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Children’s Participation Work Package Final Report

Key Findings

Ms Edel Tierney, Dr Danielle Kennan, Dr Cormac Forkan, Dr Bernadine Brady and Ms Rebecca Jackson
UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway
SEPTEMBER 2018
The Children’s Participation Work Package is one of the five Work Packages of the PPFS Programme. The Five Work Packages are: Meitheal and Child and Youth Participation; the establishment of foster care fora in conjunction with Empowering People in Care (EPIC) to support children and young people and youth participation; the development of a child-friendly complaints service (see Figure 1). Through participation toolkit for practitioners; the development of a quality assurance framework supported by: the development and dissemination of a Tusla participation strategy and National Children’s Charter; child and youth participation training and a seed fund initiative; national conferences on child participation; the establishment of foster care fora in conjunction with Empowering People in Care (EPIC) to support children and young people in foster care to feed into policy development and service provision; and the development of a child-friendly complaints service (see Figure 1). Through this programme of work, Tusla is committed to developing its participatory practice at all levels in the organisation.

What is the focus of this report?

The aim of this research was to find out what extent children and young people are participating in decisions made by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and if this has become routine practice.

How was the research conducted?

The study involved a mixed methods baseline and follow up approach, using various research streams to measure progress with embedding participation in Tusla. A baseline report was published in 2016.

Eight research streams and data sources across a number of participant perspectives

1. A literature review exploring the how well structures and procedures intended to support children’s participation in child welfare, child protection and alternative care services are working
3. National baseline and follow up participation survey of all Tusla staff
4. Interviews with children and young people about their experience of individual participation in Tusla services
5. Evaluation of fora which were set up to support the collective participation of children in care
6. Evaluation of child and youth participation training - Pre, post and follow-up survey with all participants in the child and youth participation training during the period January -June 2017
7. Documentary analysis of various aspects of Tusla PPFS children’s participation programme
8. Interviews with internal and external stakeholders

Conclusions and Recommendations

The PPFS Child and Youth Participation Programme of Work has been a significant driver in embedding children and young people’s participation across Tusla. There are still gaps which need to be addressed. These needs to be more awareness about the PPFS Child and Youth Participation Programme of Work. Finally, more long term research should be put in place to track progress and to measure the impact of this programme on children’s lives.

WHAT ARE THE KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS?

1. There is strong evidence of children and young people’s participation being embedded across Tusla.
2. The PPFS Child and Youth Participation Programme of Work, has supported this. Especially the participation training for staff and the tool kit which helped support participation of children and young people in line with the Lundy Model of Participation.
3. Other reasons such as an openness to work in a participatory way and a strong national legal and policy framework supported children’s participation to become normal practice in Tusla.
4. Collective participation is less embedded than individual participation, but has shown large improvement over the course of the PPFS Child and Youth Participation Programme of Work being carried out.
5. The presence of a trusted adult, whom children and young people could express their views to and would speak on their behalf supports participation.
6. Obstacles to embedding participation include the time for staff to do participatory work and the idea among some staff that children and young people don’t want to participate or they feel that their voice won’t be heard.

Figure 1: The PPFS Child and Youth Participation Programme of Work
List of Publications for the Children's Participation Work Package:


Further Information

If you would like to read the Children’s Participation Work Package Final Report, or any of the publications listed above please visit our website [www.nuigalway.ie/childandfamilyresearch](http://www.nuigalway.ie/childandfamilyresearch). If you have any questions on our research, please email [cfrc@nuigalway.ie](mailto:cfrc@nuigalway.ie)

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