Welcome to the Consultation Toolkit

This is a practical guide about how to consult with children and young people on policy related issues. It is written for community workers, youth workers, teachers, local authority workers, facilitators and other organisations and individuals working with children and young people. It is also for children and young people themselves who may be involved or interested in organising a consultation exercise.

The toolkit forms part of the Scottish Executive's Action Programme for Youth. Scottish Ministers made a commitment in the Programme for Government document "Making it Work Together" (September 1999) to consult widely on an Action Programme for Youth which values young people and meets their aims and their needs. Their opening objective was to introduce a systematic approach for securing the views of children and young people on national policy issues. Save the Children was commissioned by the Executive to produce the Consultation Toolkit to provide people consulting with children and young people with an accessible and useful resource.

Ministers were keen to have an initial event to discuss a range of youth issues and to get feedback from young people on the best way to obtain their views. The event - Scottish Youth Summit 2000 - involved around 200 young people at Motherwell and linked with 8 satellite events involving a further 1000 young people at a range of venues across Scotland via video-conferencing. Fourteen Scottish Executive Ministers and the Secretary of State for Scotland attended the Summit and engaged with young people on subjects including drugs, sex and sexuality, schools and education, alcohol, work and unemployment, housing and homelessness and the environment. A Report on the Youth Summit has been produced separately.

The document has been developed since the Youth Summit. Preparation material was written for workers accompanying young people to the Summit. This material included suggestions on how to facilitate sessions and discussions to prepare young people for the Youth Summit together with a range of activities and fun exercises. At the event itself workers shared their ideas about what makes an effective consultation and discussed what would be most useful in a consultation resource. Following the Summit there were a range of interviews and meetings with other workers and organisations together with discussions with children and young people about how they would like to be consulted. Quotes used in the text are from these meetings and discussions unless otherwise stated.

introduction

Children and young people have the right to participate in decisions which affect their lives, the lives of their community and the larger society in which they live. Participation should run alongside decision making at a local and national level. The toolkit aims to encourage and facilitate participation of children and young people in the decision making process at these different levels. The document is written for a wide audience, from people with no experience of group work or consultations to those with extensive experience: therefore each section has an information list for those people who want to explore an area in more depth. Add your own notes and ideas or case studies to the toolkit over time – it is a dynamic document.

What are the objectives?

- To help with the process of increasing the level of participation of children and young people in decision making and policy-making
- To be a resource for organisations taking part in Action Programme for Youth 2000
- To support organisations throughout Scotland in carrying out consultations and participatory activities with children and young people in the area of policy
- To help ensure consistency and quality in consultations and participatory activities, taking into account the diversity of groups
- To provide a summary of the different approaches and methods of participation in relation to policy consultations
- To provide specific case studies of different examples of participation with children and young people
- To give a checklist of issues and tips for effective participation in policy consultations
- To provide a reference list of relevant information which can be regularly updated
- To be a comprehensive and accessible on going resource for policy consultation with children and young people that will also be available via the Internet

Who is this toolkit for?

- Policy makers and decision makers including the Scottish Executive, local authorities and the Scottish Parliament
- People working with children and young people in local authorities (e.g. in community education), schools, social work, voluntary organisations and other agencies such as health boards and trusts
- Children and young people involved in consultation processes
- Young people involved in carrying out a consultation with their peer groups

The document is divided in ten main sections.

These include: Why consult?, the principles of participation, ways of including people, planning and preparing for a consultation, the main approaches and methods of consulting, techniques and tools that can be used, methods of recording, ways of transferring ideas and information, guidance for policy makers followed by a general checklists and suggestions for good practice. A number of case studies are used to illustrate different approaches and methods and there is a list of further references and resources.

Why consult children and young people?

Children and young people have the right to participate in decisions which affect their lives, their community and the larger society in which they live. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them. It is also important that children and young people have the opportunity to voice their opinions when making decisions that affect them because they have many varied experiences, insightful ideas and plenty of enthusiasm.

"...opportunities to participate in collective decision making and scope for independent initiatives by children are very restricted. This is due partly to an unwillingness to change social relationships and partly to the fact that policy-making is dominated by the perspectives and interests of adults. It is absolutely essential to involve children and young people if the alienation of young adults is to be avoided and opportunities to build a dynamic society for the future are to be created"
(Save the Children, 1997)

The Scottish Executive wants to listen to the views and ideas from children and young people all over Scotland. The Action Programme for Youth provides an opportunity and framework to listen to what everyone has to say.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

"The UNCRC's emphasis of the right to participate moves beyond a limited shopping list vision of rights towards a more open and uncertain agenda in which children and young people can shape their future and make new demands of adult society" (Roche and Tucker, 1997)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a set of rights for all children under 18, to make sure they are treated fairly, taken care of and have a right to an opinion on things that affect them. In 1989 it was passed through the UN General Assembly and became a legally binding document. In 1990 the World Summit for Children declared that: 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a new opportunity to make respect for children's rights and welfare truly universal.'

In 1991 the United Kingdom (UK) Government agreed to sign up to the Convention and to ensure that children knew about it. As a signatory the Government is obliged to respect Article 12 which states that a child has the right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account, in all matters affecting the child. Every five years governments report to the Committee regarding the compliance with the Convention. The UK Government submitted its second report in 1998 and as part of this process the then Scottish Office commissioned Save the Children to carry out the Our Lives consultation (Save the Children, 1999).

The basic principles of the UN Convention

"Everyone that is alive has the right to do what they want and say what they want as long as you do not hurt people"
Young person (aged 13)

The UN Convention encourages the valuing of children as active participants, entitled to rights and freedoms, capable of expressing opinions and assuming responsibilities in the family and society. The Convention has 54 Articles in total and four of these Articles have been identified as 'general principles' that underlie every other area of rights. A number of the other articles also relate to participation.

The Basic Principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

the general principles

- **Non-discrimination**
  Article 2 is concerned with forming a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and states that all the rights in the UNCRC must apply without discrimination based on "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" to all children.
- **Best interests of the child**
  Article 3: the best interests of the child are to be a primary consideration in all actions concerning the child.
- **The right to survival and development**
  Article 6: the child's right to life and optimum possible survival and development.
- **The views of the child**
  Article 12: One of the most crucial principles is concerned with respecting and acting upon children's views and opinions. This article is about respect for the child's view in all matters affecting the child and giving children the opportunity to be heard in judicial or administrative proceedings affecting the child.

Other participation-related Articles
Article 13: the child's right to obtain and make known information, and to express his or her views, unless this would violate the rights of others.
Article 15: the right of children to meet with others and to join or set up associations, unless the fact of doing so violates the rights of others.
Article 17: the state should ensure that information is accessible to children from a diverse range of sources and should take steps to protect children from harmful materials.

The Convention can be described as being concerned with the three "Ps" of provision (of services), protection and participation:

Provision: all the rights in the Convention must be available to all children without discrimination of any kind.

Protection: the child's best interests must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning them.

Participation: the child's views must be considered and taken into account in all matters affecting them.

Children's and young people's participation is critical to ensure that all aspects of the Convention are met. The Consultation Toolkit aims to assist in the process of supporting each child's and young person's right to speak and participate, whatever their situation.

Legislation which links to the UN Convention

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 2000
The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. (Scotland) Act requires pupils to be consulted on all school development plans and incorporates broad principles from the UN Convention.

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
The Children (Scotland) Act is the first attempt in Scotland to make law based on the principles of the UN Convention. It emphasises that professionals should work in partnership to ensure the best interests of children.

What concerns young people?

What should children and young people be consulted about? What concerns children and young people?

In preparation for the Youth Summit on the 19th June 2000 a total of 508 young people aged 11 to 18 completed short questionnaires that were circulated through Connect Youth Co-ordinators, YouthLink Scotland's membership and distributed in the Young Scot magazine. Of all the respondents 243 were aged 11 to 15 and 265 were aged 16 to 18. Issues raised by 11-15 year olds and 16-18 year olds were very similar although employment, financial issues and tuition fees were mentioned more frequently by 16-18 year olds. The main issues concerning young people raised in the survey are listed here (ordered by category).

It is clear that a wide range of issues concern young people and this is not an exhaustive list. Therefore a consultation could be about a range of topics for a range of reasons. This document is about consulting with children and young people about policy related issues at a local, Scottish, UK or European level. It does not cover participation generally (e.g. how to involve young people in running a youth club or association) as there are a number of other books and packs available that do this. The Consultation Toolkit is written so that its ideas and suggestions can be used when consulting on any area of policy that affects children and young people – it is not issue specific.

Issues that concern young people from the Action Programme for Youth Survey

Health issues	drugs
	alcohol
	smoking
	health issues generally
	eating disorders
	mental health
Relationship issues	bullying and peer pressure
	relationships (including family and friends)
	sexual relationships
	age discrimination
Social issues	poverty
	homelessness and housing
	politics
	fashion/consumerism
Crime and police issues	crime and violence
	police
	vandalism
Democracy issues	lack of representation
	lack of voice for young people
	Scottish Youth Parliament
Sex and sex education	sex (sex education and sexuality)
	sexual abuse
	teenage pregnancy
	sexually transmitted diseases
	date rape
Money and employment	employment
	unemployment
	money and poverty
Education	school and exams/tuition fees
	sex education
	section 28
	racism
Facilities for young people	we are hanging about
	nowhere to go
	nothing for young people to do
Environmental issues	the environment/pollution/ global problems
	transport issues
	genetically modified foods
	cleaner towns/cities/litter
	cruelty to animals
	world peace/war

"If the people in power listened to us young ones then a lot of things would change for the better."
Young person (aged 13)

"Adults should properly listen to what we have to say. I mean they should really listen and not pretend to listen."
Young person (aged 15)

Some of the main benefits of consulting with children and young people are listed below:

Experience and knowledge
Children and young people have much to offer in terms of their experiences and knowledge of issues

Enthusiasm
Projects, policies and people can all benefit from the enthusiasm and energy that children and young people can bring through participating

Creative and practical ideas
Children can think laterally and have lots of creative and practical ideas or solutions to problems

Effectiveness and efficiency
The effectiveness and efficiency of services targeted at young people will be improved if they participate in the design (e.g. a teenage sexual health services in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh benefited from the input and ideas from young people in terms of the requirements and priorities for the service)

Personal development
Facilitates the personal development and skills of children and young people

Promotes democratic ways of working
Encourages active participation and citizenship now and in the future and also promotes democratic ways of working

Sustainability
Children and young people have a good understanding of sustainability issues and the protection of resources for the future

There can be many reasons for doing a consultation. For example, you may be consulting because you have been asked to present young people's views on a specific policy document or you may be consulting children and young people about issues that affect their quality of life in the community where they live. Therefore the benefits of consultation with children and young people can be very wide-ranging.

Case Study

Scottish Youth Summit
The Scottish Youth Summit was held on 19 June 2000. The aim of the event was to provide an opportunity for young people from across Scotland and from a range of backgrounds to exchange views with Ministers and with each other. 200 young people attended the main event at the Civic Centre in Motherwell and a further 1000 participated through satellite events in Angus, Dundee, Highland, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Campbeltown. Young people could also participate through e-mail. The event was attended by 14 Scottish Executive Ministers and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Workshops were held on topics chosen by young people through a questionnaire in the Young Scot magazine and through the Youth Summit website. There were 16 topics eventually chosen, ranging from Clean Environment to Housing and from Poverty to Sex and Sexuality. In addition, each workshop was also asked for feedback on the consultation process to date, including the summit itself, and to suggest new ways of consulting with young people in the future.

Each workshop had two facilitators, one of whom was a young person from the Scottish Youth Parliament and, where possible, a Minister or senior Scottish Executive official also participated. The aim of the workshops was to identify what the group felt about the topic in general; what specifically needed to be done; how this might be achieved and who could help achieve it.

Not all the groups had time to feedback on the youth summit and other methods of consultation. Where feedback has been received it has been, not by any means uncritical, but certainly enthusiastic and keen for "more events of this kind" to be held.

Comments included:

"...excellent. I knew nobody in my group, but we became friends quickly"

"We learned in a fun way about drugs. It also got our views forward to the MSPs"

"very informative"

"...a brilliant opportunity for young people to express their views and opinions"

and perhaps inevitably;

"Beats going to School!!"

Further information
Report of the Scottish Youth Summit 2000, Scottish Executive

What is a consultation?

"I don't think society as a whole actually listens to young people, because they can't affect anything that happens around them. For instance voting; because we don't have a vote, it means we're not part of society."
Young person quoted in Our Lives, Save the Children, 1999)

"Few of us want a say in policies and services for the sake of it. They are only important to us because they have a bearing on how we live. We want to be in control of what happens to us."
Beresford and Croft (1993)

"Nothing will get changed anyway through consultation ... the wee things might but not the big things like money and police checks."
(Looked after young person, quoted in Hand and Hand, 1998)

A consultation involves asking people to share their views and ideas about something, recording their ideas in an accessible format and feeding them back to people who are involved in the decision making process. What makes a good consultation? The following list of 'good practice' guidelines is based on a brainstorming session with group workers who attended the Action Programme for Youth Summit 2000.

This toolkit will explore these issues and discuss what makes a good consultation in greater depth to provide a resource for planning and conducting effective consultations with children and young people. A consultation could be about a general theme (e.g. health) or a more specific policy (e.g. alcohol policy) or it could be about a Scottish Executive consultation paper or a local authority initiative (e.g. a regeneration plan). The framework and decision making process in terms of the different stages of planning and conducting a consultation are very similar for most types of consultations.

Defining a 'good' consultation

(points not in any order)

- ✓ *The ability to effect change or the consultation is pointless*
- ✓ *Make the aims and objectives of the consultation clear*
- ✓ *Do not raise unrealistic expectations*
- ✓ *Consider a variety of methods to give feedback to policy makers as they can have more impact (e.g. video, drama, graffiti wall, and young people using Power Point in a local authority setting have all worked well)*
- ✓ *Have a 'chill-out' area at large consultation events*
- ✓ *It should be informative and you may need good quality preparation materials*
- ✓ *Small groups are an advantage*
- ✓ *The importance of the right language and no jargon*
- ✓ *Make it inclusive and make it fun*
- ✓ *Good venues and food are important for large consultation events*
- ✓ *Speed of feedback - the quicker the better and does not have to be finished reports*
- ✓ *Drama in consultation events and workshops can be very effective*
- ✓ *Keep people's attention and keep the consultation process interesting*
- ✓ *People being comfortable*
- ✓ *Planning is so important (very careful planning)*
- ✓ *Ground rules are good in a group situation*
- ✓ *Parts of the consultation fitting together well*
- ✓ *Equal opportunities is important*
- ✓ *Meet young people on the streets (e.g. outside shops and play areas)*
- ✓ *Make it representative – don't involve just one type of person*
- ✓ *Get policy makers on board in the beginning and through all stages*
- ✓ *Having a 'link person' can sometimes be useful (e.g. to transfer views to the Scottish Executive and then to give feedback to young people)*
- ✓ *Young people giving feedback to policy makers themselves can be very effective*
- ✓ *Question time sessions are a good idea*
- ✓ *Feedback (both directions)*
- ✓ *Remember the everyday things (e.g. food, transport)*
- ✓ *Make a jigsaw of good consultation practice*
- ✓ *Remember the principles of participation*
- ✓ *Remember the best interests of children and young people and children's rights*
- ✓ *Consider the ownership of information*
- ✓ *It must not be tokenistic*
- ✓ *Involving children in the different stages of the process*
- ✓ *Young people freely taking part*
- ✓ *The language you use should be clear and straightforward*

The consultation process is summarised opposite and the toolkit will cover these stages of the process:

Consulting Children and Young People

PROCESS

Clarify that a consultation actually needs to be done

▼

Identify what you want to find out about and write out your objectives

▼

Decide on your overall approach to consultation and consider ways of involving children and young people in the process

▼

Clarify who should be involved in carrying out the consultation and identify roles

▼

Write out a timeline

▼

Identify which groups of children and young people you want to consult

▼

Identity how you will access these children and young people

▼

Clarify any ethical or confidentiality issues

▼

Decide on the consultation method/s to use

▼

Collect and record the information

▼

Depending on the method chosen analyse the information

▼

Give feedback to the children and young people who participated

▼

Present your findings and/or recommendations

▼

Reflect on the process

▼

Record aspects of the consultation that worked well and list what you would do differently in the future

Further information

Roche, J. and Tucker, S. (1997) Youth in Society – contemporary theory and practice Sage Publications in association with the Open University Press.

Marshall, K. and Maguire, R. (1998) Values education and the rights of the child report for the Gordon Cook Foundation, Centre for the Child and Society, University of Glasgow.

Quigley, P. and Kelly, K. The Rights Stuff! An education resource on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A partnership publication between Development Education for Youth, Amnesty International and Trocaire.

What is participation?

Participation is about people sharing ideas, thinking for themselves, expressing their views effectively, planning, prioritising and being involved in the decision making process to create change.

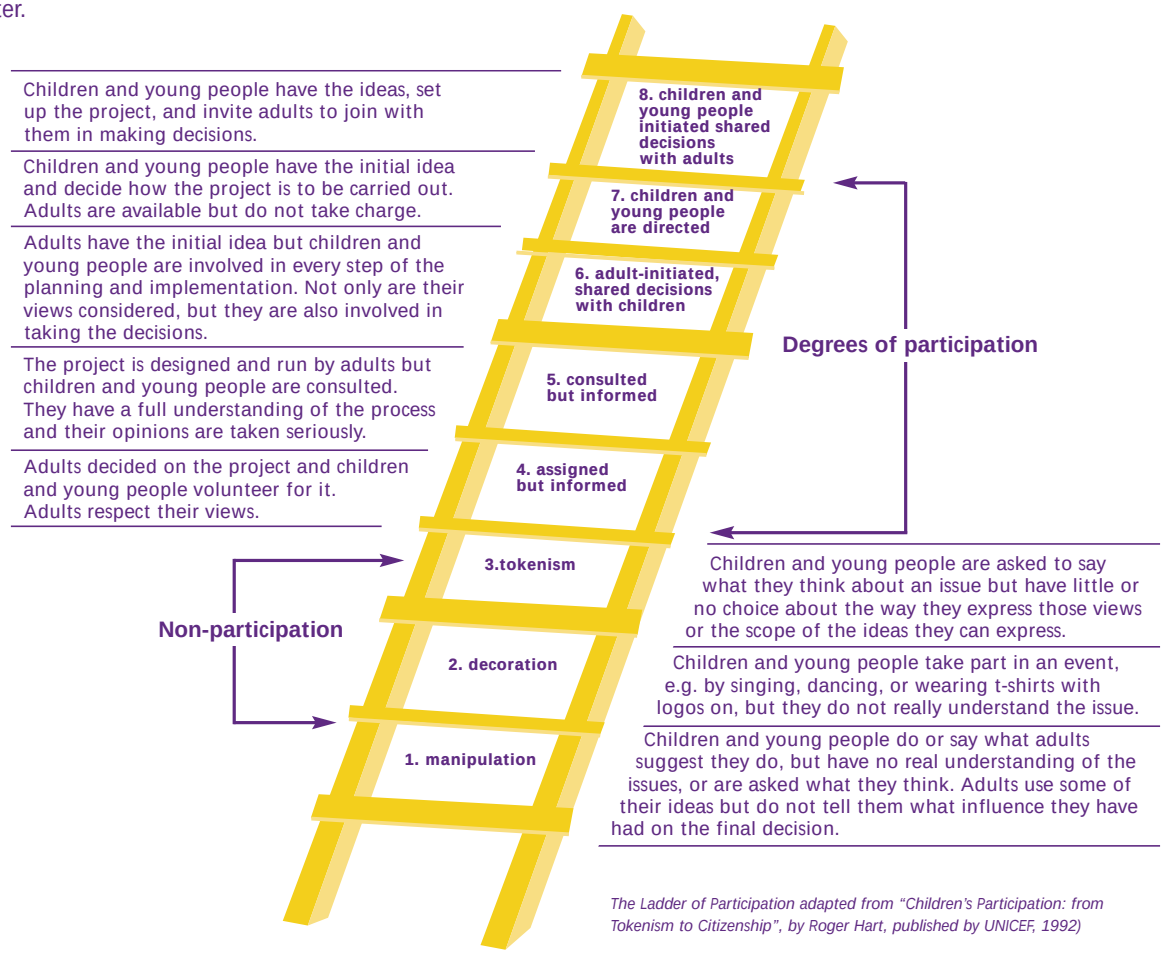
There are a number of ways of describing the different levels of participation and these have commonly been represented in terms of a ladder. Examples of participation ladders include an eight-step ladder illustrated by Hart (1992). This ladder moves from manipulation on the first step, where children and young people do or say what adults suggest they should say but have no real understanding of the issues and consequences of their choices, through to child/young people-initiated projects where they make shared decisions with adults. The first three rungs of the ladder are considered as including no 'real' participation.

Sherry Arnstein's ladder of participation is commonly referred to (Arnstein, 1979). A participation ladder assumes that it is always better to work towards increasing the level of participation in a given situation. However, this may not always be the case and therefore you could represent participation in other visual forms (e.g. circles). In some situations it may not be appropriate or beneficial for there to be the maximum level of participation. Consultation generally falls in the middle of a chain or ladder of levels of participation. Also there are different levels of participation within consultations and these are discussed later.

Empowerment is closely linked to participation. Hodgson (1995) says that five conditions should be aimed for if children are to be truly empowered:

Access to those in power
Access to the relevant information
Choices between different options
Support from a trusted independent person
and where needed a representative
A means of appeal or complaint if things go wrong

There is a broad range of demographic and personal factors which help to determine the nature of participation open to each child, including age and gender, socio-economic conditions, physical conditions and the type of rural or urban environment. When doing a consultation remain aware that young people are not a homogeneous group and they have varying needs to allow them to participate. There can also be barriers to participation. Young people identify some of these barriers in Voices for Change and these include lack of money, discrimination, lack of resources, lack of childcare and lack of information (Save the Children, 2000).



The Ladder of Participation adapted from "Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship", by Roger Hart, published by UNICEF, 1992)

Activity 1 : Drawing participation

Aim : To encourage people to discuss and create a clear definition of participation. Also a good team building exercise.

Time : 30 minutes

Age : 9 upwards

You need : Large pieces of paper or flipchart
Pens of different thickness and colour

What you need to do :

- Divide people into groups and ask people to draw their idea of 'participation'. No words are allowed to be included in the drawing.
- When the group has finished they present their work to the other groups for discussion.

Points : Some of the comments for these diagrams included:

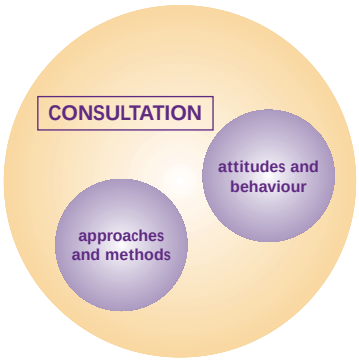
working together
a process
doing
working together
helping
ownership
non-hierarchical
about people
enabling
facilitating change
being inclusive
creative
equality
respect for people
sharing
listening
being involved

Notes : You could use this exercise to draw the barriers to participation and then discuss ways of reducing the barriers

Attitudes and behaviour

"I don't like it when people talk down to me or do not listen to the answer when they ask a question"
Young person (aged 10)

"You have to genuinely listen and be interested in what young people have to say.
Attitudes and your behaviour comes first and then the methods and how you are going to do the consultation comes second" Worker



One of the most important aspects of participation is people's attitudes and behaviour.
Working in a participatory way is more than having a bag of tools and techniques. It is essentially about having the right attitudes, behaviour and philosophy. It is about listening and genuinely being interested in what people have to say without being judgmental or dominant. It is about remaining neutral and not putting forward your own ideas and views when asking young people about theirs and sometimes this can be difficult if you feel very strongly about an issue or topic. As one worker put it, *"Prepare well. Remain neutral. Empty your head of your views. Then get out-and-about to where young people are and listen."*

The following diagram summarises the main attitudes that are important. If you are involved in training people in appropriate methods and tools to use during the consultation also include attitudes and behaviour in the training programme. Someone involved in the consultation may be new to this kind of work. To others it may be very familiar ground but there is no harm in reminding yourself before each consultation (e.g. Do I always remain neutral? Do I ever dominate? Do I listen effectively? Am I flexible enough? etc.). Sometimes facilitators themselves can dominate a group and this is usually unconscious behaviour. To avoid this teams of facilitators can agree on ways of reminding each other not to dominate (e.g. this could be done through a team contract).

The activity overleaf is useful for generating a practical discussion about attitudes and behaviour.

Activity 2 : Real or roles?

(adapted from Pretty *et al.* 1995)

Aim : Use for raising awareness of the different roles that people can take in a group situation and can lead on to a discussion about ways of creating a dynamic and constructive group environment.

Time : 30-40 minutes

Age : 10 upwards

You need : Pieces of paper with roles written out
Two facilitators

What you need to do :

- Give out pieces of paper with different roles written on them as follows:
- talker 1 and talker 2 who will have a discussion on any topic that they decide
- listener/s
- one saboteur who will try to dominate and interrupt or change the conversation
- anti-saboteur who will try and help the talkers to continue and stop the saboteur from trying to take control
- one observer who will take notes on the group dynamics (e.g. what was happening? What strategies did people use? etc)

- Decide beforehand who is going to be the saboteur and ask them to come outside to help one of the facilitators who can then explain that their role is to try and disrupt the group and any method is allowed without the use of physical force.
- During this time the other facilitator gives out the roles. If you have a large group you can split the group up into two groups of six for example. Avoid having more than one saboteur though. Do not tell the people in the group other people's roles and do not explain that there will be a saboteur.
- Decide with the talkers a subject that they can easily discuss (e.g. what they like to do at the weekend, where they have been on holiday, or an issue related to the consultation) and explain the other roles with the exception of the saboteur.
- Once the group has got going and the talkers have started their conversation let the saboteur come into the room. Let the whole thing run for about 10 minutes. Do not let it run too long.
- Bring the group back together to discuss what was happening and people's roles. This can lead onto making a list of the different ways people can intentionally or unintentionally disrupt a group discussion and then the different strategies that can be used to prevent or dilute such disruption. An example is given in the table opposite.

Examples of ways to sabotage	Examples of ways to be an anti-saboteur
Change the focus of the discussion	Bring the discussion back to the main focus
Be negative	
Not turning up	Have some ground rules for the group
Not working in a team or sharing information	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities
Being rude	Point out behaviour
Wanting to take control	Have roles within the group
Not listening to other people and interrupting	Give them something else to do
Talking about things that are not relevant	Review the aims and objectives

Notes

This activity can also be used as an icebreaker that can be linked to the setting of ground rules (see tools and techniques section of the toolkit).

It can be a useful and fun exercise to do when teaching people about group dynamics (e.g. if a team of young people is going to facilitate a meeting as part of the consultation and you are training them in facilitation and group work skills in preparation for this).

Checklist

- ✓ Is the consultation sincere in its aims to consult with children and young people?
- ✓ Are you genuinely interested in what people have to share and contribute?
- ✓ Will children's and young people's views and ideas be listened to?
- ✓ Do participating children and young people have a real possibility of changing and/or influencing the decision making process?
- ✓ To what extent can you create an open and participatory atmosphere?
- ✓ Can you remain neutral and throw out your preconceptions?
- ✓ Can you be both flexible and structured in the consultation process?
- ✓ Have you considered issues relating to attitudes and behaviour?
- ✓ What level of participation do you feel is appropriate for the consultation?

Further information

Arnstein, S. (1979) Eight rungs on the ladder of citizens' participation. Journal of the American Institution of Planners

Cohen, J. and Emanuel, J. (1998) Positive Participation. Consulting with children and young people in health-related work: a planning and training resource. Health Education Authority, London

Hart, R. (1992) Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship. UNICEF

Hodgson, D. (1995) Participation of Children and Young People in Social Work

Johnson, V., Ivan-Smith, E., Gordon, G. and Pridmore, P. and Scott P. (eds) (1998) Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process Intermediate Technology Publications, London

McGlinchey, S. (2000) Voices for Change, Save the Children

2 notes

What is inclusion?

What is inclusion and who is often excluded?

During the research phase of the toolkit children and young people (aged 9-18) were asked about who is usually consulted in their communities. Their comments are listed here together with some additional suggestions made by adult workers.

Who do you think should be asked for their views about the area where you live (e.g. views about your community or the school)? List made by children and young people

- Everyone
- All age groups
- Not just the girls
- It should not matter where you live
- It should not matter if you are shy
- Parents and brothers and sisters
- Not just the same people
- It should not matter how much money you have
- All the people that live here

Community education workers added to this list:

- Gender - young men can be more difficult to involve than young women
- Young parents e.g. young parents may not easily be able to travel or commit the time to meetings
- Young people from black or minority ethnic groups
- Young people with mental health problems
- Young people with physical, sensory or learning difficulties
- Young travellers
- Young people who do not attend youth clubs and after school clubs
- Young people in care

Who is usually asked for their views (e.g. views about your community or the school)?

List made by children and young people

- Adults
- The same people
- I don't know
- The Council and people who work for the Council
- If you vote you get asked
- If you go to an after school club you sometimes get asked
- Youth clubs sometimes ask you things
- Teachers
- Parents
- Youth workers

Who is often not asked for their views about the area where you live (e.g. views about your community or your school)? List made by children and young people

- We are often not asked
- People who don't go to meetings
- People with disabilities like my brother
- If you are in hospital
- Very young children
- People that cannot read and write
- If you can not see or are deaf
- People who take drugs
- People on the streets
- Shy people
- If you can not speak English very well
- Teenagers who have children (you can't always get out as much)
- People in prison
- I don't know
- People who live in the flats
- People who do not vote

Making consultation inclusive

Aim to make the consultation inclusive by involving a wide cross section of young people. The following points about ways to include people were made by children, young people and workers:

- Consult using a variety of methods and techniques
- Speak to and involve people from a wide range of places and backgrounds
- Work in partnership with other organisations
- Ask young people to participate in their own environments and do not just rely on meetings or large events. Sometimes you can get a different response if you ask young people questions in a formal setting (e.g. school) or informal setting (e.g. corner shop). Be aware of this and consider consulting in a variety of settings.
- Ask young people for their ideas on other people who may like to be involved
- Make the process enjoyable
- Consider how to involve young people in the planning phase
- If people are not interested in being involved ask what their reasons are and be flexible in your approach
- Making the process attractive can help (e.g. layout of printed materials, good venues, refreshments etc.)
- Make the questions relevant to the young people you are asking
- If working with people with disabilities ask them and/or their carers what issues you may need to be aware of during the consultation
- Keep a note of the age groups and gender division of people that have participated along with the areas where people live (i.e. tracking sheets). This is useful to check that you are not concentrating on one age group and excluding other age groups
- Make sure any meeting times are when young people are usually free
- Advertise the consultation well and not just through one source. Word of mouth can be the best form of advertisement. Any leaflets should be welcoming and the details about possible times (starting and finishing) and venue location clear

When asked how they would like to be consulted children and young people made the following comments:

- There could be local events
- The politicians should get out and ask us themselves
- Through school
- After school clubs
- There could be a website
- It depends what we are being asked about
- People coming to us to ask us
- Don't know
- There could be a community youth council
- You could give out surveys at the night-clubs
- You could ask everyone in our school

Comments from the Youth Summit (June 2000)

- More events like the Youth Summit
- Involve local politicians in events
- The voting age should be lowered
- Email and websites (if you have access)
- Youth forums and councils
- Youth clinics and surgeries
- Scottish Youth Parliament
- Streetwork
- Video conferencing
- Letters sent to your house
- Email sent to me at home
- Through the school and youth clubs

Case Study

Who cares? Scotland

Background

Who Cares? Scotland developed from the voluntary group 'Speak Out' which set up in 1978 to improve the care system for children and young people. In 1988 this group received Scottish Office funding and became Who Cares? Scotland. This organisation works with young people under the age of twenty-five who are, or have been, looked after in care.

Consultations

Consultation exercises have been done at both the national and local level. National meetings for 50-70 young people are based around themes (e.g. safety, mental health) and the annual conference is a two-day residential event. The local consultations are varied (e.g. children's service plans, local policies, designing a new residential service, workshops to inform national consultations). Their work is split into under and over 12s although in consultation events the age groups are broken down further as it is felt that 2 yearly groups (12-14 and 14-16) work best. Children and young people hear about these events through local authorities, the National Foster Care Association and the British Association for Adoption and Fostering.

Examples of consultation events by Who Cares? Scotland

National annual conference

A residential two-day event is issue based (e.g. leisure, safety,) and the workshops are 1 hour maximum. There are workshops on the first day; a disco in the evening and the second day is usually activity-based (drama, arts and crafts, dance, poetry). The conference ends with a group debriefing and feeding back session. There have been two safety conferences: following the first, a report was written and launched at the 1998 National Safety Conference and at the second young people gave presentations about safety related issues.

Daffy Duck (Under 12s)

Objectives

- To introduce Who Cares? Scotland to young people in foster care
- To identify what people feel about being in foster care
- To avoid raising sensitive issues that cannot be dealt with during the meeting
- To using language that everyone can understand
- To have fun

✓ Ground rules discussed and put up on the wall so that people can add to them (i.e. what is OK and what is not OK)

✓ Icebreaker: In a circle throwing a ball to people and shouting out the person's name when you throw it to them

✓ Information about Who Cares Scotland (very short and discussion-based 10 minutes)

✓ Duck exercise

- A giant duck is drawn up before the meeting
- Naming the duck: 'The duck has not got a name: what shall we call it?' Names are put in a hat and one is drawn out
- Discussion about what is wrong with the duck (it has no feathers)
- Group makes feathers by drawing round their hands onto coloured card and cutting out feather shapes
- Each child makes four feathers and writes on each:
  - Something that makes you happy …
  - Something that makes you sad …
  - Something you like about your foster carers …
  - If you had a wish what would you wish for?
- Everyone sticks the feathers on the bird

Juice and crisps

- Drawing session (fun activity)
- Creating balloon animals (having something to take away)
- Ask for feedback informally

Any advice?

✓ Have a back up plan on how you may deal with emotional issues within the group and be aware of child protection issues

✓ Have two facilitators

✓ Ask young people about what you are organising and get their input

✓ Make sure there is an element of choice in all activities (e.g. choice of workshop, disco and a quiet room)

✓ Make the consultation appropriate to the age group and use language everyone understands

✓ Have fun (everyone)

Further information:
National Office, Who Cares? Scotland
Oswald Street, Glasgow, G14 QR Tel: 0141-400-6363
Email: who.cares.scotland@zetnet.co.uk

Settings

Consultations can take place in a range of settings. Different issues need to be considered depending on the setting (e.g. if you are consulting in the street the police need to be informed). Points related to the formal school setting are discussed here.

Formal settings: linking with schools

There are a number of ways that a consultation exercise could link with the school curriculum. Consultations can teach pupils a wide range of transferable skills (e.g. communication and teamwork skills, research skills, planning skills, enquiry skills, analysing and presenting information). There can be cross-disciplinary activities, for example, a consultation which involves the use of a questionnaire could be brought into the modern studies programme and the data analysis could be covered during a maths lesson. A large consultation could also be introduced as an additional activity and a pupil led planning team could organise the consultation if there was teacher support available. Free time however is limited as there are no study periods in S1-4, some schools timetable them for S5, and although nearly all S6 have free time exam related work is usually expected.

Some of the main links with the curriculum in Scotland include:

- Environmental Studies 5-14
- Enquiry skills in Standard Grade Modern Studies (assessment weighting 60%)
- Modern Studies Higher
- Modern Studies Social Science Research Methods Advanced Higher is taken by a small number of pupils and this covers all the main social science research approaches and methods in detail.

An example:

This table identifies the common features within the revised 5-14 Environmental Studies guidelines (October 2000). In social subjects the emphasis is on enquiry skills, in science the focus is on investigative work and in technology it is on designing and making. *Some suggestions as to where the different stages of a consultation exercise can be built into the curriculum are shown in italics.*

	Social subjects	Science	Technology
Preparing for tasks	• Planning tasks • Identifying appropriate sources of information • *Planning a questionnaire or group discussion*	• Understanding tasks • Planning an activity • Designing fair tests • Predicting • *Designing the survey methods to ensure they are statistically valid*	• Analysing • Researching • Planning • *Planning the methods of analysis*
Carrying out tasks	• Selecting relevant information • Processing information • Judging usefulness and reliability • *Conducting a survey or interview*	• Observing • Measuring • Using measuring devices and units • Recording findings • *Coding a questionnaire*	• Developing ideas • Creating solutions • *Addressing any problems during the consultation*
Reviewing and reporting on tasks	• Presenting findings • Presenting conclusions • *Presenting findings in a brief report e.g. written, talk, poster*	• Describing tasks • Presenting findings • Evaluating • Identifying patterns • Understanding the significance of findings • *Presenting quantitative data in terms of graphs* • *Doing a correlation*	• Testing • Evaluating • *Evaluating the consultation and running a debriefing meeting Based on the Revised 5-14 environmental studies guidelines*

Checklist: Schools

- ✓ Class sizes are large and there can be 30 pupils in a group unless you are consulting with post 16 classes. Therefore if you are having workshop-based activities you may need two facilitators and to break the class into small groups
- ✓ Pupils will all know each other and this can have an effect on behaviour patterns
- ✓ Make sure that the questions are clear and have some relevance to the pupils you are consulting with
- ✓ If an external group is conducting a questionnaire the school needs to ask parental permission, and in some areas also seek the approval of the local authority. Allow time for this. If the school is doing the questionnaire itself parental permission is not required
- ✓ Permission from the school, parents and pupils is needed to put photographs in any reports. No photographs or pupil names or addresses can be put on the Internet
- ✓ Avoid the examination period unless you are consulting with years 1-3 when they may be more flexible in the curriculum around May
- ✓ The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. (Scotland) Act requires pupils to be consulted in school development plans
- ✓ Make the language and questions accessible and consider piloting the questions with a range of teachers and pupils before the consultation (with a range of age groups)
- ✓ Consider involving the learning support department for consulting with children with learning difficulties
- ✓ Consider that the school environment is a formal setting and a number of pupils may want to 'give the right answers' and tell you what they think you want to hear. This problem can be reduced by building a feeling of trust with the pupils and developing ground rules to address this
- ✓ Do not take it for granted that the pupils understand the questions. Use reflective listening to check if they understand the questions
- ✓ Consider linking the consultation activities to the learning outcomes in the curriculum
- ✓ Create an atmosphere that is non-threatening, interesting and lively so that young people do not feel intimidated
- ✓ Thank pupils for their input and explain the next stage of the process and how they will be kept informed of any changes

Case Study

Consulting in Schools Save the Children

Background

This consultation exercise was commissioned by the Scottish Executive and carried out by Save the Children in Scotland in October 1999 as part of the Scotland wide consultation into the proposals on the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 2000. The aim of the exercise was:

"to consult meaningfully with children and young people on their experience of the education system and to seek views on ways to raise standards in education and promote social inclusion" (Scottish Executive)

Involving people

The Scottish Executive's criteria for the groups required a range of ages from schools in different geographical settings, as well as groups representing vulnerable young people with experience of school exclusion and experience of local authority care. The majority of schools and groups consulted were through Save the Children networks. Recognising the constraints of a small sample size groups were identified in order to reflect diversity in geographical location, ethnicity, experience, special needs and different ages and developmental stages.

Who participated?

11 focus groups were consulted (88 young people participated in total) between the ages of 5 to 16 years from:

- Four primary schools and three secondary schools were involved
- An education centre for young people who have experienced difficulties within their local school
- One 'special provision' school for young people with severe physical disabilities,
- One 'special provision' school for looked after young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties
- One group of looked after and accommodated young people

Method

Consultation was carried out using a focus group methodology, adapted according to the age and setting of the group. This method provides an opportunity to explore complex issues and elicit a wealth of information, views, opinions and experiences. The group sessions were audio taped and later transcribed.

How was it done?

• Introduction

The consultation was introduced in the context of a new Scottish Parliament and a new Scottish political system. The following points were covered:

- This is a special year for Scotland because of the Scottish Parliament.
- One of the first new laws to be passed will be a law about schools.
- Before passing the law the devolved government (Scottish Executive) have talked to lots of teachers, head teachers, councillors etc.
- But young people are also experts on schools and so they have asked Save the Children to come and talk to pupils about your views and ideas about how your school could be improved.
- After we have talked to you about your school and education we will write down what you have said and send it to the Scottish Executive and Scottish Parliament.
- Then they will take your views into consideration before agreeing what is to be in the new law.

• **Icebreakers and energisers**

Games and exercises were employed at the beginning and the middle of the session in order to promote a relaxed atmosphere. This was particularly important when working with younger pupils, but secondary-aged young people also appreciated this.

The following icebreaker was used: *Name game* - sitting in a circle, ask each young person to say their name and what they like best at school. Then go round the circle again and get each to repeat what has been said before them plus their own. Facilitator should go last and then try to remember ALL the names!

• **Ground rules**

What we would like

❑ Your opinions, ideas, experience, willingness.

❑ Respect for each others' views and willingness to listen and let each other have turn to speak.

What you can expect

❑ Respect for you, your ideas, opinions, experiences.

❑ Trust that no one will be named, tapes and notes are private and won't be shown to teachers, parents, government etc. (But if you talk about anything that has happened to you which is dangerous or bad for you - e.g. if someone has hurt you - then we may have to talk to another adult about it. But we would talk to you about that on your own first.)

❑ Feedback – young person's report by the end of the month.

Case Study continued

- **Techniques and tools**

School tour and photographs

Pupils were asked to spend 15 minutes showing the facilitators around the school, identifying aspects of the school, which they felt to be important, or which they either liked or disliked. The use of an instant 'Polaroid' camera gave pupils a specific task that was also fun. This activity was followed up by a group discussion on aspects of the school such as the physical environment, relationships, structure and decision making systems, using prompt questions (see table).

- *Brainburster exercise*

Pupils were asked to brainstorm – alone or in pairs – what they think contributes to a successful or enjoyable learning experience. This brainstorm was used as a point of departure for further discussion about learning methods, what works and what doesn't, using prompt questions.

- *Interview and graffiti wall*

Pupils were invited to interview each other by asking the following questions:

- *What makes a good day at school?*
- *Why do you come to school?*
- *What would you change about your school?*

The exercise was followed up with a 'Graffiti Wall' exercise, where pupils were invited to present their views creatively on a large, paper, 'graffiti wall', using coloured markers. Whilst the pupils were doing this the facilitator was able to follow up points for discussion using prompt questions.

What worked well?

- A large number of young people throughout Scotland participated
- Young people were consulted in a setting familiar to them
- Groups were generally homogeneous and used to working together
- The transcripts generated by the groups were rich in qualitative data
- Facilitators were able to put young people at their ease and to stimulate discussion, but they were also unconnected to the school or community so the young people felt free to talk openly about their experiences
- The method is adaptable and flexible to the needs and requirements of the individual group, hence we were able to consult with a very wide range of age and experience using the same method and materials

What did not work as well?

- Certain individual views may not have been expressed in a group
- It was not possible to create common conditions given diversity of age and experience of groups.
- The group dynamic lends itself to the dominance of certain individuals which must be managed by the facilitator.
- The group dynamic could carry the groups in a variety of directions. It was therefore the responsibility of the facilitator to find a balance between free and steered discussion.

Impact on policy

The findings of the consultation demonstrated that children and young people had good ideas about their schools and their experience of education which could be used in developing local and national policies. In addition in the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. (Scotland) Act the right for school pupils to be consulted has now been included (Section 5, Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 2000).

Further information: Save the Children,
Haymarket House, 8 Clifton Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5DR
Tel: 0131-527-8200 Fax: 0131-527-8201

Case Study continued

The consultation structure and questions

Focus of consultation	Key questions and follow up	Tools or techniques used
PART 1 Education Inputs	**What is good about your school? What could be done better?**	
• School environment/culture/ethos/ relationships including parents, teachers and pupils • School management/decision making/ resources and facilities/inclusion/ participation/setting school targets and objectives • Discipline/safety/bullying/guidance and support	- Do you get on well with your teachers? - What do they do if you are naughty/ misbehave/break rules? - Are your parents involved in the school? - Who do you go to if you have problems at school eg bullying? - Are you involved in decisions at school? - Do you help decide what to buy (software/ games)? - Do any kids ever get left out?	- School tour/informal questioning - Instamatic photos of school – likes and dislikes - Questioning and discussion in group
PART 2 Learning Methods	**What makes a good lesson? What could make it better?**	
• Classroom and learning environment • Relationship with teacher/ individual teaching time/guidance and support (educational and vocational) • Class sizes/homework/school visits/ trips/projects/information technology/ curriculum	- What makes it easier to learn? - Does the teacher help you enough? - Do you use computers at school? - Do you play games and do they help you learn? - Are the lessons too long/ too short? - What motivates you to work hard? - How do you know if you are doing well at school?	- Brainstorm Game – How many things can you do with a piece of string? - Brainburster sheets – alone or in small groups - Feedback to flipchart - generate discussion
PART 3 Education Outputs	**What makes a good day at school? What could make a bad day better?**	
• Purpose of school • How pupils value their school and their education • How they make judgements about good days and bad days – good schools and bad schools. • What they want from education in long term	- Why do you come to school? - Do you think school is important? - What is the most important thing about school for you? - How do you decide whether you have had a good day or a bad day – what would make the difference between good or bad? - What would be the difference between a good school and a bad school? - What would you change about your school?	- Start with a quick game or energiser to refresh from previous discussion - Interview role play - Graffiti wall

"People with learning difficulties are not special – they are 'us'. If we have no opportunity to be ourselves and practise some control over our lives, we've had it – 'We' meaning all of us" Disability worker

"Most initiatives to promote children and young people's involvement have begun with older teenagers. They are generally an articulate and outspoken group who can converse on adult terms and manage within adult dominated environments. Projects which promote the involvement of younger children and young people with learning disabilities are less common. But their views and experiences count too" Local Government Information Unit in the EcoCities Project

"If you know that someone has a visual-impairment you may want to send the questions for discussion on an audiocassette in advance of the meeting" Worker

The consultation process should be as accessible as possible. For example, if you are consulting with children or young people with a disability you need to know what you can do to make the consultation process accessible for them. You may need to adopt a range of strategies to ensure that the person or group feels comfortable and is not disadvantaged in the consultation process. All the thought and preparation needed to communicate very clearly and effectively will be of benefit to the whole group.

Consider the language that is used in the wording of questions and keep the consultation process inclusive and fun. For example, use 'people with disabilities' (which emphasises that they are disabled by the way society and the environment are arranged) not 'the disabled' or use 'a person with epilepsy' or 'a person with dyslexia' and not 'epileptic' or 'dyslexic' (i.e. medically imposed labels can be a stigma and focuses on the disability as people's defining feature). The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) and the National Deaf Children's Society both have regional offices in Scotland and can be contacted for further information.

Effective communication: Children and young people with a visual impairment

(Points made by the Scotland Education Officer for RNIB)

Clear and large print

- Good standards of print legibility help all readers, but for many people with a visual impairment the issue is crucial to whether they read or not. It is important to recognise that blind and partially sighted people have different eye conditions and what they see can vary greatly differ. It is impossible to devise a 'print standard' which will meet all needs.
- RNIB's research has shown that a significant proportion of blind and partially sighted people can read large print. RNIB recommends 14 point as the minimum print size for material intended for blind and partially sighted readers (16 point preferred).
- Typefaces to avoid are the obviously bizarre or indistinct ones. Stick to even word spacing. Do not condense or stretch lines of type. RNIB recommends using unjustified right hand margins. Leave reasonable space between lines of type.

Braille

- Braille is a system of raised dots which enables blind people to read with their fingers. Braille is bulky (e.g. one A4 printed page takes up two and a half pages of braille).
- Personal correspondence and straightforward text can be easily produced. If your office uses one of the popular word processors such as Word, you will be able to run a braille translation program which converts text into braille. The computer could then be linked up to a braille embosser for printing.
- Consider having a few hours on-site staff training (available from suppliers). The 'Articles for the Blind' postal concession allows items to be sent free of charge. Ask your post office customer services office for details.

Moon

- Some people find braille too difficult to master. However, they may be able to read Moon, a system made up of lines and curves.

Use of audio cassettes

- If you want to do-it-yourself, basic desktop recorders and microphones suitable for producing recordings for individuals are available relatively cheaply.
- Several professional transcription services available.

Electronic formats

- Electronic formats such as email and the internet work well for some young people with visual impairment who have adapted computer systems to enable them to access the information.

Further information: RNIB, Dunedin House, 25 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH4 3TP Tel: 0131-311-8500 Fax: 0131-311-8529

The following points are made by people who have worked for a number of years with children and young people with a range of learning disabilities and have experience of consultations.

Learning disabilities: Experiences of consultation

- We use five guidelines (Respect, Confidence, Community participation, Community presence, Choice).
- Ensure that the consultation has specific aims and objectives and that you want and need to consult people with disabilities. Make sure that the consultation is valued and is not tokenistic.
- Access issues are always important to consider. Venues are generally appropriate for people with physical disabilities (e.g. wheelchair access). What is sometimes over-looked is accessibility for people with learning disabilities (e.g. many people with autism require a quiet space without background noise).
- It is a good idea to also discuss the venue and people's preferred communication methods or the requirements of individuals attending a workshop with carers, teachers, parents or peers before the event.
- Explore different communication methods such as signing.
- Picture symbols can be effective for collecting ideas and identifying priorities. Select or design appropriate pictures and symbols for the group you are working with. Do not use symbols made for young children if you are working with an older age group (e.g. children's cartoons).
- Ask one question at a time and keep the wording straightforward and relevant.
- People with autism often respond very well to working with photographs rather than images. Videos, taping experiences and cutting out pictures from magazines can be effective. Log books work very well with some people.
- Be varied, creative and active in the techniques you use.
- Be aware that you often need a longer time scale to work with disability groups and you may need to use a number of mediums within the same group. Ensure that the funders are fully aware of the time needed to do the exercise properly.
- Consider health and safety issues and ensure that facilitators are aware of them (e.g. the incidence of epilepsy is high with people with learning difficulties).
- Make sure the facilitators are good if you use them. Select facilitators who value everyone's input. Also consider peer facilitation.
- Many people with learning difficulties can grow up thinking they do not have many choices as their lives have been very structured. It is therefore useful to do awareness raising about the choices available. Confidence building and self esteem work is very important.
- It is important to liaise with carers or specific organisations in advance as it is difficult to generalise about learning disabilities as they are very specific to the person and in many cases people can have dual disabilities.
- Be careful over the wording and language used (e.g. a child with autism and not an autistic) and avoid stereotyping and making assumptions.
- Often many people have small social networks and many individuals do not have the same peer networks as other children or young people. It can be useful to be aware of this.
- Be aware that it may take more time to explore feelings. Some people are not used to recognising their own feelings and other people can have great difficulty naming feelings and developing causal links. For example someone may know 'happy' and 'angry' but not 'disappointment' or 'frustration'.
- Thematic approaches and problem solving exercises can work very well when doing a consultation (e.g. how would you improve that?). Make questions relevant to people's lives. Keep questions short and repeat them if necessary.
- Consider different ways of giving feedback to decision or policy makers (e.g. video, photographs with comments added to them, log books, banners etc.).
- See each person as a whole and see ways round the disability – they may only need support in certain areas. Communication is vital and this can be in many forms and levels e.g. emotional, practical, non-verbal through relationships with staff, friends, clients and groups.
- People with learning disabilities have often already found a good way round a problem – learn from it, share it and incorporate it.

Experiences of working in the disability field and conducting consultations - based on interviews with disability workers in Scotland and Rachel Shephard (Statewide Disability Service) and Darian Bailey (Special Needs Programme), touring Scotland July 2000 from Anglicare, South Australia.

One form of disability affecting a large number of children and young people is dyslexia:
" I am dyslexic and it is difficult for me to fill in forms and read. Things that help me are the computer and having lots of space and short sentences in anything that is written" Young person with dyslexia

Dyslexia simply means 'difficulty with words'. However, there is nothing simple about a difficulty with words. Some people still view dyslexia as 'getting the words back to front or that mirror writing' and this is a false misrepresentation of the problem. Many people with dyslexia never get words back to front but yet they may have great difficulty in remembering their own phone number, reading a novel or spelling simple words. It can be very common for children and young people with dyslexia to be lacking in self-confidence and have low self-esteem. Few generalisations can be made about dyslexia as it presents itself in many different ways (reading difficulties, writing difficulties, sequencing problems, short-term memory problems, lack of confidence etc.). However people with dyslexia are usually very creative, have highly developed visual memories and exceptional abilities in lateral thinking. All of these skills can be an advantage in a consultation exercise – especially in a consultation organised by young people themselves. Some simple guidelines if you are consulting with children or young people with dyslexia follow and for more information contact the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) or refer to Ott (1997).

- Keep questions very short and specific
- Leave plenty of space in documents or questionnaires
- Sequence questions carefully and give clear instructions
- Allow plenty of time
- Say that you are not worried about the correct spelling
- Consider the use of computers, audiocassettes/dictaphone, scribe and visual diagrams
- Use a large font size in written information (e.g. 14)
- Consider using arts based methods
- Consider involving them in the design of the consultation (e.g. planning, advertising materials, designing feedback material etc.)

It can therefore be useful to think about inclusion in a broad sense as the reasons people are excluded vary. It is important to ensure that all children and young people have the opportunity to participate. You may also need to consider communication and language issues, physical and financial access and the setting. The following two activities may be useful for generating a discussion about being inclusive in consultations. They may be particularly helpful if you are involved in organising a peer lead consultation exercise and you are planning training sessions.

Case Study

Woodlands Youth Initiative

The Woodlands Youth Initiative was established in January 2000 in the Woodlands area of Glasgow.

The project aims to:

- offer information and advice for black and ethnic minority young people
- highlight the lack of culturally sensitive services for young people
- provide personal development and training opportunities
- work towards overcoming social inclusion
- address issues of racism and bullying and cultural and religious diversity
- empower black and ethnic minority young people

Between 30-40 young people use a drop-in centre every week. Consultations are done through discussions and short questionnaires. A large consultation exercise has recently taken place with other agencies looking at the barriers to the provision of effective services for black and ethnic minority groups in the area. Young people are involved in running the project at different levels and sit on the advisory groups.

Further information: The Woodlands Initiative
304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow, G20 7YE
Tel: 0141-331-0110 Email: ukalim@hotmail.com

Activity 3 : The Exclusion Game

(adapted from Quigley and Kelly "The Rights Stuff")

Aim : To encourage groups to think about how some people are excluded and discriminated against

Time : 30 minutes

Groups : Three small and one 'director'

You need : Sheets of sticky dots in three colours
Refreshments
Chairs

Preparation

Ask the director to place a dot on the forehead of each person. People in the same group have the same colour dot (e.g. red for one group, green for another, blue for the third). This is played in three rounds.

What you need to do

- Round 1: The director gives the green group all the power. They have chairs to sit comfortably and some nice food and drink. The greens order the reds to stand together with their noses touching one wall. They may not look around or talk. They are totally excluded from the activity. Meanwhile the greens give orders to the blues, e.g. hop on one leg, do ten press-ups, count backwards etc. The blues must do what the greens tell them within the bounds of safety.
- Round 2: After a few minutes, the director stops the game and changes the roles around.
- Round 3: The director again stops the game and changes the groups around so that every group has the opportunity to play every role.
- **It is important that your groups have an opportunity to de-role and talk about the game. The director can lead the discussion.**

Debrief

What happened during the exercise?
What did the groups feel at each stage of the exercise?
What did they want to do?
How did having power affect people's behaviour?
Move the discussion onto real life and who may be excluded from a consultation exercise. Have the group had any experiences where they've felt excluded? How can the consultation be made more inclusive?

Activity 4 : Stepping Forward

Aim : That young people explore some of the barriers to being included and participating.

Time : 1 hour – more if individuals or groups debrief

Age : 12 upward

You need : A large space
Labels with names
Role cards for each player

Preparation : Photocopy the role cards

What you need to do

- Photocopy the role cards and give each person one to read. Ask them to make a label showing their name and where they live and to attach it to themselves. Depending on the size of the group more than one person may have the same role.
- Ask them to think about who they are and where they live. Now ask people to stand in character at one end of the room. Ask the groups to stand with their backs to the wall and use the full length of the room.
- Explain that you are going to call out statements. After each statement is read they must take a giant step, a baby step, or stay where they are depending on how easy it would be for them to participate in the consultation. Take a big step if you can participate quite easily, take a baby step if you can do it with difficulty. Don't move at all if you cannot participate.
- Emphasise that the aim of the exercise is to try and experience what life is like in character – it is not about reaching the end first.
- Now call out the first statement. Once everyone has responded, ask them to explain what they did and why. Choose more statements from the list, read them out and allow participants to make their move. When all the statements are read out start the debriefing.

Debrief

Who got the furthest along? Why?
How did you feel when you could not move?
How did you feel when you were moving faster than other people?
Who moved the shortest distance? Why?
What can be done to make it easier for people who moved slowly?
Choose one character and discuss what could be done to allow him or her to participate.

Statements: Can you participate?

- A questionnaire is sent round primary and secondary schools about health issues – can you participate?
- There is a meeting at the local library on Tuesday evening at 6pm about leisure facilities for young people – can you participate?
- A survey is sent through the post for young people to express their views about drugs and alcohol – can you participate?
- There is a workshop at the local college about transport in the area and it is based on photography – can you participate?
- A drama company are touring schools and running workshops about 'education is fun' – can you participate?
- There is a meeting about the Scottish Youth Parliament – can you participate?
- A questionnaire on issues that young people are concerned about is put on the web by the Scottish Executive – can you participate?
- You are asked in the street about your views on the health service – can you participate?
- You are invited to a focus group between 7-9pm next Thursday evening about services available and needed for children in the area – can you participate?
- There is a large consultation event in Glasgow about children's rights – can you participate?
- You are asked to read a summary paper on education from the government and write down your responses – can you participate?
- A graffiti wall is drawn in your local library on young people's views on the area – can you participate?

Role cards

to be photocopied and cut out

Marie: You live with your mother and sister in Glasgow and you are fourteen. You have dyslexia and find it difficult to read and complete forms. You are very creative and enjoy photography and art-based activities.

Patrick: You live with your family who are travellers in a caravan on the edge of a town. You have been to four primary schools, each in a different town. You like your current school best and you have met new friends in the area. You would like to get linked up to the internet at home but you do not think that it will be possible.

Padma: You live with your parents, your two brothers and sister in Edinburgh. You are planning to go to university next year and you would like to study computer science. You speak English at school but not at home.

Tom: You are fifteen and you live with your mother and younger sister. Your Mum is a single parent and works during the evenings. When you get home from school you look after your sister until your Mum gets home from work at about 7pm. You have a Saturday job to earn money for CDs and going out.

Peter: You live with your parents in Edinburgh and you go to the local youth club on a Thursday evening. Your mother works as a community worker and your father works within the planning section of the Council. You enjoy surfing the net both at home and at the youth club.

Ellie: You live on a farm with your family on the Orkney Isles in the north of Scotland. It is very expensive to travel to Glasgow or Edinburgh and you have only visited these cities once in your lifetime. You do have a computer and access to the Internet.

Dan: You are involved in setting up the Scottish Youth Parliament and you enjoy going to meetings and discussing issues that affect young people. You have access to the Internet and are about to take your Higher exams.

Sue: You do not like school and you often do not go but hang out with your friends instead. At night you go down town and hang about and you are looking forward to being eighteen as there is nothing for young people to do.

Andy: You had polio as a baby and you now need a wheelchair to get about. You like reading but the local library has steps and you cannot get in without help. You do not like going out when it is dark because the street lighting is not good in your area and it makes it difficult for you to get about.

Angaila: You have recently moved to Scotland as a refugee with your parents and you can speak a little English but you can not read it very well. You are very shy and you do not like going to large meetings.

Paul: You are living in local authority care at the moment. You are interested in reading and playing football. You would like to get a computer but you do not have one now. You attend school and your favourite subjects are music and drama.

Cameron: You live in the Western Isles of Scotland and have a slight visual-impairment. Your computer is adapted so that you can read text that is sent to you via email but you cannot read standard text very well.

Jane: You have two young children and you are a single parent. Your mother helps you out a lot with the children but she does not like babysitting at night because she does not feel safe walking to your flat in the dark. You plan to go to college when your youngest child starts school.

Checklist: All in together

- ✓ Have you considered equal opportunities issues?
- ✓ Is the venue accessible? Is the setting appropriate?
- ✓ Have you considered the timing of the consultation or meeting?
- ✓ Have you considered practical issues (e.g. transport to the venue, crèche facilities etc.)?
- ✓ Is the preparation material and written information clear, easy to read and appropriate for the age group?
- ✓ Are there any cultural issues to consider?
- ✓ Have you considered if it is more appropriate to have mixed or single sex groups?
- ✓ Have you considered how to allow people to participate who may not be able to attend meetings?
- ✓ Are there any issues to consider that are related to the setting?
- ✓ If you are consulting in a school have you considered the schools checklist?
- ✓ Do you have a system whereby someone who can not read or write can contribute?
- ✓ Are you planning to involve people from a wide range of backgrounds?
- ✓ Do you need to have the consultation material translated into any other languages?
- ✓ Can you keep a tracking sheet or record (age, gender, where people live etc.) to ensure you speak to a wide range of people?

Further information

Bardsley (1991) in Advocacy report, Scottish Association of Mental Health

Beecher, W. (1998) Having a Say! Section II, Practice initiatives and selected annotated references, Council for Disabled Children, London

National Deaf Children's Society (East Scotland), 5 Coates Place, Edinburgh EH3 7AA Tel: 0131-220-5189 Fax: 0131-220-5189

Griffiths, J., Cunningham, G. and Dick, S. (1999) Onwards and Upwards: Involving disabled children and young people in decision making: A training manual for professionals. Children in Scotland

Mayer-Johnson Co., Boardmaker Picture Communication Symbols, P.O. Box 1579, Solana Beach CA 92075, USA

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), Dunedin House, 25 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH4 3TP Tel: 0131-311-8500 Fax: 0131-311-852

Russell, P. (1998) Having a Say! Section I, Disabled children and effective partnership in decision making. The report of a consultative seminar and other investigations into practice examples and policy initiatives in involving disabled children, Council for Disabled Children, London

Shaping our Lives (1998) Video of people with disabilities speaking out about how they can be included and participate in changing things that affect their lives. Produced by the Shaping Our Lives project by Healthcare Productions. Contact the National Institute of Social Work.

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) 98, London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU Tel: 0118-966-2677

Ott, P (1997) How to Detect and Manage Dyslexia: A reference and resource manual, Heinemann Educational Publishers, Oxford

Knowing where you are going . . .

"Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?" said Alice. *That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,"* said the Cat.
Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

Where do you start when planning a consultation? The most useful starting point is to decide 'where you want to get to' by writing the consultation objectives. From this point you can then decide on the approach and methods that would be most appropriate, plan the time involved for each phase, the resources needed and the roles of people working on the project.

When you have to consult people quickly it can be difficult to find enough time for thorough planning; as a youth worker commented: *"It is difficult to spend a lot of time planning when you have so little time and money to actually do the consultation itself."* But do not underestimate the importance of this phase.

The planning stage need not take too long if it is focused. Writing the objectives helps with this, and you can use them to structure the planning phase by constantly asking: ' Does what I plan to do contribute to these objectives?' Proper planning will help save time because it gives you the opportunity to clearly structure the consultation and discuss the best ways of using the time available.

Starting points:
- Write out the key aim and purpose of the consultation
- Write out your objectives
- Decide on the approach and methods to use
- Make a resource list
- Draw out a timeline
- Decide on roles

The objectives for the consultation are the starting point; an individual or the planning group can write them. Make sure everyone involved in the planning of the consultation has a copy of the objectives and during planning meetings it can be useful to have them written on a piece of flipchart for everyone to refer to. Write them before deciding on the approach and methods to use.

Writing objectives

The objectives should be simple and clear so that everyone involved can understand them easily. They should be jargon-free. They need to be achievable in the time available and realistic considering the budget and resources.

Objectives should be
- Simple and specific
- Achievable
- Measurable

An example of the objectives for a participatory appraisal consultation

- To encourage young people to share and record their views and preferences about the facilities for young people in the area (minimum 150 young people)
- To get out and about to meet with as wide a cross section of young people as possible
- To start the process of identifying and prioritising the needs of young people in the community
- To start the process of identifying more/new young people who could play a positive role in local committees
- To encourage young people to identify and record barriers to becoming involved in committees and ways to reduce/ overcome these barriers
- To make the process and methods as enjoyable as possible for everyone
- To remain neutral and not to raise unrealistic expectations
- To produce an accessible document recording all the views and ideas together with the consultation process

Tips box

Objectives
- Start the planning stage of the consultation by writing out the objectives
- Make sure the objectives are clear, specific, jargon-free and realistic
- If you are running a workshop during the consultation put the objectives up on the wall for the group to read and refer to them during the session
- Add 'to have a fun/enjoyable time for all involved'
- Ask yourself 'Have I chosen the best approach to achieve the objectives?'
- Constantly return to your objectives and ask 'Is this method, question or tool relevant to these objectives? Am I doing what I set out to do?'
- You may need overall consultation objectives and a series of detailed objectives for each phase of the consultation
- Consider to what extent you have achieved your objectives following the session or consultation

What you are looking for…

Once you have decided 'where you are going' you need to know what you are looking for …

'Found what?' said the Duck. 'Found it' the Mouse replied rather crossly: 'of course you know what "it" means,' 'I know what "it" means well enough when I find a thing', said the Duck: 'it's generally a frog or a worm.'

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

The next stage involves choosing the approach and method that best suits the objectives. The section on approaches and methods will give you some guidance here.

And keeping a track of time…

"If you knew Time as well as I do', said the Hatter, `you wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's him.' `I don't know what you mean,' said Alice. `Of course you don't!' the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. `I dare say you never even spoke to Time!' `Perhaps not,' Alice cautiously replied: `but I know I have to beat time when I learn music.' `Ah! that accounts for it,' said the Hatter. `He won't stand beating."

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

Time, like money, is usually a scarce resource in working with young people. So consultations need to be as efficient as possible.

Some of the most practical ways to monitor progress and make the best use of the time available include:

- Constantly refer back to the objectives and ask 'Does this contribute to these objectives?' and if it does not then stop doing it
- Have a detailed timeline for the overall consultation and each section of the consultation
- Be well prepared in terms of the materials and resources needed
- Be realistic in terms of the amount of time that tasks take or one person can do in their allotted time
- Keep a consultation diary to record the process and tasks
- Start writing up as soon as possible
- Prioritise the tasks involved in each phase
- Anticipate potential problems during the planning stage.
- If possible build in some flexibility into the time framework for things that can not be predicted

It can be difficult to take the time to reflect on the consultation process when there is very little time available to actually do the consultation. Some of the points relating to time are covered in more detail here:

Drawing a timeline

One of the most useful things you can do during the planning stage is to draw out a large timeline for all sections of the consultation (planning, doing the consultation, report writing, feedback etc.). A timeline is just a large visual representation of time with the tasks for each phase clearly defined and written at the relevant points along the line. It includes the starting and finishing dates for each activity. You may need to make revisions to the timeline so leave enough space to make such alterations. It is a good idea to have it large and then it can be referred to during group meetings and discussions; a number of smaller timelines on A4 paper do not work as effectively.

Tips box

To time or not to time?

- Draw a timeline for all the stages of the consultation and update and revise it
- Draw the timeline out on a large piece of flipchart for everyone in the group to refer to
- When running a group or workshop during a consultation it can be useful to put a timeline of the session on the wall and refer to it as you move onto the next section. This helps the facilitator keep a close track of time and illustrates that the session has a time limit
- You may find it useful to have a timeline for the planning meeting and give for example 30 minutes to set the objectives etc. as this helps to structure the meeting and can help avoid lengthy discussions on one point. You can come back to issues that need more discussion
- You could consider asking someone in the group to be the 'time keeper'; their role is to make sure that the whole group runs to time. Doing this helps involve everyone in the 'timekeeping process', making it a shared responsibility. It also helps the facilitator because you are not always the one having to say, 'We have to move on now. We don't want to run out of time!' Instead you could say, 'How are we doing for time, Joe?'
- Have specific roles within the consultation and check how flexible and adaptable people can be
- Have realistic time estimates for each stage of the consultation
- Choose an appropriate method of consultation for the time available

Preparing materials

Make a resource list of all you will need for the sessions and activities. For example your list may include: flipchart paper, marker pens, tape, post-its, labels for names, Blu Tack, spare materials, expenses sheets, maps of the area and refreshments.

Tips box

Preparing materials

- Activities and resources used by the facilitator during the session or consultation should be carefully designed to suit everybody in the group
- Allow time to develop and pilot the materials which you plan to use, keep the exercises simple and clear and use a variety of different activities
- Think of everything, even the small things, as the resources you have planned for may not be there (e.g. do you need spare refreshments/paper/pens?) and for this reason it is worth taking a bag of spare materials

Using activities to plan

You can use an activity to structure the planning phase of the consultation. This can be useful too if a group of young people are planning a consultation exercise to consult with their peers. Two planning activities are included here and they can be adapted to suit the situation.

Activity 5: Consultation Cards

Aim : The aim of this activity is to discuss a range of issues that should be considered during a consultation and to prioritise these issues. These Consultation Cards have been made from comments people made during the research phase of the toolkit. Generally these people were workers with a range of experience in consultation exercises with children and young people.

Time : 1-1$^1/_2$ hours

Age : 14 upwards

You need : Photocopies of the cards
Timer and person timekeeping
Group of people (e.g. a planning team of between 5-10)
Sticky dots or scoring units (optional)

What you need to do

- Photocopy the Consultation Cards and cut along the dotted lines to make individual cards
- Make the aims and objectives of the consultation exercise clear to everyone in the group. If the consultation exercise is a partnership project describe the roles of the different organisations involved
- Shuffle and deal out all the cards to everyone in the group. The smaller the group the greater the number of cards each person will receive
- Set the timer for 5 minutes (depending on the size of the group you may want to increase the time slightly – do not increase it too much though)
- The person with the card marked No. 1 reads out their card and discusses how they think it is relevant to the consultation. Other people can also make comments and suggestions and the person with the card is responsible for writing the three main points or suggestions on the card.
- When the timer goes everyone must stop talking
- The timer is reset and the person with card No. 2 reads it out This continues until all the cards are discussed (i.e. if 10 cards are used this should take 50 minutes)
- Have a 10 minute debrief and discuss which areas may need further discussion and consideration

Notes

Additional cards could be added (at Stage 2) from people in the group relating to issues they feel are important to consider. When all cards are discussed they could also be ranked (e.g. in terms of which ones people feel are most important to take into consideration at that moment in time). Place all the cards on the table and give everyone five dots or scoring units and ask people to vote on the cards. Write the scores on each card and discuss in order of priority how all the issues will be addressed.

1 How big, how small?

Discuss the best way of working with the group in terms of timing and breaks so that you are well prepared, and decide if the group worker will be there during the session. Generally 6 to 10 is a reasonable size of group to work with. There again you may not be working with a group at all. In this situation it is still important to be clear about who you are consulting with (e.g. age group, background, gender etc.). Be clear about how you are going to record the numbers of people who have participated (e.g. tracking sheets) and be inclusive. How many people are you planning to consult with?

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

2 Building on local resources?

If we use local existing structures less resources are required to maintain and support the process. Those who know and work with young people could be supported to develop internal vehicles for consultation. It may also be appropriate to allow different institutions to develop other techniques and methods appropriate to the needs and interests of the young people involved. However to work in this way needs extremely clear communication channels to avoid people straying from the main objectives of the consultation. What are the local resources? What are the existing communication channels?

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

3 Consider the setting?

The setting of the consultation is important. A formal setting (e.g. a school) and an informal setting (e.g. youth club) present different issues to consider. Different types of preparation would be required for each. In a school environment the teacher needs to be aware of the objectives of the consultation and it may be possible to arrange for some preparatory information to be discussed in advance. In an informal situation it is more difficult to predict the size and age range of the group and therefore there needs to be more flexibility in activities planned. Remember that there may not be the materials or facilities you need at the venue and to take your own (paper, pens, refreshments etc.).

Bear in mind that concentration and interest levels of young people will vary enormously depending on the individuals, the group dynamic, and the environment in which the consultation takes place. For example, consider the difference between a double period, first thing at school, which is usually fairly disciplined and teacher led, and an evening youth group which is centred around activities and in which the young people expect to have more say and more freedom to come and go. While still remaining structured the sessions and materials need to be flexible enough to take these factors into account.

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

4 Being inclusive?

Try and consult with a range of children and young people – unless of course you are doing a very specific consultation. This means giving people who are often excluded a chance to participate and not involving everyone from one type of setting or environment (e.g. youth club). It also means including people who may not attend clubs. Be specific about who should be included. Remember that young people also have the right not to participate if that is what they choose. Can you list who should be included?

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

5 Timelines and deadlines?

Time is needed for planning, piloting, doing the consultation, feeding back, writing it up or recording the findings and transferring the information to the next stage. Allow enough time for each stage. Adequate time should be allowed for building contacts. When targeting minority groups who are difficult to reach but important to represent, allow plenty of time for planning and building up a level of trust. How much time do you need? How much time will each stage take?

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

6 Ongoing reviews, monitoring, feeding back and evaluating?

Two important aspects to any consultation are giving feedback to participants and evaluating the process to identify the things that worked well and the things you could have done differently. In this particular situation what methods of feeding back the finding will be the most appropriate? What is the preferred method of evaluating?

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

7 Linkages?

It is important to create linkages with groups, organisations and individuals as this can have practical benefits to the consultation. Think laterally about where and how these links can be made. It takes time to establish links; therefore it is useful to be clear about people's roles, especially if you are working in partnership on a consultation. Is this a partnership project? What are the roles of each organisation? If you are doing the consultation alone – are there any opportunities to make links or strengthen links?

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

8 Skills and resources?

There are a range of resources and skills that are needed in any consultation exercise and the cost of these should not be underestimated. In this case what are the main resources that you need? You may require training sessions for people involved in the process. If so, what are the priorities for this training? Who is it for? Who will do it? How long will it take?

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

9 Planning and piloting?

The planning and piloting of a consultation is very important. What are the main aspects that need to be planned? How do you anticipate piloting the consultation questions and are there any areas of support that would be useful? Good quality information and preparation material may be needed for schools or groups – what type of material would be the most appropriate in this case? You might wish to adapt exercises for use by young people with disabilities or learning difficulties. When doing this it is a good idea to talk to the group workers to get some ideas about the kind of activities the group enjoys and which work best. However do not deviate too much from the standard exercises as this could cause problems when comparing the findings.

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

10 Sustaining and supporting?

What are the main channels of communication through which ideas from the consultation can be brought into wider debate? How is the information to be transferred to policy makers at the local and/or national level? What support structures are needed to do this effectively? Linked to this children and young people's time and input needs to be valued – how can this best be done and shown in this consultation?

1 . . . . . .

2 . . . . . .

3 . . . . . .

Following the planning of the consultation it can be useful to anticipate some of the potential problems. This is most usefully done in a small group. It can be done in a number of ways (e.g. brainstorming, drawing spider diagrams). This activity uses a timeline to address possible problems.

Activity 6: Anticipating problems

Aim : To improve the planning process by anticipating problems in advance. It can also be a fun team activity and used with adults and/or young people during the planning process.

Time : 1 hour (depends on the nature of the consultation)

Age group : Any

You need : Paper or flipchart, pens, post-it notes

What you need to do

- Firstly draw out a line on a large piece of paper and label one end the start of the consultation and the other the end of the consultation. Mark on all the main stages e.g. planning, preparation, doing the consultation, giving feedback etc. Each stage can be broken down to give more detail about the tasks and activities involved.
- Take a number of blue post-its and each person should write anticipated problems for each stage of the consultation. Write one problem per post-it and stick them onto the timeline at the point where you anticipate the problem. Any general potential problems can just be placed at the top of the page.
- Everyone in the group reads out the post-its to make sure that all the points are understood and that similar points are placed together. Count how many different potential problems you have identified.
- Take a number of yellow post-its and ask people to think of any possible solutions or preventative measures for each of the 'problems'. Place the yellow post-its onto the timeline at the point when they are most appropriate. For example if one of the points on a blue post-it is *"we may not consult enough young people who have left school"* a yellow post-it may contain *"Build in some 'streetwork' and go to the places where young people of this age group hang out"*
- Once you have identified a number of possible solutions you can divide them up into those that can be developed and used to alter the planning stage and those that can be back-up plans if the problem does arise.

Checklist: Getting ready

- ✓ Have you written your objectives for the consultation?
- ✓ Are the objectives clear, specific and realistic?
- ✓ Do the methods, tools and techniques that you are planning to use allow you to achieve the objectives?
- ✓ How many children or young people are you aiming to consult with?
- ✓ What age group are you targeting?
- ✓ Are you targeting a specific group of young people?
- ✓ Have you decided how to access or recruit young people?
- ✓ Are you going to involve young researchers in the data collection stage?
- ✓ Have you decided on the approach method/s you are going to use?
- ✓ Do you have a rationale for the approach and method/s you are going to use?
- ✓ Have you drawn out a timeline for the consultation?
- ✓ Have you decided how the information is going to be recorded?
- ✓ Have you considered what the potential problems may be?
- ✓ Will the people you are consulting need any preparation material?
- ✓ Are you well prepared in terms of the resources needed?
- ✓ Have you planned how you are going to give feedback to the people who participate?
- ✓ How do you plan to present the information once the consultation has taken place?
- ✓ Have you drawn a detailed timeline for all stages of the consultation including dates of when you aim to finish each stage?
- ✓ Have you decided on the roles of each person involved in planning the consultation?

Further information

Gibson, A. and Clarke, G. (1995) Project-based Group Work Facilitator's Manual, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London

Pretty, J. N., Guijt, Thompson, J., Scoones, I. (1995) Participatory Learning and Action. A trainers guide. International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London

There are a number of different approaches to the process of consultation and the important thing to remember is to make sure that the approach and methods you are using allows you to achieve your objectives. The following diagram summarises the main approaches and methods that can be used. The advantages and disadvantages of each method and the process of selecting an appropriate method together with case study examples are also provided.

The following definitions are used

Approaches: Reflect the underlying philosophy of the consultation e.g. qualitative or quantitative

Methods: Specific ways of implementing the approach e.g. use of questionnaires for a quantitative approach or use of focus groups for a qualitative approach

Techniques: Possible ways of effecting the method e.g. mapping, brainstorming, and ranking

Tools: Physical objects that can be used during the interviews and/or group meetings e.g. Checklists, pictures, sketches and models

The main approaches

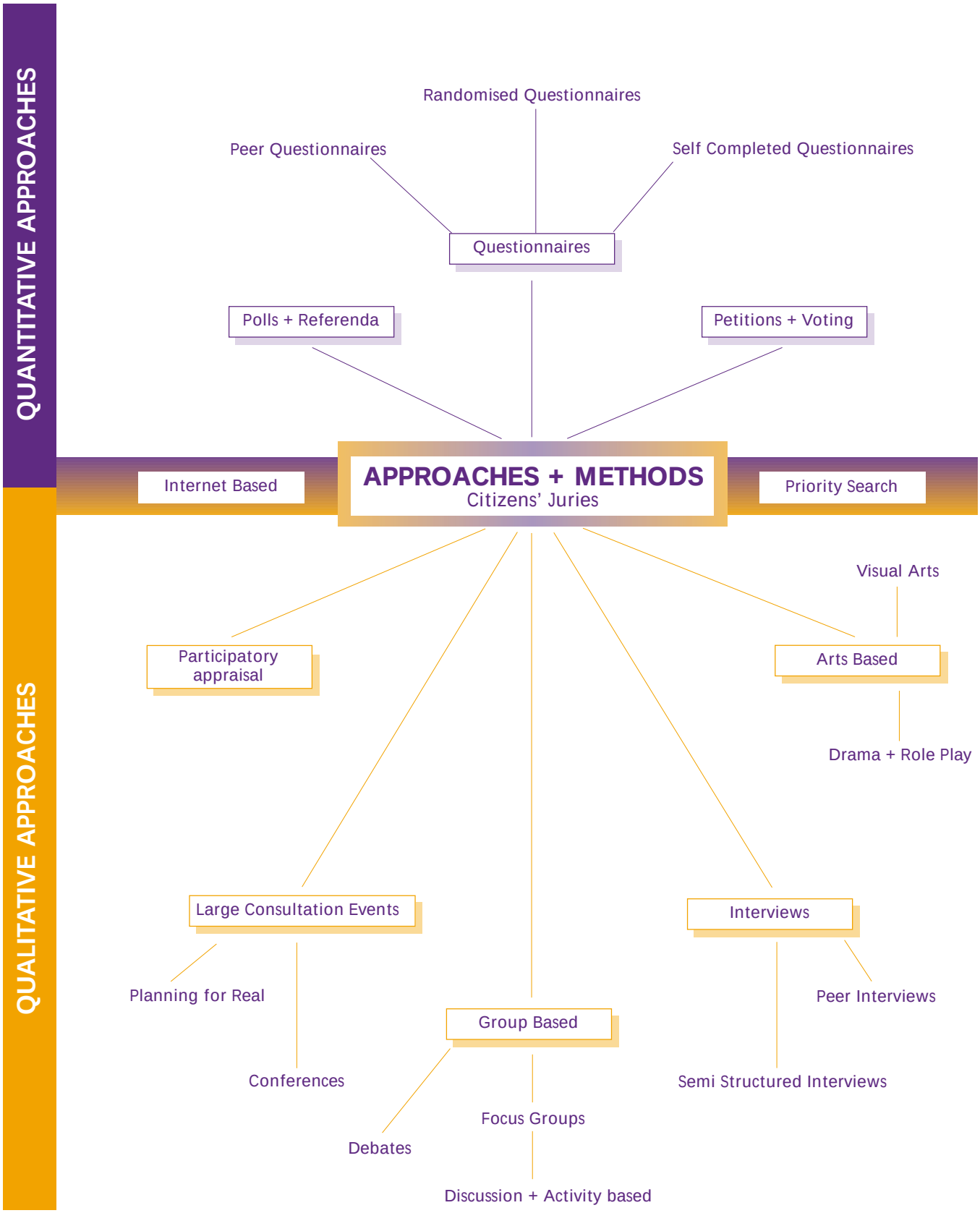
Generally approaches fall into two main categories: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative approach usually makes use of questionnaires to collect information that can be analysed and represented statistically from which it can be possible to draw conclusions about a wider population or make predictive statements. The other approach uses a wide variety of qualitative methods (e.g. semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participatory methods) and open questions to explore issues in depth through discussion or visual diagrams. Which approach is most suitable for your situation? The following table may help you to decide which approach to take when doing a consultation. You may want to use a combination of approaches.

Quantitative is most appropriate:	Qualitative is most appropriate
When a detailed numerical description is required	When meanings rather than a numerical description is required
When you can measure something and measurements are clearly defined and meaningful (e.g. like or dislike)	For exploratory work or when variables are unknown or their definitions are unclear
When there is no need to relate findings to the broader social or cultural setting, or this setting is sufficiently understood	For explanatory depth; when you want to relate particular aspects of behaviour to the wider context
When the subject area is very clearly defined	When the subject area is less clearly defined or unfamiliar
When repeatability of measurements is important (e.g. to measure changes in attitudes over time)	When flexibility of approach is needed to allow for the discovery of the unexpected, and in-depth investigation of particular topics
When generalisability of results and a statistical comparison across or between groups is desired (e.g. different age groups)	For studying selected issues, cases or events in depth and detail

Adapted from World Health Organisation (1996)

The main methods

This section will give guidance to people who are new to using consultation methods. It is best used in conjunction with the 'Techniques and Tools' chapter of the toolkit as the boundary between some methods and techniques is often blurred as there can be a degree of overlap between the different categories. The main methods are summarised here:



Case Study

Young people participate in primary care Greater Glasgow Health Board

Background

Greater Glasgow Health Board Health Promotion Department worked in partnership with two Local Healthcare Co-operatives (LHCCs), young people and community organisations to improve the participation of young people within the decision making processes of health services. The project has now been underway for one year.

Objectives

- To create a representative profile of the young people from the LHCC catchment area and to highlight the diversity of young people in the community and their different needs
- To develop a consultation exercise, facilitated by the working group, to explore young people's priorities and perspectives on their health and well being. To explore current barriers from, and encouragement for using existing services
- To address issues raised by the consultation
- To develop a model of participation where young people can have a real involvement in health care planning

Methods

A wide variety of methods were used to consult with young people and the planning group were very conscious of the need for speaking to young people in their own environments. Youth workers were important in this process as they have had the knowledge, skills and relationships with many 'groups' of young people.

- Information sessions

Information sessions with young people and workers, which was intended to raise awareness of the wide range of things that contribute to health and well-being, exploring not just the medical and lifestyle issues associated with health, but also the wider social determinants.

- Photography and art work

Young people were then given disposable cameras and asked to 'capture' things in their world that affected their health and well being. The resulting images were developed into 3 large collages, which captured the themes of the groups. What was particularly powerful here was the challenge to the primary care staff's perception of young people's health issues. In earlier sessions sex and drugs had been raised by workers as the main health issues, however the artwork clearly raised issues such as territoriality, difference, money and respect as priorities.

- Questionnaire

The school based health and lifestyles survey (600 pupils – cost approx. £3000) was chosen to give a quantitative picture and to complement the artwork. The results from this standard survey can be compared with national averages (Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire, Schools Health Education Unit, Exeter).

- Workshops

Consultation groups led by a youth worker and primary care worker are being run using a range of participatory tools and aim to develop action plans rather than just raise issues.

The next stage

Once the consultation work is completed the group will develop recommendations for the LHCC and health service. We will hold a seminar for the LHCC to review the recommendations and to develop plans for implementation. This will be held in a community health venue and will involve wider community representation. Young people who have been involved in the project will also be invited along to part of the seminar. This will include an art exhibition of the collage artwork. We will also hold a broader primary care seminar to tie this work into the evolving Public Involvement agenda and to consider the linkages between our work with young people and other excluded or disadvantaged groups. In addition we plan to develop support structures for improving youth access to health services throughout GGHB and participatory seminars will be used to consider the best way to do this (e.g. developing a pack, resources, training etc).

Advice for other people?

- Time scale – it will take longer than you think!
- Spend time at the start looking at the values of the different partners coming together to work on your consultation; this will help to avoid fundamental differences at a later stage.
- Partnership working is difficult and requires good inter-personal skills, motivation and patience
- If you don't have all the skills consider buying them in.

Further information:
Health Promotion Department, Greater Glasgow Health Board, Glasgow, 350 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G3 8YY
Tel: 0141-201-4915

Involving children and young people in the consultation methodology

There are many benefits in involving children and young people in the design, data collection, and analysis or dissemination phase of a consultation. Many of the advantages and issues to consider are similar to those when involving children and young people in research projects and these are covered elsewhere (Kirby,1999).

Involving children and young people in the consultation process
(Adapted from the Key Learning Points, Kirby, 1999)

Deciding to involve children and young people

- Young people may be involved in the design and data collection process of a consultation for three main reasons: to improve the consultation, to increase young people's participation in society, and to improve their own personal development. All three reasons need to be considered carefully.
- Quality controls are important to ensure a good quality consultation process.
- Young researchers can help in the accuracy of data collection from their peers by allowing them to be more relaxed. However, young interviewees do not always want to be interviewed by people from their own peer group, particularly when the subject is sensitive.
- Involving young people in the research involved in a consultation can be expensive and time consuming depending on how many young people are involved and which stages they are involved in and the level of support required.
- Consider whether you have access to young people who can take part in the consultation process and if you have the skills to support them.

How young people can participate

- Young people can take part in the consultation process in different ways and at different stages with varying degrees of control.
- Young people can be involved as young researchers by helping to influence the research design; by working in partnership groups with adults; by conducting the fieldwork or by analysing and writing-up the findings.
- Different groups of young people can be involved at different stages of the consultation.
- Young people can be involved in an advisory capacity, by joining an advisory group or by having their own 'reference' group.

Setting up the consultation

- Good communication is needed between all those involved in the consultation process to ensure that everyone is clear about the process and the stages of the work.
- Ensure that there is training available where necessary and a strong ongoing support network/system for the young people involved.
- There are advantages of working with established youth groups as people can work more closely as a team if they are already part of a group and it can save time in recruitment. There are also some disadvantages as it can exclude people who do not come along to youth groups from becoming involved.
- Young researchers can find consultations boring and therefore thought needs to be given to make it enjoyable and to maintain motivation and interest. It may be appropriate to involve young researchers in selected parts, rather than all, of the data collection.
- The roles of everyone involved in the project need to be clearly defined.
- Young researchers can be informed of the project's budget and they can also be involved in setting all or some of the budget.
- There are a number of ethical, practical and safety issues that need to be considered (e.g. confidentiality issues, working in pairs, equal opportunities etc.).
- Decide how feedback is going to be given to participants and the information is going to be presented to decision and policy makers and if young researchers will be involved in this process.

Doing the research

- Introduce what is meant by consultation
- Young researchers can be involved in setting the objectives for the consultation and selecting the methods. Often young people want to use questionnaires because they are more familiar with them; therefore you may want to encourage the use of other methods and discuss some the limitations of each method.
- Participatory methods, tools and techniques are a fun and appropriate way of doing consultations with young people. Some training will be needed.
- There are a number of ways that young researchers can record the data.
- Young researchers may be involved by deciding where to find young people to consult with (e.g. the places where young people hang out in the evenings).

Analysis and write-up

- Young people are often excluded from analysing consultation information.
- Young people are often not interested in analysis which is difficult or boring -therefore it may not be appropriate to include them in this stage or additional worker support may be needed.
- Consider ways of analysis and writing-up information other than reports (e.g. exhibitions, newsletters, leaflets, video). Young people can also help to produce workable recommendations and action plans.
- A decision needs to be made as to whose name goes on the report. It is important to recognise the young researchers and their contribution to the consultation

Feeding back and dissemination

- Young people can be involved in presenting information, comments and ideas back to decision makers and a variety of techniques can be used (e.g. video, leaflets, posters).
- Young people can be involved in giving feedback to participants in the project though a variety of methods (design and producing summary leaflets of the findings, preparing exhibitions, role-plays)
- Young people can be involved in an evaluation exercise about the consultation process and record what worked.

Questionnaires

"A structured collection of quantitative data through a series of questions asked to a large sample size"
World Health Organisation (1996)

" A big survey with a lot of questions where you tick boxes" Young person (aged 12)

The famous and sometimes infamous questionnaire is the key instrument for collecting information in social quantitative studies or consultations. Questionnaires are conducted either by professional interviewers, completed by the respondents themselves (individually or as a group) or children and young people can be involved in a peer survey process.

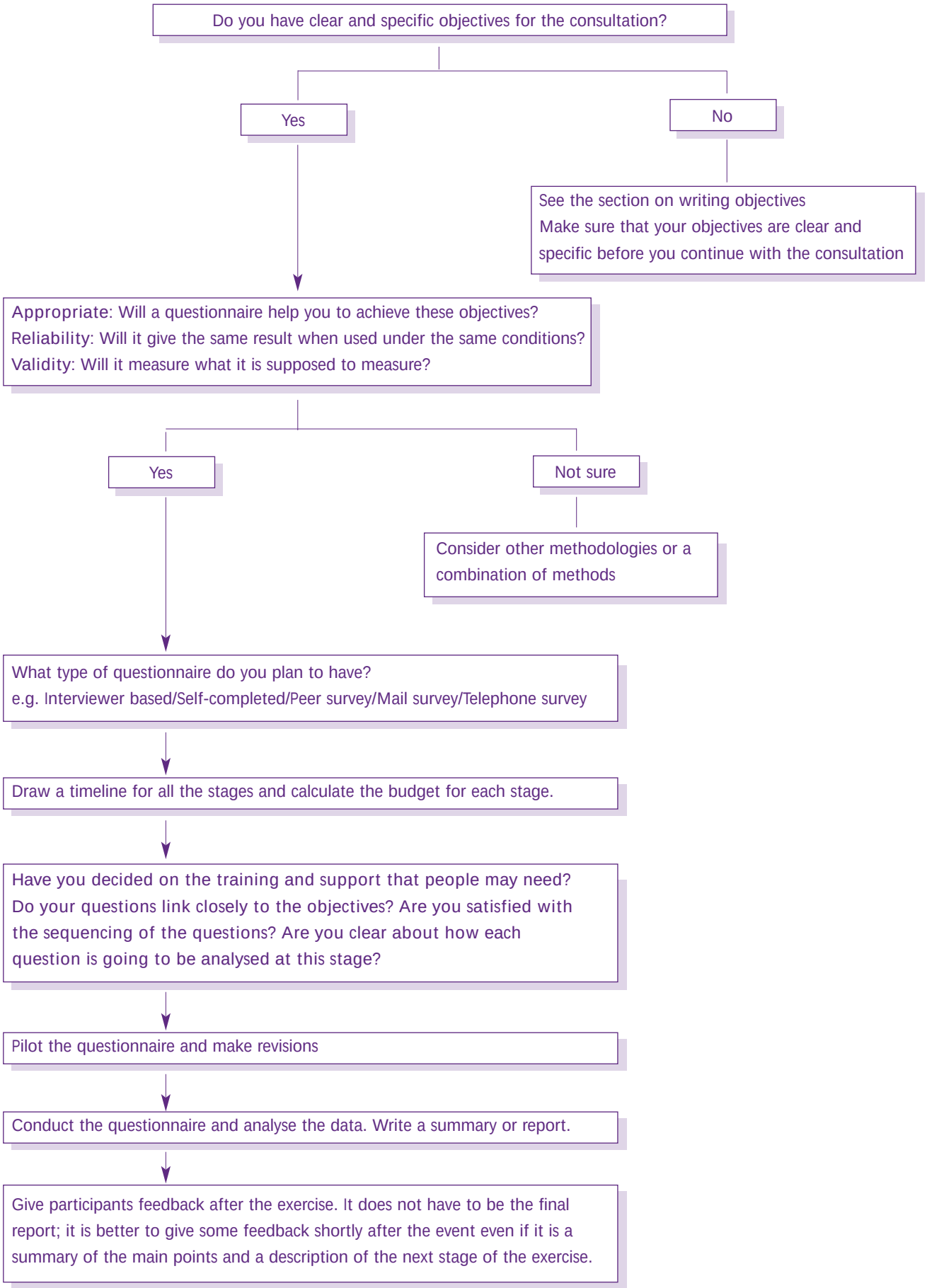
Types of questionnaires

- **Randomised questionnaires**
  Randomised surveys where a large number of people are asked to complete a questionnaire and respondents are selected at random from specific categories can provide valuable information that can be statistically analysed. They can be conducted in a number of ways including face-to-face questioning and telephone surveys. Quantitative data from questionnaires can be analysed and presented in a clear and understandable manner. The advantages of interview based surveys is that the interviewer can clarify the questions if necessary and the presence of the interviewer may encourage people to complete the survey. Large-scale surveys require substantial time and effort to carry out. The relevance of questionnaires depends again on your objectives – and remember it is easy to ask the wrong questions!

- **Self-completion questionnaires**
  These involve each of the respondents filling in the questionnaire themselves. This is often a useful method if the surveys are handed out at events or meetings (e.g. youth clubs) and can be collected in immediately after they have been completed. The disadvantage of most self-completed questionnaires, in particular those posted out to people, is that the response rate can be very low (generally less than 30%). The main advantage of this approach is that it can be possible to sample very large numbers of people at relatively low cost.

- **Peer questionnaires**
  Questionnaires can be designed, administered and analysed by children and young people to ask questions of their peer groups. These surveys can involve face-to-face interviewing, telephone interviewing or administering self-completion questionnaires. It is important that good support and training in the survey design is given. The main advantage is that young people may be more open with their own peer group. Peer questionnaires may also have lower cost, and spin-off benefits in confidence and experience amongst the children responsible for administering the survey. However, there is a greater chance of interviewer bias and complex issues of confidentiality may be raised.

Process of conducting a questionnaire



Resources

"Expect problems to arise that you have not predicted (e.g. school holidays, poor weather, computer difficulties) and build in some additional time for these when planning and budgeting" Worker

" Consider the time of year you are doing the actual questionnaire and do not plan to do it during peak holiday season" Worker

The time and resources needed depends on the type of questionnaire and the number of respondents required. It is therefore difficult to give you an exact guide to the resources needed. However, the following considerations should help when you are calculating a budget for such a consultation exercise. Make a list and calculate the estimated time and cost of each section. It is also advisable to make a note of the actual times and costs as this can be useful for future consultations as it will help you estimate the resources needed.

You can fill in a table like the following example. List all the sections of the survey and the time and costs of each section. You may also want to add the dates by which time each section is to be completed and include all the tasks involved (e.g. to inform the police if you are doing a community survey, to produce signed identification letters for the people doing the interviewing etc.).

Section	**Time** *(Estimated and actual)*	**Cost** *(Estimated and actual)*
Designing and writing the questionnaire		
Typesetting the questionnaire		
Piloting the questions (wording and sequence)		
Identifying interviewers		
Photocopying		
Training/briefing interviewers		
Conducting the survey		
Coding/data entry		
Data analysis		
Report writing		
Giving feedback		

As an example the following gives an estimate of the time budget for a survey involving 1000 respondents if you are using interviewers to record the answers (Robson, 1993). Self-completion questionnaires can be much quicker and cost less but they are only appropriate for certain situations (e.g. if you have a clearly identified group of people).

Time budget for a survey of about 1000 interviews

1 Initial design work (6 weeks)
2 Questionnaire construction, including pilot work and the design and printing of the final questionnaire (6 weeks)
3 Briefing the interviewers, following the fieldwork phase for say twenty interviewers, each covering fifty respondents (6 weeks)
4 Editing and coding can start at the same time as the fieldwork but allow for postage and sorting out problems (6 weeks)
5 Computer entry and editing (4 weeks). That is, a total of at least 6 months will be needed to get to the stage where analysis and interpretation can begin
6 Analysis and interpretation (4 weeks)
7 Production of a report based on the survey (4 weeks)

All questionnaires are different and this is based on an example and assumes that no problems will arise during the consultation phase of the survey. This example was based on a survey carried out by interviewers with a structured questionnaire. It is possible to do a large survey within a short time framework but you may need additional financial support.

Case study

Renfrewshire Youth Consultation

A survey of 537 young people aged between 12-18 years and an event for young people was organised through Renfrewshire Council in 1999 to inform the council's Children's Services Plan. The Council commissioned the Scottish Centre for Active Citizenship, a part of Community Learning Scotland (CLS), to work in partnership to develop the consultation. A Youth Consultation Team of young people and workers was established and a questionnaire was designed to look at what young people in Renfrewshire like to do, what their concerns are, what services they use, their views on community safety and if they would like to become involved in local decision making. The team surveyed young people in the schools, youth clubs and on the streets during April and May 1999.

The consultation event took place on the 23rd May 1999 in Paisley Town Hall and 150 young people attended. This day was organised by Community Learning Scotland and Impact Arts and a live DJ kept everyone up to date with information about the event including the workshops where young people discussed a range of topics and presented their ideas through a series of arts workshops during the afternoon. A local band Planet Fuse played at the end of the day.

Further information:
Renfrewshire Youth Consultation: Young People in Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire Council Consultation Report 1999

There are other ways of doing surveys and these include the self-administered postal questionnaire and telephone surveys.

The postal questionnaire

The main disadvantage with postal questionnaires is the low response rate and this can presents serious problems and considerations in terms of data reliability. The main points to consider are:

- You may have to send out a very large number to reach your target sample size
- The response you get may be biased (e.g. only those people interested in the topic or the few people who actually like filling in forms)

If you are still considering a postal consultation how can you secure a higher response rate? All the points already made about writing and conducting questionnaires are relevant but it is worth exploring ways to maximise the response rates to postal questionnaires in more detail. The following checklist list may help you (based on Robson, 1993). However be aware that even taking on board all the suggestions below the response rate is likely to be much lower than other types of questionnaires.

Factors that may help secure a higher response rate in a postal questionnaire

General points

- It should be kept as short as possible. Do not include extra questions because they are interesting - you need to know the answer to every question asked!
- Give very clear instructions as to how to fill in the survey
- Give a date when you would like all responses to be returned by. Make sure the details of where to return the survey to are on the questionnaire itself as well as on the envelope enclosed with survey
- Think about the sequencing of the questions. For example, ensure that the early questions do not imply that the questionnaire is not for them. Vary the types of questions used throughout to keep people's interest
- Where possible consider having a contact person who can collect and return some of the surveys (e.g. teacher, youth worker). Telephone them in advance to explain the aims and importance of the consultation.

Design and layout

- The appearance of the questionnaire is very important. It should look easy to read and fill in, clear instructions and with plenty of space for questions and answers. Consider having a coloured front cover (e.g. bright green) so it stands out in a pile of papers.

Initial mailing

Use good quality stationery and if possible address the letter to a named person or if sending to schools or youth clubs a named teacher, head teacher or youth worker. Enclose stamped addressed envelopes for the return of questionnaires.
If possible avoid mailing during peak summer holiday season and December.

Covering letter

The covering letter should include the aims and objectives of the survey and state the importance of their response. Also assure confidentiality and if you use a code for the survey explain what it is. Make sure that the covering letter is written for the age group and audience that you are sending it to. Give the names of all sponsoring organisations in the letter and on the letterhead. Consider pre-survey letters advising people of a forth-coming questionnaire; that can also help to increase the response rate.

Follow-up letter

This is generally the most effective tool in increasing the response. Emphasise the importance of their answers to the study. Never suggest that non-response is common. Send a further copy of the questionnaire and another stamped addressed envelope.

Further follow-ups

These are subject to the law of diminishing returns as you have to compare the time and costs involved with the potential advantages of the increase in response. Three reminders are commonly recommended and they can increase response rates by a third.

The telephone questionnaire

Telephone surveys are becoming increasingly common and they can be appropriate for some consultations. The main advantages of telephone surveys is that you can ask people questions over a wide geographical area in a relatively short time (e.g. young people from Orkney and Glasgow can be asked in the same evening). The issues to consider include: what is the best way of obtaining consent if needed? How will it affect the consultation methodology if not all people are on the telephone?

The web-based questionnaire

It is possible to write a web-based questionnaire where children and young people can complete and return it on line. There are examples of this in the section of the toolkit on using technology. The advantages are that the survey is potentially available to a wide range of people. However it is dependent on people having access to a computer and response rates are generally low although this may change in the future.

Types of questions

Question wording is one of the most important parts of questionnaire design and considerable attention should be paid to developing clear, useful and unambiguous questions. Use simple language and avoid jargon and leading questions.

A question that asks young people if they agree or disagree with the government's transport policy would be unsatisfactory without asking first if they know about the policy. For issues where there is doubt, ask a filter question to see if people are aware of the issue first and then ask the main question if people are aware of it.

Make the frame of reference clear: If you ask 'How often do you see your father?' establish this within a time framework – within the last week? last month? last year?

Personal wording asks respondents to indicate how they 'feel' about something, whereas the impersonal approach asks respondents to indicate how people feel about something. The type of wording used depends on the objectives and what you want to do with the answers. The impersonal approach does not provide you with a measure of someone's attitudes but the respondent's perception of other people's attitudes.

'How do you feel about the new Scottish Parliament?' compared with 'How do young people feel about the new Scottish Parliament?' are different questions.

There are different groups of questions. The main division is between open and closed questions and a further division is between personal and impersonal questions. Closed questions have a forced-choice where a number of alternative answers are provided and the respondent ticks boxes to answer. An open question is one where respondents formulate their own answers. Open questions are covered in detail in the qualitative section of the toolkit.

Closed questions

Usually questionnaires are based around a series of forced-choice questions and if well developed they are quicker to answer and easier to code and analyse. A lot of thought needs to be put into developing the alternative responses and checklists as the list should be exhaustive. This is done through careful pilot testing using less structured approaches to identify the range of possible responses and then in the questionnaire and by using of the 'other (please specify)' category to allow for unexpected answers.

It can sometimes be useful to have a 'don't know' response. The view is divided on including 'don't know' responses as it can also encourage a lower response rate for that question.

Vary the nature and format of the questions to keep people's interest when completing the survey.

Types of closed questions

There are a wide range of question formats that you can use in a survey. If you are consulting children and young people using a questionnaire then the best thing to do is to look through a range of 'tried and tested' questionnaires for ideas for the question formats (e.g. The Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire, Schools Health Education Unit, Exeter). The main types of questions are summarised below:

- **Likert-style formats or rating scales**
  This is a type of question that involved providing people with statements and then asking them how strongly they agree or disagree (or how important etc.). It is probably the most familiar of the types of questions. The format of the scale can be verbal, numerical or diagrammatic.

- **Semantic differential formats (social science jargon)**
  This format consists of choosing adjectives to represent two extremes of a continuum and asking respondents to mark along the line where they feel is appropriate.
  For example:
  How would you describe yourself?

Generous	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Not at all generous
Not confident	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Confident
Healthy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Not at all healthy
Happy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Unhappy

- **Checklists**
  This is a list of items and respondents are asked to circle which one is relevant to them.
  For example:
  What things do you talk to your mother about?
  (Circle all that apply)

sport	relationships	TV
school	feelings	hobbies
religion	health	politics
sex	books	Others (please specify)

- **Ranked formats**
  Respondents are asked to rank the importance of items of issues that are given. For example, people are given a list of 10 qualities that they think are important in defining a good quality of life (e.g. good health, friends, etc.) and they are asked to rank them from most to least important by placing a 1 next to the most important and 2 next to the second and so on down to 10 next to the least important. However, often long lists are too exhausting to rank and can produce meaningless results so it can be more appropriate to ask people to rank the top three.

- **Attitude choice questions**
  Instead of asking people to agree or disagree with a statement such as 'The government should provide financial grants to help students whose parents have a low income attend college or university' we could ask 'Some people think the government should provide financial grants to help students whose parents have a low income attend college or university. Others think the government should provide grants that should be paid back while others believe that there should be no government assistance at all. Which option do you favour?'
  [ ] Government give grants
  [ ] Government makes loans
  [ ] No government assistance
  [ ] Cannot choose

The following list gives some ideas of the type of questions to avoid when designing a questionnaire. If you are doing a peer survey it may be a useful list to photocopy to give to young people who are writing the questions.

Questionnaires: questions to avoid

- **Long questions** An interviewee may only remember part of the question and respond only to that part.
- **Double-barrelled or multiple questions** e.g. what do you feel about the situation of drug taking amongst young people with that of five years ago? The solution here is to break it down into a series of simple questions
- **Ambiguous questions** For example 'drug-taking' could be interpreted in many ways - after all coffee and aspirins are drugs therefore distinguish between different types of drug taking e.g. illegal drug taking, alcohol, underage drinking etc
- **Questions containing jargon** For example, 'Would you consider yourself as having a NIMBY attitude?' would not be appropriate.
- **Leading questions** Try to make sure that the respondent can give any answer without feeling they are giving the wrong answer. 'Do you oppose or favour severely cutting spending in the National Health Service' is an example of a leading question.
- **Biased questions** Provided that you are alert to the possibility of bias it is not too difficult to write unbiased questions. Also the interviewer must be neutral in the recording of the answers and should in seeking to be welcoming avoid appearing to share or welcome his or her views.
- **Too many open questions** A common mistake that is made by people who are not used to writing questionnaires is to include too many open questions. They encourage a lower response rate and too many can present analysis/coding difficulties. If you still want to ask a large number of open questions consider using a different method of consulting.
- **Negative questions** Negative questions which use 'not' can be difficult to understand – especially when asking people to indicate whether they agree or disagree. The following question could be confusing: Cannabis should not be decriminalised

  [ ] Agree [ ] Disagree

  Rewording to 'Cannabis use should remain illegal' avoids the confusion by using 'not'.

Sequencing questions

A good logical order of questions is important. Start with questions that people will enjoy answering (e.g. easily answered questions, factual questions, questions relevant to everyone filling in the survey). Go from easy to more difficult questions. Go from concrete to more abstract questions. Group questions into sections. Use a variety of formats. Finish with the demographic questions (e.g. age, where people live).

Questionnaire layout

"Look at the questionnaire and ask yourself: would I want to fill this in?" Worker

Make sure the layout is very clear and the typeset large enough to read clearly. Leave enough space in the questionnaire for the answers. Use filter questions to save respondents reading questions that are not relevant to them and guide people with boxes and arrows. Give clear instructions throughout the questionnaire for interviewers or respondents.

Piloting the questionnaire

Once the questionnaire has been developed it should be piloted. This means testing the questionnaire out with people of a similar age group for which it has been written and identifying any problems with the structure or wording of the questions. At this point check that the scaling of the questions is appropriate. There is no point including a scale if it is too broad. Check that the questionnaire flows and when people use the filter questions that the survey still flows. The timing of the questionnaire and respondents' interest and attention should also be observed. If interviewers are doing the questionnaire it is a good idea to learn from their experiences as well as from the respondents' answers to the questions. Ask them to record any questions that:

- made people feel uncomfortable
- seemed to repeat themselves
- areas where people wanted to say more
- sections of the questionnaire where people seemed to lose attention
- questions that were difficult for people to understand

When the time scale is short it is common for people to skip or give little time to the piloting stage. It is not worth taking this risk. If you pilot the questionnaire well you will notice the limitations or problems that would have arisen had you not piloted it.

The strengths and weaknesses of questionnaires

Strengths

- Relatively simple and straightforward
- Can generalise from the information
- Results can be statistically analysed
- Can make comparisons with other surveys
- Can be given to several people at the same time (e.g. to a whole class)
- Some can be answered anonymously and respondents may be more truthful
- Coding and analysing the responses is generally straightforward
- Possible to compare information over time
- Results can be presented visually in summary tables and graphs

Weaknesses

- Sample sizes need to be large for statistical analysis to be robust
- Takes time and effort to prepare and to test for reliability and validity
- Expensive to print the questionnaires
- Takes time to code and analyse the data.
- Providing immediate feedback on the results to people is difficult
- If there has been an error in the wording of a question the results can be inaccurate
- Dependency on a few interviewers can lead to bias
- Respondents may not report their beliefs or attitudes accurately
- When analysing the data potential for drawing erroneous conclusions
- Can be difficult to ask questions and understand about issues in great depth
- Respondents may not be able to express their opinions or seek clarification
- Respondents may not take the questionnaire seriously
- Many people just do not like filling in forms!

Checklist : Questionnaires

- ✓ Is the language simple? Make the questions specific and simple and ask only one question at a time
- ✓ Is the question ambiguous? Ensure that instructions, questions and answer options are clear and unambiguous
- ✓ Will the words have the same meaning for everyone?
- ✓ Is the respondent likely to have the necessary knowledge?
- ✓ Is the frame of reference clear (e.g. within the last week, year etc.)?
- ✓ Can the question be shortened? The shorter the question the less confusing
- ✓ Avoid questions with built-in value judgements and avoid jargon and unfamiliar terminology
- ✓ Can the questionnaire be shortened? Do not make the questionnaire too long as this increases the amount of time to collect and analyse the data, and will deter some people from responding
- ✓ Do you need to know the answer to each question? Ensure that you want to know the answer to each of the questions asked as many questionnaires include additional questions that are not necessary and remain unanalysed
- ✓ Are there too many open questions? If the questionnaire is for respondents to fill-in themselves (i.e. self-completed) do not have too many 'open' questions, as this will deter people from filling it in
- ✓ Use boxes for people to tick rather than numbers to circle as it increases the response rate slightly
- ✓ Pilot the survey by doing a practice run and correct any errors to make sure that the questions are relevant, focused and easily understood
- ✓ It may help to 'borrow' relevant questions from previous, successful surveys
- ✓ Consider the order that questions are asked in; easy questions should come first, with more difficult/sensitive questions kept for later
- ✓ Self-completed questionnaires need to be clearly and attractively laid-out with clear details of where to return them to (usually with a stamped addressed envelope)
- ✓ Remember to ask enough categorical questions that may be important in the data analysis (e.g. age, sex, postcode etc.)
- ✓ Consider how you will analyse the data before administering the questionnaire; closed questions, particularly those with 'either/or' or ranked responses, are the easiest to analyse statistically. You may consider using a specialist computer package, such as Phoenix, to help write and analyse the questionnaire

Further information: Questionnaires

de Vaus, D. A. (1996) Surveys in Social Research, UCL Press, London
A text covering most aspects of survey design, data collection, data analysis and ethics in questionnaire based research

Robson, C. (1993) Real World Research A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers Blackwell publishers, Oxford
A very readable coverage of planning, designing and conducting practical research and consultations

Hoinville, G., Jowell, R. and Associates (1985) Survey Research Practice, London
A detailed text on the practical aspects of questionnaire design and execution based on the experiences of Social and Community Planning Research, an independent institute for carrying out social survey research

SphinxSurvey, Published by Scolari at Sage Publications, 6 Bonhill Street, London, EC2A 4PU or see website http://www.scolari.co.uk

Young people's polls, petitions and referenda

Polls, petitions and referenda can be useful effectively for consultations with children and young people. The results are amenable to statistical analysis and can be summarised in the form of graphs and percentages.

Referenda

Referenda can be used to find out opinions on issues affecting children and young people. A well-structured referendum should also be combined with detailed debate and provision of good quality and detailed information in advance. For example this method could be used in a school setting. It is essential to the method that the wording of the referendum question is unambiguous and neutral.

Deliberative opinion polls

Deliberative opinion polls can be used effectively to consult with children and young people. They are opinion polls after information has been provided about the issue (e.g. policy document) or a group hearing has taken place. Therefore the participants are more informed before they make choices. They involve the use of asking questions, discussion and surveys. The numbers of participants can range from 100-300 and the event can take place over a day, a series of meetings or a week.

Typically participants:

- fill in a questionnaire about the issue of policy being discussed
- listen to talks and read discussion material about the arguments and different opinions
- Ask questions to the speakers
- In groups they discuss the issues and the arguments put forward
- Fill in the same questionnaire again to see if and/or how opinions have changed.

The strengths and weaknesses of polls, petitions and referenda

Strengths

- If the preparation material and presentations are of good quality children and young people can make an informed choice
- Can compare opinions, views and attitudes over time
- Views and attitudes are straightforward to summarise and can be presented graphically and analysed statistically
- Promotes democratic processes of decision making
- Outcomes or results are easy to record and summarise for policy makers
- In a school setting information can be provided in advance and meeting take place on a regular basis
- Possible to conduct by post

Weaknesses

- Opinions can be swayed (can be an advantage as well)
- Relies heavily on the quality and detail of the preparation material
- Not possible to give all the information to participants within the time framework
- Can be expensive (e.g. preparing of questionnaires, speakers' fees and expenses)
- If limited to yes/no issues there can be difficulty interpreting 'don't know' votes
- Not always representative
- Can be expensive (e.g. postal administration if ballot forms used)

Further information: Polls, petitions and referenda

Alderson, S. (1975) Yea or Nay? Referenda in the United Kingdom, Cassell
Fishkin, J. (1991) Democracy and Deliberation, Yale University Press

Citizens' Juries

Here a representative group of children and/or young people meet like a court jury to discuss an issue over a period of time. The jurors hear evidence from professionals and witnesses on the topic and ask questions. They then deliberate and discuss together their recommendations and decisions before presenting them to the court. The jury usually is based on 16-20 participants. There is no judge but a facilitator guides the discussion and witnesses are selected to give an overview of the issue at the beginning of the 'case'. Written material can also be submitted and presented. The final outcomes are not binding.

Citizens' juries and young peoples' juries are useful for policy considerations. Issues that have been covered using this method of consultation include; ways to reduce drug problems, community safety, and city centre redevelopment and community development projects.

The strengths and weaknesses of citizens' juries

Strengths

- Provides an opportunity for structured and focused in-depth discussion on an issue or policy
- Can help to identify recommendations and solutions to particular problems
- Can provide a wide range of informed views on a topic
- The process can be clearly recorded through detailed note-taking and/or video and audio-tape
- Good for problem-solving and consensus-building when options are well-defined

Weaknesses

- Very expensive and time consuming
- Relies on a number of people to give 'evidence' or informed summaries of a policy (i.e. not suitable to use during peak holiday seasons)
- Only a small number of children and young people can be involved
- Jurors do not always reach a unanimous view
- Transcribing audio and editing videotapes is very time consuming

Further information: Citizens' Juries

Hall, D. and Stewart. J. (1996) Citizens' Juries in Local Government, Local Government Management Board

Lewisham Council has produced an information pack about setting up citizens' juries and includes samples of materials and a video (Contact telephone no. 0208-695-6000 (main switch board) 0208-314-6707 (Policy and Partnership)

Qualitative Approaches

"Do not underestimate the time involved in a lot of qualitative consultation work" Worker

There are a number of qualitative methods that can be used within consultations. The most well known, and well used, are interviews and focus groups. Others, to name but a few, include participatory work, large events and workshops, arts and drama-based methods. A qualitative approach to consultation allows access to detailed and in-depth information and insights that may not be found or understood by using a structured questionnaire. It is however not an easy option (as sometimes perceived).

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for exploring issues in-depth. The interviewer uses a schedule of questions, which allows the flexibility of pursuing some areas in greater detail. Usually these interviews are recorded by written notes, or are audiotaped and transcribed.

Skill is needed on behalf of the interviewer and therefore careful and quality training in interview techniques is important if inexperienced interviewers will be involved. Care and selectivity is needed when choosing people to interview and if you are looking for a range of views and opinions do not recruit people to interview from one source (e.g. a list of contacts given to you by one youth worker). You can choose to do one off interviews or a series of interviews with the same people.

Open questions

Open questions provide no restrictions on the content of the reply (e.g. How do you like to spend the evenings? What are your views on underage drinking?). They are used within interviews (individual and group) to explore issues and gain a greater understanding of people's priorities and perceptions.

Prompts and probes

A probe is a way of guiding the interviewer thus allowing them to expand on a point that they have made. There are straightforward probes (e.g. Anything more? Or could you expand on that point a little?) together with more subtle types of probes (e.g. a period of silence, paraphrasing what the interviewee has said to allow them to add further details, or an encouraging 'mmhmmm').

Prompts however, suggest to the interviewee the range or set of possible answers that the interviewer may expect. The list may be read out or form a prompt card (e.g. a list of named alcoholic drinks for a question on drinking habits). All prompts must be used in a consistent manner between different interviewers.

It is important to include adequate training on the use of prompts and probes for the people doing the interviewing to help to standardise the interview process.

Interview schedules

Interview schedules are simple guidelines for the interviewer and they can vary in their detail depending on how structured the interview is. Such a schedule for a semi-structured interview may include:

- Introductory comments
- List of topic headings and key questions to ask under each heading
- A set of possible prompts
- Closing comments

Pilot interviews

As with questionnaires it is also important to pilot the interviews to identify any difficult questions, problems in sequencing of questions, areas of repetition etc. Interviewers can be involved in this process by giving feedback on areas of difficulty when asking the questions. It can also be useful for interviewers to interview each other during a training exercise and this can form the early stages of the piloting phase.

Recording information

Decide on how you are going to record the information from the interview and use the same method for all interviews. See the recording section of the toolkit for the advantages and disadvantages of these methods. Make sure all interviewers are familiar with the recording system that you plan to use and if organising a training or briefing day for interviewers include a section on recording.

Analysing information

Material from interviews can be analysed through the lengthy process of transcribing audiotapes (this can be done fully or partially) and then coding similar comments with a code or symbol so that you can group similar responses together. This can be done in a number of ways:

- by hand using index cards and storing similar quotes and comments together under headings (e.g. all comments relating to crime, all comments relating to things people like about the community etc.)
- using a word processor and cutting-and-pasting coded parts of the transcript to make files or documents covering similar topics or issues
- using specialised computer software (e.g. The Ethnograph) to help you code and group qualitative information. Unless you are doing a long term and very large consultation this method of analysis is not recommended as the software is expensive and time consuming to get to grips with. It can end up taking you more time.

Make sure however that you also keep a copy of the transcripts before the coding process (i.e. 'raw data') as a backup or in case you, or someone else, wants to return to the original material at a later date.

Giving feedback

It can be a long time after the interviews that participants receive feedback from interviews and it can be difficult to give feedback in the form of a short summary. Consider what type of feedback people would like and this question could always be asked at the interview stage. For example, a list of the main points raised during interviews together with the plans for the next stage of the consultation or where you are up to in the process may be sufficient until the full report or document from the interviews is available (a copy could be placed in the school or local library).

The strengths and weaknesses of interviews

Strengths

- Complicated or sensitive issues can often be explored.
- Can be very flexible
- Can be used to complement a quantitative approach
- Peer interviewing can be very effective
- Possibility of modifying the line of enquiry to follow up interesting responses
- Can allow people to give private thoughts that may not be shared in a group
- Can provide rich and illuminating material in the form of quotations
- Can be done face-to-face or over the telephone

Weaknesses

- Requires skilled interviewers or training in interview skills
- Only a limited number of people can participate
- Can be expensive (e.g. travel costs)
- If the interviewer is less experienced unstructured data can be collected
- Bias can develop because people may give the answers they think you want to hear or interviewers may lead the interviewee (intentionally or unintentionally)
- Not straightforward to analyse and lack of standardisation can make comparing interviews complex
- Time-consuming
- Involves a lot of skill on behalf of interviewers and careful preparation
- Audiotapes take time to transcribe and this can be expensive
- It can take a long time to give people feedback

Checklist: Interviews

- ✓ Listen more than you speak
- ✓ Dress appropriately
- ✓ Be friendly and approachable
- ✓ Make sure you are familiar with the interview schedule
- ✓ Use the wording in the interview schedule and keep to the sequence
- ✓ Record answers exactly if you are not using a tape recorder (do not make cosmetic adjustments or change the wording)
- ✓ Be familiar with the recording equipment
- ✓ Put questions in a straightforward, clear and non-threatening manner
- ✓ Use suitable prompts to guide people and explore issues in more depth
- ✓ Vary your voice and facial expressions
- ✓ Do not agree or disagree with what the interviewee is discussing. It is your job to remain neutral
- ✓ Sequence the questions so they flow smoothly
- ✓ Start the interview with interesting and easy questions to answer. Include the more complex questions during the middle of the interview and end the interview with straightforward and positive questions
- ✓ Avoid long or leading questions
- ✓ Enjoy the interview

Further information: Interviews

Dunne, S. (1995) Interviewing techniques for writers and researchers, A & C Black, London
A short and accessible jargon-free book about interviewing. The book covers types of interviews, ways of recording, preparation before the interview, conducting the interview and transcribing and writing up.

Robson, C. (1993) Real World Research, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford

The Ethnograph Published by Scolari at Sage Publications, 6 Bonhill Street, London, EC2A 4PU or see website http://www.scolari.co.uk

Focus groups

"A semi-structured group interviewing technique which relies on the discussion of participants" Kruegar (1994)

"It's a good discussion that is interesting and fun"
"It's a group with a focus"
"It's a posh term for a meeting"
(From interviews with young people, aged 14)

How would you define a focus group? What are the main elements of a good focus group? What should you avoid when planning and conducting a focus group? What are the advantages and limitations of the method? These are some of the main questions addressed here. This is not a definitive guide to the focus group but a practical introduction to organising, facilitating and recording a focus group for people considering using this method in a consultation exercise with children and young people. If you want to explore the method in more depth take a look at Kruegar (1994) or Morgan and Kruegar, 1998).

The main elements

Focus groups bring together small groups of people (8-10) to discuss and explore issues in a structured and detailed way. Generally they are run by facilitators who have an interview schedule with the topics and issues to be discussed. The discussions are usually audio taped and recorded in note form. Sometimes it can also be useful to video record the meeting. The questions asked are generally open-ended; the time framework usually between 90-120 minutes.

Focus groups

- are often used when insights, perceptions, and explanations are more important than numbers and proportions
- can be made more participatory by using a variety of different techniques and activities (e.g. icebreakers, ranking and mapping exercises)
- differ from individual interviews in that the participants can interact with each other and ask each other questions and modify each other's responses

Focus groups can be used alone or be combined with quantitative methods. For example, they can precede quantitative procedures to help understand the language and vocabulary used and discover the thinking patterns of the audience. They can also be used at the same time as surveys where two or more methods are used to address the same questions to confirm findings and obtain breadth and depth of information. In addition, focus groups can provide clues as to specific issues that arose during the quantitative phase or be used following a questionnaire to provide information on the meaning and interpretation of the results or suggest action strategies for problems addressed in the questionnaire.

Recruitment

Recruitment is an essential part of the focus group methodology and it can be one of the most time consuming parts. There are a number of different ways that people can be recruited including asking key people in the community who they could recommend, approaching groups and organisations for their help and advice, standing on the street asking people, going through the school or local college etc. Decide on the range of people you intend to invite (e.g. age groups, sex, and locality) and do not recruit people from only one source (e.g. through community education, through youth clubs), as you are less likely to find a range of views and experiences.

There are advantages and disadvantages associated with having either mixed groups or what are called homogeneous groups. For example, you may want separate age groups (e.g. a focus group with 10-12 year olds and one with 13-15 year olds) as people of a different age may feel more comfortable and discuss different issues more openly with other people of their own age. Also consider that it may not always be the best way to organise the groups by having mixed sexes. It will depend on your objectives but in consultations about sexual health it has worked better having separate groups of girls and boys. However in this situation you could always have a combination of groups (i.e. single sex and mixed sex groups).

Consider the expenses that may be needed for people to attend the focus group (e.g. travel, childcare) and possibly write out expenses forms to give out at the end of the focus group.

Questioning

"Much of the success of the focus group depends on the quality of the questions. Quality questions require forethought and planning. Successful focus groups begin with well-thought-out questions that are appropriately sequenced."
(Krueger, 1994)

Open questions are used within focus groups and the questions need to be clear and well sequenced. See the section on questioning in the interviewing part of the toolkit as most of the same points apply to focus groups.

Methods of recording

The most common method of recording is audiotapes combined with note-taking. There are other recording methods that can be used (e.g. video) or participatory techniques and activities could form a part of the focus group session where participants are involved in doing their own recording. For more information see the recording and techniques and tools section of the toolkit.

An example: Focus group topic guide for young people

(adapted from Krueger 1994, p72)

- Introduction
  Your name and things you enjoy doing
- Community Concerns
  - Most serious problems facing families and teenagers?
  - How does the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs compare?
  - In your community, what is acceptable use of alcohol?
    By adults
    By young people (under 18)
    If there is a difference, why?
- Alcohol Use
  - When and where do teenagers drink?
  - How is alcohol is obtained?
  - Is under-age drinking a problem in this area?
  - (If a problem) What are the main problems associated with under-age drinking?
- Prevention Strategies
  - What can parents do?
  - What can young people do?
  - Who influences teenagers about alcohol and drugs?
- Activity
  Ranking the prevention strategies and voting on the most effective
- Summary and conclusions
  - Have we missed anything?
  - What advice do you have?
  - Thank people for coming and explain about what will happen next

The strengths and weaknesses of focus groups

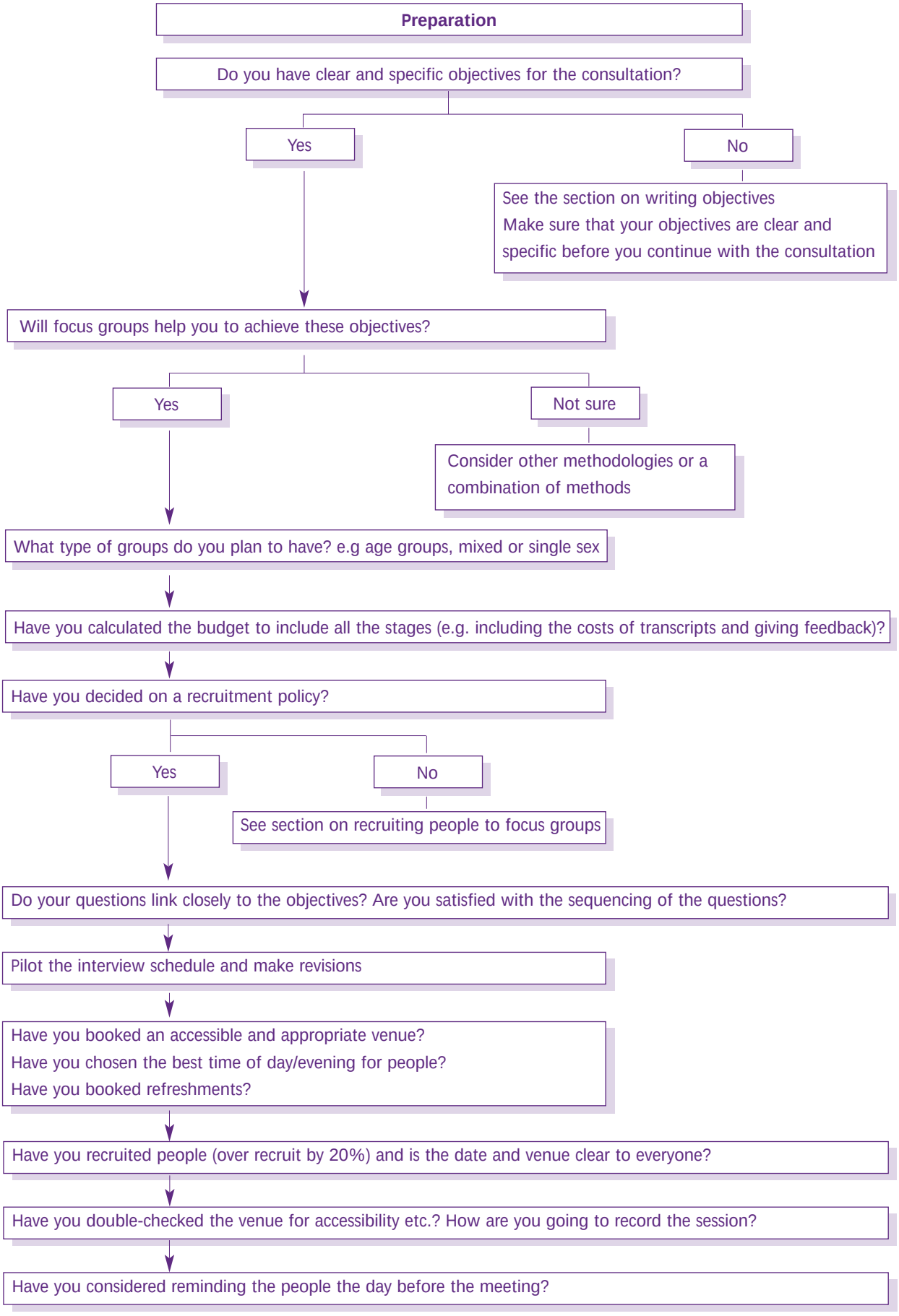
Strengths

- Good for exploring issues in depth
- Relatively low cost and potentially speedy results
- Can be used alone or combined with other methods
- The group can meet on more than one occasion
- Sensitive and personal issues can often be discussed
- Captures data in a dynamic group environment in the form of quotations
- Can introduce participatory tools (e.g. mapping) as well as having a discussion
- Relatively flexible

Weaknesses

- Only a relatively small number of people can participate
- Cannot generalise about other people's views from the results
- The recruitment process is time consuming
- Audiotapes are expensive to transcribe
- Certain types of people are more likely to participate (e.g. more confident people)
- Provides no information about the frequency or distribution of attitudes
- Can be difficult to conduct and require skilled facilitators
- Participants can influence each other's ideas (which could also be an advantage)
- Can sometimes be a difficult environment for people to discuss sensitive issues

Conducting a focus group



On the day!

Have you checked the venue and any equipment that is provided?
Have you double-checked the tape recording equipment?
Have you spare resources including tea/coffee/milk/juice?

↓

Have you made the aims and objectives of the focus group clear? Consider putting them up on the wall.
Have you asked if it is all right to audiotape and discussed confidentiality?
Do you have your interview schedule and timeline for the session?
Do you need name labels for people attending?

↓

Have you thanked everyone for coming and explained that they will receive feedback?

↓

Have you made a note of people's contact details?
Have you clearly labelled all audiotapes and flipcharts (and taped down post-its if using them)?

Follow-up

Have you given feedback after the exercise (it does not have to be the final report; it is better to give some feedback shortly after the event even if it a summary of the main points and a description of the next stage of the exercise)?

↓

Have you made arrangements for the transcription?
Do you have a time framework and structure for the written report?

↓

Have you decided on the most effective way of transferring the information and ideas to policy makers?

↓

Have you reflected on the process and made notes on what you felt worked well and what you would do differently if you were doing another consultation exercise?

Our lives - the Right's of the Child

"I think there are a lot of people in the local community who see a group of school kids and go; 'Oh no .. here's trouble!' especially from our school. But we're not like that and maybe if there was more consultation, maybe they might appreciate that we're not about to rob them or beat them up" Young person quoted in Our Lives (1999)

The 'Our Lives' project was commissioned by the then Scottish Office to consult young people in Scotland about their views in relation to children's rights and was carried out by Save the Children between September and November 1998. Forty-three groups of children and young people (326 in total) between 12-18 years of age were consulted. Children and young people participated from twenty local authority areas and came from schools and youth groups from urban and rural areas. Facilitators audio taped the sessions and filled out data recording forms, giving details about the group, the exercises and the session as a whole.

The consultation was carried out using a focus group methodology with a range of participatory activities, adapted according to the age and setting of the group. Groups were invited to discuss one of the five themes – education, family life, health, participation and protection from harm. Icebreakers, a brainstorming exercise, 'quickfire' round of voting (see techniques and tools section), questionnaires and a graffiti wall were used. In addition, a conference was held in Edinburgh for young people on the 29th January 1999 and there was the opportunity for young people to discuss the outcomes of the consultation with Sam Galbraith the Scottish Office Minister for Children's Issues. Eighty young people attended and it gave young people an opportunity to have their say and learn more about young people's rights.

A report was written and a feedback leaflet for participants summarising the main points of the consultation was designed, produced and distributed. The findings were included in Scotland's contribution to the second UK government report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Our Lives Consultation marks the first nationwide consultation with young people on children's rights in Scotland and so it has important implications for the UN Convention and the future reporting process.

Further information: Ritchie, A. (1999) Our Lives consultation final report published by Save the Children

Checklist: Focus groups

- ✓ Prepare well and make the session relaxed and interesting
- ✓ Consider telephoning people the evening before to check that they are coming and put anyone at ease who may be nervous (this has the greatest impact on attendance especially if it is personal and informal)
- ✓ Consider using icebreakers at the start of each session (see techniques and tools section)
- ✓ Check the venue in advance and make sure the layout of the room is appropriate before people arrive
- ✓ Check that there is disability access to the venue
- ✓ Make sure the timing of the group is appropriate (e.g. not during school hours if for children of school age)
- ✓ Work out a timeline for the activities and group work and allow time for breaks and refreshment
- ✓ Give enough time so that exercises do not need to be rushed and avoid spending too long on one activity or question so that people do not lose their concentration
- ✓ Vary the size of the groups if doing a number of group work activities and have different mixes of people in the groups
- ✓ Be flexible but keep the focus group well structured
- ✓ Include different exercises to keep the group interested and if you feel the group is losing interest consider reordering the activities
- ✓ Explain the aims of the session at the beginning and also explain the aims of each individual exercise before each exercise is done
- ✓ Be sure that the exercises are appropriate for the age group and experience of the group and consider adapting where necessary – have appropriate adaptations (e.g. making the exercises appropriate for older and younger groups already thought out and prepared for in advance)
- ✓ Take a bag of spare resources – just in case
- ✓ If audiotaping use the best quality microphone that you can afford. Some are designed to pick up group-based discussions. They are not cheap but worth it as they make the task of transcribing easier and less time consuming
- ✓ Always test the recording equipment before you start recording. Make sure the microphone is turned on. It sounds basic but it is all too easy to have an excellent group discussion and discover afterwards that the microphone was not turned on or the battery had exhausted and nothing has been recorded
- ✓ Decide in advance the arrangements/levels for expenses and have expense forms prepared (e.g. travel, possible childcare costs etc.)
- ✓ Fully label all flipchart sheets, stick down post-its (if using them), label and date audiotapes at the end of each session. It is also useful to record the date and session title at the start of each audiotape.
- ✓ Remember to take full contact details (you will need them to send people feedback)
- ✓ In some situations consider evaluating the exercises to assess their effectiveness and gather feedback

Further information: Focus groups

Morgan D. L. and Krueger R. A. (1998) The Focus Group Kit, Sage Publications Ltd., London

An extensive and in depth coverage of the focus group methodology in a series of six volumes in a boxed set. These volumes include: The Focus Group Guidebook, Planning Focus Groups, Developing Questions for Focus Groups, Moderating Focus Groups, Involving Community Members in Focus Groups and Analysing and Reporting Focus Group Results

Krueger, R. A. (1994) Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research. Sage Publications Ltd., London

A detailed yet straightforward and practical guide to all the main elements of a focus group written in an accessible and easy to read format

Hudelson, P. M. (1996) Qualitative research for health programmes, World Health Organisation, Geneva

An overview of the advantages and limitations of qualitative methods in the health field

Participatory Appraisal (PA)

" I only went to be nosy. I just went to see what was going on and before I knew what had happened I was in the thick of it. I went Friday, Saturday, went back Sunday for an hour or two and then on Monday night as well, I thought it was brilliant" Participant, quoted in Participation Works! (1999)

"It was fun!" Young person who participated in a PA consultation

Participatory appraisal (PA) is a family of methods, techniques and tools used to help people share ideas, analyse information, plan and act together (Chambers, 1994). The philosophy which generates and fuels PA aims to involve people in a 'participatory process' which is both empowering and enjoyable, as well as being a reliable way of gathering and sharing information. It uses a variety of visual techniques (e.g. mapping, venn diagrams, timelines) to explore ideas and issues in a structured way. These participatory techniques and tools are an excellent way of involving a wide cross section of people of all age ranges. They rely on good facilitation and careful planning.

PA has its origins in rural development theory of the late 1980s. In part, it is a response to the widespread use of questionnaires as a way of finding out and analysing information as it aims to overcome problems that are inherent in a quantitative approach to consultation. It therefore has many advantages and provides an excellent framework within which extensive consultations can be done. It also avoids the limitations of consulting a small number of people often necessary with the focus group methodology. Saying this however, it does have a set of limitations all of its own!

Many of the techniques may be familiar and you may be saying, "I've been doing that for years!" PA is a term that draws a number of techniques and tools together under a guiding philosophical umbrella to giving them a structural framework and additional strength.

There is a large PA guidebook published in India. It is a many-paged document that looks like a 'Bible' for participatory approaches and methods. The words 'The Complete Guide to Participatory Appraisal' are embossed in gold lettering on its cover. You open this cover and on the first page in large print it says, "Use your own best judgement" and all the following pages of the book are left blank! So let this be your guide to the process. Use the toolkit to help you but above all use your own best judgement. Many of the PA tools are included in the techniques and tools section of the toolkit (mapping, timelines, venn diagrams etc.). PA is chiefly about generating a participatory environment and good facilitation and the right attitude and philosophy are essential.

Case Study

Pathfinders

"There's nothing to do here you have to go to Burntisland for a date"

"There are not many services and things for young people to do in Glenrothes so your giro lasts a long time"

Young people consulted during the two day event

Background

Pathfinders is part of the Scottish Executive's 'working for communities' programme to promote social inclusion. Pathfinders will run until the end of March 2002. Glenrothes Pathfinder, one of five pilot initiatives in Fife, decided to focus on the issues facing 16 - 25 year olds who are socially excluded in Glenrothes and the surrounding villages. The Pathfinder Steering Group is made up of representatives from various Council Services, Health Services, the Voluntary and Private Sectors as well as local community representatives.

Pathfinders is working in partnership with the Local Steering Group looking at new ways of delivering existing services. Where possible pilot projects will be developed which involve linking services to meet the needs of the young people using them. Pathfinder is involving local young people in identifying the issues that affect them and the ways in which these can be addressed.

Method

The consultation was done in May 2000 using participatory appraisal methods whereby young people were consulted in their own environments and H-forms were used to allow people to share their ideas. An exhibition of all the ideas and suggestions took place in the shopping centre on the second day.

In order to agree priorities for Pathfinders it was necessary to look at what the issues were for young people locally rather than relying on perceived needs. Scottish Participatory Initiatives (SPI) trained local staff and volunteers in participatory methods. This was followed by two days out-and-about in Glenrothes speaking to young people on their terms together with facilitators from SPI. An H-Form was used to collect general ideas on what young people thought of the services and facilities for them in Glenrothes. The reverse side of the form gave young people the opportunity to comment on specific services. The emphasis was on young people giving their own views in their own words.

What worked well?

- A large number of young people were consulted (186 aged between 16-25 over a 2-day period)
- Likes, dislikes and ideas about changes in the services were collected from a wide cross section of young people
- There was the opportunity to collect contact details of people who wanted to be involved further
- Professional facilitators worked in partnership with newly trained facilitators
- The method could be used with both groups and individuals and its flexibility allows it to happen anywhere
- Young people seem to enjoy the method and their views and ideas were recorded in their own words

What did not work as well?

- The consultation was restricted to two days
- There was some bias towards one group (i.e. more 16 - 19 year old males were consulted)
- The level of detail was limited due to the amount of time young people had to spare when stopping them in the street
- The H-form has the potential to cause difficulties in terms of equality with young people with literacy difficulties or special learning needs. However in this case symbols can be used on the form

What Next

The information is forming the basis of discussions amongst local partners and shall be circulated to all key agencies and services in the Glenrothes area. It will inform additional consultations and look at ways of involving young people in the solutions to the problems they identified.

Further information: Pathfinder Co-ordinator, Glenrothes, Fife Tel: 01592-416567

Fife Pathfinders. (May 2000) The views of 16-25 year olds on services and facilities in Glenrothes - Youth Consultation Report

Causal impact diagrams

These can be used to discuss an issue in more detail and the group can consider the causes and effects that come from the issue. Causes are placed as arrows at the top of the page and effects are arrows at the bottom of the page.

Case Study

Teenage Sexual Health

A participatory appraisal project in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh looked at the issue of teenage sexual health between 1996-1997. Over 700 people participated (58% were teenagers) using a variety of participatory techniques and tools (mapping, impact ranking, timelines etc.). Local people were trained in facilitation skills and were involved in the process of collecting and sharing of ideas and information. This project was instrumental in the development and formation of a new drop-in sexual health clinic in the area.

The project was funded through the then National Health Executive from November 1996 to August 1997. The University of Hull Dept of Health and Primary Care were the fund holders and managed similar research projects in Hull and in Walsall. All 3 projects were looking at the community perceptions of teenage pregnancy. The focus was on teenage pregnancy within the context of teenage sexual health. This allowed workers to talk to the whole community (all sexes and ages) about their perceptions of the relationships between teenage sexual health and teenage pregnancy. The inquiries were conducted using the process of Participatory Appraisal where the opinions and suggested solutions of local people on how to improve sexual health were gathered.

Workers in local youth agencies, parents and young people took part. Also some work was done in schools. The consultation looked at teenage sexual health as an issue and what the barriers were to improving the sexual health of young people and the information obtained was qualitative and not quantitative.

Some of the findings included:

- Young men and women have different attitudes towards sex and each other; boys were more interested in image whereas girls were more concerned with 'being loved'.
- Different attitudes amongst workers affect the information that young people are given about sexual health; the attitudes of teachers played a big part in what young people got told or chose to talk about in terms of sex.
- Parents' attitudes also affect the information that young people get; adults tended to make assumptions about what young people needed based on their own experience.
- Perceptions of barriers that young people have about accessing services affects their decision to use them; embarrassment and peer pressure being the most important factors.
- All groups of young people experienced peer pressure
- Young people would prefer to locate sexual health services within a more holistic youth provision.

The ideas and innovative suggestions that the participants made were fed back to the local support group for the project, which included representatives from health, education and community services. In this way suggestions were implemented in the area during the course of the project. For example, a teenage sexual health drop-in was established and the publicity, location and opening times were all discussed with groups of young people using PA tools.

Further information: Wester Hailes Teenage Sexual Health Project 1996-1998 Participatory Appraisal Community Perceptions of Teenage Sexual Health in the context of teenage pregnancy, Final Report, University of Hull

The strengths and weaknesses of participatory appraisal

Strengths

- Highly flexible yet structured
- Can be used to consult with a large number of people relatively quickly
- Relatively inexpensive
- Can be used with individuals, small groups and whole communities
- Can be used in meetings or where people are (e.g. shop corners, pubs, homes)
- Records ideas and views in an unbiased way in people's own words
- Questions are open-ended
- Participants usually enjoy being involved

Weaknesses

- Potential of raising expectations
- Needs skilled facilitators
- Requires detailed and careful planning
- Can not draw statistical comparisons or conclusions

Further information: Participatory Appraisal

Chambers, R. (1992) Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory IIED Discussion Paper 311

Chambers, R. (1997) 'Who Holds the Stick?' Video from WWF International

New Economics Foundation London (1999) Participation Works! 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st century

A small book giving the details of 21 different techniques for encouraging participation from around the world based on the experiences of some of the members of the UK Community Participation Network

Pretty, J., Guijt, I., Thompson, J. and Scoones, I. (1995) 'Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide IIED, London

A trainers manual with a range of exercises and ideas for participatory consultations

Unemployed Voluntary Action Fund (UVAF) Action Research Project. Resources: Practical tools and evaluation pack. Published by UVAF, Dunfermline, Fife

An accessible pack of PA many tools and participatory evaluation

Conferences

Large consultation events can provide a medium for consulting with children and young people (e.g. The Youth Summit). These events can use workshops, drama and arts based activities. Connect Youth c/o Community Learning Scotland (CLS) run many large conferences and events to consult with young people (e.g. One Night Stand – a conference in 1998 to consult with young people about how young people can influence the Scottish Parliament).

Planning for Real

Another type of large event consultation is Planning for Real which uses three-dimensional models of proposed changes to consult local people on planned developments. It has been used with varying degrees of success for involving local people of all ages in housing, planning, transport and environmental issues and policy. It can also be used specifically with children and young people in a number of different settings (e.g. schools, youth or community centres, libraries etc.).

Open Space

Open Space is a consultation method suitable for any size of group and it aims to solve problems in a creative and participatory way. Everyone starts in a circle and participants are given a piece of paper on which to write the issues they are concerned about. The pieces of paper are placed on the wall and the themes that emerge as priorities become the focus of a number of facilitated workshops (1-2 hours). There is a final plenary when the circle reforms.

Future Search

Future Search is a large planning conference (usually over 3 days). A range of stakeholders are involved in the process (e.g. young people, shopkeepers, police, health workers etc.). Participants work in small groups (usually eight groups of eight people) on structured tasks relating to the past, present and future issues relating to their communities. Action plans are produced at the end of the Future Search event.

Over 50 Future Search events have taken place in the UK since 1995.

Case Study

Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation

Set up in 1988, The Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation is a national charity specialising in community participation, training and development, with a long history of working with residents all over the country, helping them to regenerate their communities. Many of their projects use a process called 'Planning for Real', an eye-catching, hands-on method, focusing on a 3D model of the area which people use to sort out what needs to be done to improve their neighbourhood. A number of Planning for Real consultations have now taken place in Scotland.

Further information: Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, The Poplars, Lightmoor, Telford, Shropshire TF4 3QN, UK
Tel. 01952 590777 Fax 01952 590771
e-mail: nif@cableinet.co.uk

Case Study

Have your Say!

"Please don't forget the needs of rural areas"
"Young people need to be better informed of politics and how to vote"
"Young people can have more knowledge on certain issues than adults"
'Make Scottish Parliament and local government accountable"
"Create more low cost things for young people to do in their areas"
Comments made by young people during the Have Your Say! Consultation (1998)

A consultation with young people on Local Government and the Scottish Parliament was commissioned by the Commission for Local Government and the Scottish Parliament and the Consultative Steering Group. A series of consultation events throughout Scotland took place in August 1998 to give young people the opportunity to express their ideas, identify specific issues and present their recommendations for the future governance of Scotland. Events were held in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dumfries and Galloway, Stornoway and Fort William for young people between the ages of 11-24 years. Over 200 young people participated in the events and their views included:

- Make the Scottish Parliament people-friendly and 'in tune' with young people
- Make voting accessible and reduce the legal age of voting to 16 years.
- Young people should be encouraged to participate in politics through advertising in the media.
- The government should spend VAT and taxes more effectively.
- Give young people things to do (e.g. provide drop-ins, discos and youth councils).
- Government needs to be more approachable and accountable.
- More information needs to be provided in an interesting format.
- Scottish Parliament should inform the public how taxes are spent.
- A Scottish Youth Parliament is a must.

Further information: Have your Say! Report 1998 Community Learning Scotland, Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh Tel. 0131-313-2488

Strengths

- High profile
- Can be very interactive
- A large number of children and young people can participate
- Opportunity for networking and learning from each other

Weaknesses

- Expensive
- Needs skilled facilitators
- Requires a lot of time for planning and experience of organising large events
- The recruitment process is complex if the event is to be truly inclusive
- Can not draw statistical comparisons or conclusions

Further information: Large events

Angus Association of Voluntary Organisations (AAVO), Community Participation Techniques to encourage public participation in community decision making Report published by AAVO, Arbroath, Angus

Connect Youth, c/o Community Learning Scotland (CLS), Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5EZ Tel: 0131-313-2488 Email: Connect_Youth@cls.dircon.co.uk

Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, The Poplars, Lightmoor, Telford, Shropshire TF4 3QN , UK Tel: 01952 590777; Fax 01952 590771; e-mail: nif@cableinet.co.uk

Priority Search

Priority search uses focus groups and questionnaires together with a specially developed computer package. The software is used to rank and prioritise the needs and issues raised during the focus group sessions and then create a questionnaire whereby statements are paired with each other and the person filling it in shows how strongly they agree or feel about statements. It is useful for generating ideas, identifying and prioritising needs but it has limitations in terms of exploring the ideas in depth and action planning because the survey questions are restrictive. There are also dangers that the top priority issues will overshadow issues considered of a lower priority but of significance.

Internet and technology based methods

The use of the Internet (internet based consultations, questionnaires, discussion forums etc.) and technology based methods (e.g. video conferencing) can provide useful techniques for consulting with young people. This approach has the potential to access a large number of children and young people who are very dispersed. It is however dependant upon the availability of the technology and technological skill and support. This is an important method but it may require more time to reach its full potential as the technology needs to be accessible and available to all.

Angus Whyte from the International Teledemocracy Centre, Napier University, Edinburgh discusses the advantages and limitations of electronic consultations:

The use of new media like the internet to facilitate consultation, or "e-consultation" for those not jaded by the ubiquitous use of "e", is a fast growing area that should interest anyone whose remit involves engaging young people in expressing their views. A feature of the Youth Summit 2000, it is also a subject of continuing research and development by the International Teledemocracy Centre, amongst a few others in the UK and elsewhere. So what is best practice in e-consultation and why would you use it anyway? There are no hard and fast rules, particularly with rapid changes in both technology and the scope and frequency of consultations. Here are six key factors and points to consider though :-

1. Effectiveness and efficiency: The most obvious rationale for e-consultation is to meet a need to seek the views of large numbers of people, who cannot all be brought together in one place at one time except at great cost and inconvenience to them. A well constructed e-consultation website can provide people with a single point of access, from any computer (or TV) with internet availability, to key points and background information on the proposals or issues that they are to be consulted on. Their own points of view can be gathered on the website in a number of ways.

2. Visibility and interaction: How people interact with an e-consultation site depends on various factors. Do you expect people to read a consultation document first? Can it be presented in a visually appealing format? Should comments be explicitly related to the document as a whole, or to specific points or issues? Who should identify what these are in the first place? Should comments be only for the eyes of the consulting body, or do you want to encourage deliberation of the issues by using a 'message board' facility? Will you need to monitor the discussion, and if so who will do this? You will probably not want comments to be anonymous, but how much detail about contributors should be revealed on the website? Where young people are concerned the answer is likely to involve a prior 'user registration' process that involves schools or parents, obtains details of age and address (or affiliation), but reveals as little as possible of these to other site users, for example by using a nickname.

3. Audience and location: Any website should be designed to meet the needs and expectations of its 'audience', and be publicised in appropriate media, at appropriate times. Particularly where young people are concerned, you should consider whether the site will be used in a school classroom context, in a youth work setting, or at home. If a site is to engage the attention of young people without the persuasive role of a teacher or youth worker, it will need to meet their very high design expectations. If not, there should be support for whatever the teacher or youth worker's role is. If the consultation is on a 'serious' issue people (young or old) may be unwilling to contribute unless a lot of effort is invested in relating it to their everyday experiences and interests.

4. "Clicks and Mortar": It is highly unlikely that any e-consultation can or should replace 'real life' consultation methods. As with e-commerce, the most effective strategies are likely to combine innovative technology with imaginative methods for engaging people in face-to-face settings, and/or by post or telephone. A face-to-face event for example can be an occasion for gathering contributions, which a facilitator enters into the e-consultation, or for previous e-consultation contributors to elaborate in person on what they have already said. E-consultations do not happen in a vacuum. They are shaped by real-life events and timing that takes account of the normal activities of the target audience.

5. Transparency: If all the above factors are well thought out, e-consultation should make the consultation process more *visible* and more *open* by providing you (and anyone else, potentially) with a record of who has taken part, when, and from where, as well as what they have contributed. If you gather this information with proper regard for data protection it can provide an invaluable audit of the consultation's effectiveness.

6. Feedback: Finally, however effective e-consultation may be for the consulting body, those consulted are likely to become cynical if no feedback is forthcoming on how their comments have been taken up.

7. Soon, standard tools for e-consultation will be widely available. A true indication of their success would be their acceptance as a taken-for-granted feature of the democratic process – 'consultation' rather than 'e-consultation'. In the short term at least, it is unlikely that standard offerings will suit every circumstance, and external help and support may be required to set up a system and evaluate the outcomes.

Case Study

E-Consultation

"I wish someone would stand up for the youth of today and explain that what we want is very different to what they think we want"

"What is the point of giving us a chance to put our opinions forward if all we get is a bunch of promises that never get followed through"
Comments from the electronic consultation
(Young people 14-18)

Background

The Scottish Executive asked the International Teledemocracy Centre at Napier University to run an electronic consultation exercise as part of the Action Programme for Youth, Youth Summit initiative in May 2000.

Aims of the e-consultation

1. Make the site easy to access and use by a broad range of 11-18 year-olds.
2. Clearly identify what was being asked of users, and why they were being asked.
3. Encourage users to read and respond to comments, using a 'threaded' discussion forum (i.e. visually indicating the sequence of replies to each comment).
4. Take account of education authority guidelines on the disclosure of personal information by school pupils, by not disclosing full names.
5. Minimise editorial control of the content, except where in breach of stated conditions of use.

How was it done?

Electronic consultation is an innovative way to consult using the web. For six weeks between the 2nd May to 12th June, young people with access to the internet, whether from home, school, cybercafé or community centre, could participate in the electronic consultation by going to a web site. Here they could do two things:

1. Have a look at a list of 20 issues facing young people in Scotland today, read other peoples' comments and, importantly, add their comments on the issue (this list was from a survey of top issues for young people organised by Young Scot magazine).
2. Vote for the top 10 issues that they think are the most important ones for young people in Scotland.

How was the site advertised?

The consultation was publicised through the Young Scot newspaper, by distributing leaflets via libraries and community education departments. Online advertising was initiated by the Scottish Executive, involving the placing of 'banner ads' on two websites heavily used by young people in the 15-18 age group. A further site "Pupiline" was approached and agreed to feature a link to the e-consultant site. Press and radio coverage during the consultation period was limited. Leaflets were distributed and 20 schools and several voluntary groups were also contacted.

Who participated?

In total 587 young people made comments and 279 voted (143 male and 133 female). Groups were divided into 11-14 and 15-18 year olds.

What were the main issues?

Comments: Alcohol, smoking, sex, drugs and schools received the most comments. The most frequently voiced general concern was that the comments would not 'make a difference'.

Voting: For both age groups drugs was voted as the most important issue. For the 11-14 age group this was followed by bullying, smoking, alcohol and crime. For the 15-18 age group Drugs was followed by Alcohol, Sex, Schools and Crime.

Selection of quotes from the comments page:

"It is time to accept that drinking is going on, is not a bad thing, and that young people should be given a safe environment in which to enjoy themselves, and yes, be allowed to drink alcohol"

"I think more recycling bins should be made because lots of people don't live near recycling bins"

"Police should not just assume that kids on the street at night are causing trouble. Discrimination in the police force should be stopped"

"More people should be made aware of the consequences of drugs"

"Healthy food is very expensive especially if you live in a rural area. I think that the government should do something about making healthy food cheaper"

Young people also conversed online:

"All spokespeople are nippy and geeky and posh and old and generally irritating and have nothing to do with real kids like us"

E-Consultation Case Study continued

"Well "us", I'm not really convinced about that one. I'm currently working on the executive of the Scottish Youth Parliament as a youth spokesperson, and I hope that I don't fit into your categories. If I am nippy it's because I care about the issues; if I'm geeky it's because I need to know my stuff; if I'm posh it's because I'm being diplomatic, not myself, making the issues heard politely; and If I'm too old, then I apologise, but it has taken me a good few years to be listened to, so I'm not going to stop because of my age"

E for effectiveness?

An evaluation of the consultation, through questionnaires and discussions with people who had experience of the site resulted in an evaluation report. The number of votes obtained was, though, tiny in relation to the population of 11-18 year olds in Scotland. There was no attempt to recruit a sample of participants based on socio-economic indicators such as parents occupation or employment status. Criteria for evaluation were therefore:

- Openness – was the e-consultation open to any member of the target group to take part?
- Transparency – were the processes involved, and those involved in them, easily identifiable?
- Effectiveness – did the consultation process engage people in deliberation of the issues concerned, and produce a usable account of the results?

Things that worked well?

- For an electronic consultation the number of young people who participated was high and people who used the site found it easy to use
- The supporting role of teachers and youth workers
- Linking the consultation to the youth summit
- Young people could comment from all over Scotland
- Comments were unaffected by potential adult censorship

Things that did not work as well?

- Took place during exam leave and less young people in this age group commented
- There was not enough prior publicity
- There were no restrictions on people identifying themselves or friends and therefore this raises confidentiality issues

Suggested changes for the future

- Schedule consultations with young people outside of examination times.
- Improve on-line and off-line publicity aimed directly at young people.
- Improve the graphic presentation of the site, to better reflect the expectations of its audience.
- Provide 'slide-show' presentations of background information, so that these may be used (e.g. with data projection) in group discussions;
- Provide facilities for local discussion forums, so that local 'moderators' can negotiate which comments go forward as contributions from the local group, and/or hold a local vote and forward the results;
- Retain a facility for individual contributions, but provide an incentive to register personal details;
- Provide support for individuals to share comments with friends.
- Provide facilities for users to rate their agreement with specific comments or proposals, and to find others who agree/disagree.

Further information: International Teledemocracy Centre, Napier University Tel: 0131-455-2545/4474 www.teledemocracy.org

Further information: Combined approaches~

Priority Search Ltd, Sheffield Science Park, Arundel Street, Sheffield, S1 2NS

International Teledemocracy Centre (ITC), Napier University 219 Colinton Road, Edinburgh EH14 1DJ. Tel. 0131 455 4474 email itc@napier.ac.uk web: www.teledemocracy.org or www.e-consultant.org.uk

Therefore with so many methods to choose from how do you go about selecting the 'right' one? As stressed before you must be able to achieve the objectives of the consultation exercise with the selected method. There are advantages and limitations with each one. If you have the time and budget available, you can use methods to complement each other and benefit from the advantages of each.

Activity 7: Selecting a method

It can be helpful to use a table to select the most appropriate method/s. You could make your own using the criteria that are important to you or use the following table as you read through the section. Write High, Medium or Low in the boxes for each of the headings in the grid system. Then you can use the grid to help you make a decision. For example, if you have very little time to conduct a consultation you could then look down your list and chose a method that can be done relatively quickly.

Method	Preparation time	Time conducting	Time analysing data	Cost	Flexibility	Ease of recording information	Ease of giving rapid feedback
Randomised questionnaires							
Self-completed questionnaires							
Peer surveys							
Young people's polls							
Internet based							
Focus groups							
Debates							
Citizens' Juries							
Planning for real							
Drama based							
Art based							
Semi-structured interviews							
Peer interviews							
Large events							
Participatory Appraisal							

Checklist: Doing a consultation

- ✓ Does the approach and methods allow you to achieve your objectives?
- ✓ Have you considered using a combination of methods to complement each other?
- ✓ Have you piloted the method?
- ✓ Do you need to consider training issues?
- ✓ Have you considered the strengths and weaknesses of the selected method/s?

Further information:
Doing a consultation – summary list for photocopying

General
Robson, C. (1993) Real World Research A resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers, Blackwell publishers, Oxford

Questionnaires
de Vaus, D. A. (1996) Surveys in Social Research, UCL Press, London

Hoinville, G., Jowell, R. and Associates (1985), Survey Research Practice, London

SphinxSurvey, Published by Scolari at Sage Publications, 6 Bonhill Street, London, EC2A 4PU or see website http://www.scolari.co.uk

Polls, petitions and referenda
Alderson, S. (1975) Yea or Nay? Referenda in the United Kingdom, Cassell

Fishkin, J. (1991) Democracy and Deliberation, Yale University Press

Citizens' Juries
Hall, D. and Stewart. J. (1996) Citizens' Juries in Local Government, Local Government Management Board

Lewisham Council has produced an information pack about setting up citizens' juries and includes samples of materials and a video (Contact telephone no. 0208-695-6000 (main switch board) 0208-314-6707 (Policy and Partnership)

Interviews
Dunne, S. (1995) Interviewing techniques for writers and researchers, A & C Black, London

The Ethnograph. Published by Scolari at Sage Publications, 6 Bonhill Street, London, EC2A 4PU or see website http://www.scolari.co.uk

Focus groups
Morgan D. L. and Krueger R. A. (1998) The Focus Group Kit, Sage Publications Ltd., London

Krueger, R. A. (1994) Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research. Sage Publications Ltd., London

Hudelson, P. M. (1996) Qualitative research for health programmes, World Health Organisation, Geneva

Participatory Appraisal
Chambers, R. (1992) Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory IIED Discussion Paper 311

Chambers, R. (1997) 'Who Holds the Stick?' Video from WWF International

New Economics Foundation London (1999) Participation Works! 21 techniques of community participation for the 21st century

Pretty, J., Guijt, I., Thompson, J. and Scoones, I. (1995) 'Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide IIED, London

Unemployed Voluntary Action Fund (UVAF) Action Research Project. Resources: Practical tools and evaluation pack. Published by UVAF, Dunfermline, Fife

Large events and other approaches
Angus Association of Voluntary Organisations (AAVO), Community Participation Techniques to encourage public participation in community decision making. Report published by AAVO, Arbroath, Angus

Connect Youth, c/o Community Learning Scotland (CLS), Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5EZ Tel: 0131-313-2488 Email: Connect_Youth@cls.dircon.co.uk

International Teledemocracy Centre (ITC), Napier University 219 Colinton Road, Edinburgh EH14 1DJ. Tel: 0131 455 4474 email itc@napier.ac.uk web: www.teledemocracy.org or www.e-consultant.org.uk

Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, The Poplars, Lightmoor, Telford, Shropshire TF4 3QN , UK Tel: 01952 590777; Fax: 01952 590771; e-mail: nif@cableinet.co.uk

Priority Search Ltd, Sheffield Science Park, Arundel Street, Sheffield, S1 2NS

Breaking the ice!

It can be a good idea to start a group activity or session with a short icebreaker as these help everyone to relax and can be used to focus participants on issues to be discussed. If the group does not already know each other they can help to introduce people. Of course if you choose the wrong type of icebreaker you do the opposite and make the group feel uncomfortable and embarrassed! So use your own best judgement to select appropriately considering both the age group and the setting.

You probably know a number of icebreakers already but it is good to vary the ones you use so here are a few more to choose from. Some icebreakers can also be adapted to form closing exercises to use at the end of a session. They are presented in summary boxes so that you can photocopy them and cut and paste the ones you going to use onto a timeline for facilitators/researchers involved in doing a consultation exercise or work.

ICEBREAKER

Expectations and 'Don't wants'

It can be useful to ask participants at this early stage what they hope to get from the workshop, exercise or day. One way of doing this that works well is to draw the room or venue on a piece of flipchart and place it in the middle of the room.

Give everyone in the group 3 pink post-its and ask people to write 3 things they hope to get from the meeting. Remind people to write a separate point on each post-it.

Then give them 3 blue post-its and ask for 3 things they do not want. Say for example, "When you were coming along here today if you were thinking I hope they don't have any horrible ice-breakers! Then put that down. Put anything down that you do not want to happen".

Things that may be included are 'I want it to be fun!' I want to meet other people" 'I don't want it to be boring' 'I don't want to do role play' etc. All the expectations and 'Don't wants' can be grouped into similar issues and written up on pieces of flip chart and put on the wall. They are also useful to build into the ground rules or as the basis for an evaluation exercise at the end of the session.

ICEBREAKER

Introduction maps

Clear some space on the floor. Give the group some paper, packing tape, pens, post-it, scissors etc. and ask them to create a map on the floor of where everyone has come from to the session today and by what means of transport they travelled. Sometimes this exercise can have a slow start as people in the group may say, " What do you mean a map?" but it soon gets going so just say, "Anything! You create any kind of map – it is up to you". Usually the packing tape is used as roads, train lines or to represent the general direction of travel (e.g. from the east). Then ask people to stand on the spot where they travelled from to introduce themselves and say something about their journey.

ICEBREAKER

Beans and questions

Give people in the group five beans each and ask them to put the beans in their pocket. Then ask everyone to wander about the room and ask someone a question and when they have answered it give them a bean. This works well as an exercise to encourage the group to mix with each other and it is fun. After about 10 minutes you may want to stop as it could last all day.

ICEBREAKER

Introducing your neighbour

Ask people to pair up with the person next to them or you may want to divide people into pairs in another way and then to interview each other. Give everyone three questions to ask the other person (e.g. Where are you from? What are your main interests? What are you hoping to do this evening?). After approximately ten minutes ask each person to introduce the other person to the rest of the group. This exercise is good for introducing people to each other and it encourages listening. It is also useful if you have shy people in the group, as they often feel more nervous about talking about themselves than other people. If there is an odd number of people then the facilitator should interview the 'odd one out' and vice versa.

ICEBREAKER

Fantasy Business Cards

Ask each participant to fantasise about the name they wish they'd been born with and the job they would like to have or always wanted. Ask everyone to write out a small business card for themselves. For example someone may want to be:

Poppy Fields *Artist*	**Jo James** *Dancer*

Ask for volunteers to read out and explain their business cards. Or make a pile of the cards and randomly pick out cards. Make the exercise very light-hearted and give support to people who may be more introverted.

ICEBREAKER

What is in a pocket?

In a round you can ask each person in the group to describe any item that they have in their pocket or bag at this moment or an item of clothing they are wearing that means something to them. This often works better if the facilitator takes first turn (e.g. I've got a Mars bar wrapper in my pocket because I was hungry on the way here and could not resist).

ICEBREAKER

What is in a name?

In a round, ask participants to say their name and something about it (e.g. were they named after someone? If they like or don't like their name and what is it they like or don't like). Or which version of their name they like best (e.g. Daniel or Dan/ Elizabeth or Liz). This icebreaker can be adapted and the names can be written on flipchart or on pieces of card.

ICEBREAKER

Touring and taking pictures

This technique can serve as an excellent, lively icebreaker. But it is only suitable if the children and young people are being consulted about a particular place, such as a school or youth group, and the session takes place in that setting. The children and young people spend 15 minutes showing the facilitators around the school or youth group, identifying three or four aspects, which they feel to be important, which they either liked or disliked. The use of an polaroid camera gives the participants a specific fun task, taking pictures of what they like and what they don't like etc. It also establishes an element of trust between the facilitator and young people. Focusing first of all on the physical environment of a school, youth group or club can be a good way of linking the discussion into less concrete issues such as relationships, rules, structure and decision making systems, what works and what doesn't, using prompting questions.

ICEBREAKER

Geography

Depending on the diversity of the participants' backgrounds, draw a rough map of the country or region on a piece of flipchart and ask people to mark on the map where they have come from. You could also ask them to say one thing they like, one thing they do not like and one thing they would like to change about the area they come from. This works well if you encourage people who come from the same place to compare their experiences with each other and encourage the group to ask questions.

ICEBREAKER

Fruit salad

This icebreaker is used to get the group active after a break or to break a more passive period. It can be used to form sub-groups with easily remembered names for further group work.

Arrange the chairs in a circle, one less than the number of people in the group. Decide on the number of groups that are needed, as this will determine the number of fruits selected. Ask participants to sit in the chairs. The facilitator will start the game by standing in the middle. Explain that this is an energising game. Let the participants name as many fruits as you need sub-groups e.g. apple, melon, orange, apple etc. The person in the middle calls out the name of one fruit and all the people with that name have to change seats while the person in the middle also takes a seat. Another person is left in the middle and also shouts out a fruit and the same thing happens. When someone shouts out fruit salad then everyone changes seat.

There are endless variations: for example you could do Cocktail basing the activity on the types of drinks that young people drink. Another easier variation is the Mail Game. The person in the middle announces, "I have a letter for those who live in the countryside, are wearing black shoes etc." As in Fruit salad all those who fulfil the criteria change places. The person who delivers the letter chooses another criteria and delivers the letter and those people change places.

ICEBREAKER

What is true?

In a round ask people in the group to say three things about themselves and two of the things should be true and one of them not true. Then ask other people in the group to guess which one is not true. For example: "I have just been to Greenland", "I have a mouse in my kitchen" and "I am dyslexic".

ICEBREAKER

Forming groups quickly

Birthdays and Star signs
Ask people to line up according birthday month/day or star sign. Start by calling out "January" and anyone with their birthday in January stands up then "February" etc. until everyone is standing in a line. People can then form pairs with the person standing next to them or groups of three with people either side of them.

Labels
When people come in to join the group you may want to use name labels if they do not know each other. You can colour-code the labels in advance (e.g. red, green, blue dots) and use these to quickly form different groups during the meeting.

Tips Box

Breaking the ice!

- You may not need an icebreaker as simple introductions may be more appropriate
- Using non-threatening introductions or icebreakers
- Check that the icebreaker will be fun for everyone involved (i.e. avoid cringe making icebreakers)
- Consider the nature of the group and choose appropriate icebreakers or introduction activities for the group (e.g. What is the age group? Do people know each other?)
- Give support to people in the group who may be more introverted than others
- Check and consider the setting (e.g. Do you need chairs? Is there enough room? etc.)
- Keep ice-breakers quite short (e.g. 10 minutes)
- Explain the function of the icebreaker (e.g. for people to get to know each other, to mix people up into groups etc.)

Case Study

Youth Issues Project

This project used residential events for young people with icebreakers and workshops to identify local policy issues. For example, in North Ayrshire the lack of things for young people to do was raised as an issue and this played a part in the opening of a young people's drop-in centre. The police in the area noticed a drop in crime on the evenings that the centre was open. This was a multi-agency project.

Further information: Community Learning Scotland, Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh Tel. 0131-313-2488

Creating ground rules

Ground rules are an important part of group work as they help to create an environment that is non-threatening where people feel free to express their opinions, share ideas and experiences. This can be especially important when discussing sensitive topics with children and young people (e.g. sex and sexuality, drugs, relationships issues etc.).

Confidentiality is very important for some group discussions. It may be worth discussing exactly what people mean by 'confidentiality' and if it is acceptable to record things that are shared in the group as long as people are not identified. There is also a difference between confidentiality and anonymity and therefore if groups are going to be followed up at a later date it is important to explain that names and contact details may be necessary in order to do this. Also by giving participants the opportunity to be involved in the setting of ground or boundary rules it helps them to share the responsibility of the successful running of the group. Depending on the size of the group this can take between 15-20 minutes. Establishing ground rules at the beginning is of great value if you are meeting on a regular basis or you are spending a large amount of time together as a group (e.g. a day event).

Ground rules can be set by asking people to shout out points that they would like to be included on the list. This also can include points that the facilitator would like to be included. They can also be drawn up by people writing down points on paper or post-its and then they are discussed and included if agreed on by everyone.

An example of a list of ground rules:

- *Confidentiality is important*
- *People do not interrupt or laugh at each other*
- *You do not have to participate if you do not want to*
- *Give respect and listen to other people's views*
- *Start and finish on time*
- *Have an enjoyable time*
- *Respect each other*
- *Be specific*
- *One person talks at a time*
- *Be punctual*
- *Avoid passing judgement*
- *Be supportive of the other team members and their contributions*
- *Keep discussion relevant*
- *No mobile phones*
- *Everyone is equal*
- *Criticise ideas, not people*
- *Keep an open mind*
- *Ask questions*
- *Be yourself*

Tips Box

Creating ground rules

- Some people in the group may never have been involved in setting ground rules before so it is important for the facilitator to explain clearly the function of the ground rules
- Some groups like to set ground rules relating to the practical aspects of the session of group e.g. allow time for breaks, starting and finishing times
- Ground rules can be set through open discussion or through the use of post-its where everyone in the group writes down their points and they are put on a piece of flipchart and read out and discussed
- It is often useful to have 'To also have fun' or to 'Have an enjoyable time' on the list of ground rules as well as in the objectives as it helps lighten the session and helps people feel more relaxed
- It is good to mention that once the list has been made that it is not 'closed' and that other points and issues can be added if they arise during the session(s)

The following section gives details on some of the techniques and tools useful for facilitating meetings, sharing of ideas, discussing topics, prioritising issues and evaluating consultations or workshops. Tried and tested tools recommended by people consulting with children and young people are included.

There is no suitable categorisation for all tools and techniques as many of them can be used in a variety of different situations. Here they have been grouped under some broad headings (e.g. sharing ideas, prioritising issues, evaluating) to give some help when deciding which tool to use when.

A Health Promotion, Glasgow Health Board Project

Case Study

Participatory health workshops in Glasgow

"The Baltic and The Rebels fight on the grassy areas"

"The Rebels and The Baltic carry big sticks"

"I would like a swing park and safe roads and a football pitch for us to play"

In April 1999 the East End Social Inclusion Partnership commissioned the local community health project, East End Health Action, to carry out some consultation work with children and young people together with other members of the community around the themes of the draft East End Health Strategy. The purpose of the workshops was to give local people and particularly children and young people the opportunity to influence future health policy.

The issues that were discussed were related to the impact they had on children and young people (Two age groups: 0-10 years and 11-16 years). Workshops using participatory techniques and tools were conducted. Facilitators were trained in participatory appraisal approaches and methods over three days. A total of ten participatory workshops were held over a period of five weeks and two of these were with children aged between 5-11 years on the topic of 'Safe Play'. Consent for participation in the workshops was sought from the children themselves and their parents. A community conference took place on 10th October 1999 to increase the level of local participation and verify the workshops.

The workshops for children and young people included a short icebreaker and a detailed mapping exercise. For example, children were asked to draw a large map of their area and then they were asked, 'How do you get home from the Out of School Care?' and 'Can you mark the routes onto the map?' Routes concentrated on the areas of the roads that were dangerous and reasons why they were considered dangerous were noted on the maps. Children were asked to draw areas where they played safely and put the positive and negative points relating to play together with ideas for improvements on their diagrams. The mapping exercises were considered to be very effective and produced a lot of specific detail about dangerous sections of roads, glass in the parks and discarded needles, dog dirt, territorial gangs and their boundaries together with the areas where young people are afraid to walk alone. The workshops were evaluated by running an evaluation/debriefing meeting with facilitators and comments included:

"The PA approach was felt to empower the local community to make decisions about their environment. It was seen as an excellent way of finding out about the needs and views of the community and determining a plan of action"

"The PA approach generated a lot of discussion and information, and enabled the participants to analyse the material and prioritise issues"

"From the outset of planning the workshops there is a need for all bodies involved in the work to be completely clear about what is effectively being carried out and the processes that this involves"

Evaluation comments included that more people could have been involved (e.g. by using PA tools out-and-about in the community as well as running workshops). In addition, it was felt it would have been useful to have participant feedback from workshops (i.e. likes and dislikes) half way through the five-week period. The evaluation stresses the importance of keeping questions and language simple and some of the language was simplified during the process (i.e. the names of tools and techniques) and this proved very effective. A report was then written and distributed which includes a record of the workshops and evaluation (May, 2000 Participatory Appraisal Workshops, East End Health Action). The Health Strategy Sub-Group of the East End Social Inclusion Partnership is looking at the priorities and the suggestions for improvement so that they can be linked with the local health policy.

Further information: East End Health Action, Dalmarnock Initiative Base, 35 Springfield Road, Glasgow, G40 3EL
Tel. 0141-550-7333 Fax. 0141-550-1468

Sharing of ideas

There are different ways that ideas can be shared in a group and here are two suggestions:

Brainstorming and brainbursting

The 'brainburster' exercise is a common but effective way of getting to the main issues of a consultation. This is also a useful exercise to record for transcribing. Young people can be asked to brainstorm - alone or with a friend - on the chosen theme, writing down, drawing or shouting out whatever comes into their head. This brainstorm is then used as a point of departure for a discussion on that topic.

Post-it consultation

Different coloured post-its can be used to collect and share ideas about a range of issues very effectively. If you have a large group of children or young people and you want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate consider using this tool. Post-its provide a very useful tool for exploring issues because everyone in the group has the opportunity to express their opinions and views. It can avoid the problem of one person wanting to dominate the discussion. You can use different coloured post-its to explore different areas (e.g. likes, dislikes and suggested changes). A useful colour coding system is pink (likes), blue (dislikes) and yellow (ideas and changes). Encourage people to write ***one*** idea onto each post-it otherwise there can be many ideas on each one and points become difficult to group together. The discussion and dialogue around the issues raised can be very valuable as it raises further questions and explores the issues in depth. If new points come up during the discussion encourage people to write down the point on a colour-coded post-it and put it up on the wall. All post-its can be typed up and recorded easily without losing the detail and meaning of what people have said.

This activity can be used to explore in more detail a whole range of issues e.g. education, what it is like being a young person in today's society, environmental issues, quality of life, etc. Adapt the tool appropriately and reflect on the process after the exercise. For example you would not use post-its to explore three things people like about drugs but you could adapt the approach to say what are three reasons why young people take drugs. The post-it consultation exercise can also be combined with other tools and techniques (e.g. prioritising, ranking, action planning).

An example: Post-it consultation - exploring alcohol issues with young people

Procedure:

- Give everyone three *pink* post-its and ask people to write down three reasons why young people drink alcohol
- Give everyone three *blue* post-its and ask people to write down three negative things about alcohol
- Give everyone three *yellow* post-its and ask people to write down three changes that they would like to make relating to alcohol policy and young people
- Put the post-its on the wall and group them according to which ones are similar. Ask everyone to gather round the area where you have displayed the ideas. You may want to ask for clarification on some of the points and have a discussion about the main issues raised. Give each group of post-its a heading.
- Give participants five red 'dots' each and ask them to distribute the dots on the blue post-its voting for which category they individually feel is the main problem relating to alcohol and young people. Say that they can put all their dots on one issue if they feel this is very important or they can give one problem one dot and another two and so on. Give everyone 5 green dots and ask people to do the same for the ideas for policy or changes. This process will allow a rapid prioritising of the issues raised by the group.
- *Optional:* You can then explore some of the main ideas for change in a structured way using a matrix table. Have a number of them already drawn out in advance on a large sheet of flipchart. If the main group is very large you may want to divide up into smaller groups of three or four each working on certain issues. If the group is small then you could take the top three issues and follow them through in detail.

Verbal to visual

There are many advantages of using visual tools in consultations and they can be especially effective when consulting with children and young people. The depth of discussion that often develops when people are working on visual diagrams is also very important (i.e. the process as well as the 'finished' product or diagram is of great value).

A selection of visual tools are included here and for further information see Pretty *et al.* (1995).

Mapping

There are two main types of mapping: community and body mapping. Both have been used effectively in consultation with children and young people. In the examples shown here the first is about issues that affect quality of life in the local community and young people marked on the maps things they liked, disliked and would like to change. They then went on to prioritise the changes because funding was available to make local improvements in the area. In the body mapping example children were asked what the main health issues were for people their own age and these were marked on the body diagrams and then post-its were used to say where children went for help with each health problem. This was part of a consultation exercise to identify health service needs and priorities for a lottery funded Health Living Centre.

Community mapping

This is a favourite tool of many people because it is active, fun and produces detailed specific information about places. It is useful for exploring many issues especially those that have a spatial element. For example, it could be used to consult about facilities for young people, community development issues, factors affecting quality of life in the community, local environmental issues or health facilities for young people.

An example: Community mapping - Exploring 'quality of life' with young people

Procedure:

- Divide the participants into groups to produce a map of their local area. Give out large sheets of paper and coloured pens. The exact mix of the groups will depend on the objectives and the group (e.g. age groups, single sex groups, mixed groups). In this example there were five boys and five girls aged 11-13 years.
- When a detailed map has been drawn give everyone three *pink* post-its to write down three positive things about living in the area and to stick them onto the map where most appropriate. Use more post-its for more ideas.
- Give everyone three *blue* post-its to write down three things they do not like about living in the area. Stick them on the map where appropriate.
- Give everyone three *yellow* post-its to write down three changes they would like to make or see in the area.
- Give participants a number of beans (5 or 10) to vote on the changes that they would most like to see. Distribute the beans on the yellow post-its giving the highest score to the change you would consider a priority (see section on different types of voting).
- Once the groups are finished then have a 'roving exhibition' so all participants get to see the various maps.
- *Optional:* You may want to stop at this stage depending on the length of the session or meeting. However if you have time the ideas can be placed on an impact-ranking diagram. The ideas then placed in the high impact and easy to implement box (if there are any and often there are some suggestions) could be taken forward on an action-planning table.

Body Mapping

Have a large sheet of paper on the floor (e.g. pieces of flipchart paper stuck together in advance or plain lining paper is less expensive if you have a lot of groups). Ask the group to draw round someone in the group using a marker pen (take care to use washable pens or warn people not to mark clothes). Then give the group a pile of marker pens and ask them to draw either the effects of alcohol on the body, the effects of stress on the body, the effects of drugs on the body or an especially healthy body etc. This technique can also make a fun icebreaker and can link to the topic that the group is going to be discussing. It works well with any age group – not just younger children.

An example: Body mapping to identify health needs for young people

A group of children were divided into age groups using the Birthday icebreaker and then asked to draw around someone in their group. Then with the marker pens were asked to annotate the outline. When there was some detail on the body (e.g. face, lungs, stomach etc.) they were asked to draw on the main health problems for children their own age. In this example the most common things that children drew were allergies (hayfever, eczema and asthma). Then after about 10 minutes they were asked to write on post-its which services they used for the different health problems they identified.

Action planning tables

These simple tables are very good for structuring and following through ideas into action plans. The headings can be changed depending on the objectives of the exercise but it is advisable to keep them to very straightforward questions. When people are filling in these diagrams encourage them to complete each row first rather than each column; then if the group takes longer than you anticipate they have some ideas followed through.

Action planning tables can be linked with other tools. For example they can follow a post-it consultation once the ideas have been ranked in order of priority.

An example: Ideas for change in the community

Idea for change	Why is this important?	How could it be done?	Who would be involved?	What would be the barriers?	When should this happen?
Open a drop-in centre for young people	There is nothing to do at night and we just hang about the streets	There are some shops that are empty on the High Street and it could be opened there	Us Parents The council School	Money Getting everyone to agree	A.S.A.P

Spider diagrams

Spider diagrams can be useful for brainstorming exercises but often they do not produce very detailed or structured information and ideas. One way of increasing the level of detail and structure into the technique is to look at the barriers to each point marked on the spider diagram.

An example: Barriers to teenage sexual health

- Groups of 4-5 people work together and write a topic for discussion in the centre of a large piece of paper (or draw a symbol to represent it). In this case it was sexual health.
- The main issues related to the topic can then be added as the 'legs' of the spider
- People then plot the barriers to each issue along each line using a different coloured pen
- The group can then vote to decide which barrier is the most important and develop ideas for change that can be taken forward using an action planning table

Venn diagrams

Venn diagrams are important for looking at structures that cannot be shown through mapping or timelines (e.g. the organisational structure of a school, the structure of the health services). Venn diagrams can help identify strengths and weaknesses in organisational structure (e.g. levels of communication between different groups). They can be done with individuals or as a group exercise.

An example: Venn diagram

- The materials that are needed are coloured paper, glue, scissors, flipchart or large sheets of paper and pens. It takes approximately 15 minutes for an individual Venn diagram and 30 minutes for a group activity.
- Each group takes some materials and they are asked to cut circles for each of the organisations or groups. The larger the circle the more important or most significant.
- Then the circles are placed on the paper and the closer they are placed together the greater the level of communication between the groups. Once a pattern has been discussed and created the circles are stuck down on to the paper.

Again it is the discussion that takes place during the process of creating the diagram that is of great value too. Once the diagrams are finished you could ask people how they would like to see the structure develop in the future or about the strengths and weaknesses of the structure.

It is useful to record these points: therefore ask people to write the main points or answers to questions at the bottom of the diagram so that you have a clear record for when you are writing up the activity. Taking notes is not advisable here as it can lead to misinterpretation and it is difficult to remember which notes belong to which diagram after the event thus leading to loss of detail.

Pie charts and other charts

Hand drawn pie charts can be used with individuals or small groups. The only resources that are needed are pens and paper. For example, you may be doing a consultation related to leisure facilities: therefore you could ask young people to draw a pie chart of how they currently spend their leisure time followed by a pie chart of how they would like to spend their leisure time. Then it is possible to move on to ask what changes would be necessary to move towards this. Other charts can also be drawn (e.g. histograms are useful if you are looking at certain changes over a period of time).

Graffiti walls

Create a graffiti wall. This is a good exercise to introduce if the group is fed up of sitting around talking. It is a very direct opportunity for young people to send any message they wish to authorities or government about their lives and their experiences as young people. Some participants might like to use it just to have a bit of fun but it can also be used as a tool to interview young people further whilst they are occupied and relaxed drawing or ‘doodling’. You can use their pictures or messages as springboards for further questions or discussion.

Drawing a process or concept

"When I was first told about this technique I thought, 'That will never work and it's silly', but now I have tried it I use it a lot. It really encourages people to think about the meaning of a concept or issue. It also helps people to identify what the concept or issue is not about which can be very useful" (Worker)

For this activity divide people into groups and give each group a large piece of flip chart and coloured markers. Ask each group to draw their idea of 'consultation'. No words are allowed in the drawing. When each group has finished then they present their representation to the larger group. This exercise is good because it encourages people to think visually (it can be difficult to draw a concept!) and it is a useful introduction to using visual methods. It also enables everyone to explore and question the different meanings behind the term.

This exercise can also be done with different concepts or issues. For example you may want to ask the group to draw 'inclusion' and what it involves and means to people. This technique can be used with any age group and also with children or groups who may not be able to read or write.

Timelines

Timelines are effective planning tools as described earlier in the toolkit and they are also very good for looking at the history of a situation or the history of events in a community. You can also add a section of the line for the future for people to mark on things they would like to see in the future and the sequential order of possible changes.

The H-forms

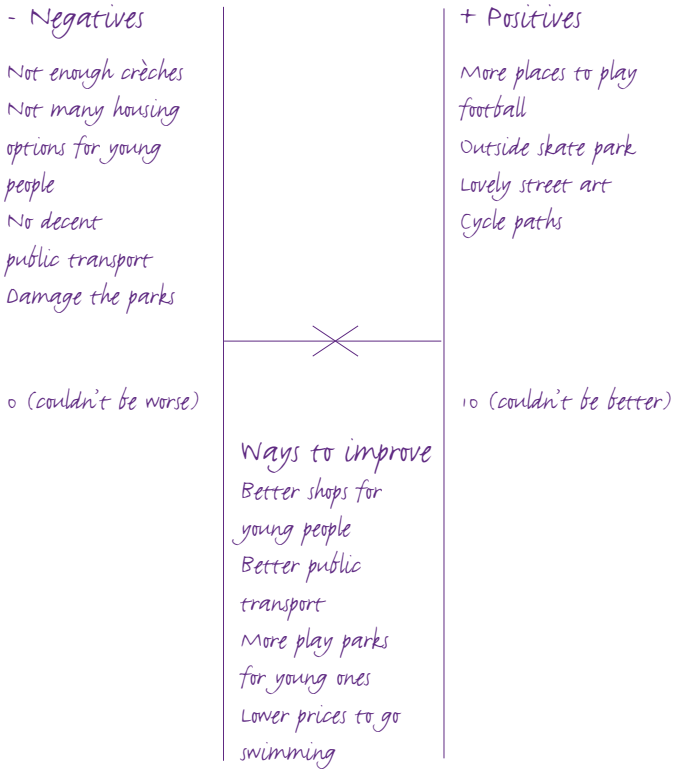
This is a structured and visual way of collecting ideas and sharing information that was invented by Inglis (1999). It can be used in a number of consultation situations and is also a useful evaluation tool. It can be used with groups or individuals in a variety of settings (e.g. meetings, conferences, workshops, streets, night-clubs).

Examples of applications include: recording ideas from semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions, evaluating a workshop or consultation event, 'out-and-about' during 'streetwork' consultations as a way of structuring comments and ideas, identifying planning issues or to structure the main points for giving feedback to participants or policy makers.

- Draw out an "H" on the paper and write the questions being discussed on the top centre area of the H-form. The question must be simple and focused.
- At the left end of the horizontal line write O or "Not at all good or draw an unhappy face and at the right hand end of the line write 10 or "Extremely good" or draw a happy face.
- If working with a group then ask each person to place a score along the line between 0 and 10 etc.
- Give each person three blue 'post-its' and ask them to write down (or draw) the negative reasons for their score. Ask people to write one reason on each post-it and place them on the form. People do not need to use all three or they can use more than three post-its. If working with individuals you will not need to use the post-its as people can write straight on the form.
- Then give each person three pink post-its and ask them to record the positive reasons for their individual score. Stick them on the right-hand side of the form.
- Ask people in the group to read out or describe what they have drawn from their post-it notes so that everyone's views are heard and understood. Ask for clarification if necessary. Keep discussion of the points short and focused.
- If working with a group at this stage you may want to ask people to agree on a group score and mark this on the paper.
- Depending on the objectives of the exercise then ask people to write down all the ways/ideas for improving the current situation. This is usually done on yellow post-its

An example: Services for young people

What are your views on the services and facilities for young people in area?



Prioritising issues

It is often important to prioritise issues and ideas when doing a consultation and this can be done in a number of ways. These tools and techniques are not specific to meetings as it is possible to use them either with individuals or in a 'streetwork' setting. For example, in the social inclusion participatory appraisal study for the South Edinburgh Partnership a list of the main ideas for change in the community were recorded on a scoring sheet and facilitators asked people to vote with ten scoring units for the ones they most agreed with. People were asked to vote at bus stops, in cafes, in the post office, in the swing park, in the pub, in the leisure centre etc. This was followed by an exhibition of the ideas and 'scores so far' where people could come and read all the ideas and if they had not yet voted there was a chance to do so.

Prioritising issues can be done through structured questions in a questionnaire or through participatory voting and ranking. Survey questions have already been covered in the toolkit. Types of voting and ranking are covered here.

Types of voting

Voting with beans or dots

Make a list of the priorities down the left-hand side of the paper (or use post-its if you want to move them later to use with another technique e.g. impact ranking). These may come from the post-its you have previously used in the Post-it consultation to collect and share ideas.

Give each person 10 beans each (if more people in the group you many want to reduce the number of beans)

Ask people to vote for the issues or changes that they feel are the most important. They can put one bean on each post-it or if there are a smaller number of ideas you can use the method of placing the beans on any post-it i.e. if you feel strongly about one issue you could place all your beans on that issue. Decide in advance which voting system you are going to use.

Everyone looks at the list and decides where to place their votes. This process is interesting as there is often a lot of discussion that takes place amongst the group over where to place beans and which issues are of greatest importance. This discussion can raise other points and is often quite in-depth. It is often not the number of votes but the depth and quality of debate that precedes the voting that is of great importance. There can be some advantages of video recording the process.

The beans are often used because people can change their mind about the voting as the discussion develops. However, you can use sticky dots or other scoring units instead but remember simple practical points (e.g. if out and about doing scoring do not use beans at mother-and-toddler meetings etc.)

'Quickfire' voting

Other ways of prioritising and voting include the red, orange, green exercise which is useful to get a more quantifiable snapshot of young people's views. Ask for a 'quickfire' round of voting on a particular statement using red, orange and green cards which represent a positive response (green), a negative response (red), and then somewhere in between (orange).

'Quickfire' voting can also be adapted if you have cards on the wall in each corner of the room saying: agree strongly, agree, neither agree or disagree, disagree and disagree strongly. When the facilitator asks a question the participants run to the corner of the room depending on how they would answer the question. This can also be adapted to make a lively icebreaker.

Impact-ranking

You could take ideas forward to look at which ones are easy or difficult to implement or which would have the greatest impact using an impact-ranking diagram. For example the issues that score the highest from the voting exercise (write the final 'bean' score on each post-it) can then be taken from the paper and placed on an impact-ranking diagram.

Draw out the impact-ranking diagram and ask everyone to place the post-its into which box they feel is best.

An example: Young people's suggestions on ways to reduce crime in the area

	Easy to do	Fairly easy to do	Hard to do
High impact	Make a decent football pitch Bring back community police	CCTV near the shops	Stop the drug problem
Medium impact	Remove the litter bins as people set fire to them	Set up a neighbour-hood watch	
Low impact			

Talking mats

Talking Mats, developed by Joan Murphy of Stirling University Psychology Department, uses picture symbols to help people with communication difficulties communicate about issues that are relevant to them. It has been used successfully with children and young people who have and do not have learning difficulties. The framework is based on three elements: picture or object symbols, two mats and the material to attach symbols (e.g. Velcro or Blu-tack):

- picture symbols can include any kind of pictorial representation (e.g. photographs, drawings, commercial symbols)
- The Talking Mats pack uses Picture Communication Symbols from the software package Boardmaker.
- Objects can also be used (often this works well with young children)
- Symbols can represent the main sections of a discussion (e.g. overall issue, different emotions, likes, dislikes and changes etc.)

It can be useful to keep a scrapbook of images and pictures which you think may be useful in the future

Letters and language

There are many ways where letter and language-based activities can be using during a consultation (e.g. debates, writing letters to policy makers). Be creative and think of the nature and age of people in the group. Two examples are included here; the letter to Santa being used with younger children and press releases being used with a group of young people.

Letter to Santa

Save the Children have consulted younger children using a letter to Santa idea. Here children wrote a wish list to Santa about things that they thought were important for children to have. This could link to a consultation on a range of issues including children's rights, facilities and changes they would like to see in the local community, schools and education or health related issues.

Press release

A group can work together to develop a press release on a relevant issue (e.g. the role of play parks in the local community). Preparation work would involve information and guidance on how to write a press release with example of other press releases being used as handouts. Press releases from the Scottish Executive can be found on their web site and these could be downloaded as examples.

Drama and art

Drama can provide a creative and fun way of consulting with children and young people about policy issues. It requires a lot of preparation and planning and good drama workers and facilitators. Art or design based methods (drawing, painting, models, exhibitions) and photography can be used very effectively with all age groups and also for consulting with children who cannot read and write.

Case Study

Drinkwise

Young Citizen's Conference

A conference for young people on alcohol issues was held on the 17th March 1997 as part of the East Lothian Health Challenge and Lothian Drinkwise campaign. The six East Lothian secondary schools were approached and one class from each school participated in the conference (163 young people attended).

Drama group

A group of 22 young people aged 13-17 met in the evening on a weekly basis over a period of 8 weeks to devise a piece of theatre to perform at the conference. The group was lead by a drama teacher. Using improvisation, games, movement, mime and mask the young people developed a production about alcohol and young people. This piece of theatre gave young people the opportunity to express their views and ideas about alcohol. All young people involved in drama activity said that it was enjoyable and worthwhile. In the evaluation of the conference the drama session was considered extremely interesting and useful.

Panel session

Panel members included a councillor, police superintendent, registrar from Public Health Medicine at Lothian Health, Director of Edinburgh and Lothian Council on Alcohol and a young person representative. The panel were presented with a series of questions from young people about alcohol issues and policy.

Workshops

There were a series of workshops throughout the day and the activities included brainstorming on why young people drink and discussion on advertising and alcohol policy.

Further information: Drinkwise, Report on the Young Citizens' Conference 17th March 1997, Health Promotion Department, Lothian Health, Edinburgh Tel: 0131-536-9451

Case Study

Voices for Change

Save the Children in Scotland consulted children and young people about their views on poverty and social exclusion as part of the "Voices for Change" project. From May until the end of November 1999 twenty-seven children and young people from Edinburgh and Glasgow between the ages of 9 and 21 years of age were consulted. The methods used were participatory group work and a conference. A range of tools and techniques were used including a walkabout tour of the local area, participatory appraisal, a museum visit, art and photography and video diaries and drama. The conference included workshops, drama, a graffiti wall and displays of mapping and photography.

Further information: McGlinchey, S. (June 2000) Voices for Change: Young people's views on poverty and social exclusion in Scotland. Published by Save the Children

Case Study

EcoCities

Children and young people's participation in the planning and regeneration of their local environment

"It's children's ideas and children have got the right to speak as well as adults, we want to make everyone hear what we've got to say about stuff - our ideas will work better" Participating young person

"I have been a Headteacher now for 16 years and this project has forced me to rethink what I have been doing. I have seriously underestimated the abilities of the children from this community and their role in all our futures" Local Headteacher

"The fact that these children have produced this inspiring model in just 5 days is what I find so amazing. It's a lesson to my own planning department" Local authority official

"Processes like this are absolutely crucial. It is essential for children to have a stake in the future of the area and to educate us about their rights and our responsibilities" Architect

An EcoCity project involves approximately forty young people aged between 10 and 14 year olds spending a week together building their ideal city in the form of a scaled three dimensional physical model. This is then presented to the local community, their teachers, parents, local politicians and Council officers, possible development partners and other local and interested professionals as the basis for dialogue on sustainable development of the local built environment. The model also seeks to reflect and support the school based 5 - 14 curriculum guidelines.

Children from four primary schools, based in the neighbourhoods that make up the peripheral Edinburgh estates of Craigmillar participated in the EcoCity project in 1999. The area has become known as the South East Wedge and had been identified for major development over the next fifteen to twenty years which will result in the relocation of the city's Royal Infirmary Hospital, development of large industrial and retail spaces and the building of approximately 5,000 new homes. An EcoCity team were invited to work with local children in what became the Craigmillar Children's EcoCity project to address ways in which their community could face up to the challenges that the South East Wedge presented.

EcoCity projects have a number of integrated elements:

- Support for environmental education
- A co-operative 'learning by doing' approach
- A commitment to children's rights
- A belief in sustainable development

Further information:

Morrison, C. and Halliday, S. (2000) Working in participation No. 5 EcoCity A model for children's participation in the planning and regeneration of their local environment Published by Children in Scotland

Videos recording the work of the Craigmillar Children's EcoCity Project (1998) are available from The International Children's Parliament which can be contacted by Email at icparliament@hotmail.com or by telephone on 0131-558-9030

Many techniques already mentioned are suitable for consulting with younger children. Two additional ones are also included.

Circle time

Many primary schools now have Circle time. This is an opportunity for children to express their views and listen to each other. Children clear away the furniture and set out a circle of chairs or sit on the floor. The circle must be big enough for everyone to see each other. Circle time has a number of ground rules (e.g. respecting each other, listen to other people etc) and may start with an activity (e.g. rolling a ball to someone after calling their name and each person must only have the ball once so they must watch and listen). It can then move to discussing a range of topics or issues. Making choices, different ways of participating or ways of including people are all good subjects for Circle time. The advantage of making use of this method is that children are already familiar with the rules. If you choose to use Circle time it is best to be briefed by the teacher as the rules vary slightly in each case.

Express cards

Express cards can be useful when consulting with younger children. They are a set of cards with short open statements on each that children use these to express their views. The responses on the cards can be in different forms depending on the age of the child (e.g. words, pictures, symbols or models). If children use pictures or symbols make sure you understand exactly what they mean for recording purposes. Examples of express cards that can be photocopied are included in the Appendix.

Variations

- The express cards exercise could be carried out in advance and the cards collected in a 'post box'. The completed express card could then be looked at by the people or organisation doing the consultation. If this is done it needs to be made clear why their views are being collected and what will happen to their ideas.
- If you are directly working with the children the ideas can be taken out of the post box and be placed face down. Volunteers can then read them out and people in the group can comment. It is important to give choices over reading out loud because a lot of children are nervous in case they make mistakes. You can also make it clear at the beginning of the session that children can choose not to participate in any of the activities. Some of the statements will be straightforward and others may spark off interesting discussions.
- A combination of the first two approaches can be used and children can complete the cards before you arrive. Children can also create speech bubbles on large sheets of paper and work in pairs to create an image and write down their views. These pictures could form an exhibition and children can show you what they have done. In a primary school setting this could then link to Circle time (see above) and there could be a discussion of the pictures and people's views. In an informal setting (e.g. a community library or leisure centre) displays could be developed over a longer period of time.
- It can be useful to use express cards if you have a very mixed age group at a meeting and younger children are interested in expressing their views but cannot write as quickly as older children or adults.

Express Cards

I like

I dislike

A change I would like to see

Sometimes

It would be great if

I would not like to see

I need

I want

I hope

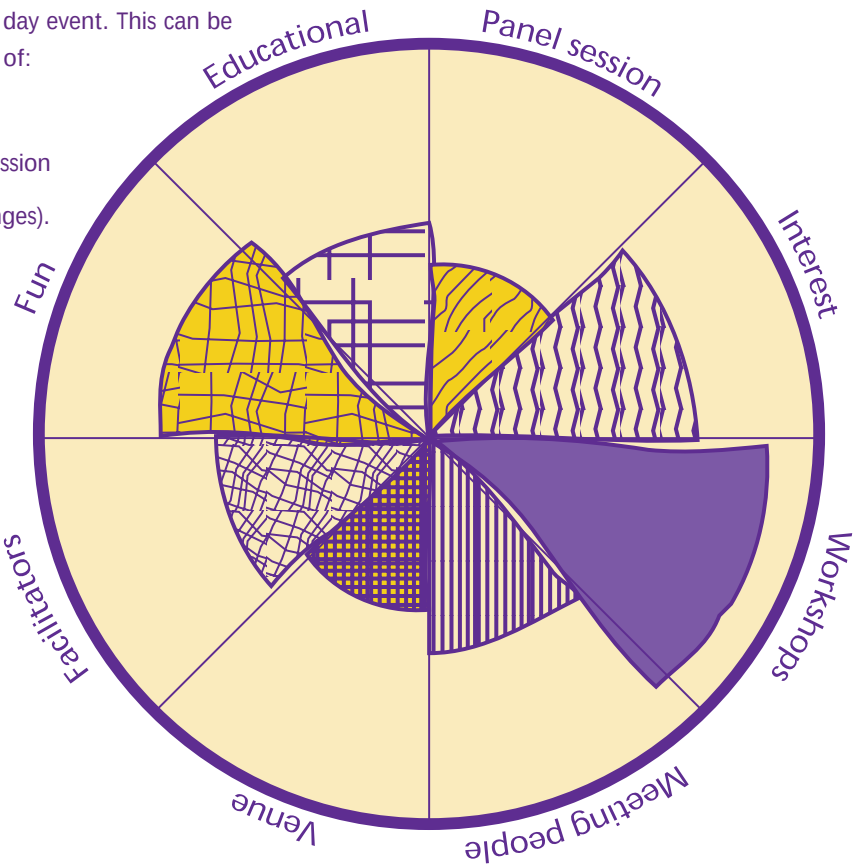
My idea is

I wish

Evaluation techniques and tools

It is useful and good practice to evaluate the consultation process or consultation workshop or day event. This can be done by using one or a combination of:

- An evaluation questionnaire
- Having an evaluation debriefing session
- Post-its (i.e. likes, dislikes and changes).
- An H-forms
- An evaluation wheel.



Evaluation wheel

Decide on a number of key questions. For example if you were evaluating the whole consultation you may want to include questions about the process and how many people participated or how effectively you met the objectives. If you are evaluating a workshop or consultation day you could base the questions on people's expectations for the event or questions could be related to the different sections of the day (e.g. what did you think of the workshops? What did you think of the role play exercise? What did you think of the visual diagrams? etc.). Do not have too many segments as the diagram gets cluttered and confusing.

Draw out a wheel and mark on the segments. You can add numbers along each segment line but this is not necessary. Each person then marks on a line or crosses off what score or position they would rate each segment. The crosses can be joined together afterwards or the sections shaded and the facilitator can see at a glance the sections that participants felt worked well and they enjoyed and the sections that had low scores can be discussed so future consultations or workshops can benefit. Post-its can also be added onto the wheel to record suggestions for any improvements.

Deciding which techniques and tools to use

Before deciding which techniques or tools to use it can be useful to look at the advantages and disadvantages of each. For example if you decide to use H-forms you can note down the main advantages and disadvantages in list form like this:

Advantages	Disadvantages
It is very flexible	If the wrong question is used
Provides a structured and focused way of recording positive and negative comments together with ideas for improvement and action	In some situations you may want to explore issues in more depth
All comments and ideas can easily and quickly be transferred into a report without losing detail or changing wording. This can be done by creating one H-form and marking on it all the individual comments or by scanning or photocopying (and reducing to A4 if necessary) original H-forms and incorporating them into report format	Not suitable for all situations – it depends on the objectives of the consultation
Can be used alongside other tools (e.g. timelines)	Other tools may be more appropriate for looking at causal relationships and links e.g. Venn diagrams
Provides an accessible and visual consultation tool for collecting and sharing ideas and is an easy to read format for transferring comments to policy makers	Other tools may be more appropriate for in depth action planning
Can be used with individuals or groups and in different settings (e.g. inside based discussions or outside on the streets)	

Another way of deciding on the most appropriate techniques and tools is to list the consultation objectives on a piece of paper and write the different techniques and tools along the top and then mark with a tick or a cross if each tool will address the objective. This provides you with a systematic and clear way of selecting techniques and tools and makes sure that they are linked to the objectives. There is sometimes a danger of people using inappropriate techniques or tools or too many of them to address the same question. This process of selection is recommended to avoid these dangers.

There are many different tools and techniques and some of them are included within this toolkit. You may want to collect other ideas and add them to your toolkit. You may also want to create your own techniques and tools or devise a technique that is a combination of the ones shown here. The list can be endless and using and creating these techniques can be exciting.

The most important thing though is not to lose sight of your objectives in the process.

Checklist: Techniques and tools

- ✓ Does the technique or tool you use allow you to achieve your objectives?
- ✓ Do you have the resources that you need?
- ✓ Do you need to provide training in the technique?
- ✓ Can you say why you have decided to use that particular technique or tool?
- ✓ Can you reflect on the process after you have used it and note any changes that you would make in the future?

Checklist: Group work

- ✓ When appropriate draw up ground rules with the group and use icebreakers at the start of a session
- ✓ Use closing exercises at the end of a session
- ✓ Make the sessions fun!
- ✓ Prepare well
- ✓ Make sure the layout of the room is appropriate before people arrive
- ✓ Make sure the timing of the group is appropriate
- ✓ Work out a timeline for the activities and group work and allow time for breaks and refreshment
- ✓ Give enough time so that exercises do not need to be rushed and avoid spending too long on one activity or question so that people do not lose their concentration
- ✓ Vary the size of the groups if doing a number of group work activities and have different mixes of people in the groups
- ✓ Be flexible but keep the time structured
- ✓ Include different exercises to keep the group interested and if you feel the group is losing interest be flexible and consider reordering the activities
- ✓ Explain the aims of the session at the beginning and also explain the aims of each individual exercise before each exercise is done
- ✓ Evaluate the exercises to assess their effectiveness and gather feedback from the group
- ✓ Be sure that the exercises are appropriate for the age group and experience of the group and consider adapting them if necessary – have appropriate adaptations (e.g. making the exercises appropriate for older and younger groups already thought out and prepared for in advance)
- ✓ Check your pace - too fast or too slow and you will lose the group's interest
- ✓ Get people moving - don't expect them to sit in the one place for the whole session. Activities should involve some variation in activities and modes of communication.
- ✓ At the end of the session show appreciation for the group's contribution and explain about the feedback process

Further information:

Drinkwise (1997) Report on the Young Citizens' Conference 17th March 1997, Health Promotion Department, Lothian Health, Edinburgh Tel: 0131-536-9451

Guy, S. and Inglis, A. (1999) Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) notes February 1999 International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London Tips for Trainers: Introducing the 'H-Form' – a method for monitoring and evaluation

McGlinchey, S. (2000) Voices for Change, Save the Children

Morrison, C. and Halliday, S. (2000) Working in participation No. 5 EcoCity A model for children's participation in the planning and regeneration of their local environment Published by Children in Scotland

Pretty, J., Guijt, I., Thompson, J., Scoones, I. (1995) Participatory Learning and Action: A trainers guide, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London

Quigley, P. and Kelly, K. The Rights Stuff! An education resource on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A partnership publication between Development Education for Youth, Amnesty International and Trocaire

6 notes

Testing, testing one two three. What is the best way of recording information when you are doing a consultation? What factors should you consider when making this decision? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the available methods of recording? These are some of the questions that this section of the toolkit will address.

Many people may be involved in recording the consultation information and the methods and tools you use must be suitable for everyone involved to minimise error and technical problems. Consider the things you want to avoid during the recording phase of the consultation. These are some of the comments you do not want to hear during this phase of the consultation:

"I forgot to turn the tape recorder on!"

"We have a technical problem"

"It was a good interview but I can't make sense of my notes now"

"I have somehow recorded The Private Life of Plants over the teenage sexual health video"

Firstly, decide how you are going to record the information at the planning stage of the consultation. Depending on the approach and method/s you have chosen, different options are available. Accuracy and efficiency in recording are essential. It is a waste of time and money if the consultation methods are well planned but the recording methods are inappropriate or inadequate. Always remember the importance of good recording and stress its importance to the people you are working with.

Factors to consider

When planning which recording method to use it can help to consider the questions: Who? What? Why? When? How?

❑ **Who?**

Consider who will be doing the recording and the possible training that may be required (e.g. professional interviewers, young people's peer groups, self-completed questionnaires etc.). Also consider whom the data is for and who is doing the analysis or report writing. Is the data in an accessible form for the analysis or report writing stage? If a report is needed think about practical ways of improving the process of transferring the data to the person/people doing the writing (e.g. very clearly labelled and dated audio-tapes, clearly labelled flipcharts, stick on any post-its onto flipchart following workshops). Also consider who will read the report (e.g. would they prefer data in terms of quotes or statistical tables?).

❑ **What?**

Consider what is being recorded and what will not be recorded. What level of detail do you want? Is it appropriate to take notes or may important detail be missed or misrepresented or seen out of context? Do you need to standardise what will be recorded so that information can be compared? If you are using audiotapes does the whole session need recording or are you going to use visual techniques and tools within the session where information is best recorded in another way?

❑ **Why?**

Consider why you are recording the information. When thinking about the methods of recording again return to your objectives and ask 'is this the most appropriate way of recording in light of these objectives.' You may want to record different sections of the consultation in different ways depending on the objectives of each section. There are advantages of using different methods to record the same information (e.g. during a focus group discussion you could use audio-tapes, video and visual diagrams to complement each other). This can be useful for cross-checking data thus increasing its reliability and accuracy.

❑ **When?**

Consider when you are going to collect and record the data, information or ideas. For example, is the time of year or day appropriate? There is little point organising consultations and sending out questionnaires to schools or clubs during the summer holidays. The response rate for a focus group with young people may be lower if it is set on the same night as another event. Build in enough time for this.

❑ **How?**

Consider how the ideas and information will be recorded, how the data will be analysed or written up and taken forward to the next stage. It can also be useful to decide how the information will be stored and for how long. For example, information can be recorded through standardised data forms, audiocassettes, videos, diagrams and/or note taking.

These are some of the main practical factors to consider when planning how to record information during a consultation exercise:

Practical recording

Straightforward

- Ensure that the method you use is straightforward, efficient and easy to use by the people doing the recording.
- Make sure you give people who are doing the recording clear instructions and if necessary training. This is especially important if using technical equipment.
- Ensure the instructions relating to questionnaires and interviews are clear.

Technical issues

- Consider that you may need some technical support during the consultation and build this into the overall budget.
- Avoid using equipment that you are unfamiliar with. It is better to use a simple and reliable way of collecting and recording information than an unfamiliar method that has the potential to cause technical problems.
- Carry instruction manuals for more complex equipment and test recording equipment before starting a workshop.
- Take a set of spares (e.g. camera battery, film, microphone battery) and additional equipment that you may need (e.g. extension lead).
- Have a back up plan if there is a technical failure (e.g. if there is a power cut I have some batteries for the tape recorder).

Time

- The time scale for the consultation may not be ideal. Very often it is shorter than you would like – along with the budget! Select the most appropriate methods of recording for the time available (e.g. you may not want to use a method that relies on transcribing hours of audio-tape if the consultation responses need to be submitted next month).
- As a general guide one hour of audio-tape requires 10 hours of transcribing time. The visual recording methods can be used very effectively when the time available is very limited.

Cost

- Take into account the costs of recording and the data analysis or presentation necessary for each method during the planning stage. It can be useful to get quotes to have this done outwith an organisation (e.g. data input, transcription, video editing).
- Consider different cost saving mechanisms and build them into the design. It can be useful to have a cost saving brainstorming session during the planning stage of the consultation.
- Ensure that expensive recording equipment (e.g. video camera) is insured.

Accuracy and reliability

- Some methods of recording are more intrusive than other methods. For example sometimes people can feel uncomfortable about being videoed and although it records a discussion fully if the people behave differently it is not always reliable (e.g. what remains unsaid as a result of the recording method used?).
- Consider, if you or someone else needs to return to the data in the future, and whether the data storage adequate? (e.g. do not use pencil on questionnaires that are to be stored).
- Using different methods to complement each other can overcome some of these accuracy and reliability issues.

Communication and feedback

- Consider how long it will take to process the recorded data and if there are any ways to increase the speed of giving participants feedback. For example, if you are doing a community appraisal you could have an exhibition immediately after or during the consultation of all the ideas and comments in a local venue.
- It is better to give feedback as soon as possible after the consultation and this does not have to be in the final format.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different recording methods? You could write a toolkit just on this topic: therefore a summary table of the main methods and their advantages and limitations are given here. You could photocopy the table and add other points as you use different methods.

Getting it down - Advantages and disadvantages

Type of recording	Examples	Advantages	Disadvantages and limitations
Response schedules or pre-designed answer sheets	Questionnaires of different types	Same data format is recorded for all interviews Information is usually straightforward to analyse Raw data can be accessed easily for checking and clarification Not dependent on expensive technical equipment Suitable for peer surveys	Unexpected answers may be difficult to analyse Very dependent on people being able to write and fill in forms Printing or photocopying costs can be expensive
Computer- based recording methods	Computer-based consultations Interviewers using computer-based questionnaires (e.g. telephone survey)	Data input completed at the data collection stage therefore creating a database for analysis is easier Can involve people from a wide spatial area	Dependent on computer support Can be expensive Technical problems possible (e.g. computer viruses)
Audio recording	Individual interviews Focus groups Debates	Full transcripts of interview possible Accessible to independent analysis because the primary materials are available for study by others If there is enough equipment children and young people can interview and audio tape each other Quotations are a powerful way of transferring and communi-cating information and ideas	Facilitation skills required Can be intrusive (probably less than video) Post interview analysis is costly and time consuming (i.e. transcribing tapes) Possibility of technical faults leading to loss of information

Video recording	Individual interviews Focus groups Participatory Appraisal (PA) Citizens' Juries Debates Role play	Full transcript of the interview is possible and non-verbal data can be recorded Accessible to independent viewing and analysis Video equipment has recently reduced in cost Young people generally like being involved in the filming process and if enough equipment children and young people can film each other A short well made video can have a great impact when transferring information back to policy makers	Intrusive – some individuals find the camera to be threatening and may not wish to participate or it may alter the flow of the interview Some participants may be unwilling to commit personal or controversial information to tape Can be expensive Possibility of technical faults leading to loss of information
Visual diagrams	Participatory Appraisal Focus groups Individual interviews	Easy to record information in a structured way Low cost as few resources are needed Can be used in any setting (e.g. inside or outside) If participants record information themselves (e.g. on visual diagrams, self-completed surveys) there is less potential for interviewer bias Useful for all age groups	Facilitation skills required Depending on the number and size can be difficult to store
Written notes	During an individual interview or focus group discussion	Low cost Simple	Can be unreliable and lead to inaccuracies; things can be misinterpreted and the interviewer's priorities and concerns can easily influence their record. Some data may be omitted Not suitable for independent analysis
Visual arts based methods of recording	Photography Pictures Collage Cartoons Murals Banners Quilts	Visual and creative Can have a great impact when communicating ideas to policy makers Suitable for giving exhibitions	Can be difficult to store Needs support to reproduce in report format Often needs experienced arts workers

Activity 8: Testing! Testing!

Complete the following recording planning table before starting the consultation. If you find that you have more disadvantages than advantages for a particular recording method consider selecting another method.

Stage of the consultation	*The recording methods that you plan to use*	*Advantages*	*Disadvantages*	*Why have you selected this method?*	*Resources or training needed*

Checklist: Getting it down

- ✓ Who will be doing the recording? Will they need briefing or training?
- ✓ What will you be recording?
- ✓ Why have you selected this recording method?
- ✓ Have you considered the costs, time and resources needed?
- ✓ Have you considered how the data will be stored?
- ✓ Are there any technical issues to consider?
- ✓ Will the recording method you use be accurate and reliable?

Further information

Orna, E. and Stevens, G. (1995) Managing information for research, Open University Press, Buckingham

An accessible and practical book targeted at first-time researchers, which contains useful information which can be applied to data recording and organisation when doing a consultation exercise

7 notes

Communicating ideas

Communicating ideas and information from children and young people to decision and policy makers forms an essential ingredient of effective consultation. The information transferred to the next stage needs to be clearly presented and accurately reflect the children and young people's views. To do this you may want to use a combination of methods and you may want to involve young people in the process (e.g. design, making a presentation etc). Some of the methods you may want to consider include:

- Reports
- Graphs and summary tables
- Posters
- Presentations
- Computer websites
- Power point presentations
- Video
- Audio-tape
- Press release format
- Drama
- Newsletter formats
- Summary letters written by young people
- Visual forms e.g. art or photography
- Visual diagrams and summaries
- Exhibitions

Case Study

Voices on Video

The Lord Provost's Commission on Social Exclusion

Young Niddrie Health Team were asked to give evidence to the Lord Provost's Commission on Social Exclusion about issues affecting young people and social exclusion. When asked to participate in the hearings some members of the group were anxious and for this reason a worker made a video with the young people, recording their views and took their voices on video to the Commission. This video made a very strong impact on the Commissioners, as it showed a group of young people describing social, economic and environmental problems in their community. Scenes of the local area were also included (e.g. boarded up areas, concrete playgrounds, shops where the young people felt they were unfairly treated etc.)
Commissioners were very moved by the openness, honesty, intelligence and insight of the group of young people. The main points of the video were also recorded in a report, which was then used as part of the final report Onecity (City of Edinburgh Council, 2000). In this case the use of video was an extremely effective medium for consultation with young people.
It enabled young people who might otherwise not feel able to be involved in the consultation process to participate and share their feelings. The Lord Provost's Commission felt the video was a very powerful tool and was extremely effective in giving young people a voice on the issues of social exclusion and for giving the Commissioners positive recommendations for inclusion.

Further information : Onecity: The Lord Provost's Commission on Social Exclusion Final Report June 2000 Published by The City of Edinburgh Council

Reaching the end

There are a number of points to check when you are reaching the end of the consultation and these include ways of evaluating the consultation process. You can use tools in the Techniques and Tools section to do this (e.g. evaluation wheels. H-forms), you can have a debriefing meeting and complete reflective evaluation forms.

Activity 9: Reflections

A simple evaluation form is included here for you to photocopy if needed.

Consultation title: .....

Starting and finishing date of consultation: .....

Area or organisation: .....

Date: .....

Questions	Reflective comments...
What were the consultation objectives?	
To what extent were the objectives of the consultation met?	
How many people did you consult with and what was the age range?	
What worked well during the consultation?	
What did not work well or what problems did you encounter?	
If you were doing the consultation again what changes would you make?	
Are there any other comments you want to make?	

Checklist: Getting the message across

- ✓ Who are you transferring the information to?
- ✓ Have you chosen the most suitable way of transferring the information?
- ✓ Have you found out as much as you can about what is wanted and needed?
- ✓ Have you considered the timing of release (e.g. if to the Parliament not during the summer recess)?
- ✓ If the information is in report form is it easy to read, are the views of children and young people accurately represented?
- ✓ Are you going to include a summary (advantages: adds to the accessibility of the report. Disadvantages: people may only read the summary and not the detailed comments)
- ✓ Consider if the document makes you want to pick it up and read it?
- ✓ To what extent can you use pictures and diagrams to summarise information?
- ✓ What are the most important points that you want to make?
- ✓ Is it presented in an interesting and accessible form?
- ✓ Have you considered involving children and young people in this process?
- ✓ Is the document confidential or restricted circulation or can a copy be put in the library?
- ✓ Have you made sure that individuals cannot be identified (e.g. names) because of the confidentiality issues?
- ✓ Have you considered other ways of transferring information (e.g. videotape, audiotape)? Check that the form is appropriate before producing.
- ✓ Have you included enough in your budget for this stage?
- ✓ Have you included your contact details?
- ✓ Give opportunities for children and young people to feedback to policy makers and think about the different ways of doing this
- ✓ Thank people and let participants know what the findings of the consultation will be used for

Checklist: Reaching the end

- ✓ Have you given participants feedback?
- ✓ Have you reflected on the consultation process and documented what worked well and what did not work as well?
- ✓ Have you considered asking for feedback on information you transferred (e.g. was it accessible? What did policy makers think of the document? Could you have presented it differently? etc.)
- ✓ Is the consultation process well documented e.g. if you were to change jobs would someone else be able to pick up where you left off
- ✓ Have you considered what may be available if children or young people want to be involved further?
- ✓ Is there a mechanism in place whereby you are kept informed of any changes that are to take place as a result of the consultation?

Who are you trying to influence?

There are many bodies, organisations or groups that you could be trying to influence. These could include:

- Government/Scottish Executive
- Scottish Parliament
- Local authorities
- Health Boards/Trusts
- Quasi-autonomous national (or non) government(al) organisations or quangos
- Community Councils
- Social Inclusion Partnerships

Case Study

Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP)

"I want a youth parliament to work. I want it to include young people from all backgrounds and to have a defined relationship with the Scottish Parliament itself"
Henry McLeish

A voice for young people is being created through the development of a Scottish Youth Parliament which aims to include young people from all backgrounds and have a defined relationship with the Scottish Parliament itself providing a channel for MSPs to listen to young people's views. Connect Youth is a national network connecting Youth Forums and Youth Congresses from 28 local authorities and national voluntary youth organisations.

What is the SYP?
It is a national youth voice for all young people in Scotland regardless of their background. The idea for a youth parliament developed from the 'One Night Stand' Connect Youth Conference on the 26th/27th of November 1998 where young people from all over Scotland met with Henry McLeish the then Scottish Minister for Devolution.

Why does it exist and what does it hope to achieve?
To promote equality for all young people and seek openings to influence change. It is an opportunity for a political voice for Scottish young people.

Why was it established?
To give young people an opportunity to participate in Scottish politics and connect local networks including local youth forums, national youth organisations and individuals to enable their collective voice to be heard.

When and where will meetings be held?
Three times a year at various locations throughout Scotland

Who will listen?
It is hoped that the Scottish Youth Parliament will act as a sounding board for Scottish Parliament business, highlight and take action on youth issues and be a real voice for young people at national and international level. The media, decision-makers and service providers will also listen to the voice of the SYP.

Where can I find out more?
The membership is aged between 14-25 years. There are local youth fora and councils all over Scotland and if you want to find out about your local contact call 0131-313-2488.

The structure of government in Scotland

The structure of the Parliament, and Government in Scotland as a whole, is similar to that of other countries around the democratic world. There is a **Government** (the Scottish Executive made up of the First Minister, Scottish Ministers, Scottish Law Officers and supported by Junior Scottish Ministers) which proposes laws and deals with certain areas of responsibility, and a **Legislature** (the MSPs themselves) which debates, amends, and votes on new legislation.

However unlike many other systems of government around the world there is only one chamber for legislation (a unicameral system); many countries have a two chambers (a bicameral) system, e.g. House of Commons and the House of Lords, U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

Much of the work that would have been done by a second chamber instead takes place in a number of specialised **Committees**, made up of MSPs. There may be opportunities for members of the public to contribute to the work of these committees. There is also a **Presiding Officer**, with a similar role to the Speaker of the House of Commons, i.e. in ensuring the daily business of the Parliament is conducted in an orderly and efficient manner. There are also two Deputy Presiding Officers.

The Scottish Executive

The aim of the Scottish Executive is to work with Scottish Ministers to improve the well being of Scotland and its people. Further information on the structure of the executive can be found on their web site: www.scotland.gov.uk

The Scottish Parliament

- What is a parliament?
- The powers of the Scottish Parliament
- How the Parliament works
- Some operational features of the Parliament
- The structure of Government in Scotland

What is a parliament?

A parliament is made up of elected representatives, in other words people who have been chosen by members of the public to act on their behalf, Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). The main job of a parliament is debating issues and deciding upon new laws. The representatives can also ask questions of Ministers, and may sometimes be able to propose new laws themselves. They will be expected to look after the interests of all their constituents, whether or not they voted for them at election time.

The powers of the Scottish Parliament

The main consequence of devolution is that the Scottish Parliament becomes responsible for most domestic policy matters, while international matters, and those that would have a "knock-on" effect throughout the UK, remain at UK level. Key examples are given below, although the full list of devolved and reserved matters is lengthier.

Key areas of devolved responsibility	Examples of issues
Health	nurses' pay and conditions
Education	school standards
Transport	road safety
Housing	public sector housing strategy
Training	lifelong learning, youth training
Economic development	regeneration of industrial areas
Agriculture	animal welfare, crofting
Environment	protecting Scotland's environment

Main Areas still covered by Westminster (reserved matters):

Policy area	Examples of issues
Constitutional issues	electoral systems, devolution and the Union
Foreign and Defence policy	European integration, Armed Forces
Most economic policy	inflation, unemployment
Social Security	levels of benefit
Medical ethics	embryology research, abortion, genetics

How the Parliament works

There are four main operating principles of the Parliament:

1. There should be a **sharing of power** between the people of Scotland, the MSPs and the Executive (Ministers). No single person or group should be too powerful.
2. **Accountability**: politicians will be **accountable** to the general public, and senior politicians (Ministers) will be accountable to MSPs.
3. The Parliament should be **accessible, open, responsive**, and should encourage people to **take part** in decision making.
4. The Parliament should encourage and promote **equal opportunities** for all.

Some operational features of the Parliament

- The Parliament normally sits in full session (plenary) on Wednesday afternoons and Thursdays. The other days are used for Committees, and Party and Constituency business.
- There are currently 16 Committees, covering various subjects such as Education, Europe, the Environment, Standards (i.e. conduct of MSPs), etc. Their main functions are to look carefully at proposals from the Government, to take evidence from experts, to keep an eye on the Scottish Executive, and potentially to propose new laws themselves.
- The Parliament is intended to be family friendly, with regular working hours and the provision of crèche facilities.
- It should provide and encourage access to all sections of society. The Public Information Service, Visitor Centre, the guided tours by Committee Attendants and the Education Service are designed to promote knowledge and understanding of the Parliament, and encourage greater participation and awareness of citizenship values among the people of Scotland.
- There are currently 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs)
- The majority of MSPs were elected to represent local constituencies by a First Past the Post system, as in previous General Elections.
- Some MSPs were elected from regional lists, and in a different way, which more closely links the number of votes each Party gets to the number of MSPs they end up with.

Libraries

The Scottish Parliament has established a network of partner public libraries in every constituency in Scotland. The 73 Partner Libraries act as a resource for members of the public, allowing them direct access to a comprehensive and up to date information resource on the Parliament. They also act as an enquiry point for the public about the Parliament and the information and documentation it produces. Additional Education Service resources are made available in all partner libraries as they are produced.

Contact: The Libraries Liaison Officer for the Parliament, on 0131-348-5357 to find out where your Partner Library is.

Further information: Scottish Parliament

Education Service
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP
email: education.service@scottish.parliament.uk
Phone: x 85395/4

Public Information and Visits (including factfiles)
X 85411
Address as above
Telephone enquiry line: 0131 348 5000
Local call rate: 0845 278 1999
email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

The Scottish Parliament Web site:
www.scottish.parliament.uk
House of Commons Web site:
www.parliament.uk
House of Commons Education Unit web site:
www.explore.parliament.uk

Shaping Scotland's Parliament: Report of the Consultative Steering Group, Stationery Office 1999

Scotland's Parliament: White Paper 1997

Case Study

Sense of Community TAG Theatre Company

"I learned about how a community is run, including trade, profit, business and generally how tough it is to run a community" Participant (aged 11)

"The Congress helped the children realise that they are valued members of our society – their thoughts and ideas are very important and they have the right to express them freely" Teacher

"People keep coming back and saying, 'When are you doing it again'" TAG

"The Sense of Community project was very successful. It far exceeded our expectations and seemed to grow and grow" TAG Education Director

Background

TAG is Scotland's national theatre for young people and aims to give young people in Scotland the opportunity to enjoy and participate in the excitement of live theatre. The company was established in 1967 and is funded by the Scottish Arts Council, Glasgow City Council and other local authorities in Scotland. The Sense of Community Project organised by TAG formed part of a four-year theatre and drama programme called Making the Nation. This project was interactive and aimed at upper primary children (9-11 years). It involved role-play together with debating issues of importance to young people across Scotland, which took place in the Main Chamber of the Scottish Parliament (Congress of Nations).

Objectives

- To explore issues relating to government and democracy
- To engage young people in drama based activities and to make arts and politics more accessible to children and teachers
- To make links to the Scottish Parliament and excite young people about their place in Scotland's new democracy
- To develop pupils' skills in teamwork, negotiation and debate
- To develop teachers' skills in using drama, role-play and the Internet as teaching tools
- To forge links between schools throughout Scotland, explore innovative use of new technologies in relation to drama projects and encourage other cross-curricular approaches

Who was involved?

The project took place in 25 primary schools across Scotland between August and December 1999. It involved over 600 pupils and teachers. The participating schools were from both urban and rural areas. Six Local Authorities supported the project (Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Glasgow and Moray) booking Sense of Community packages for 5 schools (4 satellite schools and 1 core school). Two of the participating schools were special needs schools. Flyers and local authority links were used to advertise the project.

What did it involve?

- Teacher training: two days training on the use of drama and the Internet in the classroom
- A teaching resource pack
- A pack containing ideas for drama activities and research to support teachers throughout the project and facilitate help preparing young people for the Congress Day
- Drama workshops: Five schools received 4 monthly drama workshops with the TAG drama worker. There were 4 themes to the workshops (creating, running financing and celebrating a community)
- On-line support and development: a virtual newspaper supported classes by providing ideas and 'problems' for their community to develop and solve. It also provided a platform for participating schools to communicate and share ideas
- Congress of Nations: The culmination of the project was a three-day congress in Edinburgh at the Scottish Parliament with representatives from the participating schools involved in structured role-play exercises and meeting and discussing issues important to themselves with Ministers.

Methods

The project was based on theatre, role-play, workshops and debate.

Stage 1: Teachers were trained in drama and information technology. There were 25 schools across Scotland participating and each school sent two teachers for the training.

Stage 2: The teacher's pack and the provision of a special web site where teachers could download information and workshops each month was set up. Every school received drama workshops (two hours each) and the teachers built on this with information and tasks on line or with research tasks.

Stage 3: Congress of Nations (9th-11th December 1999) where young people were involved in a role-play and also discussing issues that mattered to them.

Case Study continued

Priorities for the young people attending the Congress

Top four priorities: Health, Sport and Leisure, Education, Homeless Young People

Other priorities: Safer streets, disabled people, the environment, schools dinners, work experience, the Youth Parliament, libraries and road safety

What worked well

- It was a long term project and this meant that ideas and suggestions could be incorporated into the project as it developed
- Teachers found using drama to explore issues with children and young people a very rewarding way of teaching (e.g. the project linked to the environmental studies section of the curriculum)
- The internet allowed a presence in the outlying areas
- Pupils who participated felt that the parliament was more about them and were excited that they were the first non MSP's to be in the parliament building
- The project raised the profile of TAG and publicised the education elements of the company
- People not normally involved in young people's theatre became involved and were interested in the process and parliament event (e.g. a number of MSPs including the Scottish Parliament's Presiding Officer David Steele)
- Access to the parliament building helped make it a great success
- TAG is experienced at dealing with school structures and this helped the process
- There was a lot of goodwill and the project captured people's imagination
- A strong team worked together to organise the event
- Part of the success was the long planning and preparation time with pupils (over 4 months). This was particularly important. It gave pupils the skills and language needed to express themselves, enabling them to maximise the opportunities and enjoy the day. They also practised being in role and this was considered important as it gave young people the confidence to be in role on the day.
- "The stars were the pupils" TAG Education Director

What did not work as well

- *Technology*

Some schools did not have the access to the technology. For example only 5 schools from 250 in one Local Authority had access to the Internet and this was a barrier. Some teachers were nervous of the technology needed for the project and this was generally because of lack of experience. It is anticipated that this barrier would not occur a few years from now.

- *The logistics*

There were some potential logistical problems on the day of the congress but the strong team involved in the organisational planning overcame these difficulties. The issues related to bringing 60 children aged 10-11 to Edinburgh and booking accommodation and hotels/arranging the food/bedtimes etc. were complex. There could have been more people in the team to help organise this section of the work.

Things TAG would have done differently

- Having a couple of teachers on board during the planning stage who could have given advice on issues related to taking children on trips way from home. This was mentioned at the debriefing session after the event.
- Not relying as heavily on information technology. This acted as a barrier to some teachers/schools. There were a lot of calls to TAG asking for assistance (e.g. downloading a web page) and this took quite a lot of time.

Thoughts for others

- Do not underestimate the numbers of people needed to plan the project
- "At TAG our priority is to build and develop a good process of working with children and young people. They benefit in many ways through the process of the work, which is not product based. The product or in this case the Day event was an excellent by-product of a thorough and effective process." TAG Education Director
- When measuring success think of all the small things that are important and these can be very difficult to measure (e.g. a child who says they are not becoming involved decided to become involved).
- Have a strong planning team who communicate and work well together
- Have a teacher on the planning team to advise over the legislation and regulations involved in taking children on trips away from home

Case Study continued

- Have a long planning stage to work with pupils and develop the skills needed
- Capture peoples' imagination
- Think through the logistics of the event in great detail with a group of people (i.e. try and anticipate any difficulties in advance and decide on possible solutions or people to be responsible for different sections of the running of the event on the day as well as before the event)
- Have a debriefing session after the event and discuss what worked well and what you would have done differently. Make a record of this.

The Sense of Community project has been written up into a report which includes an evaluation of the project and also a video of the Congress Day is available from TAG.

Further information: TAG Theatre Company, 18 Albion Street, Glasgow, G1 1LH Tel: 0141-552-4949 Fax: 0141-552-0666 Email: info@tag-theatre.co.uk

Local authorities

Local government in Scotland is represented collectively by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). Formed in 1975, COSLA exists to promote and protect the interests of councils in Scotland by providing a forum for discussion. COSLA communicates collective views of local authorities to central government, other bodies and the public. All councils in Scotland are members of COSLA.

Many local authorities are consulting effectively with children and young people about a wide range of issues (e.g. urban regeneration, Local Agenda 21, Children's Service Plans). Many local authorities also have youth strategies and youth forums.

Further information:

COSLA, Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5XZ Tel: 0131-474-9200 Fax: 0131-474-9292 Email: enquires@cosla.gov.uk

COSLA, (1998) Focusing on Citizens: A guide to approaches and methods, COSLA, Edinburgh

Case Study

Hand In Hand

Partnership plan for children's services in Stirling 1998-2000

"Children know more about what it is like being a child 'cause adults were children so long ago"
(child at an after-school club, quoted in Hand in Hand, 1998)

Stirling Council worked in partnership with children and young people, Forth Valley Health Board, Central Scotland Police, and the voluntary and private sector to produce a plan for children's services in Stirling. This plan was based on extensive consultation (group consulted was 5 years of age to early 20s) and the report Hand in Hand (Stirling Council, 1998) provides an outline of the plan and a summary of the findings and views.

The Children's Services Plan is based around six main themes:

- Welfare
- Environment
- Safety
- Justice
- Opportunity
- Transitions

The plan covers a three-year period from 1 April 1998 to 31st March 2001. There are 23,650 children and young people in Stirling Council area.

Further information: Hand in Hand a partnership plan for children's services in Stirling 1998-2000. Published by Stirling Council in 1998

Policy makers comment

Policy makers were asked to comment on the issues that they considered important for all policy makers to consider when planning to consult with children and young people:

"Be clear about what you want to ask and why you are asking it"

"Make sure the language is accessible to children and young people"

"Young people are frightening - they are radical, unrestrained, anarchic. All of this is GOOD but it does create an inherent resistance to getting them involved - life is much simpler if we don't" (On the barriers to consultation)

"The building of structures and mechanisms to engage young people would be a good thing - while it would not overcome the fear factor, it would remove the 'I don't know how to do this' figleaf"

"Children can be affected by more things than might be immediately obvious – for example planning decisions might affect children's play"

Comments on consultation from policy makers

Checklist for policy makers

Preparation and planning

- ✓ Have you formulated clear aims and objectives for the consultation?
- ✓ Are you realistic about what can be done in the time framework?
- ✓ Can you be specific and prioritise the most important aspects of the consultation (e.g. questions, sections, age groups etc)?
- ✓ Do not assume there is a 'right' age to consult (e.g. consult children and young people of all ages)
- ✓ Talk to and take advice from individuals, organisations and local authorities who have experience of consulting with children and young people

Commitment

- ✓ To what extent are you prepared to act on the results or explain which areas are not being acted on?
- ✓ To what extent will you listen to what young people have to say even if it is not what you want to hear?
- ✓ Consider consulting young people on a wide range of issues

Structures and distribution

- ✓ Encourage the building of structures and mechanisms whereby young people can more easily be involved
- ✓ Consider ways in which the existing structures through which children and young people are consulted could be supported or improved (e.g. advertise the Scottish Youth Parliament and ensure it is very accessible)
- ✓ Consider the distribution process of consultation papers and send material to a wide range of organisations giving a reasonable time framework
- ✓ Consider a variety of ways of sending out information for consultation. For example documents are currently put on the web but they rely on schools or young people accessing the site. It may be appropriate to have a specific children and young persons' website

Checklist for policy makers continued

Language and layout

- ✓ Have you kept written information simple and presented in clear steps and stages?
- ✓ To what extent can complicated language, phrases and jargon terms be avoided?
- ✓ If you use a term or concept that can be difficult to define (e.g. social inclusion, sustainable development) do you also include a definition or glossary of technical terms?
- ✓ Consider the layout and design of any written material and make it look attractive and interesting
- ✓ Is it possible to pilot the material and written information with a range of workers and young people (different age groups) before sending out?
- ✓ Keep consultation documents and/or questionnaires short and specific
- ✓ Make questions relevant and ask one question at a time
- ✓ Use short sentences
- ✓ Include summaries of the main points
- ✓ Make the document layout attractive

Being inclusive

- ✓ Be inclusive and do not assume that everyone can read and write (consider including colour-coded diagrams and exercises suitable for people who cannot read or write)
- ✓ Be aware that different agencies work with many different young people (e.g. less confident, less opportunities) and some agencies do not have direct access to groups of young people

Time and resources

- ✓ Is it possible to give an estimate of the resources, support and funding needed for the consultation and be realistic in terms of the time needed (staff time and enough time to do the consultation, time for raising awareness and confidence building, preparation and piloting time)?
- ✓ Can you give as much time as possible for the consultation process (e.g. enough time to do the consultation, time for raising awareness and confidence building, preparation and piloting time)?
- ✓ Can you plan ahead as much as possible in terms of issuing documents for consultation (timetable and information) and avoid peak holiday seasons?
- ✓ Where possible can you provide some materials and information that will be useful for preparing and informing young people about the issues? Can these be sent out in plenty of time or stages or be provided on a website for people to down load?

Final format

- ✓ Be clear about what form you would like the consultation information (e.g. qualitative or quantitative). To what extent are you open to different ideas and ways of transferring views and opinions (e.g. video, arts based methods)?

Feedback

- ✓ Can you give feedback to workers and organisations on the consultation process including the reports and materials that are submitted following the consultation (e.g. what did you like? what was most useful? etc.)
- ✓ Give feedback on what has and has not been changed and why
- ✓ Is it possible to set up a mechanism whereby children and young people are kept informed on what is being done or what has changed since the consultation (e.g. webpage, newsletters)

General points

- ✓ Do not be afraid to engage and consult with children and young people

Principles and guidelines

Aims

Always make the aims and objectives of the consultation specific. Make it clear who is funding the consultation and make your role within the consultation process explicit.

Consent

During a consultation everyone should have the right to contribute as much or as little as they choose. If you are consulting with children and young people in a school setting speak to the head teacher to arrange permission. Where consultation involves research (e.g. a questionnaire) with persons under sixteen years of age consent should be obtained from parents or from those 'in loco parentis'.

Unrealistic expectations

Do not raise unrealistic expectations about what can and cannot change. It is important to be clear about the boundaries of the consultation and to be aware of the dangers and disappointments associated with raising hopes for change. Be aware of the balance between realistic and unrealistic expectations in terms of both what will change and the time scale of change.

Be inclusive

Include a wide range of children and young people in the consultation (e.g. ages, background, experiences etc.)

Honesty and openness

Be honest and open about your role in the consultation process and explain what will happen with the ideas and information during the next stage of the consultation.

Confidentiality

Be aware of confidentiality issues if you are publishing participants' ideas and comments and explain that individual people will not be identified. If you are keeping a record of names and contact details so that you can return to talk to people at a later date explain the reasons for this and the difference between confidentiality and anonymity. In the event that confidentiality and/or anonymity cannot be guaranteed the participants must be warned of this in advance.

Protection

Consider the types of questions you are asking and make sure they are neutral and that you are happy about asking them of children and young people. Use your own judgements and do not be afraid to voice your concerns to other people planning the consultation exercise if you consider the questions to be inappropriate or ambiguous.

Feedback

Give people feedback following the consultation. This does not have to be a full report. It is better to give feedback shortly after the consultation if you can even if this means it is a summary sheet of all the main points. Consider different ways of giving feedback (e.g. exhibitions, events).

Transfer

Transfer the views and ideas effectively to policy and decision-makers. A consultation is not worthwhile if people's views and voices are not heard. Decide on the most effective and appropriate way of transferring the findings and ideas to the next stage. Consider different ways of transferring ideas to the next stage in the consultation process (e.g. involving children and young people themselves either directly or through video). Do not be afraid to follow a different path as sometimes more unusual and creative ways of doing this can have the most impact.

Checklist: Getting it right

- ✓ Have you made your aims and objectives clear to the participants?
- ✓ Do you have consent (if needed) to interview children?
- ✓ Have you prepared interviewers on how to deal with difficult information if it is raised?
- ✓ If young researchers are involved in facilitating groups or conducting the consultation are training and support structured for them within the design?
- ✓ Have you made issues of confidentiality clear?
- ✓ Are you checking that you are not raising unrealistic expectations?
- ✓ Are you remaining neutral when you are asking questions and listening to answers?
- ✓ Are you happy with the questions you are asking (e.g. are they appropriate/jargon-free/clearly linked to the objectives)?
- ✓ Have you considered the basic safety precautions (e.g. mobile phones)?
- ✓ If doing a community survey have you informed the police?
- ✓ Do you need identification cards?
- ✓ Do you have a mechanism to give participants feedback?
- ✓ Do you have a clear framework planned to transfer the ideas and information from the consultation to the policy makers?
- ✓ Is the consultation being done with the genuine intent to listen to children and young people's views?

Further information

Alderson, P. (1995) Listening to children: Children, ethics and social research, Barnardos

Kirby (1999) Involving Young Researchers - How to enable young people to design and conduct research, Save the Children

British Psychological Society (BSP), Ethical principles for conducting research with human participants

The following checklists provide a guide on the types of issues to consider when doing a consultation with children and young people. A separate checklist for policy makers to consider when organising consultation exercises is also included. All points may not be relevant to all consultations. This is not an exhaustive list – keep adding to it.

Summary checklist: Consulting children and young people

Participation, attitudes and behaviour

- ✓ Is the consultation sincere in its aims to consult children and young people?
- ✓ Are you genuinely interested in what children and young people have to contribute?
- ✓ Will children's and young people's views and ideas be listened to?
- ✓ Do participating children have a real possibility of changing and/or influencing the decision making process?
- ✓ To what extent can you create an open and participatory atmosphere?
- ✓ Can you remain neutral and throw out your preconceptions?
- ✓ Can you be both flexible and structured in the consultation process?
- ✓ Have you considered issues relating to attitudes and behaviour?
- ✓ What level of participation do you feel is appropriate for the consultation?

Planning and preparing

- ✓ Have you written the objectives for the consultation?
- ✓ Are these objectives clear, specific and realistic?
- ✓ How many children or young people are you aiming to consult with?
- ✓ What age group are you targeting?
- ✓ Are you targeting a specific group of young people or a wide cross section?
- ✓ Have you decided how to access or recruit young people?
- ✓ Are you going to involve young researchers?
- ✓ Have you decided on the approach method/s you are going to use?
- ✓ Do the methods, tools and techniques that you are planning to use allow you to achieve the objectives?
- ✓ Do you have a rationale for the approach and method/s you are going to use?
- ✓ Have you drawn out a timeline for the consultation?
- ✓ Have you decided how the information is going to be recorded?
- ✓ Have you considered any potential problems that may arise?
- ✓ Will the consultation be attractive to young people?

Getting it right

- ✓ Have you made your aims and objectives clear to participants?
- ✓ Do you have consent (if needed) to interview children?
- ✓ Have you prepared interviewers on how to deal with difficult situations?
- ✓ If young researchers are involved in facilitating groups is training and support available?
- ✓ Have you considered confidentiality issues?
- ✓ Are you checking that you are not raising unrealistic expectations?
- ✓ Are you remaining neutral when asking questions and listening to answers?
- ✓ Are you happy with the questions you are asking (e.g. are they appropriate/jargon-free/clearly linked to the objectives)?
- ✓ Have you considered basic safety precautions (e.g. mobile phones)?
- ✓ If doing a community survey have you informed the police?
- ✓ Do you need identification cards or letters?
- ✓ Do you have a mechanism to give participants feedback?
- ✓ Do you have a clear framework to transfer the ideas and information from the consultation to policy makers?
- ✓ Is the consultation done with the genuine intent to listen to children and young people? Have you considered children's rights?

Getting it down

- ✓ Who will be doing the recording? Will they need briefing or training?
- ✓ What will you be recording?
- ✓ Why have you selected this method of recording?
- ✓ Have you considered the costs, time and resources needed?
- ✓ Have you considered how the data will be stored?
- ✓ Are there any technical issues to consider?
- ✓ Will the recording method you use be accurate and reliable?

Summary checklist continued

Being inclusive

- ✓ Have you considered equal opportunities?
- ✓ Is the venue accessible? Is the setting appropriate?
- ✓ Have you considered the timing of the consultation or meeting?
- ✓ Have you considered practical issues (e.g. transport to the venue, crèche facilities etc.)?
- ✓ Is the preparation material and written information clear, easy to read and appropriate for the age group?
- ✓ Have you considered how to allow people to participate who may not be able to attend meetings?
- ✓ Do you have a system whereby someone who cannot read or write can contribute?
- ✓ Are you planning to involve people from a wide range of backgrounds?
- ✓ Do you need to have the consultation material translated into any other languages?
- ✓ Can you keep a tracking sheet or record (age, gender, where people live etc.) to ensure you speak to a wide range of people?

Doing a consultation

- ✓ Have you considered using more than one method to complement each other?
- ✓ Are you well prepared?
- ✓ Are you using quality staff or providing the necessary training and support?
- ✓ Are you consulting with young people from a range of backgrounds?
- ✓ Are you consulting with the correct people?
- ✓ Is your method of consultation appropriate for the information that is required?
- ✓ Listen and interpret in an open and honest way
- ✓ Have the questions been piloted?
- ✓ Have you considered the setting in which the consultation will take place?
- ✓ Have you looked at the detailed checklists for the individual methods?
- ✓ Do you have some flexibility in the time schedule for unforeseeable problems?
- ✓ Does the technique or tool you use allow you to achieve your objectives?
- ✓ Do you have the resources that you need?
- ✓ Do you need to provide training?
- ✓ Can you say why you have decided to use that particular method, technique or tool?
- ✓ Can you reflect on the process after you have used it and note any changes that you would make in the future?

Group work

- ✓ Where appropriate draw up ground rules and use icebreakers
- ✓ Make the sessions relaxed and enjoyable
- ✓ Make sure the layout of the room is appropriate before people arrive
- ✓ Make sure the timing of the session is appropriate
- ✓ Work out a timeline for the activities
- ✓ Give enough time so that exercises do not need to be rushed
- ✓ Vary the size of the groups and have different mixes of people in the groups
- ✓ Be flexible but keep the time structured
- ✓ Include different exercises to keep the group interested
- ✓ Explain the aims of the session and also the aims of each individual exercise
- ✓ Evaluate to assess effectiveness by gathering feedback from the group
- ✓ Be sure that the exercises are appropriate for the age group and experience of the group
- ✓ Check your pace - too fast or too slow and you will lose the group's interest
- ✓ Get people moving
- ✓ At the end of the session thank people and show appreciation for all contributions and explain the feedback process
- ✓ Events need to be interesting and the atmosphere relaxed but they do not need to be too expensive - the lower the cost the more people can be consulted
- ✓ Give feedback to young people quickly, you do not need to wait for the final document

Summary checklist continued

Getting the message across

- ✓ Who are you transferring the information to?
- ✓ Have you chosen the most suitable way of transferring the information?
- ✓ Have you found out as much as you can about what is wanted and needed?
- ✓ Have you considered the timing of release (e.g. if to the Parliament not during the summer recess)?
- ✓ If the information is in report form is it easy to read, are the views of children and young people accurately represented?
- ✓ Are you going to include a summary (advantages: adds to the accessibility of the report. Disadvantages: people may only read the summary and not the detailed comments)?
- ✓ Consider if the document makes you want to pick it up and read it?
- ✓ To what extent can you use pictures and diagrams to summarise information?
- ✓ What are the most important points that you want to make?
- ✓ Is it presented in an interesting and accessible form?
- ✓ Is the document confidential or restricted circulation or can a copy be put in the library?
- ✓ Have you made sure that individuals cannot be identified (e.g. names) because of the confidentiality issues?
- ✓ Have you considered other ways of transferring information (e.g. video tape, audio-tape)?
- ✓ Have you budgeted for this stage?
- ✓ Have you included your contact details?
- ✓ Have you given opportunities for children and young people to feedback to policy makers themselves?

Reaching the end

- ✓ Have you given participants feedback?
- ✓ Have you reflected on the consultation process and recorded what worked well and what did not work as well? Have you shared this with colleagues?
- ✓ Have you considered asking for feedback on information you transferred (e.g. was it accessible? What did policy makers think of the document? Could you have presented it differently? etc.)
- ✓ Is the consultation process well documented (e.g. if you were to change jobs would someone else be able to pick up where you left off)?
- ✓ Is there a mechanism in place whereby you are kept informed of any changes that are to take place as a result of the consultation?
- ✓ Have you thanked the children and young people and let them know what the findings of the consultation will be used for?

10 notes

Doing a consultation is a dynamic process. This toolkit covers the main stages in this process and is about ways of consulting with children and young people in an interesting, enjoyable and meaningful way.

Checklists are given for policy makers and those working directly with children and young people. This toolkit also gives suggestions for further reading and where to find additional resources. You can add to the document over time and therefore space has been left for you to index sheets that you may add.

As agreed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children and young people have the right to have their voices heard. Good consultation provides an opportunity to harness and implement many creative and inspirational ideas. It is important to be inclusive and encourage participation from a wide range of young people. A variety of approaches, methods, techniques and tools are covered in this toolkit and you can use different combinations of these to complement each other.

Effective consultation requires commitment to listen to what people have to say. The Scottish Executive is committed to listening to children and young people from all over Scotland through the Action Programme for Youth. We hope that you and children and young people get a lot out of the toolkit and that children and young people's voices are really heard in Scotland today.

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Learning and Teaching Scotland
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Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
Dunedin House, 25 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH4 3TP
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Save the Children
Haymarket House, 8 Clifton Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5DR
Tel: 0131-527-8200 Fax: 0131-527-8201 Email:
scotland@scfuk.org.uk

Scottish Executive Education Department
Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
Tel: (main switchboard): 0131-556-8400

Scottish Youth Parliament
c/o Connect Youth, Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace,
Edinburgh, EH12 5EZ Tel: 0131-313-2488 Fax: 0131-313-6800
Email: Connect_Youth@cls.dircon.co.uk

The Scottish Parliament. Edinburgh, EH99 1SP
Tel: 0131-348-5000 Local call rate: 0845-278-1999
Email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

Who Cares? Scotland
Oswald Street, Glasgow, G14 QR
Tel: 0141-400-6363 Email: who.cares.scotland@zetnet.co.uk

Young Scot
Rosebery House, 9 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5EZ
Tel: 0131-313-2488 Fax: 0131-313-6800 www.youngscot.org

YouthLink Scotland
Central Hall, West Tollcross, Edinburgh, EH3 9BP
Tel: 0131-229-0339 Fax: 0131-229-0339
Email: info@youthlink.co.uk

“We should have a say as it’s our future”
“It is a good idea to listen to us because we have lots of good ideas!”

Young people (aged 12)

“Attitude is everything. You can have the techniques and tools written like a recipe book but without the right attitude you won’t get anywhere”

Worker