



An Roinn Leanai
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs

Mid-Term Review and Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on **Children** and **Young People's** Participation in Decision-Making, **2015-2020**

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1. Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to publish the Government's *Mid-Term Review and Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2019-2020*.

2019 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 of the Convention states:

States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

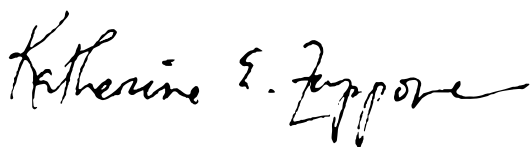
Ireland has become a global leader in meeting its commitments under Article 12 with the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making. Government Departments and Agencies that provide or oversee services which have an impact on children and young people are committed to ensuring that their voices are heard and influence decisions of relevance to their lives.

The Strategy builds on the infrastructure for children's participation already established by my Department through the Comhairle na nÓg and Local Authority structures. This cross-government action plan strengthens the voice of children and young people in their local communities, in formal and informal education settings, in health and social services and in the national context of government decision-making.

This year also marks the 100th anniversary of Dáil Éireann and, to honour the occasion, Dáil na nÓg will take place in the Houses of the Oireachtas, highlighting the importance of young people's voices on the national platform, not just as the decision-makers of tomorrow, but as citizens of today.

For those areas where we can continue to improve practice across Government, this document provides detail of refined and new actions. This *Mid-Term Review and Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making* sets out the Government's commitment to making children and young people central to decision-making at local and national level, both collectively and individually.

We continue to be ambitious in our vision to become one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up, and central to that vision is ensuring children's voices are heard in all the spaces and places where they live.



Dr. Katherine Zappone TD
MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

2. Introduction

In 2015 the Government published the first ever *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making* for the years 2015 to 2020. It is a whole-of-government strategy, with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) having responsibility for policy leadership and support. The Strategy contains actions for all of Government as well as specific actions for relevant Departments and Agencies.

An action plan was also brought out in 2015 to direct implementation of the Strategy over the first three-year period. Since then, three annual implementation reports have been published.

In 2019 DCYA undertook a review of implementation and worked across Government to develop an implementation plan for the remaining period of the Strategy. This Phase Two Action Plan is presented here and reflects the current infrastructure and progression of actions into the latter period of the Strategy.

3. Aim

The aim of this Mid-Term Review is to ensure that the Strategy continues to be relevant, progressive and accurate regarding the inclusion of children and young people in decision-making and to reflect the progress made by Departments and Agencies. The review also outlines some examples of good practice demonstrated by Departments and Agencies in implementing actions under the Strategy.

The revised Action Plan aims to lay out plans for further implementation and set goals for progressive improvement in participative practice across Government and Government Agencies. Phase Two of the Strategy and Action Plan will reflect the current context of support available to Departments and Agencies with Hub na nÓg fully operational and having a broad impact across sectors through its training programmes and other supports.

Methodology

Each Government Department and Agency named in the Strategy was asked via questionnaires for feedback and updates on current and new actions under the Strategy. Feedback was also sought on how to incorporate the work of the NGO sector into the Strategy.

These views were collated and analysed along with each of the Annual Action Plan Updates for 2016, 2017 and 2018 to develop the Phase Two Action Plan of the Strategy for the years 2019 to 2021.

Structure of the Report

This document is divided into the following three parts:

Part 1: Background. Overview of the international and national context for this Strategy, outlining the principles of participation, DCYA's leadership role in implementation and the aim of this Phase Two Action Plan.

Part 2: Progress Summary. An overview of progress made by Government Departments and Agencies with three examples of how Government Agencies have implemented their commitments under the Strategy.

Part 3: Action Plan Update Table. The agreed Actions for 2019 and 2020 and the Department/ Agency responsible for each action.

Note: Numbering of actions has been revised for convenience. Where actions remain unchanged or with minor revisions from the original version of the Strategy, the original Strategy action numbers are given in brackets.

4. Overview of the Strategy and Defining Participation

The *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015–2020* is guided and influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Primarily aimed at children and young people under the age of 18, the Strategy also embraces the voice of young people in the transition to adulthood.

The actions outlined in the Strategy aim to address the challenges in children and young people's lives and to enable them to participate appropriately in decision-making.

The commitments outlined in the Strategy are aligned with Government commitments in, and based on the values, principles and vision of, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020*.

The seven priority objectives of the Strategy are that children and young people will have a voice in decisions

- In their local communities;
- In early education, schools and the wider formal and non-formal education systems;
- In decisions that affect their health and well-being, including on the health and social services delivered to them; and
- In the courts and legal system.

Additionally:

- The voice of children and young people in government decision-making and the development of policy, legislation and research will be embedded.
- Effective leadership to champion and promote participation of children and young people will be promoted.
- Education and training for professionals working with and on behalf of children and young people will be developed.

All commitments and actions in this Strategy are underpinned by the following key fundamentals:

- Recognition that children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives;
- Ensuring the protection and welfare of children and young people in accordance with Children First;
- Establishing and improving mechanisms to ensure the participation of seldom-heard and vulnerable children and young people in decision-making; and
- Collection of data, monitoring and evaluation of children and young people's participation initiatives.

Defining Participation

Children and young people's participation in decision-making is defined as “the process by which children and young people have active involvement and real influence in decision-making on matters affecting their lives, both directly and indirectly”. This definition is consistent with [Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#), which underlies this Strategy, and [Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#).

According to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the expert body that monitors implementation of the UNCRC) and in line with its General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC, the duty to take account of what children say applies in a variety of contexts.

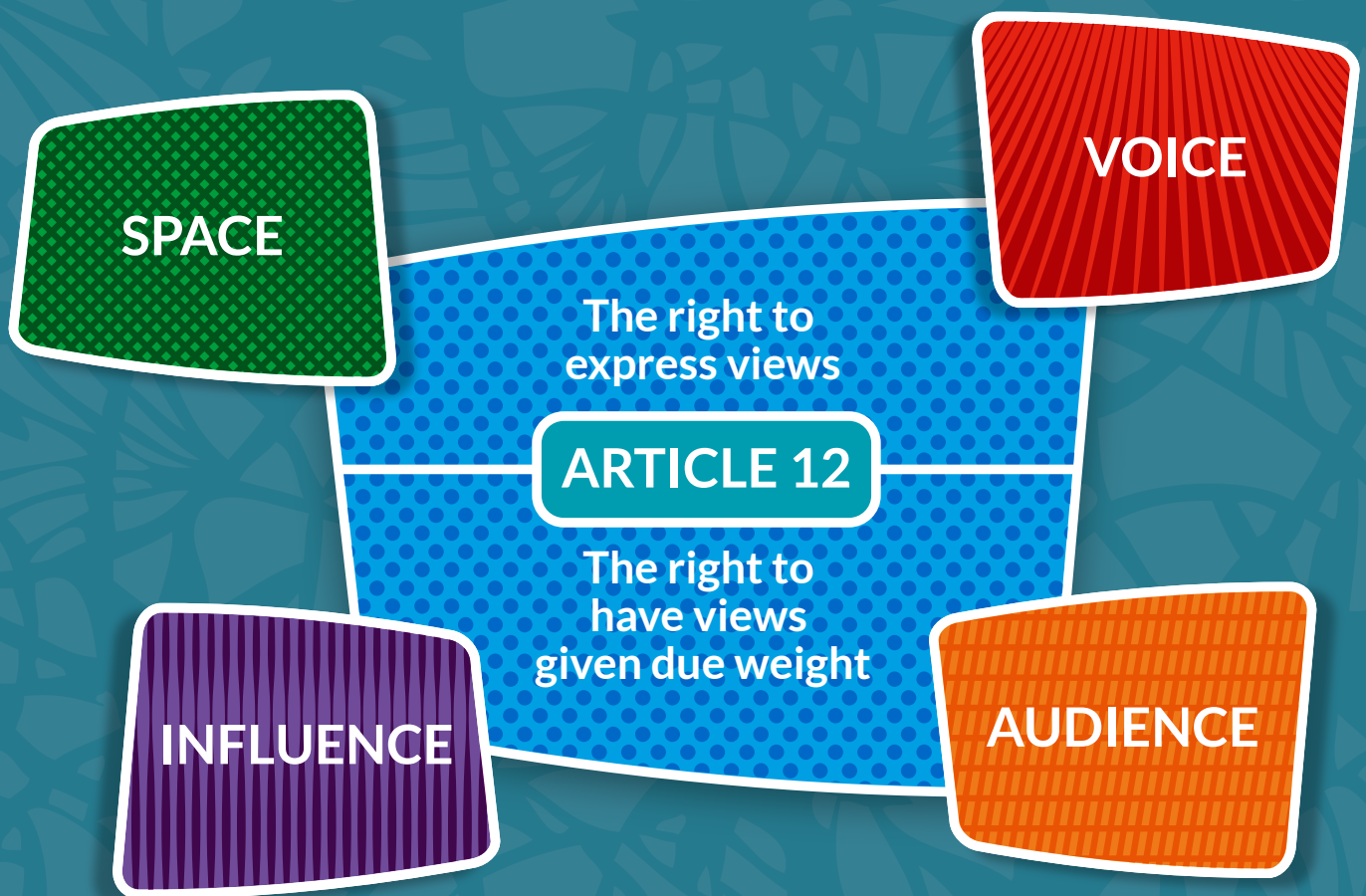
For example, at macro level, children's views should be taken into account in the development of national policies and in the design of services and, at micro level, in the individual decision-making that affects their daily lives. The UN Committee has highlighted the importance of children's involvement in decision-making in schools and local communities, where many important decisions are taken that directly affect their lives. These are two of the priorities of the present Strategy.

The participation of children and young people in decision-making involves taking children and young people seriously and where possible responding to their suggestions, ideas and views in an appropriate and timely manner.

Lundy's Model of Participation

The Strategy is underpinned by Lundy's Model of Participation (see Figure 1), which is grounded in the UNCRC and focused on a rights-based approach to involving children in decision-making.

Figure 1: Lundy's (2007) Model of Participation



This model provides a way of conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus educational decision-makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of the provision. The four elements have a rational chronological order:

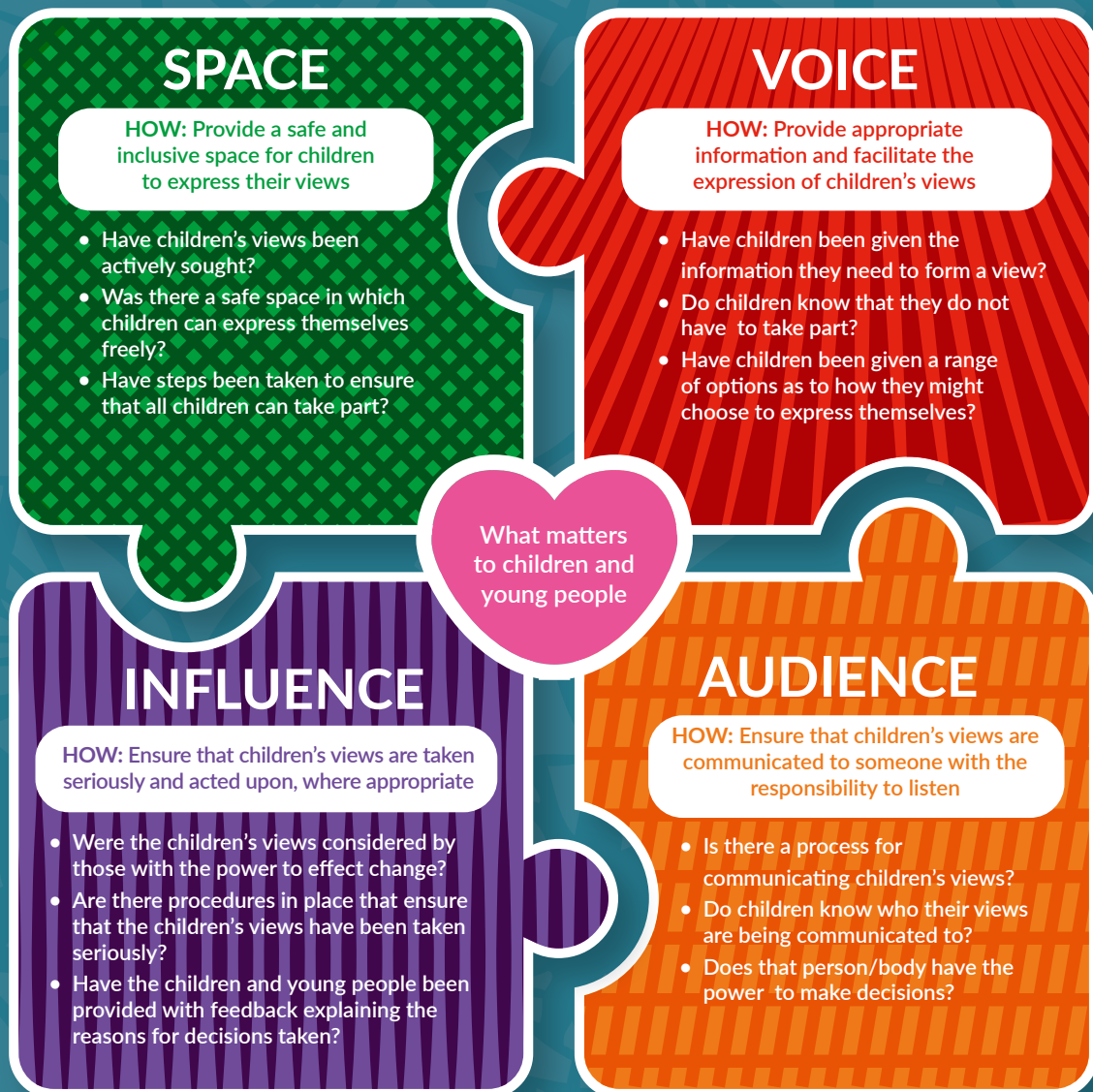
SPACE: Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view.

VOICE: Children must be facilitated to express their view.

INFLUENCE: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

AUDIENCE: The view must be listened to.

Figure 2: Checklist for the Lundy Model of Participation



Principles of Participation

The Strategy has adopted the principles of the Council of Europe's 2012 Recommendation on participation in decision-making of children and young people under the age of 18 and Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The principles refer to both the context for participation and the process of participation:

- There is no age limit on the right of the child or young person to express her or his views freely. All children and young people, including those of pre-school age, school age and those who have left full-time education, have a right to be heard in all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

- The right of children and young people to participate applies without discrimination on any grounds, such as race, ethnicity, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, disability, birth, sexual orientation or other status.
- Consideration needs to be given to the notion of the evolving capacities of children and young people. As children and young people acquire more capacities, adults should encourage them to enjoy, to an increasing degree, their right to influence matters affecting them.
- Particular efforts should be made to enable participation of children and young people with fewer opportunities, including those who are vulnerable or affected by discrimination, including multiple discrimination.
- Parents and carers have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and the development of the child and, as such, play a fundamental role in affirming and nurturing the child's right to participate, from birth onwards.
- In order to be able to participate meaningfully and genuinely, children and young people should be provided with all relevant information and offered adequate support for self-advocacy appropriate to their age and circumstances.
- For participation to be effective, meaningful and sustainable, it needs to be understood as a process and not a one-off event, and requires on-going commitment in terms of time and resources.
- Children and young people who exercise their right to freely express their views must be protected from harm, including intimidation, reprisals, victimisation and violation of their right to privacy.
- Children and young people should always be fully informed of the scope of their participation, including the limitations on their involvement, the expected and actual outcomes of their participation, and how their views were ultimately considered.
- In line with the General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC, all processes in which children and young people are heard should be transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant to children's lives, in child-friendly environments, inclusive (non-discriminatory), supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable. Member States should integrate these requirements into all legislative and other measures for the implementation of this recommendation.

DCYA role in leading delivery of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020*

In supporting implementation of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making*, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs continues to lead Government efforts to ensure that children and young people have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

The Participation Team within DCYA works across local and national Government to build, develop and sustain structures and processes that enable high-quality participation opportunities for children and young people, with a particular focus on ensuring seldom-heard young people are included:

- **Comhairle na nÓg** continues to thrive in all local authorities with the support of the **Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund**.

- **Comhairle na nÓg National Executive** published and launched the “*How was school today?*” research with the Ministers for Children and Youth Affairs and Education and Skills and has left an important resource for education policy makers.
- **Dáil na nÓg** in December 2017 focused on the topic of equality and the current **Comhairle na nÓg National Executive** are working on a number of initiatives under this topic relevant to the school setting, which will come to completion within 2019.
- **EU Structured Dialogue:** young people are supported to participate in dialogue with decision-makers to implement the priorities of the European youth policy cooperation and to make young people’s voices heard in the European policy-shaping process.
- **Hub na nÓg** was launched in November 2017 as a centre of excellence to support Government Departments, State Agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice on decisions that affect their lives, with a focus on seldom-heard children and young people.

Cross-Government

Certain actions under the Strategy are relevant to all Government Departments, while many Departments have specific commitments under the Strategy. The Government Departments and Agencies that have committed to actions under the Strategy are the following:

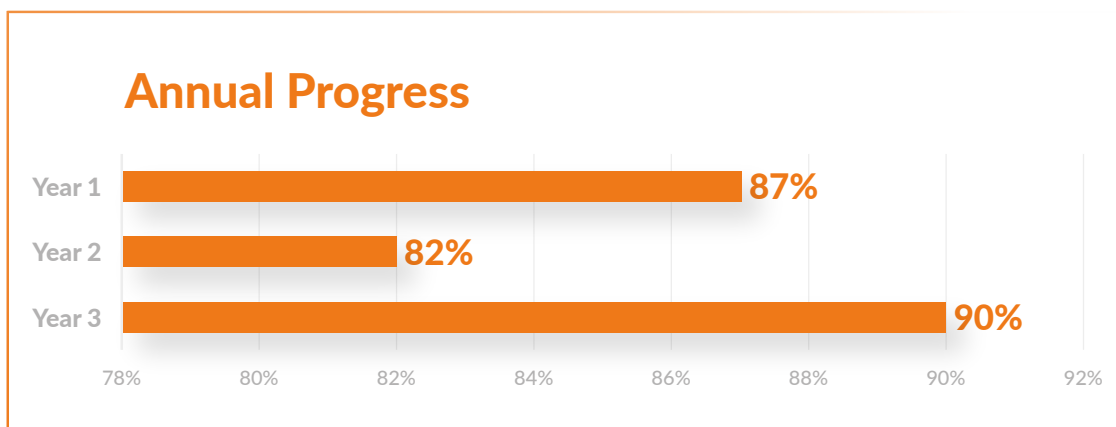
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (now Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht)
- Department of Education and Skills
- Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (now Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Department of Rural and Community Development and Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment)
- Department of Justice and Equality
- Department of Health
- Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Health Information and Quality Authority
- Local Government Management Agency
- Health Service Executive
- Mental Health Commission
- Tusla
- An Garda Síochána

DCYA has also established a network of contact points from these Government Departments and State Bodies with commitments in the Strategy to improve engagement and maintain focus on the priority actions. The network met twice during 2018 and will continue to meet over the next phase of implementation.

5. Progress Summary

The first, second and third annual reports on the implementation of the actions in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020* were published in July 2016, November 2017 and January 2019, respectively. All three reports are available on the DCYA website.

The Third Annual Report showed a positive picture of how the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020* continues to be implemented. The report findings show that 93% of the agreed actions have reached completion or are in progress. All Government Departments and Agencies are actively progressing 68 of the 73 agreed actions for 2018. This reflects a high level of commitment to ensuring that the voice of children and young people is appropriately listened to in the development of policies and services across government.



Developing Context

The establishment of **Hub na nÓg** as a centre of excellence has provided increased capacity across all sectors in the provision of training, support and advice for service providers and policy makers alike. The name and brand for the Hub were developed through a consultation process with young people and adult stakeholders. As part of its role in driving implementation of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020*, Hub na nÓg has progressed key actions to support Government Departments and Agencies in their work under the Strategy.

The Hub's objectives are to:

1. Drive implementation of commitments in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020* and *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF)* by collaborating with Government Departments and Agencies in conducting consultations with children and young people and by providing information, guidance, training and practical support.

2. Develop, document and disseminate innovative international best practice on children and young people's participation in decision-making.
3. Form partnerships with third-level and adult education institutions to oversee development of education on the right of children to a voice, in the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, for professionals who work with and on behalf of children and young people.

Since its inception, the Hub has co-produced with Professor Laura Lundy a series of frameworks, including national standards, a planning framework, evaluation frameworks and a child-friendly evaluation form, influenced by the extensive child participation practice of the DCYA and Hub na nÓg. The Hub has also published a paper on the impact of child participation on policy, service delivery and practice for the CRINI (Children's Research Network) Digest.

An increasing number of Government Departments and Agencies are consulting with and including children and young people in permanent structures such as children's councils and advisory groups. Child-and youth-friendly mechanisms for providing feedback are being more widely used, and more decision-makers are using local Comhairle na nÓg structures to access the views of young people. Additionally in the development of strategies, reform of schemes and programmes, and provision of services, decision-makers are seeking the advice of Hub na nÓg and the DCYA participation team to ensure that best practice is followed in how young people and children's voices are included in change and development processes.

Another key development over the first three years of the Strategy has been the publication of Tusla's *Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019–2023*. The Creative Ireland programme has also been significant in setting child participation as a core principle for all its Creative Youth programmes.

Highlights

Hub na nÓg collaborated in developing and conducting a number of consultations with children and young people including consultations on the Strategic Plan for the **Heritage Council**, on the **Cruinniú na nÓg** programme, on the **voice of the child in Adoption proceedings**, on a change process for the **Garda Youth Diversion Programme**, on reform of the **Guardian ad Litem** service, and on the new **Youth Justice Strategy**.

Hub na nÓg has developed and delivered training in collaboration with

1. **Sport Ireland** for five national sporting bodies and organisations.
2. The **Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)** to develop participation methods for use in the inspection process.
3. **The Arts Council** for Creative Associates appointed to support the Creative Schools Initiative and Creative Schools Co-Ordinators, which is part of the Creative Ireland Programme of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
4. The **Active Schools Team**.

Positive progress is reported across government on key actions to include the voice of children and young people at government policy level as well as in the delivery of services for children. Actions reported positively across Government Departments and Agencies were:

- **Action 1.1** (*prev 14.2*): Government Departments and Agencies will consult with children and young people appropriately in the development of policy, legislation, research and services with the support of the DCYA.
- **Action 1.2** (*prev 15.2*): All Statements of Strategy published by Government Departments and Agencies will include participation of children and young people as an objective and an action.
- **Action 1.4** (*prev 15.4*): Government Departments and Agencies that provide services for children and young people will develop child- and youth-friendly feedback and complaints mechanisms with the assistance of the DCYA Children and Young People's Participation Hub.

Areas for Further Development

Some actions, however, will require on-going focus to achieve consistent standards across Government Departments and Agencies:

- **Action 1.3** (*prev 15.3*): Building on existing mechanisms, incremental progress will be made on funding criteria for publicly funded programmes and schemes that are relevant to children and young people, requiring consultation with children and young people.
- **Action 1.5** (*prev 15.6*): Government Departments and Agencies will ensure the involvement of children and young people in reporting on international instruments relevant to their lives and well-being, including the Universal Periodic Review, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, World Health Organization reviews and strategies and Council of Europe reviews and strategies.
- **Action 6.2** (*prev 15.5*): Data collection, evaluation and monitoring of children and young people's participation initiatives will be conducted to ensure robust findings and outcomes that influence the development of policies and services.

6. Issues and Recommendations

The findings show that Government Departments and Agencies are making efforts to consult appropriately with children and young people at policy and strategy level, but more work needs to be done to ensure that this filters down to funded agencies and programmes, and to include the voice of children and young people in international reporting. Additionally, while good practice is widespread across a range of contexts and services round the country, it is often not recorded and reported, leading to the loss of valuable opportunities to learn from these practices across sectors and systems.

Many Departments and Agencies have requested advice on how to embed participatory practices into their work processes or how to carry out consultations or set up and oversee Children's or Young People's Forums or Advisory Groups. Hub na nÓg will continue to support Departments and Agencies in achieving their commitments under the Strategy and any Department or Agency unclear about how to improve their practice or policies in this area can contact the Hub for advice. Hub na nÓg is furthermore developing a National Participation Framework, which will be a useful tool available to any organisation.

7. Case Studies

The Arts Council

Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools

This pilot initiative is led by the Arts Council, in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht, and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. A defining feature of the implementation plan developed for Creative Schools is emphasis on youth voice. With the help of Hub na nÓg, training in facilitation of young people's participation in decision-making (and in particular, the Lundy model) has been provided to all of the Creative Associates delivering the initiative. All schools participating in the programme are expected to ensure that children and young people have a central role in developing and evaluating their plans for the arts and creativity in their schools.

Young Ensembles Scheme

This is a scheme for 10–24-year-olds that has a particular focus on youth voice. Within the scheme applicants are asked to demonstrate young people's roles in the development of their proposals and how young people will have the opportunity to shape the proposed artistic projects. Young people (aged 16–24) participate on the assessment panel for the scheme and share experiences and ideas with each other and with the Arts Council at annual networking days. The report forms returned to the Arts Council following implementation must detail the role young people played in completing the forms and how they were included in the project.

Sharing Best Practice

The Arts Council helps to promote events where arts organisations share their experiences of involving young people in their planning, programming and development. In 2019 the Art Cultural Centre for Children held an event to share an evaluation of the work of its Children's Council. This built on similar skills-sharing events organised by other funded organisations such as Youth Theatre Ireland and Draíocht Arts Centre regarding young people's voice in decision-making. Information on participatory practice is shared by the Arts Council across all funded arts centres in Ireland.

Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA)

Integration of Voice of the Child in Inspection Methodologies for Children in Care

Having learned of the work of Hub na nÓg, HIQA discussed the development of a training programme for HIQA inspectors on the voice of the child and how their inspection methodologies for children in care could be enhanced by this training. HIQA worked closely with Hub na nÓg to ensure that the training was appropriate for the needs of inspectors. The two-day workshop provided an opportunity to focus on Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – the voice of the child – and examined a range of participative methodologies appropriate to the environments in which inspectors were monitoring and inspection activity. They worked in groups to explore which of these participative methodologies, as outlined by Hub na nÓg, were most appropriate to the objectives of their work and the contexts in which they were carrying out inspections. Inspectors have subsequently used the tools and participative methodologies to capture the voices of the children that they meet with during foster care inspections. HIQA has also revised the foster care report template to incorporate a specific section on the experience of children with the foster care service, including what children tell us, as part of the inspection.

Tusla

Tusla's Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023

Tusla is committed to involving children and young people in decision-making and in 2019 published its first *Child and Youth Participation Strategy*, spanning the period 2019–2023. The Strategy sets out Tusla's plans to support, nurture and celebrate a culture of participatory practice in both Tusla and Tusla-funded services.

Tusla supports and promotes systems to embed participatory practice across Tusla and Tusla-funded agencies, including the dissemination of a Participation Toolkit, guidelines on running Children's Fora and the Signs of Safety model of practice.

Additionally, Tusla has committed to developing an organisational culture of participatory practice and the systems to support this, including training on participatory practice for Tusla staff, and ensuring that policies, guidelines and procedures allow the child's views to be taken into consideration in decisions that affect the child or young person, individually or collectively. Further initiatives taken by Tusla include a website developed by young people for other young people providing information on Tusla services and seed funding projects to support and encourage best practice development in children and young people's participation.

8. New Action Plan

(Note: historic numbering provided in brackets for reference)

Objective One:

Embedding the voice of children and young people in government decision-making and the development of policy, legislation and research.

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
1.1 (14.2)	Government Departments and Agencies will consult with children and young people appropriately in the development of policy, legislation, research and services, with the support of the DCYA.	All Gov. Depts. and Agencies		✓	✓
1.2 (15.2)	All Statements of Strategy for all Government Departments and Agencies will include participation of children and young people as an objective and an action.	All Gov. Depts. And Agencies		✓	✓
1.3 (15.3)	Building on existing mechanisms, incremental progress will be made on funding criteria for publicly funded programmes and schemes that are relevant to children and young people, requiring consultation with children and young people.	All Gov. Depts. And Agencies		✓	✓
1.4 (15.4)	Government Departments and Agencies and their funded bodies that provide services for children and young people will develop child- and youth-friendly feedback and complaints mechanisms.	All Gov. Depts. And Agencies		✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
1.5 (15.6)	Government Departments and Agencies will ensure the involvement of children and young people in reporting on international instruments relevant to their lives and well-being, including the Universal Periodic Review of Ireland, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, World Health Organization reviews and strategies and Council of Europe reviews and strategies.	All Gov. Depts. And Agencies		✓	✓
1.6	Children and young people will be involved in informing the implementation of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures through the formal engagement of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and the EU Structured Dialogue (Youth) Group with the implementation structures of Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures.	DCYA		✓	✓
1.7 (14.19)	The participation of young people in decision-making is to be included in the reporting of the implementation of the National Youth Strategy.	DCYA		✓	✓
1.8 (20.1)	The impact of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive on the political and policy making process will be ensured.	DCYA and other relevant Depts.		✓	✓
1.9	The DCYA will develop methodologies to ensure the voice of children is embedded in the implementation structures for First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019–2028.	DCYA		✓	✓
1.10 (20.6)	Dáil na nÓg 2019 will be held and a National Executive will be elected to implement its recommendation.	DCYA	Comhairle na nÓg & Local Authorities	✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
1.11 (20.7)	Participation by young people up to age 25 in the EU Structured Dialogue process will be facilitated.	DCYA		✓	✓
1.12 (14.9)	Children and young people will be involved in decision-making about cultural programme content and their feedback will be sought on programmes offered in national cultural institutions.	DCHG		✓	✓
1.13	The voice of children and young people is an overarching principle in the development and delivery of Creative Youth programmes.	DCHG	DCYA	✓	✓
1.14	A Participation Officer is available to work with Local Creative Youth Partnerships to ensure the voice of children and young people is reflected in the design and delivery of all programmes.	DES ETBs	DCYA	✓	✓
1.15	Creative Associates, Creative Schools Co-ordinators will be trained to ensure that the voice of children and young people is central to the design and delivery of Creative Schools programmes.	Arts Council	DES DCYA	✓	✓
1.16 (14.10)	Planning work will be commenced to establish a forum in 2021 to enable children to participate in decisions that may impact on their participation in sport. This forum will explore existing models, such as the participation structures being established in the GAA, to be used or adapted by other national governing bodies of sport to facilitate the involvement of children and young people in decision-making.	DTTAS Sport Ireland			✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
1.17 (14.13)	The inclusion of children and young people in the consultation process for the next Green Schools Programme will be incorporated as a qualifying criterion.	DTTAS DES		✓	✓
1.18 (14.14)	Children and youth groups will be consulted during public consultation phases when reviewing the National Cycling Policy Framework.	DTTAS		✓	✓
1.19	Opportunities will continue to be sought to include children and young people in the consultation phase when reviewing child/scholar public transport fares and other changes in fares for young people.	DTTAS		✓	✓
1.20	A specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Youth Forum will be established to provide opportunities for discussion and suggestions on Government Policy with regard to the SDGs.	DCCAIE	DCYA DES	✓	✓

Objective Two:

Children and young people will have a voice in decisions made in their local communities.

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
2.1 (20.2)	The role and capacity of Comhairle na nÓg will be enhanced through the development and implementation of a five-year Comhairle na nÓg Development Plan, aligned to Local Government structures and policies, and including children under the age of 12 and children and young people who are seldom heard.	DCYA DRCD, Local Authorities	Pobal	✓	✓
2.2 (20.4)	The Participation Support Service will continue to support and embed effective sustainable Comhairle na nÓg structures within each Local Authority.	DCYA	Local Authorities	✓	✓
2.3	Ensure the voice of children and young people is embedded into the planning and delivery of local services, as outlined in the CYPSC Blueprint (2019–2024).	Tusla	DCYA	✓	✓
2.4	Ensure regular reporting on initiatives undertaken by Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) to involve children and young people in decision-making.	Tusla	DCYA	✓	✓
2.5	The Department of Rural and Community Development will consult with children and young people in order to capture their views as part of the new rural policy development process.	DRCD		✓	✓
2.6 (14.3)	Children and Young People's Services Committees and Comhairle na nÓg will be consulted in the planning process for Local, Economic and Community Plans.	Local Authorities	Comhairle na nÓgs CYPSCs	✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
2.7 (14.4)	Children and young people will be recognised as stakeholders in the regeneration planning process. Structures will be put in place to integrate their participation and provide them with information in appropriate formats.	Local Authorities		✓	✓
2.8 (14.5)	All bodies responsible for the delivery of Local Area Plans (LAPs) will be required to ensure the direct participation of local children and young people in the aspects of the LAP relevant to their lives.	Local Authorities		✓	✓
2.9	The participation of local children and young people in the development of play spaces and play facilities will continue to be included as a criterion of funding for DCYA Capital Grant Funding for Play and Recreation.	Local Authorities	DCYA	✓	✓
2.10 (14.8)	All national initiatives for children in library services will continue to be designed to incorporate effective ways of obtaining children's feedback on their experiences of those initiatives.	Local Authorities DRCD	DCYA	✓	✓
2.11 (14.12)	The views expressed by children and young people on the services provided to them under the Smarter Travel and Bike Week programmes will be monitored and recorded, and used to inform policy on these services.	DTTAS		✓	✓
2.12	Commence planning to develop a toolkit for consulting with children and young people and make it available to all national governing bodies of sport for implementation at club level in 2021.	DTTAS Sport Ireland			✓

Objective Three:

Children and young people will have a voice in decision-making in early education, schools and the wider formal and non-formal education systems.

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
3.1	<p>The Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 will be enacted, providing guidelines for schools on developing their own student and parent charter. The guidelines will be developed in consultation with the education partners. The legislation aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve how schools engage with students and their parents and obtain, and respond to where appropriate, feedback from students and their parents on school activities, plans and policies. 	DES		✓	✓
3.2 (17.2)	<p>The Inspectorate Student Voice Project will be implemented by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhancing the Inspectorate's engagement with children and young people before, during and after inspections, through the Inspectorate Student Voice Project; providing guidance for schools and early years' settings re best practice for listening to children and young people; and recording outcomes of initiative through ongoing evaluation and quality assurance of inspection outcomes and procedures; outcomes will be used to inform development of policy and services within the Inspectorate and other sections of the Department. 	DES	DCYA	✓	✓
3.3 (14.20)	<p>Curriculum reform will be informed by consultation with young people.</p>	DES	NCCA	✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
3.4 (14.18)	The extent to which the voice of the child is included in decision-making in early years services will be determined, possibly by survey. Consultation with young children using the network of support services in the early years' sector will be promoted.	DES		✓	✓
3.5 (14.21)	The DCYA will be available to consult with children and young people on potential actions for the Action Plan for Online Safety.	DES	DCYA	✓	✓
3.6 (14.22)	The National Educational Psychological Service will continue to ensure that the voice of the child is central to services and supports provided to schools and children.	DES		✓	✓
3.7 (14.26)	Mechanisms for consulting students on matters relevant to them in relation to teacher education and other matters will be identified and used. Teaching Council will report on these actions	DES	Teaching Council	✓	✓
3.8 (14.27)	Through its consultative forum and other consultative processes, the National Council for Special Education will continue to consult with children and young people and/or their representative groups.	DES		✓	✓
3.9 (14.28)	Traveller representative groups will be required to include the voice of children and young people in their engagement with the Department of Education and Skills.	DES DJE		✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
3.10	The new targeted youth funding scheme is due to be introduced in 2020. The voice of children and young people has been a prominent feature of the design of the new scheme. The DCYA will build on this foundation by exploring and implementing appropriate structures and mechanisms to enable and support young people's participation in decision-making throughout the first policy cycle of the new scheme.	DCYA		✓	✓
3.11 (14.30)	The views of apprentices will be represented by the National Apprenticeship Advisory Committee and through other relevant bodies.	DES		✓	✓
3.12	The principles and objectives of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making will be incorporated into SOLAS Strategies where relevant and the development of ETB five-year strategy statements.	DES		✓	✓
3.13 (17.1)	The Department of Education and Skills is to collate data on the number of student councils in primary and post primary schools through the Lifeskills Survey Review of the effectiveness of post Primary Student Councils.	DES	DCYA	✓	✓
3.14 (17.4)	The Department of Education and Skills will continue to demonstrate the value of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and increase response rates in future rounds of the survey.	DES		✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
3.15 (17.5)	<p>Students' voices will continue to be represented through mechanisms such as the National Forum's "Teaching Heroes" awards scheme, in partnership with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI).</p> <p>Student representation will continue, through the USI, on the boards of the Higher Education Authority and the National Forum, as well as a range of committees and at policy forums.</p>	DCYA	DES	✓	✓
3.16 (17.6)	A stronger role for student councils in promoting the value of student voice in schools will be supported in collaboration with education partners and stakeholders.	DCYA	DES	✓	✓
3.17	Support for the rollout of the student voice toolkit, to be launched in late 2019 by the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, will be provided in collaboration with key education stakeholders.	DCYA	DES	✓	✓

Objective Four:

Children and young people will have a voice in decisions that affect their health and well-being, including on the health and social services delivered to them.

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
4.1	Tusla will implement its Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019–2023.	Tusla		✓	✓
4.2 (14.6)	Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure the active participation of children and young people in the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of children’s health and child and family services, which will lead to real change.	HSE Tusla	DoH DCYA	✓	✓
4.3 (19.1)	Appropriate individual structures and practices will be put in place, ensuring that the views of children and young people are taken into consideration in all assessments, case conference reports, court applications and care plan meetings. Opportunities will be provided for children and young people to participate in the further development of guidelines on how children and young people should be consulted about their care.	Tusla	DCYA	✓	✓
4.4	Tusla will implement Signs of Safety National Approach to Practice, Meitheal Early Intervention Practice Model, Well Tree Model of Care in Residential Services, and the AMBIT approach in the Alternative Care Therapeutic Service working with hard-to-reach adolescents.	Tusla		✓	✓
4.5	Current practices for hearing the voice of the child within the statutory Tusla Educational Welfare Services, the School Completion Programme, the Home-School Community Liaison Scheme and Home Education will be audited.	Tusla	DCYA DES	✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
4.6	Ensure the voice of seldom-heard children is listened to relating to attendance, participation and retention issues in the education system.	Tusla	DCYA	✓	✓
4.7	Tusla will ensure care leavers participate in the development of their aftercare plans as detailed in the National Aftercare Policy for Alternative Care.	Tusla		✓	✓
4.8	Tusla will develop a suite of outcome indicators to best reflect implementation of the Tusla Child and Youth Participation Strategy and its related outcomes.	Tusla		✓	✓
4.9	The Department of Health will commit to providing opportunities for consultation with children and young people to facilitate their views in areas of key policy development, as appropriate, and will collaborate with the DCYA to facilitate such engagement.	DoH		✓	✓
4.10 (14.37)	Information on the availability and use of the toolkit for young mental health service users will be included in the Annual Report of the Inspector of Mental Health Services.	MHC		✓	✓
4.11 (14.38)	A Citizens Forum will be established to enable increased public and service user involvement in the work of the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). This forum will include a specific focus on children and young people to ensure that their views are heard.	HIQA		✓	✓
4.12 (14.39)	HIQA will continue to report on the compliance of centres and foster care services to ascertain what improvements have been made in such services to facilitate children to participate in the decisions made about them.	HIQA		✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
4.13 (15.11)	A framework to include the voices of children and young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of health and well-being services will be developed, incorporating the principles and objectives of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015–2020.	HSE	DoH	✓	✓
4.14 (16.5)	Key stakeholders will be made aware of and follow best practice in relation to the voice of children and young people in adolescent mental health advocacy services.	HSE		✓	✓
4.15 (16.6)	The Health Service Executive (HSE) will involve children and young people who have caring responsibilities, as appropriate, as partners in care planning and provision by health and personal social service providers and particularly by the Primary Care Teams.	HSE	DoH	✓	✓
4.16 (16.7)	Collaboration will continue with ABC Initiative and other stakeholders on the development of appropriate mechanisms to involve children and young people in local needs assessment.	DCYA		✓	✓
4.17	Tusla will consult with children and young people on the design of research into children's experience in care.	Tusla		✓	✓
4.18	The Mental Health Commission will implement recommendations for more autonomy for young adults in making decisions about their mental health care and treatment.	MHC		✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
4.19	HIQA will consult with children who use the services of Tusla and Oberstown Children Detention Campus to hear their views and to ascertain if their needs are being met by those services.	HIQA		✓	✓
4.20	HIQA will introduce measures to ensure children and young people in Children's Residential Centres can participate in decisions that affect their lives.	HIQA		✓	✓
4.21	HIQA will consult with children to inform the HIQA inspection methodology for children living in care and integrate the voice of children in HIQA's 2019-2020 monitoring programme of statutory foster care services.	HIQA		✓	✓
4.22	The information material to ensure children and young people know how they can provide feedback on services will be revised.	HIQA		✓	✓
4.23	The inspection report templates will be revised to ensure that children's feedback is clearly recorded in the report and that the service provider can take any required actions to improve services for the children.	HIQA		✓	✓

Objective Five:

Children and young people will have a voice in the courts and legal system.

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
5.1 (14.41)	All relevant Justice stakeholders will consult with young people regarding justice policies and issues that affect their lives.	DJE		✓	✓
5.2 (14.42)	The DCYA will bring forward proposals to significantly reform the provision in the Child Care Act 1991 relating to Guardians ad Litem (GAL).	DCYA		✓	✓
5.3 (14.44)	Improved mechanisms for hearing the voice of children and young people will be used in reviews of Legal Aid Board services.	DJE		✓	✓
5.4	The Legal Aid Board will implement Voice of the Child Regulations.	DJE		✓	✓
5.5	Children and young people's views are to be sought as appropriate, as part of the family mediation processes.	DJE		✓	✓
5.6	The DCYA will gather the views of children and young people who have or have had a Guardian ad Litem to ensure the operational aspects of the new GAL service are fit-for-purpose from a child's perspective and responsive to children's needs in childcare proceedings.	DCYA		✓	✓
5.7 (18.2)	Implement service-level agreement with Empowering People in Care (EPIC) to make children in detention aware of their rights and their right to make a complaint.	DJE	Tusla	✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
5.8 (5.13.1)	An Garda Síochána will roll out the Internet Safety and Cyberbullying Programme for Teachers, Parents and the Community. Websites and other social media that is youth friendly, accessible and contains useful links and relevant information for children and young people will be developed. There will be direct engagement with young people, youth organisations and educational institutions.	AGS	DCYA DES	✓	✓
5.9 (5.13.2)	The Joint Policing Committees will engage with Comhairle na nÓg and other young people's organisations when local crime and community safety issues are discussed.	DJE	DCYA AGS	✓	✓
5.10	The Data Protection Commission will consult with children and young people on the processing of children's personal data and the rights of children as data subjects under the General Data Protection Regulation.	DJE	DPC (Data Protection Commission)	✓	✓
5.11	Explore how to consult with children and young people on addressing gender stereotyped norms.	DJE	DCYA	✓	✓
5.12	Consult with young people who are engaged with various points of the Youth Justice System to inform the development of the new Youth Justice Strategy.	DJE	DCYA	✓	✓
5.13	Establish a permanent consultation mechanism with young people engaging with Garda Youth Diversion Programmes (GYDPs) with a view to informing the future development of the GYDPs.	DJE	DCYA	✓	✓

Objective Six:

Promoting effective leadership to champion and promote participation of children and young people.

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
6.1	The DCYA will continue to progress the objectives of Hub na nÓg to champion and promote participation, create resources and training materials, conduct training, document and disseminate learning and establish an online children's participation database.	DCYA		✓	✓
6.2 (15.5)	Data collection, evaluation and monitoring of children and young people's participation initiatives will be conducted to ensure robust findings and outcomes that influence the development of policies and services.	All Gov. Depts. and Agencies		✓	✓
6.3 (20.5)	Support and training to Comhairle na nÓg across the country will be maintained to ensure the development of best practice.	DCYA	DRCD	✓	✓
6.4 (21.2)	The DCYA Children and Young People's Participation Support Team will continue to provide leadership, guidance and support for children and young people's participation initiatives across Government.	DCYA		✓	✓
6.5 (14.1)	The DCYA will undertake an audit of participatory practice.	DCYA		✓	✓

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
6.6 (21.5)	<p>Practical toolkits will be developed to provide guidance to Local Authorities on effective methodologies for consulting with children and young people in planning and regeneration projects.</p> <p>The Department of Rural and Community Development will commence collaboration with the DCYA on the development of practical toolkits.</p>	DCYA	DRCD	✓	✓
6.7 (21.7)	A National Awareness campaign will be conducted to promote a culture of children and young people's right to participate in decision-making.	DCYA		✓	✓
6.8 (21.8)	Through Hub na nÓg, the DCYA will form partnerships with third-level and adult education institutions to oversee development of education and training on children's right to participation in decision-making for professionals who work with and on behalf of children and young people.	DCYA	DES	✓	✓
6.9	Hub na nÓg will collaborate with academics, policy makers and practitioners to develop a National Participation Framework as a guiding tool for engaging children and young people in decision-making and develop an implementation plan for its rollout.	DCYA Hub na nÓg	All Gov. Depts. and Agencies	✓	✓

Objective Seven:

Development of education and training for professionals working with and on behalf of children and young people.

Ref	Action	Responsibility		Timeline	
		Lead	Partner	2019	2020
7.1	Hub na nÓg will continue to provide expertise, guidance and support for the development of continued professional development on the Voice of the Child across all sectors.	DCYA		✓	✓
7.2	Tusla will develop and implement training and support for staff in children's participation, including the development of a toolkit for participatory practice and a toolkit for the engagement of children and young people in the commissioning processes of Tusla.	Tusla		✓	✓
7.3	Roll out Voice of the Child continued professional development for HIQA inspectors to include the voice of the child in inspection methodologies.	HIQA	DCYA	✓	✓
7.4 (21.6)	Training for the Mental Health Inspectorate in meeting with child service users will be developed.	MHC		✓	✓
7.5	Roll out Voice of the Child professional development within the Creative Schools Programme.	DCHG	DCYA	✓	✓



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