

**Taking Part in Making Decisions:  
Training for 8 to 12-year-olds**



# **Involving Children and Young People in Evaluation**

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## Introduction

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Involving children and young people in evaluating the services they use is one of the best ways of finding out if the service is really making a difference to them. They will have a unique view about the service or project. They will know what works and what doesn't, and what could be improved or done differently. Their 'insider's view' may highlight unexpected outcomes and identify barriers to using or making the most of a service. The materials in this section aim to help a group of children and young people experience and practise some skills that can help with evaluation.

### **Involving children and young people in evaluation is good for everyone because:**

- services become more child and young person focused – children and young people's views and experiences have helped to shape the services they use and service providers have become more aware of their needs
- it is inclusive – being involved in or influencing decisions is a powerful way to include children and young people and show them that they are important
- ownership is increased – children and young people are more likely to be interested in and committed to something they have been able to influence, and involvement helps them to understand what a project or service is about
- children and young people develop skills – such as being able to listen to others, speak up for and express themselves, and weigh up different points of view.

This section provides a short training programme for a group of children and young people aged from 8 to 12 years, aiming to introduce them to some ideas about evaluation and providing an opportunity for them to practise some of the skills needed for evaluation activities. The training does not need to be delivered by an expert in evaluation, but it will help if you have read the information about evaluation included in the appendix.

These activities will work best with a group of about 12 who know each other and have been part of the same service or project for a while. For groups with a lot of younger children and/or with those who are not confident writers you will need more than one facilitator to help with recording and producing a report.

Ice breakers, further evaluation exercises and other preparatory information may be found in the Getting Started section of *Taking Part in Making Decisions: Training for 8 to 12-year-olds*.

See the appendix of this section for more background and further reading on this topic.



## Session One

# Introductory Activities

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### Purpose:

To practise listening skills and introduce the concept of respect

### Learning outcomes:

By the end of this session:

1. Everyone will have said something in the group
2. Everyone will have demonstrated that they have listened to others in the group
3. Everyone in the group will have experienced being listened to
4. The group will have demonstrated how to be respectful of each other
5. Some groups will have discussed being respected and not respected.

### Time needed:

20 minutes (including variation at end in both)



### Materials:

A comfortable room in which there can be some movement

A soft ball or bean bag

Coloured pens and A4-size paper plus Blu-Tack if you are using the variation activity

Large sheets of flipchart paper and felt-tip pens if using the list activity at the end of Balls of respect.

### Preparation time needed:

5 minutes



## Session One

# Introductory Activities

## Crazy lists

### Time needed:

10 minutes



### Trainers notes:

This activity will help the group to listen to each other and remember what others have said. It may be hard for children and young people to listen to others who are not their immediate friends. This activity is a fun way of learning to listen. The second part is about being respectful of each other and may be used in later activities to remind participants about being respectful. This is important in evaluation as all views should be heard and people's views should be listened to.

**Top tips:** All activities may be slower with larger groups or those who are not used to working with each other. You could miss out the variations in both activities if you are short of time.

If you want to do some more to build up listening and communication skills, you can find further activities in the Facilitation section.

### Method:

1. Ask the group to sit or stand in a circle. Explain the activity.
2. Everyone will take turns to say their name and one thing that they have seen on their way to the group today. For example: My name is Jaimie and I saw a white poodle on my way here today. The choice can be imaginary or wacky – often this makes it more fun. People should not talk about what others choose, although smiling and nodding to show they have heard and understood is OK.
3. The next person must say their name and one thing they have seen on their way to the group today, and repeat the name of the person next to them and their item. For example: My name is Kerry and I saw a postbox on my way here today, and this is Jaimie and she saw a white poodle on her way here today.
4. Carry on around the circle until everyone has had a go and said everyone's name and item – that is, the name and item of everyone in the group.
5. If the group is small or they accomplish this easily, ask everyone to choose a second item – the group may like to decide on the category, such as favourite celebrity, food, TV programme, sport, etc.
6. Thank everyone for listening well. Ask them if it was hard to remember everything. If they want to talk about this, do so; if not, move on the next part of the activity.

**Variation:** In some groups where participants don't know each other well or are very shy, or maybe there are difficulties with language or communication skills, you could ask the participants – or a helper – to write their name, fairly large, and draw whatever they have chosen as the thing they saw on their way to the group today (or another category if that is better for your group). They can show this to the group when they say their name and item. It can also act as a prompt for others in the group when it is their turn to speak – it will help to remind them about the item. The important part of the activity is for everyone to speak, make a contribution, and have their contribution recognised by everyone in the group. The pictures can also be displayed on the wall for the rest of the session.



## Session One

# Introductory Activities

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## Balls of respect

### Time needed:

10 minutes



**Top tips:** A bean bag is better for younger age groups as it is easier to catch.

### Method:

1. Ask the group to stand in a circle and explain that this game involves throwing and catching a soft ball – or bean bag. You should be part of the group.
2. Ask the group to throw the ball to another member of the group. They must say the person's name first. Ask them to make sure everyone has had a go. Let them practise this for a few rounds – they will get boisterous, drop it, etc.
3. Ask the group to throw the ball again, but this time they must say the person's name and also change places with the person they throw the ball to. Stop the group when everyone has changed places.
4. Explain that the group members are going to throw the ball to each other in a different way – they must say the name of the person they are throwing it to and throw it with 'respect'. You can demonstrate this and talk about what it means – for example, respect is being considerate of other people, being kind to each other, including everyone in the group, etc. You need to match your explanation to the age and understanding of the group. Then ask the group to throw the ball and as they do so talk about how they considered the other person: 'Well done for throwing it gently enough to be caught', 'Don't throw it so high that Kieron can't catch it – say sorry and have another go!', 'Not so far away that Jamal must run for it – throw it so that you help him to catch it!' and 'Has everyone been included?'
5. Once the group have done this successfully, ask if they would like to make it a bit more fun. If they have had enough, stop and move on to the next activity.
6. If not, ask the group to assume different positions – such as left arm on their head, kneeling on the floor, etc. – and throw the ball, still with respect. It is harder but can still be done. Finish after a few rounds of this and thank everyone. Ask the group to talk about the difference between being respected and not being respected.

**Variation:** If it would work with your group, use the discussion to make two big lists to put on the wall:

- We know we are respected when this happens.
- We know we are not respected when this happens.

*This activity is adapted from one used by Oval House Theatre Arts in Education Living Here Project, which works with young refugees and asylum-seekers. It is included with the kind permission of Oval House Theatre.*



## Session Two

# The Investigators – a series of four activities

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### Time needed:

90 minutes. It may work well over two sessions, but you will need to build in time to remind everyone of where they were up to.



### Trainers notes:

It is important to gear the pace of this activity to the group – some groups with older young people may want to tackle more than a younger group will, and a smaller group may want to focus on describing just one part of an activity or service. It is important to try to cover not just describing the activity or service but also reporting on it. Some groups may need two sessions to do this. Give some thought to the children and young people's report – can it be presented to others in the service? Make sure you talk to the group about this.

### Purpose:

To try out evaluating an activity or aspect of the service or project of which the children or young people are part.

### Learning outcomes:

1. The group will have reviewed a part of a project or service that they know well.
2. They will have tried out some different methods of evaluation and discussed what is OK and not OK about them.
3. They will have produced a report about their evaluation.

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### Method:

1. Explain to the group that they are going to investigate a part of the project or service to find out what is OK and not OK about it and then they will tell new people about it.

NB for the purpose of this training we will use the example of an after-school club. Ideally the group should have some involvement in choosing what will be investigated but the trainer may need to choose this beforehand.

2. Explain that the activity will involve using different ways of gathering information about an activity or aspect of a service or project that they know well. They will also prepare a report of some kind to describe the activity or service
3. Tell the group that they will soon need to choose their own reporting tool from the following:
  - Collage
  - Magazine/ newspaper page or article
  - Project advertising poster
  - TV report or interview

You might need to have a discussion to check that everyone in the group knows what these tools are and what they involve.





## Session Two

# The Investigators – a series of four activities

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## Activity One

### A simple survey

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#### Time needed:

15 minutes



#### Materials:

A large sheet of flipchart paper – probably a few taped together – with a blank table drawn on it (Resource 1)

#### Preparation time needed:

10 minutes to prepare the table

**Top tips:** If you want to have a look at some more activities on doing surveys, read the Making Change Happen section. This includes a section on methods for carrying out consultations with children and young people.

#### Method:

The first activity is a simple survey to find out what most people think about the activities offered at an after-school club. This may be done on flipchart paper pinned to the wall.

1. Ask the group to make a list of the activities that happen during the after-school club and record them in the first column of a blank table (see example on resource 1). Keep the list short. This part of the activity needs to be done fairly quickly.
2. Ask everyone in the group to put a tick in a box to show what they think about each activity. You could use smiley, neutral and sad faces instead of words across the top.
3. Ask the group to talk about the lists:
  - What do people like most?
  - Do we know who likes what? – girls and boys, new members, people who haven't had a go at that activity, etc.
  - Do we know why people like things or not?

The aim of this part of the activity is to get the group thinking about how to find out information and dig a bit deeper.

You may vary this activity for younger children by designating different parts of the room as 'Like it a lot', 'It's OK' and 'Really boring', and shouting out the activity – children run to the part of the room that reflects what they think about that activity.

4. Finish the activity by explaining that the group is going to research and report on the after-school club. They need to start thinking which format fits best with your group, their skills and interests and the resources you have available.



## Session Two

# The Investigators – a series of four activities

## Activity Two

# Asking tricky questions

### Time needed:

15 minutes



**Top tips:** If you want another exercise to practise using open questions, look at the developing questions activity in the Recruitment section.

### Method:

The group must decide what information to include in their report, but first they need to do some research and investigation. Asking questions is tricky because sometimes people don't tell you very much. The aim of this part of the activity is to encourage the group to think about the kinds of questions that draw out information, practise asking questions and get people talking.

1. Organise the group into pairs and explain that you are going to play the Yes–No game.
2. Ask for a volunteer to play the game with you to show everyone how to do it. The volunteer must ask you questions about something like – your job, your hobbies, your favourite foods or TV programmes, etc. You are not allowed to say 'yes' or 'no' in answer to a question. If the group hear you say 'yes' or 'no', they must clap loudly. You are out and must swap roles with your questioner.
3. After you have both done this once, ask the group to have a go with their partners. It will get noisy!
4. Bring the group back together and ask them to tell you what kinds of questions get answers other than 'yes' or 'no' – these will be questions like 'Can you tell me more about that?', 'How does that happen?', 'What do you like best about ... and why?', etc.
5. Ask the group to think up a list of 4–5 questions they need to ask to find out more about – in this case – the after-school club. Encourage them to think of questions that will help to:
  - find out why some things are popular
  - get ideas for new activities
  - find out if there are things people don't like
  - get answers that are not just 'yes' and 'no'.

Remember to make the questions fit your group's situation.

Don't have too many questions – 4 are fine and 5 are definitely enough.

6. Write the questions on large sheets of paper – big enough to put on the wall – and make sure they are in very clear writing.



## Session Two

# The Investigators – a series of four activities

## Activity Three

# Being reporters

### Time needed:

45 minutes



### Materials:

**Collages:** a large roll of paper (large enough to cover a big section of the wall or floor), glue, felt-tip pens – thick and thin ones, magazines, scissors, scraps of coloured paper and material, something to attach the collage to the wall.

**Magazine/newspaper page:** paper, pens, felt-tip pens, glue, magazines, scissors, flipchart paper; a digital camera and facility to print images immediately would be good but is not essential.

**Project advertising poster:** paper, pens, felt-tip pens, glue, magazines, scissors, flipchart paper; a digital camera and facility to print images immediately would be good but is not essential.

**TV reports:** a pretend or even a real microphone, a clipboard, props like huge joke spectacle frames, a Diary Room type chair, etc.; a video camera and playback facility may also be used but is not essential – the TV report can be done live but not recorded and broadcast.

**Top tips:** Facilitators and other staff can help individual groups with tasks such as taking and printing digital photos, sticking stuff on collages, preparing newspapers, sitting in the audience for the TV panel, encouraging everyone's views to be included, etc., but they should not interfere or tell those taking part what to say or do.

### Method:

1. Split the group into 3 groups (you need to have 4-5 in each group). Tell the group they are going to discuss the questions from the previous activity and talk about their answers. They will then put together their report based on these answers
2. Tell the group you will give them 3 minutes for every question and then clap your hands to remind them to move on to the next question. Everybody in the group should get a little time to answer the questions.
3. Once all the questions have been discussed, ask the groups to start putting their report together. Give the groups 2 minutes to decide which reporting tool they are going to use.
4. Remind them that they can be as creative and wacky as they like. For example, a collage might be in the form of a recipe for the perfect after-school club. Or an advertisement for the club could be a song or rap about why children enjoy it. It doesn't have to be written but it does have to include some of the information they got from the answers to their questions.
5. Encourage the group to be as specific as possible so they can create their report in the time available.
6. Tell the groups that they will be sharing their reports with others. They might need to practise. For example, TV interviewers will need to devise and go through a script. Remember, interviews don't need to be videoed but props like pretend microphones and clipboards can add to the atmosphere.
7. Remind the groups when there are only 10 minutes left and 5 minutes left so that they can finish. Keep telling them that it doesn't have to be perfect – this is the first time they have done this so they should have some fun!



## Session Two

# The Investigators – a series of four activities

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## Activity Four

# Being presenters

### Time needed:

10 minutes



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### Method:

1. Call time and ask the groups to come back into a circle.
2. Each group must then show and talk about, or perform, their report for the rest of the group. Collages or posters can be displayed and the group should be encouraged to move around to view them. Encourage applause for each presentation.
3. If you have ideas about how the reports could be shared further, ask the group what they think about that – they may not want them shared. Explain that they should always be told what is going to happen to information they provide. Ask the group if they have ideas for sharing their reports. If so, who do they think should see or hear about them? Thank the group for working so hard.



## Session Three

# Jars of Importance

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### Purpose:

To review and reflect on what has been covered in the session

### Learning outcomes:

The group will have reviewed some key issues they have explored, such as:

- listening to each other and being listened to
- including each other
- respecting each other
- asking 'Why?' and 'What's it like for you?' questions
- telling other people what you think.

The group will have reflected on the most important findings of their evaluation.

### Time needed:

30 minutes



### Materials:

Felt-tip pens, glue or glue sticks, A4 paper, large sheets of flipchart-size paper, scissors

For each small group you will need a large sheet of paper – or flipchart sheets taped together – with three large jars drawn on it and labelled:

- Very Important
- Important
- Not Important

Set of comments (Resource 2)

### Preparation time needed:

10 minutes

### Trainers notes:

**This is a very adaptable activity. The most important part is the discussion that the group has about the issues. It is a good activity to use with a group to help them prioritise what is really important to them. It may be used as a stand-alone evaluation resource too. You can keep the jars as posters to remind the group of what they discussed and agreed.**

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### Method:

1. Explain that the next activity is about deciding what was important in what the group has just been doing. Organise the group into small groups of 2 or 3 – keeping the groups small helps discussion.
2. Put the sheets with jars on on a table, the floor or the wall so that each small group can see and reach them.
3. Give each group a set of comments that you have prepared beforehand (examples on Resource 2) and explain that together the groups need to add more comments to put into the three different jars.  
  
You might want to ask questions such as 'What have you learnt today about listening?', 'What have you learnt about asking questions?' or 'What changes would you like to see happen at the after-school club?' to promote discussion. Explain that the answers to the questions will then become the comments.
4. Along with help from adults, if necessary, ask the groups to fill in some or all of the blank comment boxes. They can share comments with other groups if that works.
5. Ask the groups to decide which jars they think each comment should go in. Once agreed, they glue the comment on that jar. The discussion among the group is very important. You may want to make a few notes about why they think some comments should go in which jar – you could add little speech bubbles to a comment on a jar to explain this.

**Top tips:** This activity may be used to evaluate more general learning with groups too – such as how disagreements have been resolved, including everyone, being kind to each other, etc.

Some groups use this activity regularly to help them review what children and young people think about the activities they are involved in.

The jars can also be put on display during the life of a project or group and revisited at the end of the project to see if the children or young people want to add to them or change the priorities.

6. With the whole group look at the jars again and talk about them. Ask 'Is there anything missing?', 'Did everyone agree?', etc.

*This activity is adapted from the Jars of Importance activity in Are You Listening! Toolkit (2005), with kind permission from Cambridgeshire Children's Fund.*

# Evaluation Further Information

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Involving children and young people in evaluating the services they use is one of the best ways of finding out if the service is really making a difference to them. They will have a unique view about the service or project. They will know what works and what doesn't, and what could be improved or done differently. Their 'insider's view' may highlight unexpected outcomes and identify barriers to using or making the most of a service. The materials in this section aim to help a group of children and young people experience and practise some skills that can help with evaluation.

**Involving children and young people in evaluation is good for everyone because:**

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- it is inclusive – being involved in or influencing decisions is a powerful way to include children and young people and show them that they are important
- ownership is increased – children and young people are more likely to be interested in and committed to something they have been able to influence, and involvement helps them to understand what a project or service is about
- children and young people develop skills – such as being able to listen to others, speak up for and express themselves, and weigh up different points of view.

## What is evaluation?

*Evaluation involves using monitoring and other information to make judgements about how well an organisation, project or programme is doing.*

J. Ellis (2005 second edition).

All services need to do some evaluation. Although sometimes this is done by an independent outsider, it is more usually done by the service itself and its users – including children and young people.

Evaluation may be:

- formative – the evaluation is done as the project goes along and findings from the evaluation can be fed into and influence the service's development
- summative – taking place towards the end of a service or project.

Most services do a bit of both kinds of evaluation. Children and young people have a vital role in contributing to both.

## Evidence for evaluation

All sorts of information may be used to provide evidence for an evaluation and build up a picture of a service or project. It usually breaks down into two kinds of information.

**Quantitative information:** Counting something, like how many children or young people attend a service and how often they come. It could include information about where they come from within the local area, who referred them, and their age, gender or race. It can identify what kinds of children or young people use a service – and what kind don't – and show patterns such as popular activities and most and least used times, days, seasons, etc.

Quantitative information can help to answer questions like:

- Who?
- How many?
- How often?
- What activities did they do?

**Qualitative information:** Describing something in order to understand it better. It often includes the views of participants in projects or services and focuses on changes that have happened and why, and on what people have learnt and their experiences of a service or project. It could be something like children describing what they learnt in a project – for example how to cook a healthy meal – or a young person describing how they have made new friends and become involved in new activities.



Qualitative information can help to answer questions like:

- Why?
- What happened?
- What difference did it make?
- Have you noticed any changes?

Children and young people can be involved in collecting both kinds of information, about themselves or other users, and can also be involved in deciding what kind of information needs to be collected. They may well come up with completely different questions from those that adults devise. They will also have a view on what the information gathered means and can help to analyse and interpret it. The information they collect can be displayed in a number of different, creative ways that are much more memorable than a written report. Have a look at the *Evaluator's Cookbook* for some creative ideas about ways to display evidence.

### **Different levels of participation in evaluation**

It is important to be clear about how much participation is really offered to children and young people involved in contributing to evaluation and about what its real purpose is. Sometimes children and young people's involvement is little more than a tick-box exercise to satisfy funders and management-reporting requirements. This is not participation in evaluation. However, sometimes their participation in evaluation is about finding out how to make a service better and check out if the service really is meeting the needs of its users – children and young people. They do need to know what the answers to the following questions about their involvement in evaluation and their input:

- Can their views influence decisions?
- Will anything change and, if not, why not?

To help you to think about where children and young people's participation in evaluation fits in within your organisation, have a look at Levels of Participation from the *Are You Listening!* Toolkit (2005).

**References:** Cambridgeshire Children's Fund and Save the Children (2005) *Are You Listening! A toolkit for evaluating Children's Fund services with children and young people.*

Ellis, J (2005 second ed) *Practical monitoring and evaluation: a guide for voluntary organisations.* Charities Evaluation Services

National Evaluation of the Children's Fund (2005) *The Evaluators Cookbook: Participatory Evaluation Exercises*

## Before you start

Have a think about the ethical issues raised by involving children and young people in evaluation. Your main priority is to ensure that they are safe and that their involvement is a choice. If you would like to know more about ethics, have a look at the Children and Young People's Participation Charter, which lists key issues about participation (you can download a copy of the Charter from [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk)).

Make sure you have enough time and resources, including help from others, to do the activities – otherwise children and young people will feel frustrated and disappointed.

Be clear with the children and young people about why you are asking them to become involved in doing this. Is your service or project interested in children and young people's views? What will happen to the information and views they put forward?

## Resource 1

# Example of a simple survey

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What do you like about after school club?

	Like it a lot	It's OK	Really boring
Football			
Doing homework			
Board games			
Trips out			
Cooking			
Playing with friends			

## Set of comments

**It is good to be able to say what you think**

**Everyone should get a turn to try things**

**Children and young people should be  
listened to more by adults**