



OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY



Shifting Power: New Frontiers in Youth Participation



11 - 12 June 2026

12th Biennial
International
Conference

UNESCO Child and
Family Research Centre,
University of Galway

#newfrontiersyouthparticipation

Book of Abstracts

Thursday 11th June – Schedule
Parallel Sessions 1.45pm – 3.15pm

Parallel Session 1: Boardroom	Meaningful Participation: Reflecting on Benefits, Barriers and Challenges
Benefits and Impact of Meaningful Youth Participation: Don't Let the Perfect Be the Enemy of the Good	Fidelma Costello, Kirsty Doyle and Anna Visser, Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office, Department of the Taoiseach
Aspects of Power and Participation for Collaborative Working for those with Care Experience – Influencing Policy and Research in the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE)	Dr. Caroline Duignan, Andrea Reilly, Jamie Adams, Shauna Dillon, Sophie Walsh, Care Experienced Expert Panel, Department of Children, Disability and Equality
Youth Participation and its Impact within Local Government Decision-Making: Forms, Conditions and Opportunities	Josh Harsant, formerly a PhD student at University of Huddersfield, UK
Authentic Youth Voice in Research: Reshaping Traditional Research Structures	Dónal Walsh, Davnet McEllin, Sara Ní Chuirreáin, Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board

Parallel Session 2: Auditorium	From Consultation to Co-Production
From Consultation to Co-Production: How Marginalised Young People Can Shape Digital Mental Health Policy in Ireland	Carmen Kealy, Courtney Potts, Alba Madrid-Cagigal, Maurice D. Mulvenna, Gary Donohoe, Siobhán O'Neill Margaret M. Barry, University of Galway
Placing Young People in the Driving Seat of their Mentoring Experience: 'MentorMe' - Foróige's Youth Initiated Mentoring Programme	Jill Murray, Mentoring Manager Foróige, Louise Tuffy, Mentoring Senior Youth Officer Foróige
Shifting the Balance: Embedding Power-Sharing Through Child and Youth Panels in Homelessness Services	Erica Monahan, Sandra Krysiak, Amy Canavan, Debbie Whelan, Hester Rodenhuis, Focus Ireland
Reconfiguring Power in Research with Children and Adolescents: From a Review of the International Scientific Literature to the Design of a Chilean Model for the School Context	Mahia Saracostti, Alfredo Lagunas, Isidora Apaolaza, UNESCO Chair on Childhood and Youth Well Being, Education and Society, Universidad de Chile

Parallel Session 3: G006	Inclusion, Equity and 'Seldom Heard' Voices
One Consultation, Five Different Approaches. For Seldom Heard Cohorts, are we Going Far Enough to Create an Equitable Approach?	Sharon Buckley, Hub na nÓg, Sarah Quigley, The National Participation Office
Increasing the Visibility and Influence of Children and Young People who Experience Domestic Violence and Abuse – A Participation Approach to Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse	Aine Costello, Sarah Rush, Stephanie Whyte, Dr. Grainne Hickey, Barnardos
Including the Voices of Young People with Physical Disabilities in Raising Awareness and Advocating for Greater Access and Inclusion in Social and Community Spaces	Ciara McGagh, Emma Ward, Youth Access Group, Youth Work Ireland Galway
Child Centred Justice: Support for Child Defendants in the Irish Court System	Karen Daly, Ombudsman for Children's Office

Parallel Session 4: G023	Adulthood, Power Imbalances and Resistance to Youth Participation
'Seen and not Heard': An Examination of Irish Youth Participation Policy and Experiences of Adulthood in Irish Youth Participation Structures	Katie Blain, Foróige, Prof. John Canavan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway
'The adult in the room' - Power and the Pursuit of Working Children's Knowledge	Dr. Antje Ruhmann, Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte
Can Learning from Adult Safeguarding Advance Critical Understandings of Youth Participation and Power?	Professor Caroline McGregor, Institute for Lifecourse and Society, University of Galway
Addressing Adulthood and Power Imbalances by Engaging Counter-power Activities and Participatory Research with Young People and their Allies	Dr Eileen Lauster, Post-Doctoral Researcher in Social Connectivity, Department of Engineering, Atlantic Technological University and Tutor, MA in Social Work, Political Science and Sociology, University of Galway

Parallel Session 5: G007	Youth as Knowledge Producers and Collaborators in Research
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Longitudinal Survey and Policy Design: Responding to Meaningful Youth Participation in Growing Up in Ireland	Dr. Eoin O'Mahony, Research and Evaluation Unit (Growing Up in Ireland), Department of Children, Disability and Equality, Dublin
Academics Lived Experience of Co-authoring with Children	Dr. Cadhla O'Sullivan, Professor Sharon Bessell, The Children's Policy Centre, Crawford School of Public Policy, The Australian National University
Embedding Young Adults' Voices in Diabetes Research: The D1 Now Cluster RCT And the Role of the Young Adult Panel	Ms Síofra Kelleher, Ms Sadie Moran, Dr Aswathi Surendran, Dr Eimear Morrissey, Prof Molly Byrne, D1 Now YAP, D1 Now YAP Mentors, Prof Sean F. Dinneen, University of Galway

Parallel Session 6: Bioscience Building	Integrating Youth Insights into Service Provision
"In Every Room I Enter I do Feel Valued": Involving Under-served Young People in Integrated Care	Dr Louca-Mai Brady, Dr Yvonne Robinson, Saeeda Bugtti, Jenny Ellis, Kath Evans, Prof Daksha Trivedi, Young Advisors, University of Hertfordshire
Measuring Youth Participation in a Primary Care Youth Mental Health Service	Elizabeth Doyle, Dr. Siobhan O'Brien, Thi Cat Tien Ho, & Jaime Ni Chinsealach, Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health
Navigating Power, Participation, and Policy within a Youth Participatory Action Research Framework to Improve Sexual Health Education	Dr. Elizabeth Dickson, Dr. David Lardier, Heather Summers, Cassandra Acosta, University of New Mexico, Liza Bley, Elizabeth Weyer-Hudson, Responsible Sex Education Institute, New Mexico
Elevating Youth Voice through Evaluation Techniques	Dale Pracht, Sebastian Galindo, Kate H. Fletcher, Michelle Abraczinskas, Kate Fogarty-Read, University of Florida, Cormac Forkan, University of Galway

Parallel Session 7: G009	Creative, Play-Based and Embodied Methodologies
Little Voices, Big Ideas: Play-based and Creative Approaches to Meaningful Participation with Children Aged 8-12 Years	Charlotte Donnellan, Edel Cotter, ISPC
Play, Create, Listen: Innovative Methodologies from the National Youth Assembly on Play and Recreation	Stephaine Cooke, Erica Reade, National Participation Office
Thinking Together to Reopen Futures. Building Communities of Thought through Philosophical Practices in Vocational Education	Dr. Monica Facciocchi, University of Milano-Bicocca
From Conversation to Change: Using Participatory Card Methods to Strengthen Youth Voice and Influence	Dermot O'Brien, National Youth Council of Ireland

Parallel Session 8: Bioscience Building	Demonstrating Influence and Policy Impact
Audience and Influence – Demonstrating the Influence of Government Supported Consultations with Children and Young People	Dr. Bairbre Meaney, Participation, Play and Recreation Unit, Department of Children, Disability and Equality
Children's Contributions to Policy: Intergenerational Relationships with Child Human Rights Defenders in Scotland	Laura H.V. Wright, Kay Tisdall, Stacey Marko, University of Edinburgh, Katie Logie, Rona Blackwood, Alyssa Faulkner, Children's Parliament
Strengthening Child Voice in Adult-centric Systems: Lessons from participatory action research in South Africa	Lucy Jamieson, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town

Parallel Session 9: G008	Evidence for Change: Monitoring and Measuring Youth Participation
Sharing Impact: Co-visioning a Pilot Youth Participatory Action Research Project (YPAR) Measure Repository	Michelle Abraczinskas, University of Florida, Klara Kaufman, Harvard University
Enhancing Practice through Measuring the Quality of Participation in Decision Making Practice - Child and Youth Participation Awards	Kirstie Smith, National Coordinator, Child, Youth and Parental Participation in Decision Making, Tusla
Child Rights Barometer – Monitoring Children's Rights Experiences in Switzerland and Liechtenstein	Thomas Schmid, Institute of Social Work and Social Spaces IFSAR, School of Social Work, Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences
Unlocking Child Participation': Development and Validation of the Child Participation Post-Separation Scale (ChiPPS)	Rianne van Dijk, Mol, C. R., Rejaän, Z., Branje, S., Deković, M., Schrama, W. M., & van der Valk, Inge van der Valk, Utrecht University

Friday 12th June – Schedule
Parallel Sessions 11.15 - 12.15pm

Parallel Session 1: G023		Workshop 1	
Safeguarding Children Through their Involvement		Jan Perrin, Roisín Moyles, Tusla Child & Family Agency	
Parallel Session 2: G006		Workshop 2	
A Youth Designed and Facilitated Conference is a Unique Way to Learn and Become More Effective in Supporting Young People		Mary Glacken, Staff and Young People from Foróige Mayo	
Parallel Session 3: Boardroom		Workshop 3	
Connect, Challenge, Change: Youth Participation in Global Citizenship Education - World Within Project		Jennie Hession, Kylie Ejoh, Morgan Hansen, Natasha Muldoon, Nike-Monisola Awoyemi, Princess Mimi Chukwudi, ARD Family Resource Centre	
Parallel Session 4: G008		The Role of Adult Allies	
The Role of Children's Champions in Promoting Young People's Participation in Decision Making in Northern Ireland		Mary McColgan, Centre for Children's Rights, Queens University Belfast	
Structured Power-Sharing: Foróige Volunteers as Adult Allies in Youth Participation		Lauren Hession, former Foróige Club Chairperson and Denis O'Brien, Volunteer Development Manager, Foróige	
Parallel Session 5: G009		Achieving Policy Influence: Mechanisms and Approaches	
The Youth as Researchers Programme		Danielle Kennan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway, Maria Kyprioutou, UNESCO	
Re Centering the Middle Years: International Evidence on Supporting Children Aged 6–12 in Collective Decision Making		Dr Shirley Martin, School of Applied Social Studies, Professor Deirdre Horgan, School of Education, University College Cork	
Parallel Session 6: G007		Youth, Democracy and Political Participation	
Political Participation of Mexican Youth During the 2024 Elections		Correa Cortez María Esmeralda, Cervantes Correa Ameyali Esmeralda, University of Guadalajara	
Power of Place, Youth Agency in Crisis Transformation		Jennifer Lauren, New York University	

Parallel Session 7: Bioscience Building	Rethinking Youth Participation in Research: Power, Contexts and Possibilities
Lessons from Free Participation: a Methodological Reflection arising from Conducting Youth Participatory Action Research in a Democratic School	Dorothee Potter-Daniau, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway, Laura Stephens, Maynooth University, Cliona Murray, University of Galway, Cormac Forkan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway
Contextualizing Power Imbalances in Research Involving Youth in Diverse Contexts	Zirui Li, Aarati Taksal, Carolyn Melro, Nafisah Abdussalam, John Bedirian, Elisa Guichenal, Okeogheteno Ikime, Julie Quadrio, Arjun Kapoor, Olayinka Omigbodun, Magenta Simmons, Shiva Srinivasan, Srividya Iyer, McGill University

Parallel Session 8: Bioscience Building	Youth Participation in the Digital Age
Foróige Go: Digital Spaces as New Frontiers for Youth Agency and Power-Sharing	Van Nguyen, Prof. Tomás Ward, Insight Research Ireland Centre for Data Analytics, Dublin City University, Sarah Haslam, Director of Training, Programmes and Research at Foróige
Beyond the Hype: Co-creating a Learning System with Young People to Support Responsible Chatbot (non-)use in Psychosocial Support Settings	Annette Loy, University College Cork, PhD Candidate, ADVANCE CRT Centre for Advanced Networks for Sustainable Societies

Parallel Session 9: Auditorium	Ethical Approaches to Children's Participation
Developing a Toolkit for Ethical Collaboration with Children and Young People: A Partnership Approach	Dr Edel Tierney, Ms Shauna Malone, Mr John Mitchell, Tusla Child and Family Agency
Navigating the Complex Realities of Ethical Arts-based Research Co-production with Care-experienced Youth Internationally	Lucy Jamieson, University of Cape Town, South Africa, Mandi MacDonald, Berni Kelly, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland

Thursday 11th June – Abstracts

Parallel Session 1: Boardroom	Meaningful Participation: Reflecting on Benefits, Barriers and Challenges
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Benefits and Impact of Meaningful Youth Participation: Don't let the Perfect be the Enemy of the Good

Fidelma Costello, Kirsty Doyle, Anna Visser, Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office, Department of the Taoiseach

The paper examines the benefits and challenges encountered while working with Youth Advisory Groups for the Child Poverty and Well-being Summits in 2024 and 2025. The central importance of children's participation and voice is affirmed, while recognising that real-world delivery benefits from flexibility and professional judgment, which at times, may require adapting theoretical models and best-practice standards to take context into account.

The Child Poverty and Well-being Summits were organised by the Child Poverty and Well-being Programme Office in the Department of the Taoiseach and hosted by the Taoiseach. To ensure children's and young people's voices were central, the Programme Office and the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) established Youth Advisory Groups in advance of each Summit.

For Summit 2024, YAG 1 was tasked with producing a video of their policy priorities to be presented at the Summit. For Summit 2025, YAG 2 was tasked with compiling and asking questions of a Ministerial panel, in addition to producing a video.

The paper examines the benefits and challenges encountered in collaborating with Youth Advisory Groups for the Child Poverty and Well-being Summits. It demonstrates, however, that strict application of theoretical frameworks, can at times restrict progress, despite their clear value in guiding participation.

Following the Summits, the Programme Office reflected and identified key lessons, including the need to:

- Continue capturing and showcasing the voices of children and young people, as this was valued strongly in the feedback from attendees.
- Set shared expectations early, so that everyone—Government officials and Youth Advisory Group members—has a clear sense of the purpose, scope and likely outcomes of the process.
- Invest time for capacity building for all participants.
- Apply theoretical models of youth participation with flexibility, allowing space to respond to real-world dynamics, diverse needs, and emerging opportunities.

These lessons will inform future Youth Advisory Group processes.

Aspects of Power and Participation for Collaborative Working for those with Care Experience – Influencing Policy and Research in the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE)

Dr. Caroline Duignan, Andrea Reilly, Jamie Adams, Shauna Dillon, Sophie Walsh, Care Experienced Expert Panel, Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE)

The aims of this presentation are: · To share research findings on power and participation from a study entitled “An exploration of power within the context of strategic collaborative working towards outcomes for children and young people.” · To share aspects of participation for those with care experience who are members of the Care Experienced Expert Panel (CEEP) in the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

The Care Experiences Programme is a significant research and data programme examining the lives of children in care, and adults who were in care as children. It was commenced in response to the Ryan Report (2009) recommendation to implement longitudinal research to follow young people leaving care and transitioning to adulthood. The programme is led by the DCDE in collaboration with Tusla Child and Family Agency as a key partner. At the heart of the programme is the Care Experienced Expert Panel (CEEP), which currently has nineteen members. These members provide expertise and advice on every aspect of the Programme’s implementation and delivery. The facilitator of the CEEP will share her research findings in relation to aspects of power structures, relations and processes in collaborative contexts which are working towards improved outcomes for children and young people. CEEP members will share how the findings apply to their experiences of participation in the panel, in the context of policy and research design and development. The presentation will provide examples of innovative participatory practice, for those with care experience.

Youth Participation and its Impact within Local Government Decision-Making: Forms, Conditions and Opportunities

Dr Josh Harsant, previously a PhD student at University of Huddersfield, UK

This research starts from the widely accepted position that children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect them, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, in the UK, how this right is put into practice remains uneven and inconsistent. This is particularly evident within local government decision-making, where young people’s participation is common, but its potential to influence outcomes is often limited.

The study aims to deepen understanding of what young people’s participation actually achieves. Rather than focusing on how participation is defined, categorised or measured, it asks a different question: how, when and under what conditions do young people genuinely influence change? Drawing on academic and grey literature, the research seeks to shift the established discourse away from participation as an activity that is delivered, towards participation as a process that generates impact.

Empirically, the study examines four participation mechanisms across four Greater London borough councils: an elected youth council, an unelected (‘open-access’) youth council, a Young Mayor model, and a group of Young Advisors. Data was generated through focus groups and workshops with young people, alongside semi-structured interviews with participation workers and local authority decision-makers.

The findings are presented in three parts. First, the research explores how young people and adults understand and describe the idea of impact. Second, it identifies a set of conditions that shape how participation operates and the extent to which it leads to influence. Third, it draws out a series of cross-cutting themes, challenges and opportunities that cut across the different models.

The study concludes by questioning whether current practice in local government is too focused on delivering participation, rather than on realising its impact. It offers a conceptual framework that brings together the findings and provides practical guidance for more impact-oriented participation.

Authentic Youth Voice in Research: Reshaping Traditional Research Structures

Dónal Walsh, Davnet McEllin, Sara Ní Chuirreáin, Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board

GRETB, with funding from the Department of Education and Youth, commissioned University of Galway (UG) to explore the efficacy of youth work interventions in combatting social withdrawal in young people. To ensure the authenticity of the youth voice in this process UG recruited young people as researchers which presented challenges, particularly in terms of timeline, funding structures and research protocols. Their involvement as co-researchers also enriched the findings, broadened their social and personal outcomes and ultimately strengthened the credibility and relevance of the work.

The purpose of this paper is to examine what is required of 'structures' to hold firm to the principle of an authentic youth voice at all stages of research. It will identify the challenges of meeting this standard and acknowledge the opportunities that flow from this process.

As part of the research process, stakeholders dedicated themselves to making existing structures work. However, an unintended outcome of the research was the recognition that systemic change of organisational structures and protocols is what is needed to fully capture the youth voice.

Elements which led to the successful conclusion of the research process included:

- In-depth knowledge of the organisational protocols with a particular understanding of the flexibility and fluidity in that structure.
- Fully committed stakeholders who believed in the inclusion of youth voice.
- Patience and expertise in working with partners to ensure the processes and timeline could be adapted to ensure the authentic youth voice.

This case study demonstrates that achieving an authentic youth voice within research is both deeply worthwhile and structurally challenging. By applying youth work principles to existing research systems, the research process demonstrated that young peoples lived experience is not merely a data source but a critical research asset.

However, this process also revealed the limits of current structures, particularly around timelines, funding mechanisms, and traditional research protocols. Ensuring that youth participation remained genuine required patience, flexibility, and a shared commitment from all stakeholders. The richness of the outcomes shows that this investment is justified, but it also highlights the need for systemic change.

The learning from this project provides a pathway forward: moving from working around existing systems to actively reshaping them.

Parallel Session 2: Auditorium

From Consultation to Co-Production

From Consultation to Co-Production: How Marginalised Young People Can Shape Digital Mental Health Policy in Ireland

Kealy, Carmen¹; Potts, Courtney²; Madrid-Cagigal, Alba³; Mulvenna, Maurice D.⁴; Donohoe, Gary³; O'Neill, Siobhan² and Barry, Margaret M.¹

1Health Promotion Research Centre, University of Galway, Ireland; 2 School of Psychology, Ulster University, UK; 3 School of Psychology, University of Galway, Ireland; 4School of Computing, Ulster University, UK

This paper examines how creative, co produced research can shift power in the development of digital mental health supports for marginalised young people across the island of Ireland. Although youth participation is widely endorsed, young people who experience social, economic, cultural or structural marginalisation are often excluded from meaningful influence in policy and service design. The study demonstrates how creative, youth led methods can elevate the voices of young people who are least represented in digital mental health research.

Using the Design Council's co production framework, the research engaged 41 marginalised young people aged 16–25 in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland through creative workshops and interviews incorporating photo elicitation and PhotoVoice. Visual materials were curated with a youth Reference Group or created by participants themselves, enabling young people to articulate their mental health experiences, digital practices and expectations for policy and service reform. Narratives accompanying these visuals formed the primary dataset and were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.

Findings highlight the intersecting pressures shaping marginalised young people's mental health, including educational demands, socioeconomic precarity, stigma, cultural expectations and the influence of digital environments. Participants described digital tools as both supportive and challenging: they can offer connection, moderated peer support and opportunities for advocacy, yet also present risks such as misinformation, privacy concerns and impersonal digital interactions. Across all workshops, young people emphasised the need for participation structures that are transparent, inclusive, responsive and grounded in genuine power sharing rather than symbolic consultation.

The study demonstrates how creative, youth led approaches can redistribute influence by enabling marginalised young people to define needs, identify priorities and shape policy recommendations. Key implications include embedding inclusive co production in national frameworks, resourcing youth led digital spaces, integrating digital supports with offline services, strengthening safeguarding and using technology as an infrastructure for youth voice and accountability. These insights support the development of more equitable digital mental health systems that reflect the expertise, leadership and lived realities of marginalised young people.

Placing Young People in the Driving Seat of their Mentoring Experience: 'MentorMe'- Foróige's Youth Initiated Mentoring Programme

Jill Murray, Mentoring Manager Foróige, Louise Tuffy, Mentoring Senior Youth Officer Foróige

Foróige's MentorMe programme is an innovative youth led practice model that enables meaningful youth participation in the context of young people being fully engaged in leading their own mentoring

support. This presentation will detail how this approach to mentoring holds significant potential as an effective strategy to support young people in Ireland to actively participate in pinpointing their own goals and identifying and accessing their own mentoring support.

This presentation will showcase MentorMe as a model of youth-initiated mentoring from the Netherlands. In MentorMe the young person nominates a natural mentor of their choice from their existing social network to support them with a particular challenge that they have identified. Based on the mandate the young person has given them, the role of the mentor is to be a confidant and advocate, and a partner for liaising with other adults in the young person's life. This mentor may be a relative, neighbour, family friend, former coach etc...

The presentation will detail how Foróige staff work in genuine partnership with each young person to explore their social network and empower them to identify a mentor who can support them with a particular challenge - this process fully engages the young person and gives them ownership over their mentoring experience. It will explain how participating in this process provides an opportunity for young people to develop the life skill of being able to source support from others when they need it as they continue through life.

Facilitators will share the current implementation of the programme by Foróige staff; the engagement of young people and how they are empowered to meaningfully engage and lead the process; vetting, training and support of the volunteer mentor in their role and the support offered to participants, once matched in the programme. This session will also detail the underlying assumptions of MentorMe; the findings of international research into youth initiated mentoring and the findings of the Irish research; case examples of the benefits for participants and plans for future expansion by Foróige.

Shifting the Balance: Embedding Power-Sharing Through Child and Youth Panels in Homelessness Services

Erica Monahan, Sandra Krysiak, Amy Canavan, Debbie Whelan, Hester Rodenhuis, Focus Ireland

Over 5000 children are currently experiencing homelessness. Often described as 'seldom heard voices', these children and young people face significant power imbalances and limited opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives. To counter the potentially traumatic impacts of homelessness, disrupt cycles of exclusion, and affirm that children's voices matter, Focus Ireland has established Child and Youth Panels for children and young people experiencing homelessness.

Grounded in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and informed by the Lundy Model of Participation, this initiative moves beyond consultation towards meaningful participation, enabling influence and power-sharing in service design and policy engagement.

The presentation outlines the development and operation of five distinct panels: Non-Speaking, Pre-School, Primary School, Youth, and Young Adults Panels, spanning ages 0–26. Using age-appropriate and inclusive methods—such as play-based activities, emotions mapping, facilitated discussion, and parental participation for non-speaking children — the panels create safe spaces for children and young people to express their views on lived experience within emergency accommodation and homelessness services.

The presentation will showcase examples of workshop designs that enabled youth-led contributions to national consultations, including engagement with the Department of the Taoiseach and the

Department of Housing on the Homeless Action Plan for Children and Families. This presentation aligns most strongly with the conference theme benefits and impact of meaningful youth participation.

Reconfiguring Power in Research with Children and Adolescents: From a Review of the International Scientific Literature to the Design of a Chilean Model for the School Context

Mahia Saracostti, Alfredo Lagunas, Isidora Apaolaza, UNESCO Chair on Childhood and Youth Well Being, Education and Society, Universidad de Chile

The principle of participation of children and adolescents can be considered the “right of rights,” as it focuses on the exercise of citizenship and its effective realization, and allows for the assessment of the extent to which other rights are upheld (Giorgi, 2010).

This necessarily involves considering the cultural barriers that emerge as contextual conditions in the implementation of participatory methodologies with children and adolescents, both in school settings and in the field of scientific research. In the specific context of social research on the lives of children and adolescents, the application of the principle of child participation is even more challenging (Aguirre Pastén et al., 2021; Santana et al., 2023; Saracostti et al., 2015). Promoting research with them is therefore essential to recognize their active role in the processes of transforming their environments (Corvera, 2011; Marinkovic et al., 2022).

Although many studies recognise children as social actors capable of contributing meaningfully to social research, their involvement is frequently confined to specific phases, most commonly data collection. Based on the review of the scientific literature and considering the concept of epistemic justice, this presentation aims to showcase a Chilean model for training and implementing research projects with child and adolescent co-researchers (called “The League of the Wise Guardians”), which emerged from a research project funded by the Chilean National Agency for Research and Development (FONDECYT 1250064) and is currently underway.

The objective of this research has been to design, implement, and evaluate the effects of a training and project development model for co-research aimed at addressing social problems with children and adolescents (adapted to the Chilean context based on a review of the available scientific literature) among students from Chilean public schools.

Parallel Session 3: G006

Inclusion, Equity and ‘Seldom Heard’ Voices

One Consultation, Five Different Approaches. For Seldom Heard Cohorts, are we Going Far Enough to Create an Equitable Approach?

Sharon Buckley, Manager Hub na nÓg, Sarah Quigley, Senior Inclusivity Officer, the National Participation Office

This presentation explores how we aimed to move beyond providing identical resources and approaches when involving children and young people in decision making. This was done in the understanding that children and young people have diverse experiences and unique lives, which must be considered when developing consultation methodologies and approaches.

Hub na nÓg and the National Participation Office, conducted consultations on behalf of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality. The purpose was to inform the Government's contribution to Ireland's forthcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report on Human Rights.

This work complemented a separate report that compiled the views of children and young people from consultations held since the last UPR cycle in 2021. Five distinct groups and corresponding consultation methodologies were developed for:

- Children in a School Completion Project
- Young people in a Detention School setting
- Children with complex needs arising from a disability (school environment)
- A young person with complex needs arising from a disability (and communication partner, online)
- Children from families seeking international protection

The presentation will share the obstacles faced, the approaches applied, and the lessons learned from developing inclusive practices involving seldom heard cohorts and taking further steps toward an equitable approach. This work is rooted in the National Participation Framework and Ireland's obligations under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Increasing the Visibility and Influence of Children and Young People who Experience Domestic Violence and Abuse – A Participation Approach to Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse

Published in the 2025 Special Edition of the Irish Social Worker Journal.

Aine Costello, Sarah Rush, Stephanie Whyte, Dr. Grainne Hickey, Barnardos

Childhood domestic violence and abuse is an adverse childhood experience characterised by silence, secrecy, fear and loss of power and control.

This presentation shares the work of Barnardos' EmpowerKids Project, part of Barnardos National Childhood Domestic Violence and Abuse Project, which models a participation approach with children and young people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse. EmpowerKids is led by Barnardos in partnership with Cuan, previously Tusla, and works collaboratively with a range of community-based family support and domestic abuse support services across the country.

The aims of the project are to understand the experiences of children and young people; increase the visibility of children and young people who experience domestic violence and abuse; and amplify their voices and influence in issues that matter to them.

The presentation shares how, through the application of the Lundy Model of participation, since 2019 Barnardos has engaged more than 100 children and young people who have experienced domestic violence and abuse and has helped them to...

- define and understand their experiences;
- identify strategies that work for them to overcome their experiences;
- assist other children and young people in similar situations;
- develop guidance for service providers about what works for children and young people; and

- access platforms of influence to change how adults around them respond to their needs.

The presentation will share the practical strategies used, the challenges managed, the positive impacts on the children involved, and the meaning for future practice.

The Empower Kids project demonstrates that a participation approach of listening to and enabling children and young people who have experienced with domestic violence and abuse can be done; can contribute to increased agency and healing for children and young people; while also contributing to improved practice and policy responses.

Including the Voices of Young People with Physical Disabilities in Raising Awareness and Advocating for Greater Access and Inclusion in Social and Community Spaces

Ciara McGagh, Emma Ward, Youth Access Group, Youth Work Ireland Galway

This presentation by members of the Youth Access Group who will share their journey as members of a youth group for young people 18-24 years with physical disabilities, who came together in late 2023 to raise awareness of the lack of access for young people in social and community spaces in Galway.

The group of 5 young people created their documentary 'Breaking Barriers' which they directed, produced and filmed over the course of 9 months, sharing their lived experiences with the support of Youth Work Ireland Galway and a filmmaker. The group showcasing the barriers that prevented them from participating in social and community life in Galway City and County. The documentary included the voices of decision makers, politicians, engineers, disability activists.

After a public screening of the documentary during Culture Night 2024 it has since been screened in local youth spaces and community spaces and schools in Galway City and County, and nationally in Leinster House for TD's and Senators and for Youth Work Ireland for member youth services across the country. They have raised awareness of accessibility, of inclusion, of listening directly to young people with physical disabilities.

They have influenced the Night Time Economy programme in Galway City, linking with Galway Races, Galway Arts Festival and night clubs and social spaces to improve access and inclusion. The group are continuing to raise awareness and are currently creating their own podcast series to share the voice of young people with physical disabilities and to continue as strong advocates raising awareness and looking for change in access and inclusion for young people with physical disabilities.

Child Centred Justice: Support for Child Defendants in the Irish Court System

Karen Daly, Ombudsman for Children's Office

Since 2018 the OCO has been conducting outreach visits to Oberstown Children's Detention Campus, Ireland's only detention centre for children. Oberstown Campus aims to provide safe and secure care to children remanded in custody.

The OCO's Outreach programme aims to provide that all children have access to our complaint handling service, especially those who may be hard to reach and or vulnerable.

Our report talks about how our outreach informs our policy work and enables us to highlight areas where youth justice reform is required. It details shared challenges and successes, including how our outreach has helped shape policy developments in this area.

During our visits young people told us that, during court proceedings, they did not always understand what was being asked of them. They did not know what was going to happen when they went to court or what their rights were as part of those proceedings.

We know that child-friendly justice systems ensure child-friendly court proceedings, where proceedings take explicit consideration of a child's age, special needs, communication difficulties, etc. The OCO raised these issues with the Department of Justice and members of the Judiciary.

Our engagement resulted in the Department of Justice agreeing to pilot the roll out of youth justice workers to be assigned to young people subject to criminal proceedings. The youth justice workers will accompany "child" defendants to court, ensure they understand the proceedings and provide informal support. Before sentencing the court have the option, where appropriate, of directing the young person to work with their youth justice worker, this participation may alter their outcome.

The OCO delivered an information session to the judiciary on hearing the voices of children in court proceedings and plan to deliver training to legal professionals.

Parallel Session 4: G023

Adulthood, Power Imbalances and Resistance to Youth Participation

'Seen and not Heard': An Examination of Irish Youth Participation Policy and Experiences of Adulthood in Irish Youth Participation Structures

Katie Blain, Foróige, Prof. John Canavan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway

Ireland has been a shining example of the integration of youth participation into policy-making models. With organisations like Foróige and Youth Work Ireland facilitating and encouraging young people to participate in decision making processes, and initiatives like Hub na nÓg helping to increase opportunities for young people to have their voices heard, there is a lot that Ireland has done to recognise the right of a child to be involved in decisions made about them to express their views and opinions.

This study was undertaken as part of the MA in Child, Youth and Community with the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre and was supervised by Prof. John Canavan. The primary aim of this study was to examine the lived experiences of young people and their interactions with adult stakeholders within youth participation groups. It aims to identify how young people believe they are viewed by adults in Irish society and how those views affect their feeling of being heard and respected in youth participation spaces. This study also aimed to document and analyse the challenges that exist within youth participation structures. The study's main theoretical focus is adulthood, meaning age discrimination against young people and how it manifests within society and participation structures. This was done using a qualitative, interpretive approach utilising interviews with a small sample of young people who had taken part in youth participation groups but have since aged out.

The presentation of this study will focus on the four main themes that make up the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis. These are: 'Life Experience and Understanding of Youth', 'Local vs National Politics and Tokenism', 'Adult Behaviours and Youth Self-Image', and 'Adult Centred Youth Participation'. Each theme highlights a policy, practice and/or research implication that will be important to continued efforts in the field of youth participation.

'The adult in the room' - Power and the Pursuit of Working Children's Knowledge

Dr. Antje Ruhmann, Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte

This paper examines the complexities of participatory research with working children through the lens of Michel Foucault's theories of power, specifically focusing on the tension between knowledge production and political empowerment. By analyzing the global campaigns "It's Time to Talk!" (2016–2019) and "Dialogue Works" (2020–2029) as well as efforts of the global movements of working children to join global policy debates, the study explores how the insights of working children often meet resistance in global policy arenas, such as the World Conferences on Child Labour. The findings suggest that disclosing children's knowledge through participatory methods does not guarantee empowerment. Turning their knowledge into demands can lead to their non-participation in global policy debates because their views challenge well-established norms and legal frameworks, which is unwelcome. Working children thus seem to be wronged in their capacity as knowers due to power imbalances.

Can Learning from Adult Safeguarding Advance Critical Understandings of Youth Participation and Power?

Professor Caroline McGregor, Director of Institute for Lifecourse and Society, University of Galway

Aim: To consider how greater use of themes relating to adult safeguarding can be used more strategically to inform youth participation concepts and practice

Presentation overview: Youth participation theory and practice has been vastly advanced through promoting the agenda of children's rights. However, there are also clear recognised limits to framing youth participation within the confines of the UNCRC and the rights agenda with regard to the tension between paternalism (especially pronounced in rights to protection discourses) and empowerment and independence.

To contribute to critical understandings and policy-practice recommendations to follow, this paper explores the implications of conceptualising participation in the context of 'best interests' (child safeguarding) compared to 'will and preference' (adult safeguarding). The question is posed: Can use of discourses from adult safeguarding with a focus on power and power relations strengthen the autonomy of young people and enhance youth participation?

The materials for the presentation are secondary and twofold:

1. Critical review of current theoretical perspectives, like 'transitional safeguarding', power relations and life course safeguarding.
2. Illustrative use of research evidence relating to children in and leaving care.

The paper will interrogate the complex interplay between needs for greater participation, powers and supports for young people transitioning in care and needs to challenge over-paternalism within the

youth care system that curtail effective participation. Implications for practice and research will be considered based on the analysis.

Addressing Adulthood and Power Imbalances by Engaging Counter-power Activities and Participatory Research with Young People and their Allies

Dr Eileen Lauster, Post-Doctoral Researcher in Social Connectivity, Department of Engineering, Atlantic Technological University and Tutor, MA in Social Work, Political Science and Sociology, University of Galway

Often, city planners gather public opinion on new strategies through online quantitative surveys, with some marginalised groups, such as young people, not engaging due to a history of feeling or being excluded, usually by technology or past discrimination by decision-makers. Drawing from a Community Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) project with young people wishing to increase bike use, the presentation aims to present and stimulate conversation on a new approach to public engagement when working with young people.

Seeking inclusion during a public consultation on a new active travel regional strategy, a group of keen cyclists, composed of young people and their adult allies, experienced barriers. In response, the group engaged with Castell's (2007) concept of counter-power to challenge institutional power relations by building a network of supporters and using alternative communication options. Group discussion, Ethnographic Fieldnote, Bike Along Interview and Photovoice methods were combined to facilitate the co-design of an interactive map of young people's cycling experiences to share with decision-makers. The map included places with positive cycling experiences and other areas that are problematic for them due to attitudes towards the young people by other road users and poor cycling infrastructure. The result of a participatory and counter-power approach was capacity building and youth development through anti-adulthood activities while giving input on the strategy. The group also engaged in disseminating their findings after the fieldwork process, further expressing their voice on topics of concern to them. While recognising that implementing structural changes in any social system can be challenging due to their complexity and scope, the research project demonstrated that the effort continues to be worthwhile.

Parallel Session 5: G007

Youth as Knowledge Producers and Collaborators in Research

Enhancing Quality and Meaningful Youth Participation: Insights from Children

Dr. Christina O'Keeffe, Dr. Sinéad McNally, Dublin City University, Institute of Education

This presentation aims to explore how best to enhance children's quality and authentic participation from the perspectives of children themselves in response to the national and international drive towards facilitating children's quality participation (e.g. European Commission on Children's Participation Platform, 2022; Ireland's National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2019). Indeed, this research addresses a significant gap in knowledge in this area by critically examining how best to support children's meaningful participation, from the perspectives of children themselves who have traditionally been overlooked from such discussions (Hill, 2006). We report on findings based on a series of investigations across three primary schools in Ireland with both neuromajority and neurominority children, aged 5 to 13 years (N=136). Using a range of participatory

and creative approaches (e.g., draw-and-tell, book-making, photo-elicitation), children's perspectives were sought surrounding the research consultation process including key recommendations to support future meaningful research with children. Qualitative responses were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Preliminary findings demonstrate that children consistently emphasised the importance of: 1) fun and enjoyment; 2) autonomy and agency; 3) social connections and; 4) ethical considerations. These findings will be discussed with regards to promoting children's meaningful participation and in upholding children's right to have their voices heard on matters of importance to them. This research extends our understanding regarding how best to meaningfully engage in research with children and highlights fundamental considerations that must be recognised by researchers, policymakers and practitioners in supporting children's quality and authentic participation.

Longitudinal Survey and Policy Design: Responding to Meaningful Youth Participation in Growing Up in Ireland

Dr. Eoin O'Mahony, Research and Evaluation Unit (Growing Up in Ireland), Department of Children, Disability and Equality, Dublin

Significant economic and political changes over the last decade have required researchers in Europe and Ireland to innovate with new ideas to serve policy design. Policy design changes and the ways in which outcomes are measured must equally respond to these changes. For longitudinal cross-wave surveys, this means finding a workable balance between continuity, asking new and modifying questions.

Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) is a longitudinal study of children and young people and is a joint project of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (D/CDE) and the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Across 3 cohorts since 2007, GUI has faced similar challenges: staying consistent with previous waves but sufficiently understanding the context for the policies it seeks to inform. Responding to this challenge, the design of its survey instrument is incorporating more participative methods, with contributions from groups of emerging adults.

In advance of the next wave of Cohort '08 (20 in 2028), we consulted with stakeholders, including an expert advisory group and online focus groups, to understand new policy and research questions. The expert group online consultation re-prioritised existing issues such as loneliness, gambling addiction, and mental health. The emerging adult focus groups added a depth to this and related issues, based on their lived experience. For example, challenges establishing a residence in a housing crisis.

The purpose of the paper is to examine the emerging adult focus groups in preparation for questionnaire design. It seeks to assess the benefits and impact of more meaningful youth participation and some of the barriers encountered. To place these issues in a longer time frame, the paper reviews the participative process in advance of, and the main issues derived from, Cohort '98 at 20. How have the focus groups conducted for the preparation of the Cohort '08 survey contributed to more meaningful youth collaboration and participation?

Academics Lived Experience of Co-authoring with Children

Dr. Cadhla O'Sullivan, Professor Sharon Bessell, The Children's Policy Centre, Crawford School of Public Policy, The Australian National University

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, entitles all children to have a say on matters affecting them and have those views given due weight. In policy and practice arenas throughout the globe, there has been an increased call to include the 'voice of the child.' Yet, often these practices can be tokenistic or reduced to rhetoric and fail to adequately include children's experiences in ways that genuinely collaborative. This paper will present a lived experience piece of an intergenerational collaboration between two academics co-authoring two linked academic articles with children (ages 9-12 years) using a rights-based, child-centred methodology (Bessell and O'Sullivan, 2024). The ages of the children are important, as often when seeking views of children, it is older children or 'young people' who are included while younger children are excluded.

Through a process of consciously stepping back, flipping age-based hierarchies, and deferring to the children, we sought to create a space where children genuinely took the lead. It is not common for academics to write lived experience articles. We decided to do so as a means of reflecting of our experience of co-authoring with children. We reflect on the difficult process we encountered working with two different journals in Australia. We argue for the need to challenge norms and administrative barriers to publishing articles with children, in order to create spaces that are genuinely collaborative, where children's views, experiences and priorities can be heard and supported and taken seriously. If we are to take seriously the narratives around 'lived experience' and 'voice of the child' not just 'young people' then journals/academic publishing norms need to be reviewed to create spaces and opportunities to support this to happen in ways that are not transactional or reduced to the rhetoric of child voice.

Embedding Young Adults' Voices In Diabetes Research: The D1 Now Cluster RCT And The Role Of The Young Adult Panel

Ms Siofra Kelleher, Ms Sadie Moran, Dr Aswathi Surendran, Dr Eimear Morrissey, Prof Molly Byrne, D1 Now YAP, D1 Now YAP Mentors, Prof Sean F. Dinneen, University of Galway

Background and aim

Young adults (YAs) with type 1 diabetes face self-management challenges unique to this life stage. The D1 Now definitive cluster randomised controlled trial assesses the D1Now intervention, which consists of the Agenda Setting Tool and Support Worker, to improve clinical effectiveness and psychosocial outcomes. A central feature of our work is the Young Adult Panel (YAP), a group of young adults with lived experience, established in 2014, who are part of the research team and co-design study processes.

Methods

The trial will involve 348 young adults across 12 diabetes centres in Ireland. The YAP's role is action-oriented and continuous: refining study procedures, co-developing strategies to maintain participant engagement, and shaping accessible, YA-friendly digital platforms and study communications. YAP members lead initiatives such as online engagement tools and tailored retention activities designed to sustain motivation over the entire trial duration.

Results

Trial set-up is actively ongoing. YAP-driven strategies, such as co-designed participant-facing materials, digital resources, and a robust social media presence, have laid a strong foundation for participant engagement and long-term retention.

Conclusion

Embedding YAP's insights and actions throughout all phases ensures a trial grounded in authenticity and relevance. This active partnership strengthens potential sustainability and effectiveness, setting a benchmark for future youth-centred research.

Parallel Session 6: Bioscience Building

Integrating Youth Insights into Service Provision

“In Every Room I Enter I do Feel Valued”: Involving Under-served Young People in Integrated Care

Dr Louca-Mai Brady, Dr Yvonne Robinson, Saeeda Bugtti, Jenny Ellis, Kath Evans, Prof Daksha Trivedi, Young Advisors, University of Hertfordshire

Children and young people in the UK continue to experience poorer patient experiences and health outcomes than peers elsewhere, amid widening health inequalities and rising demand on services. Meaningful youth participation offers a vital route to improving service quality, equity and outcomes. This presentation draws on learning from the PANELS project (Participation of under-served young people in North East London health and wellbeing services).

Developed in partnership with a healthcare commissioner, academic researchers, a community organisation and local young people, the project created a place-based partnership between young people, and adults who work with them, to explore how participation can best improve health and wellbeing services for under-served young people aged 15-25. Young people shaped the work from the outset: following an initial workshop, two participants became co-applicants and recruited an advisory group who were actively involved throughout the project including event facilitation, peer engagement and evaluation. Statutory and community sector partners participated through meetings, workshops and a community of practice, ensuring that project priorities and outputs were grounded in lived experience and local knowledge.

The project demonstrated benefits including stronger communication and trust between sectors, more nuanced understanding of young people's priorities and enhanced cross-sector relationships. Involvement in PANELS also increased organisational commitment to embedding participation more systematically and informed plans for co-producing creative outputs and future research.

At the same time, the project highlighted persistent barriers to participation, including limited organisational capacity, structural and staffing changes, and the personal and practical challenges facing many under-served young people. Flexible, trauma-informed and relationship-centred approaches, together with shared values and accessible, place-based practices, were crucial to addressing inequities and supporting sustained involvement.

The presentation explores how inclusive and equitable involvement of under-served young people can meaningfully inform evidence, policy and practice, contributing to more responsive, youth-centred health and wellbeing services.

Measuring Youth Participation in a Primary Care Youth Mental Health Service

Elizabeth Doyle, Dr. Siobhan O'Brien, Thi Cat Tien Ho, Jaime Ni Chinsealach, Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health

Aim: To explore how youth participation has been measured in Jigsaw, The National Centre for Youth Mental Health, and the impact and challenges related to this.

Background: Jigsaw – The National Centre for Youth Mental health provides brief interventions for young people across Ireland. Young people volunteer with local services as Advocates to raise awareness of the service and ensure it is meeting the needs of young people in the community. Advocates also work with departments, such as the Research department, to ensure young people's voices are at the centre of our work. In addition to evaluating service delivery, youth participation is also reviewed to ensure this is meaningful and beneficial.

Methods: A document review of internal Jigsaw documents that describe the measures used and descriptive statistics to report completion rates and high-level results. Surveys used included a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Measures used included standardised and established measures, such as the Tiffany-Eckenrode Program Participation Scale (TEPPS), as well as co-designed measures which were developed with young people and Jigsaw staff. Jigsaw staff and youth volunteers will take part in the analysis and write up for this review.

Results: The presentation will present a timeline of measures used, overall results and learnings. The structures that allow participation from young people in Jigsaw will also be discussed such as Advocate roles and Jigsaw's Youth Research Council. Youth participation is vital to ensure our services are effective however assessing this can be challenging.

Conclusion/Discussion: Lessons learned in relation to measuring youth participation in a primary care setting will be explored and how to improve these practices going forward. Approaches must be flexible and adaptable for meaningful youth participation.

Navigating Power, Participation, and Policy within a Youth Participatory Action Research Framework to Improve Sexual Health Education

Dr. Elizabeth Dickson, Dr. David Lardier, Heather Summers, Cassandra Acosta, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, United States, Liza Bley, Elizabeth Weyer-Hudson, Responsible Sex Education Institute, Albuquerque, New Mexico, United States

Meaningful youth participation in research and policy advocacy remains constrained by power asymmetries, institutional barriers, and the risk of tokenism. This presentation examines the Advancing Sexual Health Education Through Youth Engagement (ASHE) project in New Mexico, USA, a case study of Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) within the politically contested domain of school-based sexual health education (SHE). Eight young people aged 18–21, representing culturally and geographically diverse communities in New Mexico, served as researchers, subject-matter experts, and policy advocates working to strengthen SHE delivery. The youth research team contributed to intervention training design, participated as subject-matter experts in training sessions, and created Photovoice to advocate and increase awareness regarding SHE. The project revealed structural and developmental challenges common in YPAR including: fluctuating levels of youth engagement, difficulty maintaining virtual participation across a predominantly rural context, and continual negotiation of adult–youth power dynamics. Attrition, competing academic and employment commitments, and institutional constraints around youth involvement complicated long-term participation. Despite these challenges, the youth research team demonstrated an increased sense of socio-political control—encompassing leadership, advocacy, and problem-solving skills—and their contributions enhanced the authenticity of the ASHE intervention. Intervention

participants reported increased understanding of adolescents' lived experiences, underscoring the importance of youth-driven insight in programme delivery. Youth-generated Photovoice work catalysed broader community engagement, contributing to policy advocacy during the state legislative session. This created a tangible pathway for youth-produced evidence into the realm of policymaking, illustrating both potential and limits of youth co-researchers navigating politicised environments. Findings from the ASHE project highlights the importance of robust structural supports, intentional power-sharing strategies, and flexible engagement models to ensure youth participation is substantive rather than symbolic. We offer insights relevant to international efforts to advance youth agency, knowledge equity, and policy influence within complex social systems.

Elevating Youth Voice through Evaluation Techniques

Dale Pracht, Sebastian Galindo, Kate H. Fletcher, Michelle Abraczinskas, Kate Fogarty-Read, University of Florida, Cormac Forkan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway

Aim: In an ever-changing culture, elevating youth voice is vital to effective programs in community-based settings. This paper highlights strategies to incorporate youth voice and perspectives in program evaluation. A review of relevant literature and other resources will be supported with examples from the authors' community-based youth programs. Resources shared are globally recognized and evidence-based for strengthening youth participation, elevating youth voice, and generating actionable insights for community impact.

Brief Description: Program examples include evaluative techniques such as youth participatory action research (YPAR), youth participatory arts (YPAs), international service-learning (ISL), and youth mentoring programs. Case studies will be described with tools for evaluation strategies, e.g., reflective techniques and timing of data collection.

Additional evaluative tools include mixed-method evaluations retrospective pretest-posttest design, and other reflective methods for documenting individual, community, and multi-level impact at local and international levels. Educators and practitioners can easily adapt such tools to enhance youth participation and elicit community impact for and by youth in their programs.

Youth-centeredness serves program planning as youth identify community issues they consider relevant. Photovoice is optimal for needs assessment whereas root cause analysis enables youth to examine pressing issues impacting them in their communities. Youth can participate in evaluation through a dreaming activity, to envision their community without a specific problem, thus determining what is missing and needs to change. YPAR is a youth-adult partnered or youth-led approach in which youth identify a topic important to their lives, conduct research about it, and then disseminate their findings to change policies, practices, and programs. Youth-centered to and their voices have influenced decision making in their local area.

Evaluation-based activities are applicable for promoting youths' evaluative thinking (critical thinking applied in the context of evaluation) to better understand the problem/issue that youth are seeking to address in their communities and identify actions/solutions to address the issues. Links to appropriate resources will be provided.

Parallel Session 7: G009

Creative, Play-Based and Embodied Methodologies

Little Voices, Big Ideas: Play-based and Creative Approaches to Meaningful Participation with Children Aged 8-12 Years

Charlotte Donnellan Child Participation and Engagement Lead ISPC, Edel Cotter, Childline Therapeutic Support Worker ISPC

This paper explores how participation with children aged 8-12 years can move beyond adultcentric consultation methods towards more relational, inclusive, and child-centred practices.

While a child's right to be heard is widely recognised through Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, participatory processes often continue to rely on verbal, adult-led approaches that can limit younger children's ability to express their views.

Grounded in the Lundy Model of Participation, this paper focuses on the concept of space: highlighting the importance of creating environments that are not only physical, but emotional, relational, and responsive to children's needs. It argues that conventional approaches can privilege verbal competence and adult-defined agendas, thereby constraining meaningful participation.

Drawing on practice-based work with children aged 8-12 years across rural and urban contexts and with children from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, this paper outlines how play-based and creative methodologies can support children to communicate through play, symbolism, and creative expression. These approaches provide safe and

supportive environments in which children can share their experiences and perspectives in ways that feel natural to them.

This paper also considers how these methods align with the four elements of the Lundy Model of Participation, supporting voice through multimodal expression, ensuring audience through feedback processes, and enabling influence by integrating children's views into the development of educational modules focusing on bullying and cyberbullying.

Overall, the paper highlights the value of play-based approaches in supporting more authentic, inclusive, and meaningful participation for younger children.

Play, Create, Listen: Innovative Methodologies from the National Youth Assembly on Play and Recreation

Stephaine Cooke, Erica Reade, National Participation Office

In April 2026, the National Youth Assembly of Ireland convened a landmark session on behalf of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) and the Department of the Taoiseach. Bringing together 53 delegates ranging from ages 7 to 24, the Assembly aimed to directly influence the new Government Strategy on Play and Recreation. This presentation examines the specialized creative methodologies developed to bridge the gap between high-level policymaking and the lived experiences of young people, with a particular emphasis on the critical need to engage children under the age of 12 in meaningful consultation.

The presentation begins by situating this work within the broader context of the National Youth Assembly of Ireland. Since its establishment in 2022, the Assembly has served as an important element to ensure that young voices inform policy on everything from climate change to rural development.

Attendees will gain insight into the collaborative framework between the DCDE and the National Participation Office, which ensures delegates are effectively facilitated to express their views in a way that is both impactful and safe.

Central to this session is a breakdown of the creative journey taken to ensure the Assembly was both inclusive and age-appropriate. This process involved the formation of a dedicated Youth Advisory Group and the execution of pilot sessions where 7–12-year-olds tested the methodologies in advance. By examining the parallel sessions held for different age cohorts, the presentation showcases specific examples of the tools used and shares direct feedback from the participants. Beyond the successes, the presentation will offer an honest reflection on the practical challenges and the significant learning gained from utilizing creative methodologies to capture the complex requirements of play and recreation in modern Ireland.

“The uniqueness of the activities; the final activities (lego, podcast and card clash) were all fun changes of pace” Quote from a delegate on the day

Thinking Together to Reopen Futures. Building Communities of Thought through Philosophical Practices in Vocational Education

Dr. Monica Facciocchi, University of Milano-Bicocca

Philosophical practices can foster meaningful youth participation in vocational education through the creation of Communities of Thought (Michellini, 2016), recognising students' voices, experiences, and interpretations as legitimate forms of knowledge (Freire, 1968; hooks, 1994). Such practices support the development of narrative identities (Ricoeur, 1983), enabling young people – particularly those often marginalised within formal education systems – to reimagine and actively shape their personal and collective futures. The contribution is grounded in a three-year research–training project (2023–2025) conducted across nine vocational training centres in the Milan area. The study adopts an action research framework integrating the Clinic of Education (Massa, 1992) and Operational Epistemology (Fabbri & Munari, 1984). Mixed and parallel groups of students, teachers and trainers engaged in philosophical practices inspired by Philosophy for Children (Lipman, 1976). These practices included the use of material mediators (e.g., music, images, objects, and metaphors), dialogical settings and ongoing pedagogical supervision for teachers, with a focus on reflexivity, non-evaluative dialogue, and shared meaning-making. Empirical evidence from the project highlights how such practices can function as spaces that challenge traditional power relations in vocational education. Students actively participate in generating questions, negotiating meanings, and connecting personal experiences to broader ethical and social issues. At the same time, teachers' roles shift from authoritative figures to facilitators and co-participants, contributing to significant transformations in learning environments. The findings also identify key conditions supporting the reproducibility of these practices in other contexts, including sustained reflexive processes (Schön, 1983), the integration of dialogical methodologies and the recognition of experiential knowledge. Overall, the project shows how youth participation can be embedded in everyday educational practices by redesigning learning spaces and fostering democratic and participatory forms of education (Dewey, 1938).

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From Conversation to Change: Using Participatory Card Methods to Strengthen Youth Voice and Influence

Dermot O'Brien, National Youth Council of Ireland

Meaningful youth participation is widely recognised as a cornerstone of inclusive practice, yet many practitioners continue to grapple with how to move beyond consultation towards genuine engagement and shared decision-making. This workshop introduces the Youth Participation & Empowerment Deck, a practical, adaptable tool designed to support youth workers, educators, and young people to navigate this challenge in real and tangible ways.

Developed through practice within the Irish youth work context, the deck acts as a structured yet flexible “toolbox for change,” guiding groups through key stages of participation. These include connecting with the lived experiences of young people, understanding community dynamics, mapping influence, and power, linking issues to policy frameworks, and defining and pursuing meaningful change.

The workshop will be highly interactive, offering participants the opportunity to engage directly with selected cards using case studies and scenarios. Through a facilitated exercise, participants will explore a relevant issue, using the prompts to spark dialogue, deepen critical thinking, and consider pathways to action. This experiential approach demonstrates how simple, well-designed tools can create space for multiple voices, encourage shared ownership, and support young people to move from expressing opinions to influencing decisions.

In addition, the session will highlight how the deck integrates elements of global citizenship, futures thinking, intergenerational practice and skills development, aligning with broader educational and policy frameworks. Participants will be invited to reflect on how such approaches can be adapted within their own practice contexts.

The workshop aims to provide both inspiration and practical insight, supporting participants to strengthen their approach to youth participation in ways that are meaningful, inclusive, and action-oriented.

Parallel Session 8: Bioscience Building

Demonstrating Influence and Policy Impact

Audience and Influence – Demonstrating the Influence of Government Supported Consultations with Children and Young People

Dr. Bairbre Meaney, Principal Officer, Participation, Play and Recreation Unit, Department of Children, Disability and Equality

The Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) is committed to realising the right of children and young people to be involved in decision-making. The Participation, Play and Recreation Unit in DCDE has developed and promotes supports and resources to assist other Government Departments and State Agencies to include children and young people when decisions what will affect them are being made.

The work of the Participation Unit is to highlight and promote the right of children and young people to be treated as key stakeholders within policy making processes, especially when the policy being developed will impact their lives.

The [National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making](#) features the [Lundy Model of Participation](#), which guides all DCDE sponsored participation initiatives. This model provides a pathway to help conceptualise Article 12 of the UNCRC, with the four quadrants outlining in a rational, chronological order what children and young people must be provided with in order to be included meaningfully in decision-making – Space, Voice, Audience and Influence.

This presentation will focus on the Audience and Influence parts of the model, often considered the most challenging to implement and record. This presentation will demonstrate how DCDE has worked with several other Government Departments to bring the voices of children and young people into their work and highlight the changes that have taken place as a result.

The presentation will provide a range of examples across various Government settings where the involvement of children and young people in the decision-making process can be traced to a specific action, development, or policy change. Examples are drawn from the work of the National Youth Assembly of Ireland, from DCDE supported consultations on specific subjects, and DCDE funded Local Authority projects across the country that have been co-designed with children and young people.

Children's Contributions to Policy: Intergenerational Relationships with Child Human Rights Defenders in Scotland

Laura H.V. Wright, Kay Tisdall, Stacey Marko, University of Edinburgh, Katie Logie, Rona Blackwood, Alyssa Faulkner, Children's Parliament

Research literature continues to show the challenges of children being meaningfully, ethically, and sustainably involved in policy decision-making at a national level in the United Kingdom (UK) and around the world. The literature consistently demonstrates that children are well able to express their views, but it is their interactions with adult systems, institutions and attitudes that weaken their rights to participate and have their views given due weight. To address such challenges, the Child Human Rights Defenders of the Children's Parliament have a 2 year programme with the Scottish Government, to work with the Executive Team, the Cabinet and associated policy decision makers on key policy issues for children. This presentation introduces a research case study taking place in

partnership with Children's Parliament as part of the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP). It explores: (1) In what ways do children and adults interact within and across the Children's Human Rights Defenders programme, and what are the implications of these for intergenerational relations? (2) What does it mean to take a children's rights approach in the Children's Human Rights Defenders programme and how is this experienced by those involved? The presentation will be participatory and provide an overview of the project, the qualitative participatory reflective methods used, and preliminary findings. Through reflexive thematic analysis we found: 1) Altering spaces for children to interact with senior policy-makers transformed relations in terms of children feeling comfortable and policy-makers level of engagement with children; 2) Contributions to impact across policy-making groups; and 3) Investment in quality time and resources is essential to establish trust, dialogue, and positive change. The presentation will conclude with learnings and recommendations for those engaging in participatory intergenerational research with children, youth, and policy-makers.

Strengthening Child Voice in Adult-centric Systems: Lessons from participatory action research in South Africa

*Lucy Jamieson, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town**

Three participatory action research case studies from the International Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP) were conducted in South Africa with co-researchers aged 10–21 years. Co-researchers were involved in all stages of the research from design to dissemination and served on an Intergenerational Advisory Committee guiding international collaboration. Data were generated using qualitative and arts-based methods to explore children's activism in different settings. Each group inductively analysed its own data, then research team incorporated these analyses into a Deductive Qualitative Analysis to test meta-theories of child participation.

The presentation begins with an overview of the ICCRP, the three South African cases, and then Cahill and Dadvand's P7 model is introduced as a tool for envisioning, planning, enacting, and evaluating youth participation. This model foregrounds the ethical, relational, spatial, and political dimensions of participatory practice and builds on established frameworks including those of Hart, Shier and Treseder.

The second half of the presentation focuses on key empirical findings and implications for theory. While existing participation models emphasise reducing power hierarchies, promoting equality in intergenerational relationships, and creating supportive environments. Findings from South Africa suggest that children and young people often prefer "parent and child" type relationships with adult allies, and that care and holistic support—helping children navigate trauma and structural inequality—are critical to developing voice. Meaningful participation in different contexts, including parliament, national policy dialogues, and service provision, is strengthened when spaces and processes are adapted to be accessible and welcoming, and when trust and relationships are built with adult allies. Positive experiences in supportive environments also generated ripple effects in families and communities, helping children and young people build social capital—networks of support they draw on for many purposes, including defending their rights in adult centric governance processes.

** This presentation draws on the work of all the South African members of the ICCRP including children and young people*

Parallel Session 9: G008**Evidence for Change: Monitoring and Measuring Youth Participation***Sharing Impact: Co-visioning a Pilot Youth Participatory Action Research Project (YPAR) Measure Repository**Presenting authors: Michelle Abraczinskas, University of Florida, Klara Kaufman, Harvard University**Author(s): Michelle Abraczinskas University of Florida, Angela Malorni, Rutgers, Tatiana Bustos, RTI International, Karena Escalante, The Education Trust, Klara Kaufman, Harvard University, Mariah Kornbluh, University of Oregon*

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) is a youth-adult partnered or youth-led approach in which youth identify an issue important to their lives, collect data, and share their findings with key decision-makers for change to better meet their needs. Though YPAR implementation varies, it has key principles of critical inquiry, reflection, and action, and impacts youth, adults, and systems. Since YPAR can be hyper-local, it is rarely studied across contexts; yet, that is crucial to understand impact at scale. In a funding landscape where demonstrating impact is strategically essential, measuring YPAR is crucial for practitioners. Similarly, to understand levers of change and their impact on multi-level outcomes, utilizing some common metrics to examine YPAR across contexts is crucial.

Building on survey crowd-sourcing and publication reviews, a topical interest group (TIG) of a U.S.-based YPAR Network is creating an open-access YPAR measure repository for researchers, evaluators, and practitioners to promote common metrics, ease of access, and use in global contexts. This repository responds directly to the call for increased consistency in documenting YPAR impact (Voight et al., 2026) and to practitioner access to evaluation tools.

In this presentation, we will share a prototype of the YPAR Measure Repository and solicit measures and feedback. First, speakers will share an overview and measures collected thus far. We will explore together how we measure YPAR and what constitutes “success,” and how our peers, communities, leaders, and funders know we are successful. Finally, using a participatory mini-zine, attendees will reflect on their own YPAR measurement, offer visions for what the repository can be, and give feedback on strengths and barriers to reaching its full potential. Additionally, attendees can share their projects, measures, and contact information via the zine to add to the repository, if interested.

Enhancing Practice through Measuring the Quality of Participation in Decision Making Practice - Child and Youth Participation Awards*Kirstie Smith, National Coordinator, Child, Youth and Parental Participation in Decision Making, Tusla*

From 2017-2022 Tusla utilised The Investing in Children Membership Award™ to assess services within Tusla and her partners agencies. Recognition was given for good practice and active inclusion of children and young people in dialogue that resulted in change.

A review of the use of IiC was carried out in 2022 and a number of incompatibilities were identified including the Investing in children use of its own “dialogue and change” concept rather than the Lundy model of participation adopted in Irish Government Strategy, Framework and Action Plan.

In response to these incompatibilities the decision was taken to create the Child and Youth Participation Awards. Tusla, with the support of fellow agencies, (An Gaisce, Children’s Rights Alliance, DCDE, Hub na nOg, Ombudsman for Children) developed an award structure that:

- Evaluates quality of practice in all the four quadrants of the Lundy Model of Participation in Decision Making
- Robustly and reliably measures the quality of participation practice
- Reflects a system-wide expectation of participation in every-day spaces and evaluation of services.
- Emphasises how children's views actually shape decisions
- Supports learning and development of participatory practice

This presentation will outline the process of developing the Child and Youth Participation Awards and how children and young people have been influential in this. It will highlight the learnings from the first 3 years of the awards, how the award processes have developed in this time, the tools used to measure the quality of participation, and ensure the process is a learning and development opportunity for applicants.

Child Rights Barometer – Monitoring Children's Rights Experiences in Switzerland and Liechtenstein

Thomas Schmid, Institute of Social Work and Social Spaces IFSAR, School of Social Work, Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences

How are children and young people faring in their families, schools, leisure time, and local communities in Switzerland and Liechtenstein? What opportunities do they have to participate in their everyday lives and in society more broadly?

The Child Rights Barometer is a newly developed monitoring instrument created jointly by the Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences and UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein. It aims to assess the implementation of children's rights from the perspective of children and young people themselves. The instrument connects child well-being concepts (see Andresen & Neumann 2018; Fegter & Fattore 2024) with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), making children's well-being measurable in a systematic and recurring way.

A distinctive feature of the Child Rights Barometer is its participatory approach: children and young people are not merely survey respondents but were actively involved as co-researchers at multiple stages of development. A series of workshops was held across all Swiss language regions and in Liechtenstein, in which children and young people evaluated and helped refine the theoretical framework underlying the instrument. Their input provided valuable insights into how young people understand the relationship between children's rights and well-being, and which dimensions they consider most important. These findings have directly shaped the design of the survey, which is expected to be completed by the end of May 2026.

The results of the Child Rights Barometer are intended to inform policy actors at federal, cantonal, and municipal levels, to strengthen the collection and analysis of child rights data, to close existing data gaps, and ultimately to give greater weight to the voices and needs of children and young people.

In pursuit of these goals, the presentation details the participatory development of the instrument and offers first insights into the data collected.

Unlocking Child Participation': Development and Validation of the Child Participation Post-Separation Scale (ChiPPS)

Rianne van Dijk, Mol, C. R., Rejaän, Z., Branje, S., Deković, M., Schrama, W. M., & van der Valk, Inge van der Valk, Utrecht University

Children have a right to participate in all decisions affecting them according to international human rights law. In the context of parental separation, many decisions need to be made regarding children's lives in which their right to be heard should be safeguarded. From a theoretical perspective, meaningful child participation is considered beneficial to them, but when parents have separated it can also be dysfunctional, bringing risks to the children involved. To better grasp child participation and its anticipated benefits and risks, we developed and validated the Child Participation Post-separation Scale (ChiPPS). Throughout the developmental phase, a panel of youth experts by experience ($n = 15$) was consulted to ensure its content and face validity. Based on a sample of $N = 218$ adolescents ($M = 15.9$; $SD = 2.25$), five lower-order subscales (expressing views, feeling heard, dysfunctional, influence, feedback) and 2 higher-order subscales (decision process, due weight) were identified in the factor analyses. All subscales showed good internal consistency and were meaningfully associated with single-item measures of children's involvement and satisfaction with the decisions made, and adolescent reports of parenting, psychological need satisfaction, and adjustment (convergence validity). Overall, the ChiPPS captured multiple distinct, yet intertwined dimensions of children's experiences, feelings and understanding in the decision-making process regarding their living arrangements following parental separation.

The ChiPPS provides researchers with a reliable instrument to measure child participation post-separation that is meaningful both in terms of children's rights and in relation to their adjustment. The ChiPPS in other settings (with the mediator and in court) are currently evaluated.

Friday 12th June – Abstracts

Parallel Session 1: G023

Workshop 1

Safeguarding Children Through their Involvement

Jan Perrin, Children First Information & Advice Officer, Tusla Child & Family Agency, Roisín Moyles, Children First Information & Advice Officer, Tusla Child & Family Agency

Children and young people are key stakeholders in the implementation of Children First within organisations. However, there is often a gap within organisations and limited resource materials to support this practice. Therefore, the Tusla Children First Information & Advice Service developed a resource document ‘Safeguarding Children Through Their Involvement’ and video to support organisations to involve children and young people in child safeguarding measures. The document is underpinned throughout by messages outlined in the Children First National Guidance (2017), the National Framework for Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making (2021) and the Lundy Model of Child Participation. Research reports completed by the Australian Catholic University Institute of Child Protection Studies on how children conceptualise safety and a lack of safety and children’s views on the value of their participation in child safeguarding measures shaped this document.

Guidance is provided on the steps that organisations need to consider on involving children in child safeguarding measures. These include:

- Management Commitment
- Involving Parents
- Engaging Children
- Hearing Children’s Views
- Creating Change

This workshop will focus on how organisations can embed meaningful child and youth participation in their child safeguarding measures. It also provides information on evidence-based practice on the use of the resources. We will also give an overview of how this work is being piloted with three groups of young people and how this will influence Tusla’s child safeguarding measures.

The workshop will:

- Explore how involving children and young people strengthens safeguarding in organisations
- Reflect on the key messages from research on how children perceive the concept of safety.
- Explore the barriers and opportunities when involving young people
- Identify steps that organisations can take to involve children and young people in their safeguarding measures.

Parallel Session 2: G006

Workshop 2

A Youth Designed and Facilitated Conference is a Unique Way to Learn and Become More Effective in Supporting Young People

Mary Glacken, Staff and Young People from Foróige Mayo

In November 2025, The Foróige youth committees from the Tusla funded Services in Mayo facilitated their Annual Youth Participation Conference. The annual conference is designed and facilitated by the young people to inform, advise and identify the most appropriate methods for Tusla and Organisations to engage and support young people living in Mayo.

Each year the young people choose a theme regarding the challenges they face in their lives and design the conference around this theme. In 2025 the title of the conference was “Making your voices heard in Ireland and in Europe”. The conference was funded through a grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs via the Communicating Europe Initiative 2025.

The 3 youth groups are Fora representing the voices of young people living in care, Nexus representing the voices of International Protectional Applicants and Ukrainian young people and ECHO representing the voices of young people engaging with Tusla Child Protection and Family Support Services.

Staff from agencies and services who support young people attended and through interactive and youth led activities were informed, educated and shown effective ways to engage and support young people in an ever evolving Irish and European context.

This interactive session will allow the young people showcase how they presented their information and utilised creative techniques to engage with the professionals attending to ensure everyone left having their work practices both praised and challenged. We will explore some of the changes participants committed to, regarding engaging and supporting young people in a more effective youth centred way.

Parallel Session 3: Boardroom

Workshop 3

Connect, Challenge, Change: Youth Participation in Global Citizenship Education - World Within Project

Jennie Hession, Kylie Ejoh, Morgan Hansen, Natasha Muldoon, Nike-Monisola Awoyemi, Princess Mimi Chukwudi, ARD Family Resource Centre

This session shares key learnings from World Within, ARD Family Resource Centre’s youth-driven Global Citizenship Education (GCE) project based in Doughiska, one of Ireland’s most culturally diverse suburbs. Rooted in the lived experiences of local young people, World Within supports participants to explore the local–global issues shaping their lives, build critical consciousness, and take collective action for change. The project begins with where young people are at, creating space for them to make sense of complex social issues and to lead meaningful responses within their communities.

The workshop will be co-designed and co-facilitated by young leaders from the project - Kylie, Jennie, Princess, and Morgan, alongside youth workers Natasha Muldoon and Nike Monisola Awoyemi. Together, they will introduce the project’s ethos of “connect, challenge, change” and share practical approaches for embedding meaningful youth participation in GCE settings.

Young people will speak directly to their role in shaping the direction of World Within — from planning sessions to leading public-facing initiatives. They will reflect on the personal and collective impact of this participation, including co-facilitating workshops for Professional Masters of Education students

at the University of Galway and developing Tight Spaces, a nationally published youth-led resource now featured on DevelopmentEducation.ie and included in a Junior Cycle English textbook. Their insights will highlight how youth leadership strengthens confidence, critical thinking, and a sense of agency.

Participants will also engage in an interactive, youth-led workshop element, experiencing activities used within the project to centre youth voice, build inclusive group cultures and to have fun! These creative, participatory methods demonstrate how a GCE youth project can become a space where young people not only learn about global justice issues but actively shape the conversations and actions that follow.

Parallel Session 4: G008

The Role of Adult Allies

The Role of Children's Champions in Promoting Young People's Participation in Decision Making in Northern Ireland

Mary McColgan, Centre for Children's Rights, Queens University Belfast

The presentation will outline a qualitative study which focuses on the role of the Children's Champions in the Northern Ireland Executive in facilitating children and young people's participation in decision making within legislation, policy and development of services.

This proposed study seeks to build on a 2014 study undertaken by the Northern Ireland Children's Commissioner exploring the role of the Children's Champions. These champions are expected to play a vital role in ensuring that children's needs are considered in policy and service delivery. They have a key role in advocacy and consultation in relation to children's rights within their respective Executive Departments.

From a Children's Rights perspective, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) gives children and young people the right to express their views on all matters affecting them and that this extends to policymaking process. However although the rights to participation have been enshrined in legislation, there has been limited focus on how those rights are exercised in the context of policy making processes and there has been a lack of research exploring this. As part of the study, a Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) drawn from the Participation Panel at NICCY will support the researcher.

The presentation will focus on the engagement process for the Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) outlining the (a) introductory phase (b) challenges in the ethical approval process (c) reflective analysis of negotiating power relationships across generational dimensions. Learning to date emphasizes the importance of relationship building, working with gatekeepers, establishing sense of co-agency, and understanding the systemic influence of epistemic justice.

Structured Power-Sharing: Foróige Volunteers as Adult Allies in Youth Participation

Lauren Hession, former Foróige Club Chairperson, Denis O'Brien, Volunteer Development Manager, Foróige

Foróige is a large youth development organisation which has for decades involved young people in discussion and decision making about actions that affect them, or in contributing to the community.

This participation is a fundamental element of the Foróige youth club model, but is under stress in many clubs.

This presentation will briefly describe the model, how it fits with current understanding of good youth participation, and the role of the adult volunteers as allies. Drawing on a 2025 national survey of volunteers, the paper identifies a 'new frontier' of participation: the challenge of maintaining meaningful engagement amidst a decline in civic literacy and procedural 'meeting knowledge' among new adult volunteers joining youth groups.

Foróige clubs use a defined meeting structure common to many organisations, with an elected committee who involve everyone else in a meeting where all aspects of the club are discussed and decided. The committee members are young people elected by their peers. A defining feature of this power-shift is the structural requirement for adult volunteers, who are embedded within the committee, to support young people to make decisions, exercise leadership without imposing ideas, facilitate, not dictate; yet being also responsible for safety. It is a complex relationship which ensures young people have decision-making authority while being supported by an adult volunteer. This paper will analyse the efficacy of the club committee structure through the Lundy Model (2007), specifically examining how adult volunteers safeguard 'Space' and 'Influence' for young people within a formal governance structure.

A definition of adult allies is: adults who partner with young people to foster meaningful participation, sharing power and responsibility rather than simply mentoring. The paper will demonstrate how Foróige volunteers operationalise this definition, transitioning from traditional authoritative roles to collaborative partners who 'scaffold' youth agency rather than directing it. We will also describe the challenges of supporting this into the future.

Presentation:

Reflecting the conference's core values, this session will be a co-produced presentation involving a Volunteer Manager, an adult volunteer, and a young person, utilising multimedia narratives to evidence the lived experience of power-sharing.

Parallel Session 5: G009

Achieving Policy Influence: Mechanisms and Approaches

The Youth as Researchers Programme

Danielle Kennan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway, Maria Kyprioutou, UNESCO

Momentum has been building in recent years behind youth-led participatory action research as a mechanism to bring grassroots youth voice to the fore. Youth-led participatory action research engages youth to identify an issue of concern, to take ownership of the research process and empowers youth to use their research findings to advocate for change. This workshop will draw on the facilitators' experience of implementing the Youth as Researchers (YAR) Programme. The YAR programme was established under the leadership of the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement at the University of Galway. It has been delivered in Ireland in partnership with Foróige and has become central to UNESCO's efforts to meaningfully engage youth in policy dialogue. This

paper will showcase the YAR programme as a youth-led mechanism to capture youth perspectives on issues of importance to them, in particular traditionally under-represented youth. It will outline for participants the YAR methodology and draw on previous examples to demonstrate its implementation in practice. Ultimately it will explore how youth, through the medium of youth-led research, can strive to influence public policy by bringing a more democratic and informed youth perspective into the policy-making arena.

Re-Centering the Middle Years: International Evidence on Supporting Children Aged 6–12 in Collective Decision Making

Dr Shirley Martin, School of Applied Social Studies, Professor Deirdre Horgan, School of Education, University College Cork

This paper synthesises international evidence on the participation of children aged 6 to 12 in collective and public decision making, with particular attention to implications for the Irish context. It addresses a gap in the participation literature by examining how children in middle childhood can be meaningfully included in formal consultation structures and policy processes. The review forms part of a wider programme of work informing the Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan and national initiatives to strengthen participation rights for younger children.

A systematic literature review was undertaken using the PRISMA 2020 guidelines and supported by the Covidence platform for screening and analysis (Page et al., 2021). The review included both peer reviewed and grey literature to capture diverse international approaches, innovative consultation methods, and evaluations of existing participation practices. It focused specifically on evidence concerning children aged 6 to 12, including initiatives that enable their involvement in policy development, public consultations, and collective decision making in educational, community, and civic settings (Álamo-Bolaños et al., 2024; Checkoway, 2011; Alanko, 2019).

The presentation highlights key international innovations designed to engage children under 12 in decision making. These include adapted deliberative democracy processes, large scale child consultations, child designed participation platforms, and digital tools that enhance inclusivity and access. Examples from Child Friendly Cities programmes, participatory budgeting, and child centred urban planning show how rights-based frameworks, intergenerational collaboration, and structured capacity building can support meaningful and sustainable participation. The review also identifies ongoing challenges, such as the limited availability of developmentally appropriate methods and a lack of robust evaluations of existing structures.

Overall, the findings point to the need for policy frameworks that recognise middle childhood as a distinct stage requiring tailored participatory approaches. For practice, there is a clear emphasis on adult capacity building, consistent evaluation, and the use of inclusive, child friendly methodologies. For research, the review underscores the urgent need for empirical and evaluative work that can strengthen understanding of effective participation models for children aged 6 to 12.

Parallel Session 6: G007

Youth, Democracy and Political Participation

Political Participation of Mexican Youth During the 2024 Elections

Correa Cortez María Esmeralda, Cervantes Correa Ameyali Esmeralda, University of Guadalajara

This paper examines the phenomenon of the ‘shift to the right’ in digital spaces during the 2024 electoral process in Mexico, analysing how opposing narratives evolved into radicalised confrontational tactics very similar to those observed in global right-wing movements such as Trumpism or Bolsonarism.

Through an analysis of young people’s behaviour across key platforms, the paper examines how the digital landscape was shaped by two main forces. Firstly, the intensive use of astroturfing and co-ordinated misinformation campaigns, aimed at creating a climate of panic and fear. Secondly, the consolidation of echo chambers on platforms such as X, where the political right created a bubble of opinion. In this context, young influencers and YouTubers emerged who produced content seeking to influence the vote.

Key words: Young people, emotional polarisation, shift to the right in the digital sphere, astroturfing.

Power of Place, Youth Agency in Crisis Transformation

Jennifer Lauren, New York University

Through history, the activism of young people has been a potent creative force in mobilizing social movements. However, youth-led civic action has not always translated into long-term, meaningful youth participation in political spaces.

In recent years, youth-led activism has become more visible in the global media landscape and in multilateral settings. This session explores the challenges and opportunities emerging from collaborating with youth climate activists on the ground, and how that can inform the transformation of education and a more equitable and locally-led global development agenda.

Drawing on multi-country, cross-generational and multi-disciplinary narratives ranging from the Ecuadorian Amazon to the National Youth Council of Ireland, this session aims to spark debate and productive pathways to power shifting, more intentional allyship and sustained avenues for youth and those on the periphery into political and institutional decision making.

Parallel Session 7: Bioscience Building

Rethinking Youth Participation in Research: Power, Contexts and Possibilities

Lessons from Free Participation: a Methodological Reflection arising from Conducting Youth Participatory Action Research in a Democratic School

Dorothee Potter-Daniau, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, School of Political Science and Sociology, University of Galway, Laura Stephens, Department of Biology, Maynooth University, Cliona Murray, School of Education, University of Galway, Cormac Forkan, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, School of Political Science and Sociology, University of Galway

This paper presents a methodological reflection arising from conducting Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) in a democratic school serving a highly neurodiverse student community aged 7 to 18 in Ireland. The school’s consent-based education creates a uniquely non-captive audience, which calls for problematising young people’s participation and co-production in transformative research.

Adopting a pragmatic epistemology, we highlight reflections arising from the gap between the initial research plan and the implementation process, as documented in field notes, memos, correspondence created as part of the work and dialogues with one young co-researcher.

First, our reflection underscores the tensions between the school's contextual marginality, its operating model, and young people's participation in the YPAR process. It shows how centring the research on the school's vulnerability, reframing action research, and blending informal and formal processes in a highly relational way helped overcome obstacles. Finally, we call for a careful problematisation of youth participation in transformative research, beyond idealised or moralised views, to avoid perpetuating normative or adultist practices.

Contextualizing Power Imbalances in Research Involving Youth in Diverse Contexts

Zirui Li, Aarati Taksal, Carolyn Melro, Nafisah Abdussalam, John Bedirian, Elisa Guichenal, Okeoghetero Ikime, Julie Quadrio, Arjun Kapoor, Olayinka Omigbodun, Magenta Simmons, Shiva Srinivasan, Srividya Iyer, McGill University

This study aimed to explore how power imbalances are understood and enacted in research involving youth in diverse contexts. Although youth involvement in research is often framed as empowering, broader social, cultural, and institutional contexts continually shape power dynamics and influence both youth and researchers involved in the research process. Using an exploratory qualitative study design, we conducted 62 semi-structured interviews with youth involved in research and researchers who involved youth in research across nine sites in Canada, Australia, India, Nigeria, and Singapore. Interviews were conducted online and in person, transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. Our findings indicated that power imbalances and power-sharing co-exist across diverse contexts. Academic gatekeeping and epistemic injustice influenced whose knowledge was recognized as credible, how research agendas and decisions were made, and the extent to which youth could meaningfully influence research processes. Deference to Elders and authority in collectivistic contexts and organizational hierarchy in research spaces across contexts together and individually shaped how youth could speak and take on leadership roles. Equitable involvement seemed to depend on researchers' commitment to power sharing and creating space for youth within institutional structures. Research approaches grounded in relationship-building and mutual trust were central to involving youth from marginalized backgrounds, including ethnic-racial and religious minoritized youth, and youth from Indigenous communities. By bringing youth and researchers' perspectives into dialogue, this study highlights the tensions between how power is conceptualized, experienced, and practiced in diverse contexts. This study also identifies practical strategies to foster more equitable research partnerships. For example, using youthfriendly languages and methodology such as storytelling and arts-based research methods, increasing the sense of belonging and trust to research by co-creating the actual research space with youth, and redistributing power through recognizing youth's contribution by offering coauthorship and leadership opportunities.

Parallel Session 8: Bioscience Building

Youth Participation in the Digital Age

Foróige Go: Digital Spaces as New Frontiers for Youth Agency and Power-Sharing

Van Nguyen, Prof. Tomás Ward, Insight Research Ireland Centre for Data Analytics, Dublin City University, Sarah Haslam, Director of Training, Programmes and Research at Foróige

Building on the widely accepted principle of youth participation in decision-making, this research looks toward digital spaces as the new frontier for such engagement. Particularly, it seeks to explore how digital youth work democratises participation, fostering inclusion and agency among diverse youth populations through tech-mediated/ supported 'Space' and 'Voice'. By analysing Foróige's digital

youth work approaches alongside stakeholder perspectives, this research identifies core success factors and challenges in the field. Ultimately, it aims to develop a model for implementing and enhancing digital youth work practices across the organisation and potentially the wider youth work sector.

This study employed a mix-methods approach to gather a comprehensive understanding of digital youth work in Foróige. This involved collecting both quantitative data from anonymous online surveys and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, including youth workers, young people, parents/ guardians, and senior leaders at Foróige. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to synthesise these perspectives and identify core trends in practice and engagement.

This presentation shares findings from the Foróige Go project, focusing on how digital tools can foster meaningful participation for youth. We introduce the developed Model of Digital Youth Work in Foróige, as well as Logic Model of Digital Youth Work in the organisation, which are structured around:

- Inclusion Practices: including spaces and accessibility, inclusive methodologies and approaches, outreach, communication, support, and resources to youth workers.
- Social Pedagogy: highlighting the importance of youth well-being and happiness, holistic learning opportunities, caring and authentic relationships, and youth empowerment.
- Experiential Learning and Learning by Designing: optimal learning occurs when individuals are actively involved in designing, creating, and inventing rather than through passive reception of information.

The findings suggest that digital youth work practice should focus on relational facilitation and safe accessible spaces, experiential learning and learning by designing, youth agency and flexibility, as well as integrated support system.

Beyond the Hype: Co-creating a Learning System with Young People to Support Responsible Chatbot (non-)use in Psychosocial Support Settings

Annette Loy, University College Cork, PhD Candidate, ADVANCE CRT Centre for Advanced Networks for Sustainable Societies

This presentation investigates barriers to youth participation in decisions about generative AI chatbots in psychosocial service and introduces a co-designed learning system that enables young people and practitioners to critically assess whether, how, and if such technologies should be used.

Global narratives increasingly frame the integration of artificial intelligence as inevitable across all sectors. In Ireland, the National AI Strategy similarly promotes the use of AI in public services. Against this backdrop, this presentation examines the barriers to meaningful youth participation in decisions about the implementation of generative AI technologies in services designed for them, particularly conversational chatbots in psychosocial support contexts.

Drawing on a community-based participatory research inquiry with young people and professionals in a second-chance education setting, this study combines thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke) and systems thinking analysis (Critical Systems Heuristics by Ulrich).

The findings highlight several barriers to participation. Structural barriers arise from the historic exclusion of young people from decisions about digital technologies in services intended for them. Cultural barriers stem from narratives of technological inevitability ("AI realism") that frame adoption

as unavoidable. Institutional barriers include power imbalances in risk assessment and the operationalisation of ethical guidelines in practice. Epistemic barriers relate to the limited integration of young people's knowledge and lived experience in technology governance.

Insights from the participatory inquiry reaffirm the central importance of relational dimensions in psychosocial and educational settings and suggest that the effectiveness and responsibility of AI use are co-constituted by implementation contexts.

The presentation concludes by introducing a co-designed learning system that enables young people and practitioners to collectively assess potential benefits, risks, and alternatives, supporting informed decisions about purposeful use—or non-use—of chatbot technologies.

Parallel Session 9: Auditorium Ethical Approaches to Children's Participation

Developing a Toolkit for Ethical Collaboration with Children and Young People: A Partnership Approach

Dr Edel Tierney, Ms Shauna Malone, Mr John Mitchell, Tusla Child and Family Agency

Aim:

Meaningful and ethical public and patient involvement (PPI) with children and young people (CYP) presents unique challenges that require specialised, child-centred approaches. A pioneering partnership between TUSLA – the Child and Family Agency, PPI Ignite Network at Dublin City University (DCU), and Barretstown, with support from PPI Ignite Network National Office, has co-developed a practical and ethical toolkit designed to support researchers and practitioners to authentically involve CYP as collaborators in research and other decision-making processes.

Research/Practice Methods:

The project was underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), particularly Article 12, and aligns with national and international commitments to children's participation in decision-making.

The toolkit was developed over 12 months through an iterative and inclusive process of consultation and co-design. A multi-method approach was used to capture diverse perspectives from the field. Key stages included:

1. Literature and policy review: A comprehensive review was conducted to map existing PPI resources and identify ethical, practical, and methodological considerations in meaningful child participation.
2. Expert Consultations: A consultation workshop was held with stakeholders, including child rights experts, researchers, practitioners, social workers, youth advocates, and CYP with lived experience of research involvement. Participants were drawn from academic institutions, statutory services, and civil society.
3. Toolkit Co-Design: Drawing on all consultation inputs, the draft toolkit was co-created by a core working group involving representatives from TUSLA, DCU, and Barretstown. The draft was then circulated to a wider network for feedback.

Presentation Overview:

This presentation will outline the development process of the toolkit and provide a description of the contents and its use as a collaborative resource with CYP as partners in the research process.

What are the implications for Youth Participation policy/practice/research?

This toolkit is designed for use by researchers, practitioners, and organisations across disciplines who wish to involve CYP not merely as participants, but as active partners in the research process. It can also be used to support collaboration with CYP in other activities, including service design and delivery. This toolkit will build capacity, standardise good practice, and ensure that CYP's voices meaningfully shape the research that affects their lives.

Navigating the Complex Realities of Ethical Arts-based Research Co-production with Care-experienced Youth Internationally

Lucy Jamieson, University of Cape Town, South Africa, Mandi MacDonald, Berni Kelly, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland

Co-producing research with young people recognises their agency, competencies, and participation rights, while arts-based methods offer dynamic ways of expressing complex and emotive ideas. There is, however, limited detailed commentary on how to apply co-production principles in the often-messy realities of arts-based research, or how to navigate sensitive relationships, especially in international contexts with care-experienced youth. Relationships may be protracted, entail close engagement and their ending is often not clearly demarcated. The visual artefacts are closely connected to, and potentially revealing of, the research participants who created them.

This paper draws on learning from the United and Unique project involving intercultural learning and participatory filmmaking with care-leavers in South Africa and Northern Ireland. It will outline our process of co-production through participatory filmmaking, highlighting some key methodological and ethical issues associated with international, interdisciplinary participatory research with care experienced youth. It will explore the complexity of navigating key aspects of the project:

- Hosting sensitive discussions about complex issues across diverse cultures.
- Outworking principles of inclusion, informed choice, and partnership.
- The importance of cultural humility.
- Responsive relational practice in the context of fluid youth lives.
- Ownership of editorial decisions during film production, editing, and distribution.
- Partnering with youth to realise their aspirations for shaping positive change.

The discussion will be illustrated with short clips from a co-produced film that documents youth engagement in peer-to-peer connections and the process of knowledge co-creation.

Thursday 11th June & Friday 12th June –

Poster Presentations

Participatory Action Research to Enable Meaningful Inclusion of Youth Voices in Tobacco and Vaping Policymaking: Critical Reflections on Methods and Impact

Ryc Aquino, PhD FHEA, Newcastle University

Background and aim: Young people are directly affected by tobacco and vaping policies, yet their perspectives are often marginalised in local policymaking. Our study uses a participatory action research (PAR) approach developed to support meaningful youth involvement in local policy decisions related to the forthcoming Tobacco and Vapes Bill in England. This poster will describe our co-produced research and practice methods, reflecting critically on their implementation and potential policy impact.

Methods: The study is conducted in partnership with young people and local authority practitioners across three English local authorities. We established three youth advisory groups (n > 20), facilitating nine sessions to date. As a group, we agreed research priorities, co-designed our research methods, and piloted research study materials. Data are being collected through focus groups with young people aged 11–18 years to explore views on proposed tobacco and vaping policy changes, anticipated impacts, and preferences for involvement in local policymaking. Semi-structured interviews with local policymakers are examining how national legislation is interpreted and implemented locally, including existing and planned strategies for youth participation in policy processes. Data will be synthesised to co-develop actions how young people can support policy processes amid a national policy. In our work, we use various interactive engagement techniques which have supported open discussion and empowered young people to share their views. However, those from underserved or marginalised backgrounds have been challenging to involve due to self-selection. To ensure equitable participation, youth advisors recommended flexible, non-judgemental approaches to engagement. Planned next steps include skills development opportunities aligned with young people's interests (e.g., research/communication training) and the co-production of research outputs to ensure that youth insights directly inform local policy action and recommendations.

Child Engagement in the Inspection of Social Care Services: a Scoping Review

Laura Behan, Mary Lillis, Sabine Buschmann, Sheila Hynes, Sinead Murray, Lorraine O'Reilly and Mary Wallace: Health Information and Quality Authority

A key challenge in regulating and monitoring children's social care services is meaningfully involving children in inspections so that their voices and lived experiences are central to how services are evaluated. This scoping review aimed to explore how children are facilitated and encouraged to participate in the inspection of children's social care services internationally.

A comprehensive database search was performed including CINAHL, Pubmed, PsychInfo, SocIndex and Social Sciences. The review also included a grey literature search for policy documents, guidance and guidelines from targeted websites of regulatory organisations and Government agencies. Grey literature searches focused on six jurisdictions: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Australia and New Zealand.

Findings showed that children's voices are underrepresented in inspection processes, particularly in child protection and welfare services. Where children were engaged, this was through interviews and

surveys. Posters in residential settings and child friendly online materials helped explain inspections and how to take part. Trained young inspection volunteers with care experience supported participation. Inspectors were expected to have trauma informed and child development training before speaking with children. Methods of providing feedback to children after inspection were not consistent but included verbal feedback, written feedback or requests for staff to provide feedback. Involving children and care-experienced adults early in designing inspections, and aligning criteria with what matters to children, would strengthen their influence.

These insights have guided the next stage of our study where HIQA will consult with children, young people and stakeholders to shape how their views are gathered and how inspection feedback is delivered. We will use this input to develop and evaluate a child-centred inspection methodology and provide the training needed to support its implementation.

Youth Voice in Action: How Young People Shape Decisions in their Foróige Youth Projects

Young people aged 13-18 from Galway and Roscommon Foróige Youth Projects

Foróige have always had a firm commitment to young people having an influence on decisions that affect them. Since the first clubs were created led by committees of young people in partnership with adult volunteers, to today, there are two dedicated seats on the Foróige Board for young people. Foróige has ensured that young people are central to decision making in the Organisation. It is core to all work done by Foróige that we actively involve young people in influencing decisions that affect them. Youth Participation in Foróige is defined as: "Young people being actively involved in influencing decision-making and the direction of Foróige by voicing their opinions, attitudes, perspectives and values" This definition came about through the hard work of our first Youth Participation Working group in 2010. This group was made up of young people, staff and volunteers in Foróige.

This poster presentation will highlight the day to day ways that young people's voices are heard, listened to and acted upon within the local Galway and Roscommon Youth Projects. With over 11 projects across the region, a lot of work goes into making sure young people's opinions are given space and listened to in every group they take part in. Through photographs, artwork and testimonials, young people from Galway and Roscommon youth projects will highlight the ways they have been listened to and their voices have influenced decision making in their local area.

Activism of Children and Young People: Cultural and Legal Barriers

Prof. Roberta Bosisio University of Turin, Department of Cultures, Politics and Society, Dr. Nicoletta Sciarrino, University of Turin, Department of Cultures, Politics and Society

While children are now widely recognized as social actors and bearers of their own understanding of social reality, their capacity to express dissent, challenge injustices, and propose change—individually and collectively—remains far less accepted. Recognition of children's agency often stops where conflict begins. Only recently has children's social and political activism gained attention within studies of their civil and political engagement (Taft & O'Kane 2024; Tisdall & Cuevas-Parra 2020).

This poster examines the cultural and legal barriers that constrain children's activism, focusing on the tension between protection-oriented legal norms and parental responsibility, on the one hand, and children's participation rights as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), on the other:

- the right to express their views and have those views given due weight (art. 12)

- freedom of expression, including “freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas” (art. 13)
- the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (art. 15)

Restrictions on children’s activism may not merely reflect protective concerns, but reveal a deeper form of age-based discrimination—limitations imposed on children as children in ways that would be unacceptable if applied to adults (Daly et al. 2022).

Drawing on childhood studies, the new sociology of childhood, and the critical lenses of adultism (Wall 2025) and childism (Biswas et al. 2024), this poster interrogates the boundaries of children’s political legitimacy and asks whether we are truly prepared to recognize children not only as participants, but as dissenting political subjects.

Co-designing a Survey with Young Adults with Lived/Living Experience of Supporting Friends through Mental Health Challenges: Lessons Learned

Dr. Sadhbh Byrne¹, Georgia Brown¹, Dr. Benjamin Hanckel², Dr. Erin Dolan³, and the PRISM Co-Design Group (1Maynooth University, 2Western Sydney University, 3The University of Melbourne)

This overarching study aimed to explore the informal support that young adults provide to friends experiencing mental health challenges. While existing literature is clear that friends are a principal source of support, little research has explored the nature of the support provided, or what it is like to provide it. Given this gap, and the need to ensure that the study focused on what young adults themselves consider relevant, meaningful, and reflective of their lived/living experience, we adopted a co-design approach to develop and implement an exploratory survey. Little guidance exists in the academic literature on survey co-design specifically, especially with youth. This presentation therefore aims to outline the lessons learned through this process.

In this study, co-design was defined as “a practice where people collaborate or connect their different knowledge to carry out a design task...sharing decisions (the design choices that are made)” (Knowles et al., 2022, p. 3). Six young adults from across Ireland with lived/living experience of supporting friends joined the project Co-Design Group. Through four co-design workshops, we co-designed the survey itself and the participant recruitment strategy; we interpreted and contextualised the survey findings, identified key take-away messages, and co-designed the dissemination strategy. This poster outlines the co-design process and reflects on the impacts of co-design, what worked well, challenges encountered, and lessons learned.

Youth participation and co-design demonstrably and substantively enhanced the quality of the research, and in turn the relevance of the results. The successful development and implementation of this co-designed survey, and the rich findings it generated, therefore illustrate the benefits of partnership with young adults. However, our experiences also revealed the need for clearer guidance to support meaningful youth participation in survey co-design. Through sharing our practices, we seek to support other researchers to meaningfully embed youth participation in future survey design.

Are Young People claiming their Space in Higher Education settings?

Michelle Conboy and Sean MacDermott, University of Galway

As undergraduate students of the BA in Child, Youth and Family: Policy and Practice programme, we have noticed that our peers are sometimes hesitant to actively participate in the context of smaller learning environments such as seminars and tutorials where they are encouraged to express their

views and opinions. It appears to us that they may lack the confidence and resources to engage and claim their space within the classroom setting, thereby creating a barrier to their active and full participation. This research explores if there is a correlation between those who have partaken in youth groups/services and if they are more confident when claiming their space in the overall educational setting. The Lundy model (2007) posits the concept of space as a process in which adults facilitate and support young people in being empowered to form and express their views and opinions in a safe and inclusive environment. Focusing on this concept, we propose that the space element experienced in youth work settings helps young people to be more confident in claiming their space in higher education classroom settings. This paper will present the findings of a quantitative study conducted with second year undergraduate students. The work aims to show that experiences of meaningful youth participation may have lasting impacts, shaping young people's confidence and capacity to claim their space and contribute within university classroom settings.

Extern: Shifting Power in Practice: Family Support, Youth Justice and Meaningful Participation in Youth Justice Family Support Services

Liz Cronin, Tracey McSteen, Laura Davis, Jake Prunty, Extern

To showcase how Extern delivers integrated Family support across the youth justice continuum—Bail Supervision, Youth Diversion Projects (YDP), and Intensive Family Support—while embedding youth participation and children's rights (UNCRC) in work with families vulnerable to criminal exploitation, grooming by organised crime groups (OCGs), and coercion.

This practice-based poster draws on multi-agency service delivery, including referral pathways from Probation, Tusla (across services), An Garda Síochána, community mentors, and direct parent/guardian self-referral. It highlights relational, trauma-informed, and strengths-based approaches, alongside community-based mentoring and intensive wraparound supports. Case-informed insights (anonymised) illustrate engagement strategies with young people and families experiencing high levels of vulnerability and system involvement.

The poster will map Extern's model of layered support across youth justice and prevention pathways. It will demonstrate how participation is actively facilitated in complex contexts where power imbalances, distrust of services, and risk factors (e.g. grooming, coercion, marginalisation) are present. Key elements include: · Creating safe conditions for youth voice in high-risk environments · The role of adult allies in shifting decision-making power within families and systems · Flexible referral pathways that reduce barriers to access · Integrating family voice into intervention planning and review · Practice responses to ethical challenges, including safeguarding and participation balance The poster will also highlight outcomes such as improved engagement, reduced justice system escalation, and strengthened family capacity.

The Voice of the Child as a Critical Friend: Listening through Audiences through Philosophical Dialogue

Michela Dianetti & Lucy Elvis, School of History and Philosophy, University of Galway

This poster presents the CPI as a fruitful space to capture the voices and experiences of young people and a valuable methodology for Participatory Action Research. Within the CPI, collective, facilitated dialogue on conceptually focused, enduring questions that matter for human living, accept knowledge and lived experience as epistemically valuable. In this context, the facilitator's role is to reflect back

the thinking of the young people who provide the content themselves. Thus the relationship between the facilitator and the community is vital to creating an open space for dialogue together.

In this poster we present our critical reflection on the commitment to decentring authority that is identified as a core aim of Philosophy for and with children and explore how the position of the facilitator of the CPI in relation to the institution or organisation can impact the extent to which the critical voices of children and young people can be empowered.

In this case, it presents a successful partnership between the university and an arts organisation where the facilitators (from the university) were able to empower young persons through their position working with rather than for the organisation (arts festival) itself.

The poster includes brief reflections on how the candid reflections of the children supported a meaningful process of reflection by the festival's schools team on their aims and objectives.

This is the First Time my Son has been Asked to Participate in Research.' Barriers to the Participation of Children with Disabilities in Research'

Dr Rose Doolan Maher, Dr Susan Flynn, Dr Julie Byrne, School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin, University of Dublin

The aim of this poster presentation is to highlight the challenges to including children with disabilities in research on sensitive topics. The poster also emphasises the ethical, moral, and practical importance of engaging children with disabilities in research about their digital lives.

This poster is based on a funded research project at Trinity College Dublin, in which 34 children with disabilities were interviewed about their internet use. Learning from research investigating the intersection of disability, child protection and welfare, and internet use, methodological and ethical implications are described. Structural (funding and resources, skills, safeguarding), cultural (views of childhood, moral panic, digital divide), and language (disability terminology, digital terminology) challenges are explored in terms of their impact on conducting research with children with disabilities.

The poster is informed by qualitative research with children with disabilities that employed a bespoke method of semi-structured, person-centred, dyadic interviews, as well as vignettes to engage them in their safe spaces and places.

This poster connects to the conference theme 'barriers to participation (incl. structural, cultural, language, and other challenges).

Overall, the poster highlights children with disabilities' agency and participation rights, underscoring the importance of including their views in research. This research promotes their inclusion in discourse about digital policy and regulation, ensuring a digital future for all.

From Evidence to Practice: A Journey in Supporting the Participation Rights of Disabled Children and Young People

Beth Ferguson, Senior Development and Research Officer, Hub na nÓg

Building on Hub na nÓg's specific focus on including seldom-heard voices, this poster journeys the most recent developments in supporting the meaningful participation of disabled children and young people in decision-making. As a national centre of excellence, Hub na nÓg, an initiative of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE), supports the realisation of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Article 7 of the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRC) through evidence-informed resource development, education and training. This journey highlights the role of partnership and sectoral expertise in promoting participation that is inclusive, accessible, and grounded in evidence.

The journey of evidence-informed practice began with research and collaboration, culminating in the publication of a Literature Review and Scoping Document in 2024. Developed in partnership with Dublin City University and the National Disability Authority, Hub na nÓg also collaborated with working groups of academics and Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) to ensure the outputs were grounded in sectoral expertise. The scoping document was further shaped by consultations with disabled children and young people, where their views and perspectives were included to inform the guidance.

In 2025, this evidence base moved into practice through a pilot training model for practitioners in disability services, including Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs) and respite settings. The purpose of the pilot was to refine the training model, drawing on the expertise of practitioners. Follow-up evaluation interviews enabled a collaborative review of the training's impact. These evaluations indicated an increase in practitioner confidence, with staff reflecting a change from seeing participation as an optional extra, nor a luxury, but a non-negotiable right.

Current work in 2026 focuses on the initiation of a toolkit which will share guidance and good practice examples. Initial steps include the commencement of a working group and a Youth Advisory Group to inform its development. Hub na nÓg also continues to build capacity across a variety of sectors through a free, self-paced introductory eLearning course focused on children and young people's participation in decision-making.

¹In this abstract, the terms "children and young people with disabilities" and "disabled children and young people" are used interchangeably. The term 'disabled people' is recognised by many within the disability rights movement in Ireland to align with the social and human rights model of disability. However, we also recognise that others prefer the term "persons with disabilities" because of the inherent understanding that they are first and foremost human beings entitled to human rights. This also reflects the language used in the UNCRPD (National Disability Authority 2022).

The Youth for Justice Project: Uplifting Youth Voices and Vision(boards) for Change

Jesica Siham Fernández, PhD, Ashley Orozco-Plata, Linda Soto, Milagros Cruz-Jimenez, Santa Clara University

Youth participation is fundamental to the sustainability and viability of a healthy democracy in a globalized world where despite the rise in technology there can be barriers to equitable participation, inclusion and representation. The poster presentation aims to uplift and center the voices of pre-adolescent youth; how they experience their school, family, neighborhood and community. We describe a "vision board" making activity that centered the experiences of youth, ages 10 to 14. The purpose of the activity was for youth to reflect upon their challenges, hopes and dreams for their living and learning environments, as they come of age in precarious economic times, social injustices and climate change. Qualitative methods are described, specifically fieldnote data of the youth in the Youth for Justice Project (YJP) afterschool program. Featuring themes on youth critical thinking, sociopolitical development and collective action, the poster will explain the history and context of the YJP, which follows a youth participatory action research (yPAR) paradigm. Youth engaged in yPAR are positioned as collaborators in the research process. By describing the YJP, and the "vision board" making activity, we examine how youth engaged ethical critical reflexivity as they centered their voices

and uplifted each others' stories. Our intention is to offer a valuable resource, and to invite all to dialogue at the conference about what we can do to support youth. Thus, as a resource to be shared, we envision the "vision board" making activity can be adapted or modified to meet the needs of diverse youth. We offer educators, youth service providers, practitioners and advocates information about the activity, which they can use to engage youth in sociopolitical development opportunities to support their wellbeing.

Decreasing Tokenism and Other Harmful Practices by Reflecting on and Exploring ways to Dismantle Anti-Youth Ageism

Kate Fogarty¹, Michelle Abraczinskas¹

Dale Pracht¹, Kate Fletcher¹, Sebastian Galindo¹, Cormac Forkan²

¹University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, United States, ²UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway, Galway

Accounts of the roles of young people within youth-serving organizations on a global scale are replete with terms/phrases such as "tokenism," "adults taking over," and "youth washing." The underlying source of these is adultism, also known as anti-youth ageism. This poster will outline a definition of anti-youth ageism with provision of appropriate examples. The aims of this poster are to inspire participants to facilitate forward movement toward youth-adult equity in their community-based settings.

A key perspective that guides forward movement in promoting youth voice is the TYPE pyramid (Wong et al., 2010) that has guided youth participatory action research (YPAR) in recent practice in diverse settings globally. The TYPE pyramid is introduced with perspectives for disrupting imbalances in power and promoting youth-adult equity. The poster will cover how intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors prompt greater youth-adult equity, along with assessment tools to address anti-youth ageism in their work. The emphasis is for observers to create and modify their practices to decrease biases against youth.

This poster appeals to youth development professionals in global settings (YDPGS) providing the following (within allotted space requirements):

- Delineate how anti-youth ageism is defined and manifests in youth-serving organizations within community settings
- Critique theories that inform youth development practice yet, implicitly and unintentionally, perpetuate anti-youth ageism
- Impart understanding of refinements to youth theories and new approaches that promote youth-adult partnerships and youth-led work
- Examine and evaluate case studies, using presented paradigms that positively impact youth-adult processes within organizations
- Generalize knowledge for the purpose of applying new approaches into their youth-serving organizations
- Formulate a foundational starting point for supporting youth-adult partnerships in youth-serving organizations at global capacity

Specifically, we anticipate participants will apply this information to enhance the “inputs” and “activities” components within the logic model of their program to strengthen youth participation and community engagement.

Identifying Key Barriers and Solutions to Youth Participation in Digital Youth Mental Health Research: A Global Modified-Delphi Study

Amanda Fitzgerald, University College Dublin, Sophie Kathryn, University College Dublin (Presenting author), Maria Tibbs, University of York, Charlotte Blease, Uppsala University, Shaun Liverpool, Edge Hill University, Josefin Hagstrom, Uppsala University, Parisa Gazerani, Oslo Metropolitan University

Rationale: Digital mental health interventions are essential tools to support young people’s mental health and wellbeing. Participatory research practices, including co-design and patient and public involvement (PPI), are considered “best practice.” However, there is limited evidence describing how youth involvement is implemented in digital mental health research. Challenges such as sustained youth engagement and power imbalances persist. Additionally, there are digital-specific barriers for young people in research such as inequitable access to devices or digital literacy skills. These challenges are under-reported, with little guidance on how to address them.

Objectives: This study aims to build international consensus on the most significant barriers to youth participation in digital mental health research and identify achievable solutions to support meaningful and sustainable youth engagement across the research lifecycle.

Methods: A modified-Delphi approach was conducted in line with ACCORD guidelines. Participants were recruited across three international expert panels; young people, researchers, and clinicians/organisational stakeholders (n=20 per panel). Initial barriers were identified through three stakeholder consultations and an umbrella review of reviews. A three-round online Delphi questionnaire was used to achieve consensus on key barriers, followed by the co-development and validation of practical solutions through panel consensus.

Results: The study identifies the key barriers and associated solutions to youth participation in digital mental health. Findings highlight practical strategies to enhance engagement, address power imbalances, and navigate digital-specific challenges across the research life cycle

Conclusion: This project will provide consensus-based outcomes for researchers and practitioners to dismantle barriers to youth participation in digital mental health research. The findings will provide stakeholder-informed guidance to support inclusive and sustainable youth engagement.

This project is presented by a young researcher and conducted within COST Action 250 CA23153 - Digital Mental Health for Young People (YouthDMH), supported by COST 251 (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).

Partnering with Adolescents to Shape the Digital Health Literacy of Adolescents in Ireland Project

Hannah Linney (1), Ken van Someren (2), Sinead Keogh(3), 1. Department of Enterprise and Technology, Atlantic Technological University, Galway, 2. Department of Tourism and Sport, Atlantic Technological University, Donegal, 3. Department of Enterprise and Technology, Atlantic Technological University, Galway

The aim of this study is to engage adolescents in the development of a novel, adolescent-specific survey instrument that will be used to assess the digital health literacy of adolescents in Ireland. In this age of digitisation, the internet and social media are important sources of health information for

adolescents. While the digital space can be a valuable resource, widespread misinformation poses risks that may negatively impact health decision making. Therefore, the ability to critically appraise the trustworthiness of the information accessed, a key component of digital health literacy, is becoming increasingly important. Greater understanding of the digital health literacy of adolescents is needed as this key developmental period has implications for health across the life course.

Existing measures of digital health literacy, originally designed for adults or adapted from adult frameworks, have not kept pace with the speed at which the digital environment, and adolescents' digital lives, continue to evolve. This poster will outline the use of World Café process to engage adolescents in the design of a survey instrument that will be used to investigate digital health literacy among adolescents in Ireland.

A World Café session was conducted in a post primary school in Donegal in April 2026 with forty adolescents aged fifteen to sixteen. The adolescents discussed their experience of interacting with health information online, on social media and on generative artificial intelligence chatbots. The session provided an insight into the digital spaces and tools favoured by this demographic, their motivations and perceived challenges when engaging with health information digitally. Involving adolescents in the design of this survey instrument is likely to support age-appropriate design and participant understanding. This session will inform the questionnaire wording and clarity to ensure that the study and measurement tool reflects young peoples lived experiences, minimising potential misunderstanding or distress.

Cross-National Comparison of Young People's Understandings of Co-Construction

Clara Mariné, School of Social and Political Sciences, ULisboa

This doctoral research is part of the COCOSO Doctoral Network, which explores co-construction as a key dimension of democratic innovation in social welfare. As an EU-funded program, it brings together universities and non-academic partners across nine European countries.

While co-construction is increasingly present in policy and academic debates, it often remains vaguely defined and normatively assumed. At the same time, there is limited empirical research on how young people understand and experience these processes, especially those in situations of structural vulnerability. This study approaches co-construction from a critical perspective, focusing on how power relations shape what participation actually looks like in practice.

The research explores how young people aged 18–29 involved with social services understand and experience co-construction across the network countries: Portugal, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Denmark, Austria, Romania and Poland. Particularly, it examines the barriers that limit meaningful participation, including institutional constraints, unequal power dynamics, and forms of adultism, as well as the conditions that may enable more inclusive processes.

Methodologically, the project follows a sequential mixed-methods design. The first phase consists of an ethnomethodological case study in Valencia (Spain), developed in collaboration with the NGO Jovesólides, which provides a deeper insight into everyday interactions within social services. The second phase is a transnational survey, allowing for comparison across countries and helping to identify broader patterns linked to different welfare and socio-political contexts. An intersectional approach runs throughout the study, considering how overlapping social factors shape young people's opportunities.

Overall, the project aims to contribute to a clearer understanding of co-construction by incorporating young people's perspectives, identifying the main barriers and enabling factors that shape their participation, and exploring how these processes vary across different European contexts. In doing so, it also seeks to generate knowledge that can be useful for developing more inclusive and responsive social policies.

“How did that make you Feel?”: Adult Facilitation and Adolescent Leadership in Participatory Research

Ruchika Tara Mathur¹, Lakshmi Murthy², Saoirse Nic Gabhainn¹, Colette Kelly¹

1 Health Promotion Research Centre, University of Galway; 2Jatan Sansthan, Udaipur

This poster examines the role of adults in supporting an adolescent-led evaluation of health services, drawing on a participatory study with a mixed-gender cohort in India. The study adopted an adolescent-led evaluation approach within a broader participatory research design.

Data were generated through creative and visual tools in participatory workshops, adolescent-generated evaluation outputs, and reflective session debriefs. Adolescents defined evaluation criteria, developed assessment questions, and appraised both adolescent health services and the participatory processes. Adults (researchers and institutional officers) provided facilitation, ethical oversight, and logistical support. Adolescents contributed to preliminary interpretation through group reflection and discussion exercises. Data were then charted and coded in NVivo, focusing on themes such as participation, decision-making, and adult facilitation across stages of the research process. Data were analysed using a reflexive thematic approach.

Findings show that adult input was exercised across recruitment, facilitation, ethics, analysis, and feedback stages, positioning adults as both enablers and gatekeepers. Intentional adult facilitation practices, including scaffolding of tasks and use of prompts, supported adolescents' participation and decision-making within time-bound participatory engagements. The findings indicate that adult facilitation, alongside institutional and ethical factors, plays a substantive role in shaping the conditions for active and meaningful youth participation.

The study positions adult scaffolding and facilitation as a deliberate component rather than an invisible backdrop to youth participation. It highlights that ethical and institutional requirements can function as sites for upholding participatory intent rather than as procedural constraints. The study contributes empirically grounded insight into how adults shape meaningful adolescent participation within short-term and constrained contexts, and calls for greater transparency in reporting adult roles and power dynamics.

HAPPY and Heard: Youth Engagement in the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC) Ireland study 2026

Carmel McGarr, Dr. Laurie Décarpentrie, Louise Lunney, Aoife Gavin, Ruth Heffernan, Kaylynn Hennessy, Professor Saoirse Nic Gabhainn and Professor Colette Kelly, Health Promotion Research Centre, University of Galway

This paper presents the participation of adolescents in preparing for HBSC 2026 in Ireland, focusing on the process and benefits to both the adolescents and the research. It highlights the value of giving adolescents a voice in matters related to their health and wellbeing, skills developed and provides an example of how this was achieved.

In preparation for the HBSC Ireland 2026 survey, a Youth Advisory Panel, HAPPY (Health Advisory Panel of Passionate Youth) was established in collaboration with the youth organisation, Foróige. Based on a literature review of best practice in youth participation, we incorporated processes to ensure meaningful participation. Adolescents from diverse backgrounds and regions in Ireland participated in six online workshops over ten months, outside school hours. During these sessions, the panel co-developed priority topics for the survey, designed age-appropriate materials to support data collection, and advised on effective communication of study findings.

As HAPPY meetings were held online, each participant required access to a device to join. Two facilitators from the research team led each session and adolescents could provide confidential feedback after each meeting. Funding to support adolescent participation in the HBSC study was secured at the study outset.

By using the evidence on meaningful youth engagement and establishing expectations and goals for the adolescents and the HBSC study, ensured the adolescents and the study benefited from the process. Young people's input shaped the study's focus in meaningful ways and revealed priorities that can guide more responsive, youth-driven research. The lessons learned through HAPPY could benefit other projects striving for genuine youth participation leading to stronger, more relevant outcomes.

If Participation Cannot Be Measured, It Cannot Be Real: A Youth-Led Instrument Based on the Lundy Model for Evidencing Power-Sharing Across Settings

Sebastian Mech, Department for Political Science, Justus Liebig University Giessen

Meaningful child and youth participation is widely endorsed as a normative principle in policy and practice, yet remains difficult to empirically demonstrate. Current evaluation approaches in Childhood Studies predominantly rely on qualitative approaches, most prominently drawing on the Lundy-Model, which allow context-sensitive interpretation but limit systematic comparison across institutions and participation settings.

This poster examines whether and how meaningful participation can be measured through youth self-assessment in a reliable and comparable way. It addresses the methodological gap between normative participation concepts and empirical measurement by developing a quantitative instrument that allows young participants themselves to evaluate participation processes. The aim is not to replace qualitative approaches but to complement them with a standardized, low-threshold and self-applicable measurement that enables comparative and repeated assessment across settings.

Building on the four pillars of the Lundy framework, the poster presents a scale consisting of four six-item subscales. Items were co-constructed and cognitively tested together with members of German child and youth parliaments to ensure comprehensibility and usability by young respondents. The instrument was then implemented in a quantitative pretest survey prior to a nationwide survey of youth parliament members.

Results indicate that the dimensions can be empirically distinguished, show satisfactory reliability and are clearly interpretable by respondents. Youth self-assessment thereby functions as an indicator of experienced influence within participatory arrangements. The paper outlines analytical applications including comparisons across institutional contexts and monitoring of participation quality over time.

By operationalizing meaningful participation and its components in a participant-driven measurement format, the instrument enables empirical assessment of power-sharing and identification of tokenistic practices. The contribution therefore addresses a central challenge of participation research and practice: participation that can be measured can also be held accountable by young participants themselves.

Democracy of Tomorrow? Youth-Generated Knowledge, Power, and Participation in German Child and Youth Parliaments

Sebastian Mech, Department for Political Science, Justus Liebig University Giessen

Children and youth have the right to participate, granted through Art. 12, UN CRC. For the past thirty years, child and youth parliaments were established in German municipalities to ensure the right to participate formally in the lowest level of German politics. As of 2026, about 600 parliaments exist on local levels. Few studies have already been conducted, yet we lack knowledge from a nationwide comparative perspective.

This poster presents results from an ongoing participatory research process that examines meaningful child and youth participation through the lens of power and influence. Focusing on child and youth parliaments in Germany, the project treats the research process itself as a site of participation, thereby shifting epistemic authority toward young people.

In a first participatory workshop held in November 2025, members of child and youth parliaments generated 151 research questions reflecting their lived experiences of participation. These questions focused strongly on issues of influence, access to decision-makers, resources, adult responsiveness and recognition. Through an inductive analytical process, the youth-generated questions were translated into six thematic categories, corresponding research questions and one overarching guiding question. This step made visible how young people conceptualize meaningful participation not as a formal right, but as a multidimensional power relationship.

In subsequent participatory workshops in March 2026, these themes were collaboratively translated into example survey questions, forming the basis for a questionnaire draft to be tested in a quantitative pretest in May 2026. By visualizing this stepwise participatory process, the poster demonstrates how participatory research can counter adultism, make power relations visible and contribute to the development of more accountable youth participation practices on a local level in German politics.

Exploring the Role of Youth Participation as part of the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2023-2025

Aisling O'Leary, MA Public Policy Student, University of Galway

The research paper aims to explore the role of the youth consultation in the Youth Homelessness Strategy 2023-2025. The previous youth homelessness strategy (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2013) did not include the voices of young people with lived experience of homelessness. This paper will aim to address the gap in knowledge on the role of youth participation in the most recent Youth Homelessness Strategy. This paper will apply the Lundy model of youth participation (Lundy 2007) to further understand if the policy makers involved in the strategy provided the young people an opportunity to be express their view and be responded to. This study will aim to answer the two following sub questions. Did the youth consultation identify any knowledge gaps for policymakers? How did the actions carried out in the strategy align with contributions from the young people?

Document analysis will be carried out on relevant policy papers related to the strategy such as a report on the consultation by Fullerton (2022). Thematic analysis will be used to identify emerging themes. The findings should provide an understanding on how policymakers use the contributions from young people's participation to formulate policies. The study will also provide an insight into the challenges young homeless people in Ireland face and the opportunity to gain a sense of agency by engaging in the consultation.

Adolescents Attending Paediatric Services with Food Allergy, Current Quality of Life and Transition Readiness to Adult Care

K. Peiris, O. McIntyre, M. Molcho, V. McCauley, E. Moylett, University of Galway

Adolescence is a time of increasing independence, responsibility, and identity formation. For young people living with food allergies (FA), however, this transition can be particularly complex, impacting not only their physical health but also their overall quality of life.

Globally, the prevalence of FA has risen significantly, with growing recognition of the associated psychological and clinical challenges faced by this group. Adolescents are at a developmental stage marked by neurological changes, including brain pruning and increased impulsivity and risk-taking behaviours, which can heighten the risks associated with managing FA.

This poster explores the quality of life (QoL) and readiness for transition to adult healthcare services among adolescents with FA. The study addresses three specific research objectives (SROs): [SRO1] to assess the current QoL of adolescents with FA; [SRO2] to investigate adolescents' perception of FA-related risks, their awareness of what to avoid, and the impact of FA on their social lives; and [SRO3] to examine the transition readiness of adolescents with FA and to better understand their attitudes towards managing their own health care.

The study population consists of adolescents aged 13 to 17 attending a paediatric allergy clinic at University Hospital Galway. Participants were invited to complete two validated questionnaires: the Food Allergy Quality of Life – Teenage Form (FAQOL-TF) and the Transition Readiness Assessment Questionnaire (TRAQ-A, version 6). A total of 33 adolescents participated in the study, providing insight into both their lived experiences and preparedness for managing their condition independently as they transition into adult care.

By recognising adolescents' growing desire for independence, healthcare providers can use these findings to inform decision making regarding strengthening education, and supporting self-management skills, and decision-making involvement. Supporting young people during this critical transition period is essential to promoting both their wellbeing and long-term health outcomes.

From the Inside Out: Exploring Student Partnership within Irish Higher Education Institutions

Alana Powell, Daniella Deshko, Iris-Annabel Metsik, Aundria Cameron, Niall Hogan, Dr Glen Jankowski, and Emeritus Professor Barbara Dooley, University College Dublin

The project developed scalable recommendations to meaningfully improve belonging across Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) based on the empirical data (e.g., a review of National Student Engagement Programme (NStEP) case studies) and student co-researchers' own reflexivity. The key recommendations related to the following themes: Student Partnership and Consultation, Peer Support and Transition, and Co-Design and Pedagogy. Based on recommendations from the reflexive input of the team, the importance of centering research around student voice and including students

who may be underrepresented such as commuting students, young students who start college at an early age (i.e., under 18), and those who don't participate in college events is important and should be targeted. Additionally, input from the researchers own experience of being a student included socioeconomic barriers such as having to balance college with work, missing out on college events due to commuting, and personal identities influencing student belonging such as moving from a different country to study in Ireland and having to pave their own way and push themselves out of their comfort zone to connect with others in college, being a first generational college student and not having family to talk to about these experiences because their family might not be able to relate, and finally, being part of the LGBTQ+ community and being non-religious whilst feeling the religious input within the institution, and how it has impacted their own sense of student belonging.

Government of Ireland – Support for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making

The Participation, Play and Recreation Unit in the Department of Children, Disability and Equality

The Irish Government, through the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, has a number of policy documents and structures in place to support the participation of children and young people in decision-making.

The poster features a graphic which displays how the structures funded by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality are linked and work together. It is a visual to help attendees understand the central role that the Government plays in the progressing the participation of children and young people in decision-making in the government sector and beyond.

This includes:

- The Participation, Play and Recreation Unit in the Department of Children, Disability and Equality
 - Policy documents:
 - [The Lundy Model of Participation](#)
 - [The National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making](#)
 - [Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028](#)
 - [Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan 2024-2028](#)
- [Hub na nÓg](#), is the national centre of excellence and coordination in children and young people's participation in decision making
 - Research
 - Training
 - Capacity Building
 - Tailored Consultations
- The National Participation Office
 - [Comhairle na nÓg](#)

- [National Youth Assembly](#)
- [Dáil na nÓg](#)
- [Seanad na nÓg](#)
- [National Executive](#)

The poster also includes information on the [eLearning Course – Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making](#)

Barriers to Participation: Using Immersive Technologies to Promote Engagement and Support Participation

Tom Rickard, VR Development Officer & Adam Leech, Senior Youth Officer, GoVirtual (Foróige)

A significant challenge to participation is the inequality in access to youth work services for young people. For a variety of reasons, some young people face difficulties and challenges in accessing face-to-face youth work services. Consequently, their voices are often seldom heard, and they become marginalised in mainstream conversations about the provision of appropriate and relevant services.

Through the work of Foróige GoVirtual we have leveraged the use of VR technology to engage young people who find it difficult or challenging to participate in face-to-face youth work services. This includes young people who are geographically isolated, autistic young people, peer-isolated, and those presenting with a variety of physical and/or mental health challenges that prevent them from accessing in-person services.

The first step toward meaningful participation and ensuring the voices of young people are heard is to provide the opportunity to engage with services in spaces where they feel comfortable and can access with agency.

This poster presentation details some of the recommendations made following an independent review of Foróige GoVirtual over the past three years, which spanned the Rethink Ireland Scaling Education Fund. The poster also addresses some of the benefits and impact of meaningful engagement with youth services and how this contributes to beneficial, impactful, and authentic youth participation.

Young people's Experiences with Engage in Education Explored through Photovoice.

Dr. Cormac Forkan. Researchers, Dr. Tanja Kovacic, Caroline Fahy, Annemarie Shalloo, UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, University of Galway

Educational inequality is a permanent feature in the Irish education system (Cahill, 2020). A ratio of 4.9 students from disadvantaged areas to 10 students from affluent areas attend third level institutions.

This poster presentation provides an overview of participatory action research carried out in conjunction with young people who were supported by Engage in Education. Engage in Education is an alternative education programme supporting children and young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds in Limerick city, by encouraging them to enhance their career opportunities by attending further and higher education.

The aim of our study (which formed part of a wider evaluation of alternative education in Ireland funded by Rethink Ireland) was to understand the perspectives of young people who are affected by

educational inequality. Photovoice is a community-based participatory action research (PAR) method that provides voice to marginalised groups usually excluded from the political arena (Liebenberg, 2018; Sutton-Brown, 2014). Six participants who were supported by Engage in Education took part in photovoice from September 2023 to February 2024. They were asked to take photographs expressing what Engage in Education meant to them. The research team then discussed the photographs in a focus group interview and one-to-one interviews with the young people. Utilising Tsang's framework for photovoice data analysis, five themes emerged. These were; friendships, improve one's life, wellbeing, practical support, and grinds facilitating a different way of learning.

As this poster presentation will highlight, photovoice as a participatory action research method is useful in foregrounding seldom heard voices in relation to matters that affect their lives. Most saliently, it highlights from the perspective of the young people who engaged with the project, the types of support offered by alternative education projects such as Engage in Education, in their endeavor to combat education inequality in Ireland.

Balancing Protection with Participation -our Duty of Care in Consulting with Children and Young People

Kirstie Smith, National CoOrdinator, Child, Youth and Parental Participation in Decision Making, Tusla.

Facilitating consultations with vulnerable children and young people requires practitioners to prioritise safety, dignity, and meaningful participation at every stage of engagement. Affirming children's right to right to express views and have those view be given due weight. while also protected from harm and making decision in the best interests of the child. Facilitating consultations with/by external agencies adds another layer of complexity. For Tusla these agencies can be governmental, other statutory agencies, inspectorates and other stakeholders who want to hear from children and young people because they are accessing Tusla services.

Drawing from learning and best practice in research, other agencies facilitating consultations with and for external agencies and our own experiences, we have identified key elements that need to be addressed to ensure the balance between protection and participation.

The aim of this poster presentation is to highlight these elements and stimulate conversations regarding this challenge and ideas/solutions.

The central elements we have identified in maintaining this balance are (in no particular order):

- Application process and approval system.
- Memorandum of understanding and clear roles and responsibilities
- Clear information sharing
- Commitment to best practice and full iteration of the Lundy model of Participation
- Informed consent.
- Right to withdraw
- Distress/ Disclosure Protocol

We will be available to discuss the challenges and elements we have identified and would love to hear from attendees their thoughts and ideas for achieving this balance.

Meaningful Youth Participation in Early Transitions to degree level study: Co-Creating Inclusion and Belonging

Clarrie Smith and Mike Dessington, Leeds Trinity University

The research explores how meaningful youth participation, enacted through student–staff creativity, can reshape early transitions into degree-level study and contribute to more inclusive and equitable higher education practices. Situated within the department of childhood and education, the research responds to ongoing challenges around belonging, engagement, and retention, particularly for first-generation students navigating entry into university.

The study adopts a participatory methodology grounded in principles of shared power, knowledge equity, and ethical engagement. First-generation undergraduate students were positioned as co-creators rather than research subjects, reflecting on their early transition experiences when joining a university department in England and actively contributing to the development and enhance of future transition practices. Data were generated through a series of collaborative workshops incorporating dialogic discussion, visual mapping, and co-design activities, followed by iterative online engagement. Analysis was thematic and interpretive, privileging collective meaning-making and participant-defined indicators of successful transitions.

Findings demonstrate that students want to participate and share their experiences to enhance the experiences of future students, supporting their sense of belonging and inclusion during the critical early stages of degree-level study. By redistributing power and valuing lived experience as legitimate knowledge, the approach challenged traditional hierarchies in higher education and supported student's ideas to directly influence system wide practices and influence decisions. The research also identifies practical strategies for embedding meaningful participation within routine academic processes, encouraging students to be(come) influential citizens within university spaces.

The paper contributes to debates on the benefits and impact of youth participation by offering transferable ideas for participatory practice with system-wide relevance. It highlights how embedding participation can inform policy, resource and research, advancing more inclusive and sustainable approaches to higher education that centre student voice as a driver of institutional change.

How Children Are Heard in Divorce Proceedings. Insights from Observational Research in Dutch Family Courts

Van der Valk, I. E., Van Dijk, R., Mol, C. R., & Rejaän, Z.

In the Netherlands, children aged 8 and older are invited to express their opinions to the judge in divorce, custody, and visitation proceedings through a so-called child conversation. These child conversations have been an important topic of discussion in academia, practice, and media. Although theory and social science literature suggest that children generally benefit from participation in divorce proceedings, there are also concerns about the possible over-involvement of children in this setting. It is therefore important to gain a better understanding of how child participation in divorce proceedings is currently given form in Dutch court proceedings through observational research. The poster presents results from observational research that is part of a large-scale interdisciplinary study into the participation of children in divorce at home, in mediation, and in court. It presents our initial findings of 28 observations of child conversations in four district courts in the Netherlands. Unique insights are given into how conversations with children are conducted and whether the conditions for meaningful participation were met.

The observational research provides valuable insights into how child participation in family law proceedings currently occurs in the Netherlands.

Our Space, Our Pace: Growing Together at the Heart of Togher

Stephanie Whiteford, Ciara O' Mahony, Togher Family Centre CLG

The Pod Youth Resilience Project is built on the belief that every young person deserves a safe, welcoming space where they can grow, explore, and develop at their own pace. Its ethos centres on creating a supportive environment that nurtures resilience, confidence, and positive relationships, while empowering young people to take an active role in shaping their own lives. The project recognises that resilience is not something young people are expected to develop alone; it is strengthened through consistent support, meaningful connections, and opportunities to succeed.

At the heart of The Pod is a commitment to youth centred practice. Young people are treated with respect, listened to without judgement, and encouraged to express themselves openly. Their ideas, experiences, and perspectives shape the activities and direction of the programme. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and agency, helping young people recognise their strengths and build belief in their abilities.

The project places strong emphasis on relationship based work, understanding that trust, safety, and connection are the foundations of resilience. Staff create a warm, predictable environment where young people feel valued and understood. Through group activities, shared experiences, and supportive conversations, young people learn to build healthy relationships with peers and adults.

The Pod also embraces a holistic view of development, supporting not only academic needs but also emotional, social, and creative growth. Activities are designed to promote communication, problem solving, emotional intelligence, and self expression, while also giving young people space to relax, play, and simply be themselves.

Overall, the ethos of The Pod Youth Resilience Project is one of care, empowerment, inclusion, and possibility—a place where young people are supported to thrive, overcome challenges, and build the resilience they need for the future.