participation Toolkit explores different participation approaches (**consultation**, **collaboration** and **child-led**) as well as different participation levels (day-to-day decisions, organisational decision-making and consultations). The information compiled in this toolkit has emerged from an in-depth analysis of existing literature around methodologies that enable children's participation in decision-making, as well as the conceptual underpinnings surrounding participation and children's participation in youth settings.

## **What is the purpose of this resource?**

*Play Your Part* has been developed based on the existing guidelines of youth work, namely Priorities for Youth, Engagement framework (EA), and the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for the youth work sector in Northern Ireland.

The Participation Toolkit is designed to support youth workers in their fulfilment of providing a high-quality service for young people which can effectively demonstrate the contribution to the engagement outcomes of youth work. In particular, it addresses the Active Participation indicators of the Engagement Framework.

As described in the framework, active participation involves assessing needs of children and young people; involving them in decision-making, and 'planning and problem solving either around a single activity or within the club, unit or project generally' (Engagement Framework Guidance note, p. 2). This dimension advocates for participation in planned, long-term, group work programmes which will enhance children and young people's capabilities, develop interpersonal skills and personal relations, as well as improved health and well-being.

**Who is this resource for?**

This toolkit is directed at youth workers across Northern Ireland to help them promote and implement meaningful participation amongst young children through play.

**Using this resource**

This toolkit contains practical guidance on how to design and conduct participation processes with children from the four to eight age group. In it, you will find a conceptual framework to participation through the playwork lens, as well as a step-by-step guide on how to plan participation, what activities to undertake, what evidence to collect and how to take action to influence change as well as giving appropriate feedback, and involving children in the process of evaluation and reflective practice.

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# The Toolkit

## **Getting young children involved! Participation through play**

Play, by its very nature, is a participative process: play empowers children and provides social tools to participate in decision-making. Play is how children learn about the world, about themselves and each other, and give meaning to the things that happen in their lives (Jans 2004). It enables children to move through each stage of their development naturally, allowing them to make friends, deal with challenges, share and cooperate and feel part of their community. Play forms the basis of their interactions and the way they relate to their environments. At its most successful, it offers children choice, control and freedom.

Children and young people's lives are playful – when we think about involving the four to eight age group in participation processes, the importance of play needs to be recognised. By entering the realities of children through play, we attempt to understand the child's perspective. This can be done through many means; here, we propose to link youth work with playwork in order to enable youth workers to successfully engage young children in their participation activities.

Youth work and playwork professionals both hold common aims of promoting the personal, educational, creative and social developments of children and young people. Both professional stances aspire to support children and young people to reach their full potential. In playwork, this is achieved by providing safe, stimulating and supportive environments and age appropriate opportunities and experiences for children and young people.

Playwork can support children and young people to:

- have fun, play, laugh, learn, experiment, make mistakes and thrive
- treat themselves and others with love, kindness and respect
- participate in exciting initiatives, innovations, activities and experiences
- grow into motivated, positive, resilient and caring citizens

The role of the playworker like the youth worker is one of facilitator and enabler. As positive role models, playworkers and youth workers aspire to make a positive impression on children's lives, supporting them to grow, develop and flourish.

## **Playwork Principles**

The Play Your Part Toolkit is underpinned by Playwork Principles. These eight principles are based on the recognition that children's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.

The Playwork Principles identify that the role of the playworker (in this case the youth worker) is to support all children in the creation of a space in which they can play and participate. It is a whole approach that can become embedded within organisations through the positive interactions of the adults and children.

1. All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals and communities.
2. Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their own play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.
3. The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.
4. For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.
5. The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.
6. The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up-to-date knowledge of the play process and reflective practice.
7. Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people on the playworker.
8. Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the development benefit and well-being of children.

**The Playwork Principles were developed by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group, Cardiff 2005.**

Children and young people have so much to offer to society and to the communities in which they live. They know about themselves, about how they feel, and what is important to them. Participation is more than just asking children and young people for their ideas and views to learn about what they would like to happen. It's an ongoing process of listening, taking them seriously and turning their ideas and suggestions into reality.

### **Importance of play**

Play is a right of all children as outlined in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

**States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.**





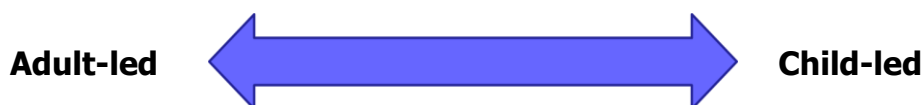
Playing is crucial to children’s physical, social, mental, and emotional health and well-being. Play can happen in places and environments where children feel free to play in their own way; following their own ideas and for their own reasons.

**PLAY IS FUN! It improves imagination and creativity. It can help children manage challenging situations and help build resilience. It helps improve mental and physical health. It can promote independence. It helps regulate emotions. Children learn through play. Through play children learn about the world around them.**



### Role of the adult

As youth workers it is your role to create an inviting play space which is sensitive to the play needs of the younger children attending your setting. You also need to know when it is appropriate to join play activities, when to intervene and when to just let things be!



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Children need time to make their own decisions and to learn from their failings. If adults continually interrupt children's play, the children can lose their natural independence and risk-taking skills. Children need to learn these skills to become resilient and develop persistence. As adults, we need to be aware of the impact that we can have on children's play:

- Wait to be invited to play - adults should only join in children's play if they have been invited, we are there to facilitate play.
- Enable play to occur un-interrupted - children should have the opportunity to become 'lost in play' unaware of the outside world. If we interrupt a playing child the play experience for the child may become lost.
- Enable children to explore their own values - children often behave and play in ways that we, as adults, may find inappropriate, risky or hurtful. Often children naturally adjust these as they play.
- Leave children to improve their own performance - play is essentially an adult free experience, where children learn their own skills through trial and error (for example, overcoming a fear of heights, or standing up to a bully).
- Leave the content/intent of play to the children - play is what children do, they should be in control of what they do, how they do it and why they do it. They are the best people to decide what they want to do and why they want to do it.
- Let the children decide why they play - children shouldn't be pushed, induced or put under pressure to engage in a particular activity.
- Only intervene when children want it - from time to time children will become bored, uncreative or un-stimulated. They may ask you to help by inventing something for them to do.

### **A playwork approach to participation**

Playwork and youth work approaches are similar.

*Playwork* as outlined in the Playwork Principles (page 6) is an approach to working with children in which children determine and control the content and intent of their play, rather than it being adult-led or directed. Children are provided with the opportunities and space to put forward ideas and initiate their own play activities.

*Youth work* principles are premised on the personal and social development of children and young people and effective youth work therefore helps young people to identify their personal and social developmental needs.

Personal and social development allows a child or young person to gain knowledge, understanding and awareness of him/herself as an individual and as an active participant in relationships with others. The relationship between the youth worker and the young person is a key factor in this process.

Participation is a key element of the youth work process. It is a way of thinking and working which facilitates joint decision-making by young people and youth workers. The uniqueness of youth work is that young people of all abilities and often diverse interests *choose* to participate regularly on a voluntary basis.

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Non-formal education - youth work encourages children and young people's participation to develop their personal and social skills encouraging them to engage or re-engage in positive learning within a non-formal setting (Priorities for Youth – Department of Education 2013).

Both playwork and youth work approaches:

- encourage children and young people to voice and share their opinions
- give children and young people free choice
- have the welfare of children and young people at the core
- follow Article 12 of the UNCRC which enshrines participation rights including the right to express opinions and have those opinions taken into account
- most importantly are **fun** for children and young people!

Commonly, when we talk about participation we are talking about engaging children in decision making about an adult agenda – when we talk about participation in the context of play however, we as adults need to recognise that we are engaging with the child's agenda.

### **The voice of young children**

Participation is more than just asking children for their views and ideas – it is an ongoing process of listening, taking them seriously and turning their ideas and suggestions into reality. Meaningful participation should therefore be embedded into the culture of the youth setting. There is no one size fits all; methods must be tailored to meet the needs and ages of the children attending – this toolkit explores participatory methods for younger children (four to eight-year-olds).

Article 12 of United Nations Convention on the rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that:

**All children have the right to have their view heard and for it to be taken seriously.** But the weight their view is given is dependent on their evolving capacities - the extent to which they can understand the issue and the possible outcomes of a decision.



Participation applies to all children (0 – 18 years) without discrimination. It can be individual or collaborative, and can take place directly or indirectly. Through playful activities children may not even realise that you are collecting their views and opinions. Effective participation empowers children and young people - this is our aim as both playworkers and youth workers.

Participation should be embedded within the culture of the organisation. Children and young people should be involved in the day-to-day activities and methods of engagement in the club. Participation is not a 'one off' exercise - children and young people should be encouraged to participate in the decision-making in organisational programmes, plans, policies and events.

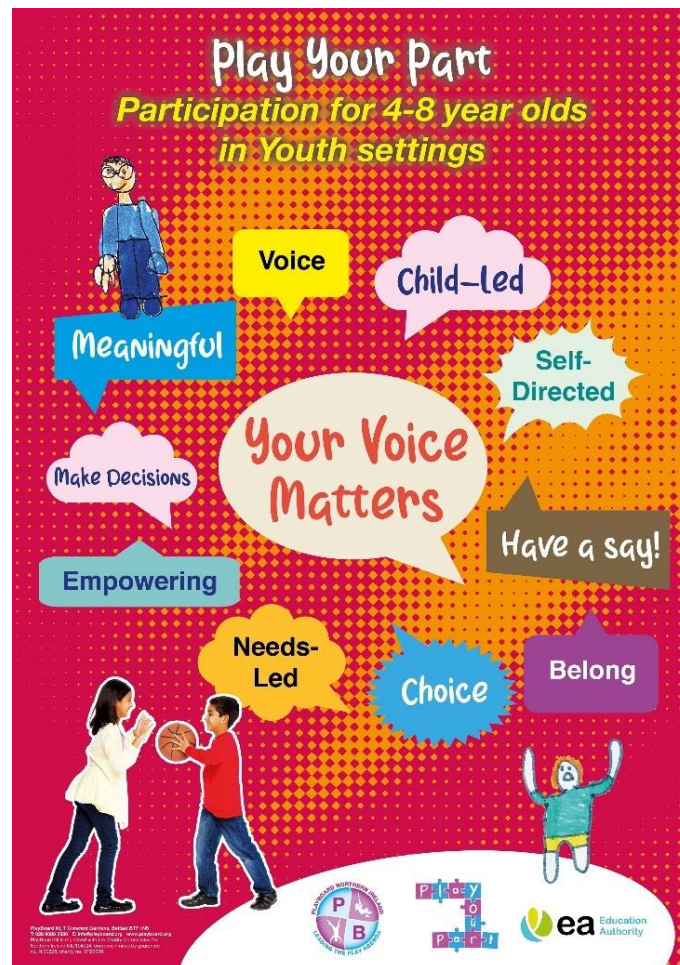
How we can encourage participation within our youth settings:

- Provide fun child-led activities
- Ask open-ended questions
- Give children time, space and permission to talk and to be heard
- Ensure children and young people feel safe and respected
- PLAY!

## Remember ...

- Safe, effective, meaningful practice requires careful planning and preparation
- Ensure that involvement leads to positive outcomes for change
- Keep children's best interests at the forefront at all times.

**Valued, listened to, respected.**



## Reflective practice

Play by its very nature is a participative process; children empower themselves through playing much more than through any formal consultation. Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. We do this a lot in playwork!

As practitioners, we do four main things:

- Reflection **IN** action - takes place during an action
- Reflection **ON** action - takes place after an event has occurred
- Reflection on **INACTION** - thinking about future actions with the intention of improving or changing a practice
- Reflection **BEFORE** action – encourages people to connect with past experiences before moving into another activity.

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**We watch, observe, reflect and change/amend where necessary.**

Reflective practice can be carried out by observing children and young people. It involves paying attention to what's going on, observing thoughts and feelings whilst also keeping our attention moving with what is happening.

It is important that children and young people are given the opportunity to reflect too, this can be done through individual conversations, focus groups, or games.

Creating a playful space may help children to feel more comfortable about expressing themselves or their opinions.



**Children's images of play**

## Lundy Model of Participation

This toolkit is premised on the Lundy Model of Participation (2007), which aims to provide a conceptual framework for understanding and bringing to life children's right to participation.



The four dimensions of Lundy's Model offer a comprehensive approach to participation reflecting on the areas that must be taken into consideration when involving children and young people. By applying the Playwork Principles to the Lundy Model we will achieve child-centred meaningful participation.

Lundy's Model includes listening to children's voices, supporting them in expressing their views, taking their views into account, involving children in the decision-making process and finally, sharing power and responsibility for decision-making. Listening to the voice of children as a mechanism to inform practice, sets the basis for a more democratic way of working with children which 'can relieve practitioners and parents from the burden of needing to know all the answers' (Clark 2011, p.2). Actively listening to children and young people can potentially unveil different opportunities for engaging children and discovering new interests together.

Youth workers must tailor participatory methods to the needs and priorities of different age groups recognising children's many languages. As providers of the participatory space, youth workers must 'create an environment which allows

children to communicate in as many ways as possible' (Lancaster 2003), including emotional space to support children and young people in expressing their feelings.

Providing space also means 'making time for talking and listening, and for children to explore their thoughts and to explore and become absorbed in their play' (Lancaster 2003). Children and young people must be given a choice of resources, opportunities and daily routines through which they can participate, as well as the choice about whether to participate. Finally, youth workers should subscribe to a reflective practice allowing children and young people to reflect on their participation process and how they have taken part in it.

<b>Child-centred Model of Participation</b>	
<b>Space</b>	Children and young people must be given the space to feel safe and comfortable to express their views and talk about their experiences. Children and young people must be given time for talking and listening, and to explore their thoughts.
<b>Voice</b>	Children and young people are given the opportunity to express their views in as many ways as possible, including non-verbal ways. Child-centred methods ways that are creative and fun. Children and young people should be provided with a choice of resources, opportunities and daily routines through which they can participate, as well as the choice about whether to participate.
<b>Audience</b>	Children's views should be respectfully listened and responded to. Their views should be given due weight. Adults should ensure children's views are communicated to the right people when appropriate.
<b>Influence</b>	Children and young people's views must be acted upon as appropriate. In those cases, in which there is a reason to not do so, or there is an impediment to do so; it should be communicated to them.



The following checklist will help you make sure that all the key aspects to ensure meaningful participation are embedded in your setting.

<b>Checklist</b>	
<b>Space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you make sure that <b>all</b> children and young people are heard?</li> <li>• Have you allowed enough <b>time</b> to listen to and hear their views?</li> <li>• How will you ensure children and young people feel <b>safe</b> to express their views?</li> </ul>
<b>Voice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are children and young people provided with the support they need to give their views and be heard?</li> <li>• How can they raise the things that matter to them?</li> <li>• How are they offered different ways of giving their views?</li> </ul>
<b>Audience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you show that you are ready and willing to listen to children and young people's views?</li> <li>• How do you make sure they understand what you can do with their views?</li> </ul>
<b>Influence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will children and young people know how much influence they can have on decisions?</li> <li>• How will you give them feedback?</li> <li>• How will you share with them the impact of their views on decisions?</li> <li>• How will you explain the reasons for the decisions taken?</li> </ul>

**Adapted from the Planning Checklist and the Everyday Spaces Checklist Child Participation Framework – Hub na nÓg: Young Voices in Decision-making 2020, p.18 and p.20.**



## The Circular Model of Participation

Along with the Lundy Model, the Circular Model of Participation (Treseder 1997) identifies five types of participation in a circular layout including:

1. Child-initiated and directed
2. Child-initiated but adult-led
3. Consulted and informed
4. Assigned but informed
5. Adult-initiated but shared decisions with children.



The Circular Model of Participation Treseder 1997

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The circular design of the levels of participation offers a non-hierarchical approach in which participation is adapted to different circumstances, different age groups, and according to the different capacities of children and young people.

*Children and young people initiated and directed.*

Children and young people have an initial idea and decide themselves how they would like a project or activities to be carried out. Adults are available for advice and support but do not direct the process.

*Children and young people initiate shared decisions with adults.*

Children and young people bring forward their own ideas and work together with adults to set up projects or activities. Adults are available for advice and support but do not direct the process.

*Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children and young people.*

Adults have the initial idea but involve children and young people on its planning and implementation being fully involved in making decisions.

*Assigned but informed.*

In this type of participation, adults decide on the project or activity and ask children and young people to volunteer for it. Adults provide all the information necessary for children and young people to understand the project or activity and assign different tasks or activities for children to undertake.

*Children and young people are informed and consulted.*

The project or activity is designed and run by adults, but children and young people are consulted through different means.



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## Participatory methods and techniques

Children and young people communicate in many different ways, therefore a range of fun, interesting and child-friendly activities can be used to enable daily participation. Methods employed will depend not only on the skills of the children and their ages, but also on those of the youth workers, as well as the time, space and resources available (Clark 2011).

There are various activities in which adults can engage with children and by adopting different methodologies to encourage participation, the 'children are less likely to try to guess the response they think will please adults' (Davies and Hamblin 2016, p.15).

Children's active and ongoing participation and engagement can be encouraged through daily playful activities such as arts and crafts, songs, music, dance, dressing up, climbing, making swings and dens, taking photographs, using a range of objects creatively (loose parts), running, skipping, football and games. Small group discussion, circle time and children's committees or councils can also be used with open or guided discussion.

### **Remember ...**

Play by its very nature is a participative process: children empower themselves through playing much more than through any formal consultation or adult-led activity.

By sensitively observing and engaging with children, youth workers can use their knowledge of theory and experience to reflect on what children need.

Respect children's contribution, listen and observe and act upon any feedback they give you.

A culture of 'participation through play' should be the ongoing ethos of a youth setting.

The following table offers some general methodological approaches to children's and young people's participation. These can be used to gain a richer picture of what children think and feel about a range of issues. Some are child-led and others require the assistance of an adult. Youth workers should ensure that the choice and control of play stays with the children through using a playwork approach at all times.

Method	Strengths	Key considerations
<b>Observation</b>	Contributes to building an understanding about children's lives, their likes and dislikes and what is important to them. Particularly useful for very young children and those who do not use verbal language to communicate. Observation can be done in person, or via video. Observation can complement other methods to build up a narrative and context for children's voices.	Gives a youth worker perspective on children's lives rather than actively engaging children in the participation process. By sensitively observing how and where children choose to play, how they use the environment and where they are playing we can use our knowledge of theory and our experience to reflect on what children need. This will enhance children's play because they have shown us what they want without limiting or interrupting it.
<b>Talking and listening</b>	<p>Enables children to take the lead in discussions around content that is meaningful to them and within the scope of their understanding.</p> <p>Group discussions are good for sharing experiences, generating ideas, collecting information, solving problems, and for planning. A 10 to 15-minute discussion is appropriate for young children's concentration span. Maximum group sizes of 8 to 10 are suitable.</p> <p>Telling stories allow youth workers to introduce ideas and topics in engaging and age appropriate ways; allows children to explore and express their feelings and experiences. Youth workers can either use stories (with spaces for children to interject, or act them out) or have children make and tell stories to them.</p>	<p>Children need to feel comfortable and at ease in a relevant and familiar environment and/or with known youth workers present or close at hand.</p> <p>Youth workers should take time to listen and be sensitive and responsive to children's cues. A flexible approach is required, for example if children prefer to be on the move as they talk.</p>
<b>Scrapbooks and maps</b>	Builds a picture of a child's experience, or how they feel about something that can then be talked through. Could include drawings, cut-outs, photos, stickers, dictation, likes, dislikes, favourites, things that make them feel certain ways.	Can be particularly effective in gaining a child's perspective on a particular environment or setting, revealing the importance of people and spaces. These can take time to develop and be added to on an ongoing basis.

<p><b>Draw and tell</b></p>	<p>Children use drawings as a representational tool to portray objects in the world. The process of drawing is in itself a great communication vehicle; drawings can be the platform of meaning-making and the child can talk to the adult to explain what is going on in the drawing.</p> <p>Painting and drawing allow for visual rather than verbal expression.</p> <p>Youth workers and children can work together when drawing and as such can develop an understanding about a particular topic. The discussion should be kept open-ended and the child's voice is given room. The adult contributes respectfully by making links between the child's thoughts, experiences and ideas.</p>	<p>This method generates meaningful insights when supported by observation and/or discussion, with youth workers listening carefully. This can be effective in those situations when the child wants to have a youth worker present on the process of drawing; or on those occasions when the drawings are abstract and need of explanation.</p> <p>However, not all children consider drawing to be fun and some children may be inhibited about their drawing capabilities.</p>
<p><b>Peer research</b></p>	<p>This method empowers children and young people by taking ownership of the participatory process.</p> <p>Children can develop ways to encourage others to represent issues which are important to them (e.g. using drawings, descriptions, photographs, and demonstrations).</p> <p>Peer researchers may be tasked with collecting data on a specific issue (e.g. use of a space or new activities).</p>	<p>Can be used in consultative, collaborative or child-led participation processes.</p>

<p><b>Recording – using cameras, tours etc.</b></p>	<p>Photographs can be used as starting points for conversations with children and young people.</p> <p>This methodology can also be applied in a more engaging way by letting children and young people use cameras to take their own images demonstrating what is important to them.</p> <p>Tours (or maps) can allow youth workers to explore children’s perspectives of a particular area, environment or setting. Tours can be led by children who want to take part; for many this will be a new experience and preparatory sessions prior to doing a tour are recommended – e.g. if cameras will be used, children will need time to familiarise themselves with the equipment over time.</p>	<p>This is an excellent way of getting children’s views about an environment, space or topic.</p> <p>Images from camera work can serve as a basis of further discussion and consideration.</p> <p>Children can record what is important to them – polaroid, disposable, digital cameras can be used.</p> <p>During the tours, youth workers can observe, question, listen and discuss during a tour led by one or more children.</p> <p>Clipboards can be a great playful addition for children to use to record thoughts/feelings.</p>
<p><b>Roving reporters</b></p>	<p>This is a playful way to find out views using a dictaphone or other props to make the experience real for children. Children take on the role of reporter to find out what other children think. Children can develop a series of questions and carry out the ‘research’ in their own style.</p>	<p>Recordings can be transcribed and findings presented by the children in a range of ways e.g. storyboards, interactive white boards, PowerPoint presentation etc.</p>
<p><b>Games</b></p>	<p>Games can be adapted to allow children to express their feelings and opinions. Children can create games with their own rules and self-direct them.</p> <p>Using physical activities will increase enjoyment for many children.</p>	<p>This generates meaningful insights when supported by observation and/or discussion, with youth workers listening carefully.</p>
<p><b>Graffiti walls</b></p>	<p>This is an effective way to record children’s ideas and views in a visible and interesting place. Children can write or draw their views on an ongoing basis and these can be recorded and fed into planning.</p>	<p>This allows for ongoing feedback from children which is easy to manage and very effective. Children have ownership of providing their views and thoughts at a time which suits them.</p>

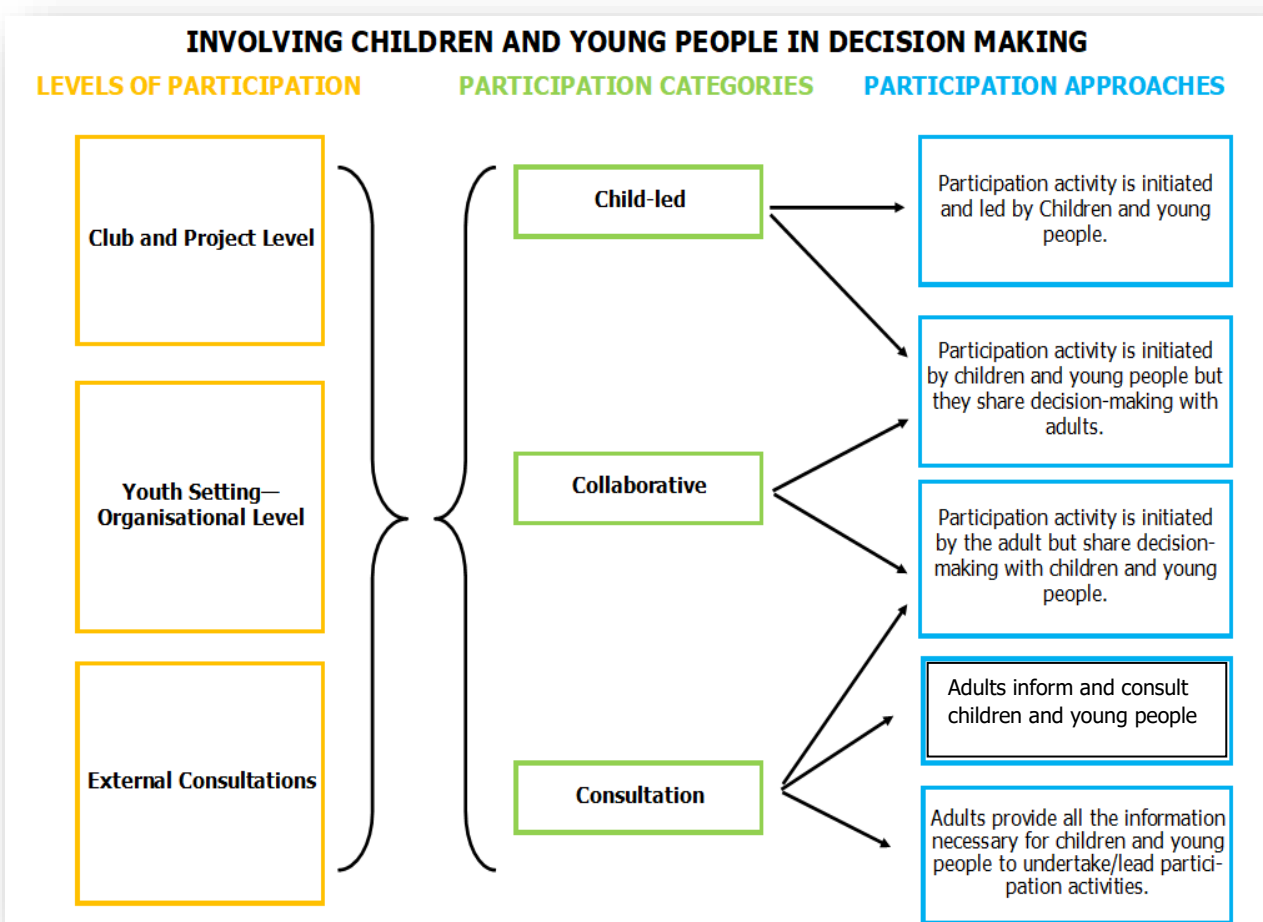
<b>Music and movement</b>	<p>Allows children to express feelings and opinions.</p> <p>Using music and physical activity increases enjoyment for many children.</p>	<p>Sounds, spaces and movements can stimulate discussion about particular situations and evoke feelings and responses to issues such as physical well-being.</p> <p>Activities should be kept simple, with a clear purpose.</p>
<b>Ranking (Q – methodology)</b>	<p>This method gives a clear insight on what is important for children and young people. It consists of ranking different statements or pictures on a board and children can identify the ones that they feel most represented by and the ones they do not feel represented by at all, aiding open discussion.</p>	<p>There are two strengths of Q methodology, where research with young children is involved.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is not limited to written statements, so youth workers can use pictures, objects, foods and other materials.</li> <li>2. It is not limited to face-to-face interactions so it can be used on an online session.</li> </ol>
<b>Role play</b>	<p>Children can express their views on particular experiences via the use of dress up, a puppet/doll/toy or by using these intermediaries as prompts for acting out scenarios and what they might do/say/expect.</p> <p>This can reveal children’s perspectives on an issue, e.g. how they have made sense of an experience.</p>	<p>Can be structured (children are asked what 'teddy' would do, say or feel in a particular scenario and how they might also feel) or open (children are free to act out their experiences of a particular scenario) using props to support their play.</p>
<b>Discussion groups/children’s committees or councils</b>	<p>Ongoing discussions can feed ideas into planning and delivery of youth activities.</p> <p>Children’s committees or councils are another way to involve children in decision making processes.</p>	<p>Discussions, committees/councils should be run and directed by children. They should be child-friendly and to be effective, real decision making should take place and processes implemented to allow children’s ‘voice’ to be heard and changes/suggestions actioned.</p>
<b>The Mosaic Approach</b>	<p>This multi-method approach recognises the different ‘voices’ or languages of children. This is a useful mechanism to encourage listening at different levels and in different contexts. This methodological approach combines the traditional methodology of observation and interviewing with the addition of participatory tools – for example, cameras, drawings, etc.</p>	<p>Can be applied in a variety of contexts as it focuses on children’s lived experiences. Embedded into practice, this approach has the potential to be both used as participatory tool or evaluative tool.</p>



# Planning for participatory exercises

## 1. Planning participation

When planning a participation process, first of all, it is important to classify what kind of participation you are planning. The categories, approaches and levels introduced earlier (see the summary in the table below) will guide you to identify what type of participation you are about to conduct and will help you choose the best methodological approach and activities.



Once you have established what kind of participation process you will be undertaking, you will have to decide who will be involved in the process (i.e. how many children, of what age group, etc.) and what activity or activities will be best suited.

There are a few things that need to be taken into consideration. The table on the next page will help you to structure your thinking around the design and implementation of the participation process.

## Designing meaningful participation: what do you need to think about

	Consultation participation	Collaboration participation	Child-led participation
<b>Topic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make a clear list of the topics on which you want to hear the views of children and young people.</li> <li>- Consider how you will ensure that the key focus of the process stays on the topics you identified? You can use games to stay on topic, for example: Car Park activity (see page 27).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make a clear list of the topics on which you want to hear the views of children and young people.</li> <li>- Discuss the list with the children and young people that are taking part in the participation process, they may think there are other related topics that are worth exploring.</li> <li>- Consider how you will ensure that the key focus of the process stays on the topics you identified. You can use games to stay on topic, for example: Car Park activity. Children and young people may have other ideas that they would like to implement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children and young people will make a list of the topics on which they want to hear the views of other children and young people, and/or adults.</li> <li>- Help them put in place tools to stay within the topic they want to explore.</li> </ul>
<b>Information/feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will you ensure children and young people are given age-appropriate and accessible information?</li> <li>- How will children and young people know to whom, how and when their views will be communicated?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will you ensure children and young people are given age-appropriate and accessible information?</li> <li>- How will children and young people know to whom, how and when their views will be communicated?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will children and young people know to whom, how and when their views will be communicated?</li> <li>- How will children's views be complied?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will they be given age-appropriate and accessible feedback during and after the participation process?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>when their views will be communicated?</li> <li>- How will they be given age-appropriate and accessible feedback during and after the participation process?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will you help children to generate appropriate and accessible feedback during and after the participation process?</li> </ul>
<b>Ethical concerns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will children and young people know that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time?</li> <li>- Consider what steps will be taken to ensure children and young people understand what the participation process entails.</li> <li>- What support will be provided to those who become anxious, upset or uncomfortable?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will children and young people know that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time?</li> <li>- What steps will be taken to ensure children and young people understand the process is inclusive and accessible?</li> <li>- What support will be provided to those who become anxious, upset or uncomfortable?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will children and young people know that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time?</li> <li>- What steps will be taken to ensure children and young people understand the process is inclusive and accessible?</li> <li>- What support will be provided to those who become anxious, upset or uncomfortable?</li> </ul>
<b>Taking action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will you identify and involve relevant decision-makers (those responsible for influencing change)?</li> <li>- What are your plans to make sure that children and young people's views impact on decisions?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will you identify and involve relevant decision-makers (those responsible for influencing change)?</li> <li>- What plans are in place to support them to play a role in communicating their own views?</li> <li>- What are your plans to make sure that children and young people's views impact on decisions?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will you identify and involve relevant decision-makers (those responsible for influencing change)?</li> <li>- What plans are in place to support them to play a role in communicating their own views?</li> <li>- What are your plans to make sure that children and young people's views impact on decisions?</li> </ul>

<b>Evaluation/ reflective practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will you ensure that children and young people are given opportunities to evaluate the process throughout?</li> <li>- What activities will you set in place to allow four to eight age group to participate in the process in a meaningful way? (see page 64)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will you ensure that they are given opportunities to evaluate the process throughout?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will you ensure that they are given opportunities to evaluate the process throughout?</li> </ul>
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❖ **Car Park activity: park discussion topics for another time.**

Draw a big Car Park on a flip-chart or a big piece of cardboard that you can stick on the wall. The purpose of the car park is to be able to leave interesting discussion topics on hold making sure that the key focus of the process stays on the topics you identified.

During the participation activity, every time that an interesting point of discussion comes up but you do not have the time to explore it adequately, ask the child to make a note (or make a note for them if they are not confident on their writing) and stick it on the Car Park chart. Make sure that you revisit the topics that have been postponed.



## 2. Participation activities

If 'consulting' with children about a particular issue (i.e. an external policy or consultation topic) ensure there are a range of activities that are fun and child-friendly. These playful activities will support youth workers to create an environment that ensures the views, opinions and voices of young children (four to eight years) are heard within youth settings. Activities can complement the ongoing discussions that you have with children on a daily basis.

Within this part of the toolkit we have developed some activities that you can use with four to eight-year-olds. We have included a list of participatory activities based on some of the relevant methodological approaches to engage this age group. The table below lists the activities that we thought could be useful.

<b>Methodological approach</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Planning</b>	Mood boards	34
	Ten questions to start with	35
	Code of conduct	36
<b>Observation</b>	Play stations	37
	Swap seats if you...	38
	Finish the sentence	39
<b>Talking and listening activities</b>	Circle time	40
	Pass it on	41
	Storytelling and discussion	42
	Story boards	43
<b>Scrapbooking and maps</b>	Designing an outdoor map	44
	Designing an indoor map	45
	Scrapbooking	46
<b>Draw and tell</b>	Designing posters	47
	What's important to me	48
	I am me	49
	Co-construction drawing	50
<b>Peer research</b>	Importance pyramid	51
	The Apprentice	52
	Importance post box	53
	Set up a children's council	54
<b>Music and movement</b>	Talent show	55
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	Picture perfect participation	59
	Roving reporters	60
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	Parachute games	62
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### 3. Collecting evidence

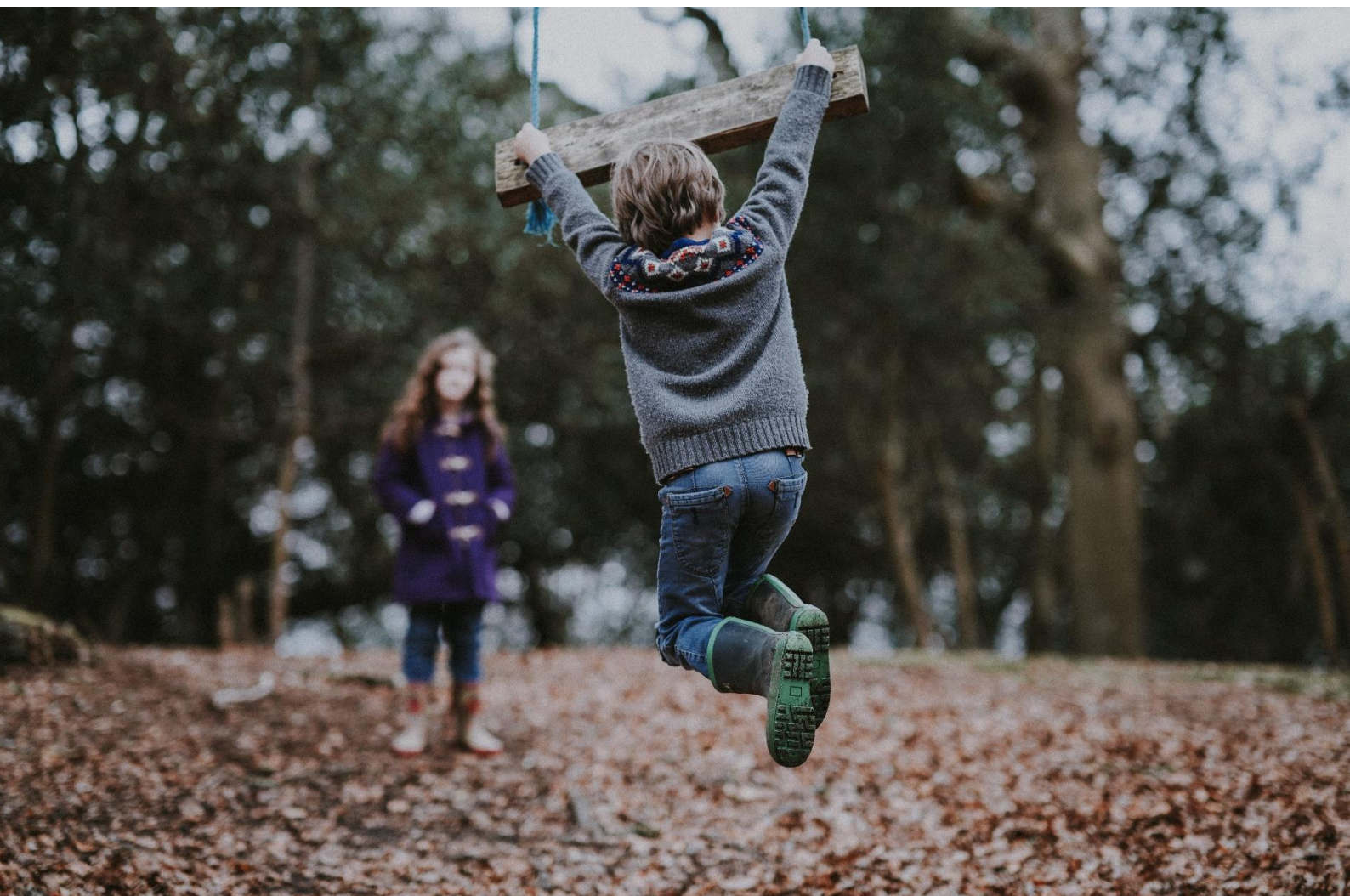
Gathering the evidence emerging from a participation activity or process is key in order to get the necessary evidence to inform decision-making. Evidence can include observation, reflections, discussion notes, drawings, pictures, posters, photographs or recordings (video and/or audio).

This is particularly important when consulting with children about an external topic (such as a government policy or consultation topic). Share your findings with the children who have taken part.

### 4. Taking action

By taking action we refer to the process of influencing change, which is the necessary steps to translate what children have shared during the participation activity into action. Their views can be translated into action within the organisation (day-to-day or management) or into recommendations as part of a consultation.

The following table presents some suggestions on how to use children's views to influence change, divided into the three participation approaches: **consultation**, **collaboration**, **child-led**.



<b>Consultation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In this approach the adult takes the lead in the decision-making by (1) deciding how the evidence is being used; and (2) presenting it to the relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>- Write a report on the views and experiences shared by children and young people (following any guidelines provided by the policy/consultation lead).</li> <li>- Make sure that their views are represented truthfully without modifying their meaning. A good way of doing this is by adding direct quotes from children and young people.</li> <li>- Include drawings, pictures etc., to demonstrate that the conclusions presented are emerging from the views of the children.</li> <li>- Inform the children that the report has been sent and provide feedback on findings.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaborative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In this approach the adult and children and young people share the decision-making on (1) how the evidence is being used; and (2) how to present it to the relevant stakeholders (internal or external to the youth setting).</li> <li>- The way in which you deal with the evidence emerging from the process of participation will depend on what you will be using it for. Will it be used internally in the setting to inform organisational or day-to-day decision-making; or will it be used externally by another organisation or stakeholder?</li> <li>- The key point here is that the decision of how to present the findings and to whom is shared between youth workers and children and young people.</li> </ul>
<b>Child-led</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In this approach children and young people lead the decision-making on (1) how the evidence is being used; and (2) how to present it to the relevant stakeholders (internal or external to the youth setting).</li> <li>- If required, youth worker(s) can give children and young people some suggestions of activities which they can undertake to communicate their findings.</li> </ul>

## 5. Feedback

As part of the process of meaningful participation, it is important to give age-appropriate feedback to children and young people.

Lundy (2018) recommends a four 'Fs' feedback process for consultations or collective decision-making processes with children and young people.

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- **Full:** Provide comprehensive feedback to children and young people outlining which of their views were accepted, which were not accepted and the reasons for these decisions. This feedback should also note who is implementing their views and what the next steps will be.
  - **Friendly:** Feedback or responses given to children or young people need to be in a format and language they understand (child-friendly). They need to be informed about the findings of a consultation or survey and about how their views were given due weight.
  - **Fast:** Children and young people grow and move on from things they are involved with swiftly. Therefore, any decisions that they have impacted on need to be reflected promptly.
  - **Followed-up:** Ongoing feedback and information should be shared with children and young people throughout any policy or decision-making processes.

## **6. Evaluation - Reflective practice**

Having appropriate mechanisms in place to provide feedback to children and young people who have taken part in the participation process is essential (Davies and Hamblin 2016).

It is also important that children and young people are given the opportunity to reflect on their experience of taking part in a planned participatory exercise/process in order to draw conclusions on it. There are different mechanisms that can be used – it can be done through individual conversations, focus groups, or games. When young children are reflecting on a process of participation, creating a playful space may help them to feel more comfortable expressing themselves.

Reflective practice from both the youth workers and the children and young people who have taken part in activities is encouraged. Reflecting together on the participation experience is an important tool in order to clarify thinking, recognise change and expand understanding.



Here there are two examples on how to evaluate an activity, but you can find others in the participatory activities at the end of the toolkit (see page 64 to 68).

### Example 1

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	Snowball feedback
Method	Reflective practice
Aim of activity	To allow the children to give their thoughts and opinions in a fun and exciting way which the adults can use in their reflective practice for future reference.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for children to be able to give good honest feedback to adults in an anonymous way. It then allows the adults to use these in their evaluations and reflective practice in the future.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Pens and paper. Alternatively, you can use stickers, for example emoji (smile, sad, angry); or <i>Inside Out</i> stickers (joy, sadness, anger, fear, disgust), to allow the youngest children to take part without the help of the adult.
How to do this activity	Ask everyone to grab a pen and piece of paper, give them five minutes to write down what they thought about the activity or how they felt during it. Ask them to divide the page into 'what they enjoyed' and 'what could we do better' for example. When they have done this, allow them to scrunch the paper up and throw it around for a couple of minutes until all the balls are mixed up (like a snowball fight). When this is over open up the balls and have a short summary of what was written.
How to collect evidence	The feedback and discussion afterwards can be used as future reference.

## Example 2

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	The feedback sandwich
Method	Reflective practice
Aim of activity	To allow the children to give their thoughts and opinions in a fun way.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for children to be able to give good honest feedback to adults to help them improve in the future.
Time needed for activity	10 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Pens and paper Sandwich prop
How to do this activity	<p>Explain the idea of a feedback sandwich having three main parts. The two slices of bread (start and end) should be positive feedback with the filling or middle part being what the setting could improve on.</p> <p>On the pretext of making a pretend sandwich, children and young people take turns to give feedback on your chosen topic through discussions.</p>
How to collect evidence	The written feedback and discussion will act as evidence.



# Participatory activities

## Planning

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Mood boards</b>
Method	Planning
Aim of activity	To get children involved in the planning within their setting. This could initially be adult-led in explanation but then should give the children a chance to use their own imagination to devise plans they wish to implement in their setting.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for allowing children to have a sense of responsibility in their setting and to give them a chance to design exactly what they wish to see in their setting.
Time needed for activity	45 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Large piece of card, magazines etc., scissors, glue, pens.
How to do this activity	Explain to the children that you want them to create a mood board for how they wish their setting could look. Tell them they can draw pictures, write or use cut outs from magazines or other articles to show what they would like to see in their setting. Have a discussion afterwards about what they feel would work best and how the adult could make these changes a reality.
How to collect evidence	The mood boards and discussions act as evidence.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Ten questions to start with</b>
Method	Planning
Aim of activity	To allow children to understand what it means to fully participate and be involved in discussions about what they want but also to listen to others around them about their needs.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for allowing children to get really involved in discussions by asking and answering questions about their wants and needs in their setting.
Time needed for activity	45 minutes
Resources needed for activity	White paper, pens, a flip chart, Post-it notes.
How to do this activity	Give the children 10 Post-it notes each and ask them to write their name and a question they would like to ask. It could be anything they like as long as it's related to planning to make their setting a better place for them to be. Get the children to stick their questions on a board and form groups and discuss the answers to their questions before coming together in one large group and asking the adults to answer any remaining questions.
How to collect evidence	The Post-it notes and discussions act as evidence for reflective practice.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Code of conduct</b>
Method	Planning
Aim of activity	To create a safe space where children have been involved in the planning of their 'code of conduct' or 'rules' for their setting.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for allowing children to feel involved in planning a safe space which will ensure everyone had a clear idea of how they should behave in the setting.
Time needed for activity	20 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Flip chart, pens.
How to do this activity	On the flip chart write down phrases like 'what do we need to make our setting work for everyone?' or 'let's think of something positive to do with our friends today.' Make sure the rules are positive and realistic for everyone. Try and avoid words like 'never' and 'always', for example, 'we will always show up on time' or 'we will never be late' can sometimes be difficult due to individual circumstances. Just make the children look forward to this planning activity rather than not wanting to join in.
How to collect evidence	Use the rules as help for planning in the future.

## Observation activities

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Observing children's play stations</b>
Method	Observation
Aim of activity	This is an opportunity for adults to observe children's play at different play stations set up in their setting. This will allow them to get a feel for what activities children enjoy more and what could be changed or added to improve the space.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for adults as it allows them to see how children get involved in their settings and what the children enjoy doing. It is also good for children as it offers them lots of different play stations to choose from. Activities in the setting should be different than what they see at home.
Time needed for activity	Dependant on how many play stations in the setting.
Resources needed for activity	As many play stations as you want to include. In these stations you can add: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loose parts</li> <li>- Dress up costumes</li> <li>- Musical instruments</li> <li>- Arts and crafts materials (papers, pencil colours, markers, scissors)</li> <li>- Messy or sensory materials etc.</li> </ul>
How to do this activity	Make different stations in your setting for children to move freely between. The adults can then observe what is more popular in the setting and what can be improved on. It would then be good to bring the children together to discuss what they enjoyed and what they would like to add to their space.
How to collect evidence	Pictures/recording (consent needed). Through observations of what the children enjoyed or might want to be added to and discussions with them afterwards. Adults could take notes of the discussions.

**Participation Toolkit**

Name of the activity	<b>Swap seats if you ...</b>
Method	Observation
Aim of activity	To energise the group and allow adults to gather children's ideas and opinions through an active and visual activity.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for getting children up and moving whilst also allowing adults to gather their ideas and opinions through observation.
Time needed for activity	15 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Chairs – enough for all apart from one participant.
How to do this activity	<p>All but one participant has a chair. This person (could be the adult or facilitator to start with) stands in the middle and says 'swap seats if you ...'. This will continue then with the facilitator starting and then the child without a chair asking the question. Anyone that fits the category stands up and swaps seats as quickly as possible until the last person is left without a seat. This person then asks the questions and this should continue until the group learn a little about each other.</p> <p>This activity can also be focused on a particular topic of discussion. The youth worker leads the activity by presenting children with a specific theme/question that they want the children to explore and give their views. For example, if the youth worker wants to know what children like to do when they are on the beach to plan a summer camp. Or more complex questions about feelings, needs and wants.</p>
How to collect evidence	Make a visual note of what you have learned about the group.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Finish the sentence</b>
Method	Observations
Aim of activity	To learn more about the children by observing how they finish the sentences given to them.
What is this activity good for?	Allowing adults to learn more about the needs/wants of the children in their group in this fun activity for the children.
Time needed for activity	15 minutes
Resources needed for activity	A hat, pens, paper.
How to do this activity	<p>Get the children into small groups. Put a number of sentence starters in a hat. Get the children to each pick one out of the hat. Repeat until the sentences have been completed. Some example sentences could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am ...</li> <li>• I have never ...</li> <li>• I love to ...</li> <li>• My favourite animal is ...</li> <li>• What makes me laugh is ...</li> </ul>
How to collect evidence	Make note of the answers and use this in reflective practice in a way to learn more about the children in the setting.



## Talking and listening activities

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Circle time</b>
Method	Talking and listening
Aim of activity	For children to explore how they feel through expression of free speech. The circle time could include questions which can be based on emotions or it could be as simple as chatting about their day.
What is this activity good for?	This activity enables children to take the lead in discussions around content that is meaningful to them and within the scope of their understanding. It's good fun and can be changed as much as possible to meet the needs of the setting.
Time needed for activity	20 to 30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	You could use a prop of your choice to act as a 'talking' prop. The child with the prop speaks and can then pass it to the next child.
How to do this activity	Get the children to stand or sit in a circle and pass the prop to the child whose turn it is to talk. It is the adult's role to ask questions and listen to what the children are telling them.
How to collect evidence	Adults choose how they store and use the information shared.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Pass it on</b>
Method	Talking and listening
Aim of activity	To encourage the children to listen to exactly what other children are saying.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good as it teaches children the importance of talking and listening carefully to others and how sometimes things can be taken out of context if misheard. It could be used as a fun way to encourage children's participation.
Time needed for activity	15 minutes
Resources needed for activity	None
How to do this activity	One child is tasked with coming up with a starting word or phrase and they will whisper this to the next child and so on. The aim of the game is to ensure the children listen carefully enough to repeat the word or phrase at the very end of the line of children.
How to collect evidence	Adults can observe how children cope with this talking and listening exercise.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Storytelling and discussion</b>
Method	Talking and listening
Aim of activity	<p>Discussion/conversation over a specific topic through story telling. After listening to a story, children are able to discuss what they thought about it and how it made them feel; or thoughts it may have triggered.</p> <p>Story books surrounding specific actions, decisions, thoughts and feelings would be good for this activity. Alternatively, youth workers can create their own story including the elements they would like to discuss with/communicate to children.</p>
What is this activity good for?	<p>The benefits of this activity are twofold. On one hand, this activity is good for children's listening and language skills through listening and conversing throughout and after the story ends.</p> <p>On the other hand, it benefits their language, imagination and emotional skills as discussions can be had about specific topics though the characters of the stories and their adventures, thus removing the children themselves as the subjects at the centre of the discussion.</p>
Time needed for activity	30 to 40 minutes depending on the length of the story and discussions.
Resources needed for activity	A storybook. Resources for a quiet corner, e.g. comfy cushions, blankets, comfy sofas etc.
How to do this activity	Read the story to the children and discuss it afterwards to get a sense of their feelings and emotions, and thoughts and experiences. Prepare a quiet corner to allow the children to have space and peace to listen and absorb the story. This quiet space will allow children to feel more confident in discussion after the book has ended.
How to collect evidence	Through observation or note taking during discussions. After the activity has taken place it would be advised to write down some reflections and thoughts about it to make sure you note down all what children have shared with you.

## Participation Toolkit

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Story boards</b>
Method	Talking and listening
Aim of activity	This activity gives children the opportunity to talk about real life experiences in a fictional sense. It is helpful at the time to express their feelings, views, thoughts and experiences.
What is this activity good for?	Freedom of expression whilst benefitting children's social and emotional development and creativity.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes for writing and 30 minutes for telling.
Resources needed for activity	Pens, paper, story board template, pictures of other things related to the topic, scissors, glue.
How to do this activity	<p>For children aged four to eight, story boards are the best approach as it allows younger children to get involved without lots of writing.</p> <p>Give the children a briefing on what the story should be about but give them freedom to design the story how they want to. Ensure characters are fictional for confidentiality reasons.</p> <p>TIP: Keep fun and exciting by encouraging children with praise and acceptance of their feelings.</p>
How to collect evidence	<p>Collect the story boards after the activity.</p> <p>Take notes of any comment and explanation the children give you to make sure you gather all what they have shared with you.</p>

## Scrapbooking and Maps

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Designing an outdoor map</b>
Method	Scrapbooking and maps
Aim of activity	Allowing children to be involved in planning the outdoor spaces and environments based on features they consider important in their lives.
What is this activity good for?	Giving children the opportunity to map out and plan their outdoor play space. The maps can be used as an interesting talking point for children and adults. For example, these could be used to identify where they want to play, what types of spaces they do or don't like to play in and why; and what stops children from playing in the places they would like to. A scaled map of play areas can give children in a group the opportunity to discuss children's perspective in development of public spaces.
Time needed for activity	1 hour
Resources needed for activity	Paper, pens.
How to do this activity	Explain to the children that they have the opportunity to design their own play spaces. Let them discuss with each other and then draw out the map of their play space. Have a discussion with the children about their wishes and then put this into place.
How to collect evidence	Collect the maps Discussions with the children Notes on the maps gathered during the discussion.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Designing an indoor map</b>
Method	Scrapbooking and maps
Aim of activity	Allowing children to be involved in planning their indoor spaces and environments based on features they consider important in their lives.
What is this activity good for?	Giving children the opportunity to map out and plan their indoor play space. The maps can be used as an interesting talking point for children and adults. For example, these could be used to identify where to play, what types of spaces they do or don't like to play in and why, and what stops children from playing in the places they would like to. A scaled map of play areas can give children in a group the opportunity to discuss children's perspective in development of public spaces.
Time needed for activity	1 hour
Resources needed for activity	Paper, pens.
How to do this activity	Explain to the children that they have the opportunity to design their own play spaces. Let them discuss with each other and then draw out the map of their play space. Have a discussion with the children about their wishes and then put this into place.
How to collect evidence	Collect the maps Discussions with the children Notes on the maps gathered during the discussion.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Scrapbooking</b>
Method	Scrapbooking and maps
Aim of activity	Scrap booking allows children to document their feelings and opinions about specific topics through both drawing, cutting, sticking and writing in their scrapbook.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for documenting children’s voice, emotions, experiences and opinions in a visual way that they can keep and add too. It is a great activity to identify the needs and wants of the young children in your setting.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Scrapbook, pens, glue, magazines, pictures, scissors.
How to do this activity	Give the children a scrap book and allow them to express their feelings and thoughts in this book. Allow them to design it how they want and use whatever materials they would like to make their scrapbooks unique.
How to collect evidence	Look at the scrapbooks/keep them in the settings for the children to add to.

## Draw and tell

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Designing posters</b>
Method	Draw and tell
Aim of activity	This activity will allow children to get creative and express their feelings on relevant issues. This is good for the age range of four to eight-year-olds as some drawings may be abstract and need some explaining. This then encourages discussion between adult and child.
What is this activity good for?	It is a visual fun and effective way for opening up conversation with children and finding out what is important to them using drawings to represent their views.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Pens, colouring materials, paper, card.
How to do this activity	Allow the children to design different posters. This could be surrounding whatever they feel is important in their lives, for example, family or friends. You could add an element to this by asking them to think of a name for their poster and present it like a poster advertising a film, e.g. 'A day in the life of ...'
How to collect evidence	Collect the posters at the end of the activity for evidence. Discuss what and why the children designed the posters the way they did. Take notes of the discussion.



<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>What's important to me</b>
Method	Draw and tell
Aim of activity	To get children to explore what is important to them by putting it onto paper. This is good for the age range of four to eight-year-olds as some drawings may be abstract and need some explaining. This then encourages discussion between adult and child.
What is this activity good for?	It allows children to be creative in a way that they can express what is important to them visually.
Time needed for activity	30 – 45 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Pens, colouring materials, paper, card.
How to do this activity	Get the children to find a space in the room and draw what they think is important to them, for example, themselves, friends, school, home. They could choose to use words, draw pictures, make a comic strip etc. Let the group work on their pictures. When the group has finished, get each small group to explain their picture to the larger group. This activity can also be focused on a particular topic of discussion. The youth worker leads the activity by presenting children with a specific theme/question that they want the children to explore and give their views.
How to collect evidence	Collect the drawings and listen to the stories. Adults can support this through discussion. Take notes on those elements of the explanation that give an insight to their drawings.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>I am me</b>
Method	Draw and tell
Aim of activity	To get the children to explore how they see themselves through drawing themselves. This is good for the age range of four to eight-year-olds as some drawings may be abstract and need some explaining. This then encourages discussion between adult and child.
What is this activity good for?	It allows children to be creative in a way that they can express how they see themselves visually. It allows adults to understand how the children view themselves and how they should work with them in their setting.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Pens, colouring materials, paper, card.
How to do this activity	Get the children to find a space in the room and draw how they see themselves. They could use choose to use words, draw pictures, make a comic strip etc. Let the group work on their pictures. When the group has finished, get each small group to explain their picture to the larger group about how they see themselves.
How to collect evidence	Collect the drawings and listen to the stories. Adults can support this through discussion. Take notes from the discussion and keep them with the drawings for a better understanding of the meaning behind them.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Co-construction drawing</b>
Method	Draw and tell
Aim of activity	With this activity adults and children are given a chance to work together on developing an understanding about a relevant topic. This is good for the age range of four to eight-year-olds as some drawings may be abstract and need some explaining. This then encourages discussion between adult and child.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good as it encourages discussion between the child and adult and allows the adult to respect the child's thoughts and ideas and appreciate them through this visual activity.
Time needed for activity	45 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Paper, pens.
How to do this activity	Discuss what you would like the child to draw. Give them the materials and allow them to draw what you have discussed. Give them help or advice if asked for it. Prompt them with questions about their drawing if necessary and discuss their drawings in a group scenario afterwards.
How to collect evidence	Take notes from the discussion with children and keep them with the drawings.

## Peer research

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Importance pyramid</b>
Method	Peer research
Aim of activity	For children to show through a cutting and sticking activity what order they would rank the importance of different issues in a setting. For example, the importance of certain rules compared to importance of changing activities etc. Children discuss together the rank of importance reaching consensus among them.
What is this activity good for?	This activity will benefit children's thinking and decision-making skills and give adults an opportunity to see what is important to the children within their setting.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Scissors, glue, pens and pre-written choices for children to put in order.
How to do this activity	Explain the concept to children to rank the phrases from top to bottom with the top of the pyramid being the most important to them. Get the children to cut and stick these and let them colour in their pyramids for extra enjoyment.
How to collect evidence	Collect the pyramids in at the end of the activity to use as evidence.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>The Apprentice</b>
Method	Peer research
Aim of activity	For the children to be able to discuss their thoughts and feelings in a fun and imaginative manner.
What is this activity good for?	It allows children to express their thoughts in an imaginary 'boardroom' scenario where children have the say rather than the adults.
Time needed for activity	Dependant on length of discussions.
Resources needed for activity	A boardroom style table and chairs. Children could dress up to make this more interesting and fun for children. Pen and paper for the adults to make notes on the children's suggestions.
How to do this activity	Have the children sit on one side of the table and the adults at the other. Give them the power to ask and answer adults' questions and tell the adults their views and opinions with the adults giving them their full acceptance and respect.
How to collect evidence	Take notes on what the children are saying.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Importance post box</b>
Method	Peer research
Aim of activity	To give children the opportunity to physically visualise what they think is important.
What is this activity good for?	This is good to help children visualise their views and use their own thoughts and feelings to participate in their setting.
Time needed for activity	20 to 30 minutes.
Resources needed for activity	A post box, colourful paper and pens.
How to do this activity	Get children to write down what they feel is important to them about their setting and put it in the importance post box. Explain their views will be listened to and there is no wrong answers and they can keep their answers anonymous.
How to collect evidence	Gather the paper they have posted and use this in reflective practice.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Set up a children's council</b>
Method	Peer research
Aim of activity	For the children to be able to discuss their thoughts and feelings with each other.
What is this activity good for?	It allows children to feel a sense of importance being part of a council in which their thoughts and feelings are listened to and respected. It helps adults to learn about children's experiences, needs and wants.
Time needed for activity	Dependant on how long it takes for discussions.
Resources needed for activity	Pens and paper for children to write down their thoughts. Badges to distinguish who is part of the council. This will give children a sense of importance as well.
How to do this activity	Hold an election for the council. Give children the opportunity to run in the election and those who aren't running to vote for who they would like to see on the council. This is a fair and diplomatic way to choose. When the council is formed hold a small award ceremony and present their badges to them. Give the children time to decide amongst themselves what they would like to see in their setting in the future. Keep the council meetings regular and change them on a six-month basis to give other children a chance to get involved. The council can discuss issues related to the day-to-day organisation of the setting; the organisation of events or activities; or management decision-making when appropriate.
How to collect evidence	The children's notes or presentations can be used for evidence.

## Music and movement

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Talent show</b>
Method	Music and movement
Aim of activity	The aim of this activity is for children to be able to express their views through singing, dancing or movement.
What is this activity good for?	Base the activity that they choose to perform around any relevant issues in the setting. It will be a good way for children to get involved whilst being creative but also having fun and expressing how they feel about the topic.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes practice and 30 minutes for the show (dependant on number of children).
Resources needed for activity	Stage, props.
How to do this activity	Ask the children to think of a talent that they have but base the talent on any relevant issues. For example, write and sing a song about their feelings, the setting, the community, different ways to play, their relationship with others in the setting/with the youth workers.
How to collect evidence	Video or voice recording of the talent show could act as evidence (need of consent). Take notes during the show of anything relevant to the topic of discussion.



<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Musical chairs</b>
Method	Music and movement
Aim of activity	The aim of this activity is to stimulate discussion about particular situations and evoke feelings and responses.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for children's social and emotional benefits as it adds a competitive level to children's play. This could lead to discussions about turn taking, winning and losing and other life skills.
Time needed for activity	20 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Start with the same number of chairs as children. Music.
How to do this activity	Start with the same number of chairs as children. When the music stops the children must rush to a chair. An adult will remove a chair each time and the child left without a chair is out of the game. Continue until one child is left and wins the game. This will help children learn important life skills and could lead to discussions about their feelings after the game.
How to collect evidence	Notes of the discussion after the game.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Song writing and performing</b>
Method	Music and movement
Aim of activity	To get children to come up with a song to express their feelings and emotions through a fun activity.
What is this activity good for?	Freedom of expression as well as benefitting children's social and emotional development and creativity.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes to write song and 25 minutes to practice and five minutes to perform the song. One hour in total.
Resources needed for activity	Paper and colourful pens.
How to do this activity	Get the children into small groups. Talk about what goes into writing and performing a song, for example, the tune, rhyming words and explain that the song should be about expressing their thoughts and feelings together. Get the children to write down the song and then give them time to practice and perform their song. Encourage them to think of actions or a dance to go with their song.
How to collect evidence	Video or voice recordings of the songs.

## Recording

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Reporter for the day</b>
Method	Recording
Aim of activity	To give the children the responsibility to video their friends, for example on an iPad and ask them what they feel is important to them within their setting. Ask them to describe each space in their setting, how they use it and what they think/feel about it.
What is this activity good for?	It gives children responsibility to be in charge of their video tour and allows them to feel comfortable enough to discuss their feelings and thoughts with their friends. This will give the youth worker an insight of how children are using the facilities (maybe their actual use of spaces/resources is not what was intended), and their experiences/feelings about each area of the setting. This information can be used to make changes in the environment or the activities provided.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	iPad, video camera etc.
How to do this activity	Tell the children to go on a tour of their setting and children can record what they feel is important to them. You could make this fun and exciting by getting the children to do this in a 'reporter' style etc.
How to collect evidence	The video would act as the evidence for future reference. Take notes on what you think is the most relevant information.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Picture perfect participation</b>
Method	Recording
Aim of activity	To learn about children's views, needs and wants through pictures.
What is this activity good for?	<p>Polaroid disposable and digital cameras can all be used effectively by children and they can make up stories to go along with the display of pictures through a slide show, power point or story board etc.</p> <p>This activity allows children to identify what they want to express without the use of direct speech. Some children may not feel comfortable having a one to one or group conversation; or may not have the ability to do so.</p> <p>Taking pictures around a particular topic allow youth workers to learn about what children want, like/dislike or need, through an inclusive and fun process.</p>
Time needed for activity	One hour 30 minutes in total.
Resources needed for activity	A polaroid or digital camera, a laptop or something to make a power point on or pens, paper, scissors and glue for a story board.
How to do this activity	<p>Give the children a digital or polaroid camera and ask them to take pictures of their setting that they like or don't like. The activity could be improved on and then give them time to either print these pictures for a story board or use them digitally in a power point to explain to adults how their space could be improved.</p> <p>Once the pictures have been viewed the youth worker can have a one to one or a group discussion about the pictures (check if children want to share with the group, or with the youth worker as they may not want to).</p> <p>If a discussion/explanation of the pictures has been agreed, these can be printed off or presented digitally to other children and/or youth workers.</p>
How to collect evidence	<p>The pictures are the main evidence (either printed, on a power point or on a story board).</p> <p>Take notes about the most relevant points of discussion.</p>

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Roving reporters</b>
Method	Recording
Aim of activity	This activity gives the children a chance for children to gather other children's views in a fun and imaginative manner as they take on the role of a newspaper reporter.
What is this activity good for?	Children can develop the questions and carry out the detective work in their own style. This activity gives the opportunity to explore views, experiences, and feelings about a particular topic in a fun way. On a day-to-day participatory process, the topic of "investigation" can range from likes/dislikes of the setting; or activities undertaken; or find out what would be the best activity/event for Halloween/Christmas/summer. It can also be useful to undertake a consultation on organisational decision-making on a very specific issue (resources, funding, etc.), or an external consultation (e.g. urban planning, redistribution of community funds, etc.)
Time needed for activity	30 minutes to gather information, 30 minutes for recording and discussion. One hour all together.
Resources needed for activity	Voice recorder, pens and paper for designing their newspaper, technology for presenting their findings.
How to do this activity	Explain the activity to the children in a fun and child-friendly manner. Give them the methods and time to carry out their research. For example, a voice recorder for collecting their friends' views and opinions. Allow them time to design their newspaper either by hand or by technology methods e.g. an iPad or laptop.
How to collect evidence	The recording can be transcribed to draw the ideas together and presented in a range of ways by the children e.g. power point, interactive white boards or a story board. Take notes of any comment, conversation or discussion that is relevant to the topic.

## Games

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Animal corners</b>
Method	Games
Aim of activity	To get children moving around and be able to identify what they think are the most important issues during a discussion and to identify how they are feeling about specific topics.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for getting children moving around and expressing their views in a visual and physical sense. It is an open-ended way of checking how the children feel at different points in time.
Time needed for activity	10 to 20 minutes
Resources needed for activity	An open space. Pictures of animals that represent feelings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lion: brave and strong</li> <li>- Mouse: timid or scared</li> <li>- Whale: overwhelmed and patient</li> <li>- Owl: clever, wise, aware</li> <li>- Cat: independent, sometimes lazy sometime playful</li> <li>- Dog: Sociable, gullible, eager to please</li> <li>- Other: allow them to come up with their own</li> </ul>
How to do this activity	Place the pictures around the corners of the room. Ask them to stand in the middle and then run to the corner they identify with when they are told. When they do, ask questions that allow the adult to understand why they identify with the particular animal. Play this game more than once and see if they change their mind on how they are feeling on different days. If they do, discuss why this might be.
How to collect evidence	Take notes of children's and young people's opinions for future reference.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Parachute games</b>
Method	Games
Aim of activity	To get children moving around and be able to identify what they think are the most important issues during a discussion.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for getting children moving around and expressing their views in a visual and physical sense.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	An open space, a parachute.
How to do this activity	Get children to stand around the parachute and take hold of it. When an adult shouts the name of an activity the children must run underneath if they enjoy the activity. If they don't they can stay still and then discussions can take place about improving the activity.
How to collect evidence	Take notes of children's and young people's opinions for future reference.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Hot seat</b>
Method	Games
Aim of activity	To encourage the children to speak out in front of a group using open-ended questions whilst remembering not to use forceful or intimidating but encouraging ways to do this.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for encouraging children, even those who are a little shy, to get to know other children and allow others to get to know them.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	A seat
How to do this activity	Get everyone to sit in a semi-circle with a chair faced towards the group. Each person takes a turn to sit in the chair and explain a little bit about themselves, e.g. name, age and favourite meal etc. Then the adult can ask some open-ended questions and they can answer in any way they like. Ask in a fun and non-intimidating manner and allow the children to 'pass' if they want to. Make it like a quiz show where they are in the hot seat etc. Have an agreed amount of time and questions before starting.
How to collect evidence	Take note of children's and young people's answers for future reference.



## Evaluation and reflective practice

Participation Toolkit	
Name of the activity	<b>Graffiti wall - large</b>
Method	Reflective practice
Aim of activity	The aim of this activity is to provide an effective way to record children's ideas and views in a visible and interesting place.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is a good visual way to allow children to get involved in sharing their views in a fun creative way. Children can add to this as regularly as they want. This activity can be used after each participatory process so youth workers can evaluate how the participation activities went; how children experienced them; and introduce any necessary changes.
Time needed for activity	Unknown
Resources needed for activity	A plain wall, spray paint or other painting methods.
How to do this activity	Give the children permission to decorate a wall in the setting with their views of the setting and how it makes them feel. Allow messy play within this activity and encourage them to add to it regularly.
How to collect evidence	The wall itself acts as evidence. These can be recorded and used for planning.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Graffiti wall – small with Post-it notes</b>
Method	Reflective practice
Aim of activity	The aim of this activity is to provide an effective way to record children’s ideas and views in a visible and interesting place.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is a good visual way to allow children to get involved in sharing their views in a fun creative way. Children can add to this regularly. This activity can be used after each participatory process so youth workers can evaluate how the participation activities went; how children experienced them; and introduce any necessary changes.
Time needed for activity	Unknown
Resources needed for activity	A large piece of thick card, Post-it notes, colourful pens.
How to do this activity	Give the children permission to write down their thoughts and feelings on Post-it notes. These notes can be changed and added onto the card which could be titled ‘how I feel’ or ‘what makes (my setting) fun’ etc.
How to collect evidence	The wall itself acts as evidence. These can be recorded and used for planning.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>Snowball feedback</b>
Method	Reflective practice
Aim of activity	To allow the children to give their thoughts and opinions in a fun and exciting way in which the adults can use in their reflective practice for future reference.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for children to be able to give good honest feedback to adults in an anonymous way. It then allows the adults to use these in their evaluations and reflective practice in the future.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Pens and paper. Alternatively, you can use stickers, for example emoji (smile, sad, angry); or <i>Inside Out</i> stickers (joy, sadness, anger, fear, disgust), to allow the youngest children to take part without the help of the adult.
How to do this activity	Ask everyone to grab a pen and piece of paper, give them five minutes to write down what they thought about the activity or how they felt during it. Ask them to divide the page into 'what they enjoyed' and 'what could we do better' for example. When they have done this, allow them to scrunch the paper up and throw it around for a couple of minutes until all the balls are mixed up (like a snowball fight). When this is over open up the balls and have a short summary of what was written.
How to collect evidence	The written feedback and discussion afterwards can be used as future reference.

### Participation Toolkit

Name of the activity	<b>Keep it or bin it</b>
Method	Reflective practice
Aim of activity	To allow the children to give their thoughts and opinions in a fun and exciting way in which the adults can use in their reflective practice for future reference.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for children to be able to give good honest feedback to adults in an anonymous way. It then allows the adults to use these in their evaluations and reflective practice in the future.
Time needed for activity	30 minutes
Resources needed for activity	A bin and a suitcase. Pens and paper. Alternatively, you can use stickers, for example emoji (smile, sad, angry); or <i>Inside Out</i> stickers (joy, sadness, anger, fear, disgust), to allow the youngest children to take part without the help of the adult. Children will place the stickers on a piece of paper.
How to do this activity	Ask everyone to grab a pen and piece of paper, give them five minutes to write down what they thought about the activity or how they felt during it. Ask them to write/stick on a piece something that they liked about the session and that they want to keep. They will put this in the suitcase. Ask them to write/stick on a piece something that they didn't like about the session and that they want to keep. They will put this in the bin.
How to collect evidence	The written feedback and discussion afterwards can be used as future reference. Take notes about the points discussed that you think are relevant for the evaluation.

<b>Participation Toolkit</b>	
Name of the activity	<b>The feedback sandwich</b>
Method	Reflective practice
Aim of activity	To allow the children to give their thoughts and opinions in a fun way.
What is this activity good for?	This activity is good for children to be able to give good honest feedback to adults to help them improve in the future.
Time needed for activity	10 minutes
Resources needed for activity	Pens and paper Sandwich prop
How to do this activity	Explain the idea of a feedback sandwich having three main parts. The two slices of bread (start and end) should be positive feedback with the filling or middle part being what the setting could improve on. Take turns to give feedback on your chosen topic through discussions.
How to collect evidence	The written feedback and discussion will act as evidence.

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