How to engage children and young people, individually, in decisions that affect their lives.

February 2014
CSC Participation Toolkit

Participation is a process where someone influences decisions about their lives and this leads to change. (Treseder, P. 1997)

The purpose of the toolkit is to provide you with an increased understanding and a range of activities to encourage children and young people you work with to participate more fully in children looked after reviews and child protection conferences.

It is generally accepted that if we ask children what they think we are more likely to get it right for them. When asking children and young people what they think it is important that we provide information and give realistic parameters. It is up to us to make it accessible, relevant and interesting and that is where this book comes in to assist you in developing methods which enable you to record what children and young people are thinking and saying.

Children need a trusting relationship with an adult and time to digest the process and the questions. Children need choices about how to participate including the use of advocates, written messages, drawings, audio tapes or attendance at conferences/meetings, which needs careful planning.

Before meetings conversations should be had with the child/young person about exactly how they would prefer to give their views at the meeting. After the meeting the child/young person will need you to clarify the plan, explain the decision and get feedback from them.

Young people (age appropriate) should always receive a copy of the plan, written in a child focussed manner, and consideration needs to be given to how best to explain the plan to a child/young person.

Be mindful of the existing guidance about involving children and young people in CLA and CP processes. Think about how best to involve each individual child and include the child in these discussions. Particularly think about person centred techniques and how these can be applied to a particular meeting and young person.
Children and young people need help to exercise real choice about the nature of their involvement. It's worth noting that; attendance at meetings does not equal participation and not attending should not mean not participating.

Within this toolkit each activity is on a different page and includes information about; suggested timings, how it works, why we like it, what you will need and developments/adaption's. Sheets can be printed/copied from the book so it is easy to use.

Very few of these methods involve sitting around a table while someone takes 'minutes'. As adults, this is a method we are more than familiar and it has its place. However, this break with tradition does not mean there is not a need to record information. As we know, when making decisions and plans it is crucial that we have something to look back on, and that the information is both accurate and easy to understand by anyone involved in the process. So, how do we accurately record and portray what the children and young people are saying?

A number of methods in this toolkit involve you sitting alongside them as they record their views or draw pictures. Ideally they will write or draw themselves but for a number of reasons this may not always be possible or practical (literacy, ability, inclination or otherwise may play a part here!) but particularly if the child/young person has asked you to do it for them. Interpretation of what they are telling you should always be led by the facts. Find out what the child/young person is trying to tell you; 'tell me about this picture', 'I wonder if you are saying...'. Make sure you tell them what you think they are saying/meaning and invite them to let you know if they are wrong.

It is worth using an activity like this at the start of working with a child or young person as it is a co-operative way to create a set of negotiated ground rules. Explain that you want your time working with them to go well and you need their ideas for how to make this happen. You can give examples of things they might want to think about; how should I behave towards you, how should you behave towards me etc. Typical responses include; listen, share, respect, feedback, honesty. Write all the ideas down and record them; you should use this as a starting point for any interaction with the child/young person asking them if they are happy with them and/or would like to add anything else. This sets the scene nicely for your working relationship and the child/young person has ownership of the agreement so is more likely to stick to it.
**The Three Houses Model**

This activity is about exploring good things and feelings; hopes and worries.

**Timing:** 5-15 minutes

**How it works:**

Give the child/young person a copy of the three houses sheet and ask them to fill in each house i.e. house of good things, house of worries and house of dreams. They may choose to draw or write in each house. If they draw pictures ensure that you ask them to explain each drawing and record this on a corresponding sheet. The staff member may want to make suggestions based on their knowledge of the child/family.

**Why do we like it?**

It is simple

It provides us with evidence which can be used in meetings - you can take a photo of it or scan it so it can be included in the minutes of a meeting etc.

It was suggested by Munro as a model to communicate with CYP

**What will you need?**

The house model

Crayons/pencils

**Developments/adaptations**

You could change the houses for a fairy with wings and a wand or a super hero with a cape and a light sabre. The body could be worries and each side of the wings/cape could be good things and the wand/light sabre could be dreams, be as creative as possible!
Three Houses Model

House of Good Things

House of Worries

House of Dreams
**Emotion Placemat**

This activity is about exploring how the child/ young person feels

**Timing:** 5- 15 minutes

**How it works:**

Give the child/young person a copy of the emotions sheet and ask them to look at all the faces of the children on the sheet. Ask them to identify how they feel about their lives. They can draw themselves in the centre of the paper and arrows to the emotions they feel. Ask them to explain what causes those emotions and record that along the arrows. The staff member may want to make suggestions based on their knowledge of the child/ family i.e. when your mum stays in bed how do you feel? When strange people come to the house how do you feel? How does your sibling make you feel most of the time? When are you happiest?

**Why do we like it?**

It is simple but focus on their emotions

It allows them to record positive as well as negative feelings

It allows staff to prompt children with questions about their emotions linked to their personal circumstance or the issues which the child/family are facing

It provides us with evidence which can be used in meetings - you can take a photo of it or scan it so it can be included in the minutes of a meeting etc

**What will you need?**

The emotions placemat- you may like to print it onto A3 as there will be more space to record answers

Crayons/pencils

**Developments/adaptations**

You could print out poster versions of each of the emotions faces and record when they feel each emotion, why and if anything causes this emotion.
**Shooting star**

This activity is about exploring what the child/young person's hopes for their future are (both immediate and future)

**Timing:** 5-15 minutes

**How it works:**

Give the child/young person a copy of the stars sheet or ask them to draw their own. In each star ask them to record, by drawing or writing, their hopes for the present/future. They can be aspirational hopes but staff can ask them questions which allow the children to think realistically i.e. 'when would you like to see your family'; 'what do you hope your mum will feel in the future'; 'who would you like to live with'; 'what do you hope will be in your future'.

**Why do we like it?**

It is simple but focus on their hopes

It allows them to be aspirational

It provides us with evidence which can be used in meetings - you can take a photo of it or scan it so it can be included in the minutes of a meeting etc

**What will you need?**

The shooting starts sheet

Crayons/pencils

**Developments/adaptations**

You could use the image of a magic wand or ask them to draft a 'wish list' for the future.
Shooting stars
**Brick wall**

This activity is about exploring strengths with the child/young persons.

**Timing:** 5-15 minutes

**How it works:**

Give the child/young person a copy of the brick wall or ask them to draw their own. In each brick ask them to record their characteristics or the characteristics of their family. Start at the bottom with the strengths at the bottom for support moving up to weaknesses or things that could improve.

**Why do we like it?**

It is simple but it is strengths based so it is a positive activity.

It allows them to focus on what they are good at.

It provides us with evidence which can be used in meetings - you can take a photo of it or scan it so it can be included in the minutes of a meeting etc.

**What will you need?**

The brick wall

Crayons/pencils
The Brick Wall
The Family Shield

This activity is about exploring the child/young person's family

Timing: 5-15 minutes

How it works:

Provide the child with paper and crayons/pencils to draw their own family shield or a shield template as shown below and ask them to fill them with the strengths of either themselves or their family. This can be done by writing or drawing.

Explanation about shield designs – "Every Knight needs to Design a Shield! With all that armour it was hard to tell who was who so Knights used a shield with symbols and words that would distinguish themselves from others".

Why do we like it?

It is simple but it is strengths based so it is a positive activity

It allows them to focus on what they or their family are good at

It provides us with evidence which can be used in meetings - you can take a photo of it or scan it so it can be included in the minutes of a meeting etc

What will you need?

The shield template

Crayons/pencils

Developments/adaptations

Make a collage using; tin foil, glue, scissors, magazines, stickers and any other embellishments

Make a family coat of arms to symbolize your family, history, career, hobbies and sports. You can have a lot of fun when you design your own coat of arms that reflects the identity of you and your family.
Flying Carpet

This activity is about exploring where the child/young person would like to go and who would you take with you?

Timing: 5-15 minutes

How it works:

Provide the child with paper and crayons/pencils to draw their own flying carpet including where the child/young person would like to go and who would they take with them? Staff members can prompt the child/young person to think about why they want these things and include as much detail. It could be a way of having a theoretical conversation or one which is more practical. This can be done by writing or drawing.

Why do we like it?

It allows them to focus on what they want and why

It provides us with evidence which can be used in meetings - you can take a photo of it or scan it so it can be included in the minutes of a meeting etc

What will you need?

Paper/template

Crayons/pencils

Developments/adaptations

Using photos of family members or magazines which can be cut out
**Worry Bags**

The activity enables children/young people to have a 'safe space' to store, disclose and ultimately discuss their worries.

**Timing:** 5-15 minutes

**How it works:**

Start by designing the worry bag/box with the child/young person. Discuss its purpose with the child. The template below may be enough but they may like an actual worry bag/purse/box. The child will complete the worry 'bag' between your meetings as well as at the session. The worries within should be openly and regularly discussed and explored. Please note that the purpose of this method if not about having secrets between the staff member and child but rather as a way for them and others to explore what worries the child may have. Staff should encourage children to use this method as a reflective tool post meetings/decisions/discussions regarding their personal circumstances.

**Why do we like it?**

This enables children/young people who find it difficult to disclose issues face to face but may find it easier to write them down.

It can be ongoing rather than a 'one off'

**What will you need?**

Paper/ template

Crayons/pencils

**Developments/ adaption's**

The idea of Worry Dolls is a common one and may be adapted as part of this method. Dolls can be drafted out of paper or pegs. **'Worry dolls** (muñecas quitapenas), or **trouble dolls**, are very small and colorful dolls traditionally made in Guatemala. A person (usually a child) who cannot sleep due to worrying can express their worries to a doll and place it under their pillow before going to sleep. According to folklore, the doll is thought to worry in the person's place, thereby permitting the person to sleep peacefully. The person will wake up without their worries, which have been taken away by the dolls during the night'
**Sentence Completion Cards**

The activity enables children/young people to answer questions and record their thoughts and feelings to set statements.

**Timing:** 10- 20 minutes

**How it works:**

Give the child/young person the template below (or make your own which is more suited to the child/ young person). Ask them to answer some of the questions but explain that they can pass if they do not want to. As a staff member you should record their answers (as accurately as possible).

**Why do we like it?**

This enables children/young people to explore questions in a different way rather than a traditional 'interview' format

The children are in control of which questions they want to answer or not

**What will you need?**

Paper/ template

**Developments/adaptations**

You could cut out each separate box, laminate it and turn it into a flip book making it more tactile

Each box could be cut out and placed face down on a table- turning one at a time and answering each one in less than 10 seconds turns it into a game and make it exciting. Afterwards staff could ask the child/young person to go back to certain cards and discuss them in more detail.
My family are...........

2 good behaviours I do....

My world would be better if......

I'm thankful when...........

I feel happy when...........

I feel grumpy when.........
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I feel sad when..........</th>
<th>One thing I would change about my life would be ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Sad Face Emoji]</td>
<td>![Wand Emoji]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My favourite place to be is ...</td>
<td>When I get angry I ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Question Mark Emoji]</td>
<td>![Angry Face Emoji]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want my friends and family to stop.....</td>
<td>My favourite person is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Stop Sign Emoji]</td>
<td>![Award Emoji]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I worry about......

My favourite memory is........

My friends think I am......

I love....

I am different because....

I feel scared when.....

I get in trouble when I.....

When I am alone I.....
If Change were to Happen

The activity enables older children/young people to focus any futures changes. It’s an activity used and shared by Action for Children.

Timing: 10-20 minutes

How it works:

Give the child/young person the template below asking them to complete the thought bubbles. They are asked to think about what will; keep on happening, stop happening and start happening. Members of staff may prompt them with questions such as; 'if your case goes to court'; 'if your mum goes to hospital'; 'if you improve your attendance' etc.

Why do we like it?

The children can explore possible scenarios and their feelings about them

It provides us with evidence which can be used in meetings - you can take a photo of it or scan it so it can be included in the minutes of a meeting etc

What will you need?

Template (below)
Pens/paper
IF CHANGE WAS TO HAPPEN

What needs to ..... 
Keep on happening 
Stop happening 
Start happening
**Tramlines/Scales**

The activity enables children/young people to focus on their feelings

**Timing:** 10-20 minutes

**How it works:**

Give the child/young person the template below asking them to mark on the line how they feel. They then have to note anything that would improve that feeling. Members of staff may prompt them with questions. It's important to focus on what they and others could do to improve the situation making the exercise solution focused and positive.

**Why do we like it?**

The children can explore their feelings by focusing on possible ways to improve

It provides us with evidence which can be used in meetings - you can take a photo of it or scan it so it can be included in the minutes of a meeting etc

**What will you need?**

Template (below)

Pens/ paper
Tramlines

Please mark on the lines below your answer, somewhere between 0 (little or no) to 10 (lots or very), in relation to each statement.

How do I feel today?

0  ___________________________________________________ 10

What could improve how you feel?

How worried am I?

0  ___________________________________________________ 10

What could reduce your worries?

How stressed am I?

0  ___________________________________________________ 10

What could improve this?

How scared am I?

0  ___________________________________________________ 10

What would improve this?
**Lifelines**

The activity enables children/young people to focus on their journey/life

**Timing:** 10-20 minutes

**How it works:**

Give the child/young person the template below (or draw your own) asking them to complete each bubble with memorable thoughts/feelings/memories. Staff could choose to focus it on happy memories or focus on a particular time period i.e. over the last year. Tell me about the times/things you remember. The staff member can then discuss these memorable moments with the child/young person and make a record of who was there, how it felt, when it took place etc.

**Why do we like it?**

The child/young person can map out particular memories which are strong and explore how they felt, why they felt like that etc. This can be a useful way to discuss the past.

It provides us with evidence which can be used in meetings - you can take a photo of it or scan it so it can be included in the minutes of a meeting etc

**What will you need?**

Template (below)

Pens/ paper
LIFELINES

[Diagram of sky with clouds and paths]
Useful information and further reading

Involved by Right is an EU Daphne programme grant-funded project which seeks to improve participation and advocacy in child protection to achieve better outcomes for children at risk;
http://www.participationworks.org.uk/topics/internationalparticipation/involved-by-right

The Children's Commissioner for England 'Don't make assumptions: Children and young people's views of the child protection system'.
http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_486

Young Spice Fun participation activities for the under 11's;
www.childcom.org.uk

Lots more resources can be found at –
http://www.sparklebox.co.uk