

# Top Tips for Children and Young People's Participation



- 1. Treat children and young people with respect**
  - Do things **with** them, not to them or for them. By repeating back to them what you think they have said children and young people will see that you are hearing them and that their involvement is genuine.
- 2. Don't talk down to children and young people**
  - Speak to them as equal and look them in the eye. This shows that you are listening and that their contributions are valued and taken seriously.
- 3. Don't be a "try hard"**
  - Children and young people are not expecting you to be COOL – be authentic.
- 4. Don't make assumptions about what children and young people are capable of**
  - Don't assume that children and young people, because of age or other circumstances, will not want to be engaged or make a valuable contribution.
- 5. Remember that children and young people are as diverse as any other population group**

Children and young people are not a homogenous group. They have different views, experiences, beliefs and backgrounds. Do not ask children and young people what **all** children and young people think, ask them what **they** know and experience.
- 6. Tell young people how they will be involved and always provide feedback**
  - Be clear, realistic and honest with children and young people about what you are trying to achieve and what is involved in achieving it. Always provide feedback to them on the decision-making process.
- 7. Be open to new ideas, especially ones you may not have thought of**
  - One of the best things about involving children and young people is that they often have a different way of looking at things. Inform them that there are no right or wrong answers and this can create all sorts of new ideas and possibilities.
- 8. Give young people time and space to say what they mean**
  - Be open to silence – often involving children and young people in decisions that affect them is new to them - so just give participants some time to get comfortable and think about what they want to say.
- 9. Give clear objectives and limits for decision making**
  - Be clear and honest about the things that young people have control over or a say in, and those areas where they don't. That is, set clear boundaries with children and young people, and take time to discuss expectations – both theirs and yours.
- 10. Steer clear of professional jargon whenever possible.**
  - If you must use jargon, take time to explain it clearly. Also, take time to explain and discuss different words and phrases related to their participation – like "represent", "having a voice", "consultation".