

## Don't assume - Ask first

### Appropriate Methods

The methods applied to engage with children and /or young people must be **suitable** to their age/stage of development and levels of interest.

Children and young people communicate in different ways. The methods applied must be varied, creative and fun to give children the opportunity to express their views. Everyone should enjoy the engagement and **benefit from the experience**.

### Support

Children and/or young people are supported by a trusted and skilled person “**who knows them well**”<sup>1</sup>.

The views of children and/or young people should **not** be communicated by an adult representative.

### Knowledge (of the issues to be discussed and how it will be done)

Children and/or young people must be provided with **relevant and accessible** information about what is expected from them and the purpose of the ‘engagement’. They will need to know in advance the issues that will be discussed and how the “engagement” will be carried out.

### Feedback

Children and/or young people must be given feedback on how their input was **considered**. They need to know what **difference** their involvement has made and how this has transferred into policy/service development.

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<sup>1</sup> Vasquez de Valasco cited in Early Childhood Matters (2003)

### Inclusion

Children and young people are **all different** and they **all have a right** to have a say about things that impact on their lives. Not all children and young people participate in group activities or youth groups. It is important to contact children and young people in a range of different situations. Inclusion is not about, treating all children and young people **the same**, it is about ensuring they have **the same opportunities**.

### Respect

Children and young people will be treated with respect. They should be given enough time to prepare and think through their ideas. They should also be allowed to decide the nature and extent of their involvement, including the option not to participate.

### Senior People (direct engagement with people who have influence/make decisions)

Children and/or young people have **access to those making decisions** on policies and services for Northern Ireland.

Decision makers **hear directly** what children and young people have to say about matters that impact on their lives.

### Timing

Children and/or young people should be included **early in the process** when things can still be changed.