



Participation of young children in child welfare and child protection: Guidelines for policymakers, managers and practitioners

Worksheet with questions to explore your organisations WHY, HOW and WHAT

1 Questions to explore the 'WHY' of your organisation

- **What is the purpose of your organisation?**
- What is the existing mission and vision statement of your organisation?
- Does it include reference to young children, their rights, and/or their participation rights?
- Are all people in your organisation aware of the mission statement, i.e., do they all have the same mindset.
- Do they have a shared picture of the organisation's vision? If not, can one be agreed?
- When you speak about participation in your organisations; what do you mean?
- What are the main issues in your cultural context regarding young children's participation?
- What are important values regarding young children at risk?
- What benefits do you think a collaborative work between children and professionals could bring to your organisation?
- **Why is the voice of young children helpful?**
- Why have you chosen, or might you choose to be a participatory organisation and/or policy?
- Do you choose to be a participatory organisation because you must, it is the law?
- What is your own motivation in endorsing a participatory organisation and/or policy?
 - Are you ready to listen to (young) children (Shier, 2001)?
 - Are you ready to support (young) children in expressing their views (Shier, 2001)?
 - Are you ready to take (young) children's views into account (Shier, 2001)?
 - Are you ready to let (young) children to join in your decision-making processes (Shier, 2001)?
 - Are you ready to share some of your adult power with (young) children (Shier, 2001)?

2 Questions to explore the ‘How’ of your organisation

- How is your organisation working?
- Which theoretical model or framework does your organisation use to achieve your purpose (the mission)?
- Do the ways you promote child participation contribute to your strategic goals and fulfill your mission statement?
- What principles does your organisation have regarding young children’s participation them having contact within Child Welfare and Protection Services (CWS)
- Is your policy/management supporting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989)
- Is it a policy requirement that (young) children must be listened to (Shier, 2001)?
- Is it a policy requirement that (young) children must be supported in expressing their views (Shier, 2001)?
- Is it a policy requirement that (young) children’s views must be given due weight in decision making (Shier, 2001)?
- Is it a policy requirement that (Young) children must be involved in decision making (Shier, 2001)?
- Is it a policy requirement that (young) children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions (Shier, 2001)?
- Is there a procedure that enables (young) children to join in decisions-making processes (Shier, 2001)?
- Is there a procedure that enables (young) children and adults to share power and responsibly for decisions (Shier, 2001)?
 - In which aspects can the child co-decide, and is this being transparent?

3 Questions to explore the ‘WHAT’ of your organisation

- Are you curious about what is happening in practice?
- What does your organisation do to promote younger children’s participation in the child the welfare field?
- Are you aware that you can find answers in practice?
- Do you consult your social workers/professional workers?
- How do you evaluate the trust between government, the organisation, and professionals/social workers?
- What are complicating factors? How do you deal with it?
- What is the task/role of the professionals regarding young children’s participation?
- Does your professional workforce work in a way that enables them to listen to (young) children (Shier, 2001)?
- Does your professional workforce have a range of ideas and activities to help (young) children express their views (Shier, 2001)?
 - Do you ‘trust’ the competence of the professionals/social worker?
 - What competences do you ask of your employees?
 - Which methods and tools do the professionals use when communicating with young children?

- Are the professionals adequately skilled to communicate with younger children?
- How much time does the professional spend with the young child and the parents together?
- How much time do professional spend with the individual young child?
- Do the younger children participate in decision-making in their trajectories?
- Does the decisions-making process enable your workforce to take (young) children's views into account (Shier, 2001)?
- Does the professional involve the young child as a collaborative partner or not?
- Do you 'practice as you preach' (= culture of organisation)?

4 Important competences needed among staff to frame young children's participation to be a collaborative process

Competences according to UNCRC articles 2, 3, 5, 6, 12 and 13 (participation rights)

- Being able to inform young children in an open and age-appropriate way.
- Being able to let children express their views in a non-compelling way and with respect for their privacy.
- Being able to act respectful with children, also children from minority groups.
- Being able to act in a participatory way in situations of concern.
- Being able to interact with babies and toddlers by using adapted tools.
- Being able to interact with young children in a non-discriminatory way.
- Being able to interact collaborative with young children.
- Being able to make protection plans in a participatory way with children at risk.
- Being able to go through a participatory process with children.

Competences according to UNCRC article 2, 3, 5, 6, 12 and 13 (Best interests of the child)

- Being able to include and assess children's views in relation of the best interest of the child.
- Being able to make connection and interact with children from diverse backgrounds.
- Being able to act in best interest of the child in relation to the family's needs.
- Being able to protect and care for the child regarding its well-being.
- Being able to act in possible situations of vulnerability.
- Being able to take care of the child's health.
- Being able to provide quality education.