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Office of the Advocate for
Children & Young People

A Guide to Establishing a Children and Young People's Advisory Group

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We would also like to acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal people and culture within the NSW community.

ACYP advises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers this report may contain images of people who may have passed away.

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Foreword



This is such a wonderful resource that has been designed and developed with young people and the support of many organisations across New South Wales. The voice of children and young people needed to be embedded in all the work we do, not just in government, but also in community and business. This resource will help organisations establish youth councils and meaningfully engage children and young people in their work. We are thrilled and energised by the fact that organisations are determined to ensure that children and young people are heard. The need for this resource has occurred because organisations have asked for it and they want to ensure that they engage with children and young people in a meaningful way.

Thank you to everyone who was involved in developing this resource. Not only to the amazing team at ACYP but to all the councils, services and other providers. Together we can elevate the voice of children and young people and ensure that they are active participants in all aspects of society. They have a right to be heard and to be involved in decisions that affect their lives.

Zoë Robinson

Advocate for Children and Young People

Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified by Australia in 1990, includes the right for children and young people to be listened to on any matter that concerns them.

Article 12 states; *“Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child’s day-to-day home life.” (Unicef)*

Involving children and young people in organisational decision making makes sense because:



Children are not just objects who belong to their parents and for whom decisions are made or adults in training. Rather, they are human beings and individuals with their own rights.



Children and young people are experts in their own lives. They have a body of experience and knowledge that is unique to their situation. As a result, they can tell adults things that they don’t know. They can get adults to look at things differently.



Like all people, children and young people have a right to express their views when decisions are being made that directly affect their lives.



We know that **initiatives designed for children and young people are more likely to be effective** if children and young people themselves participate in their development and implementation.

This resource has been developed to help organisations, including government departments, meaningfully and effectively involve children and young people in their decision making. It highlights the importance of seeing children and young people as partners with adults in the decision making process.

In this document, 'participation' refers to children and young people's involvement in collective decision making. That is, children and young people having a say in the decisions that government and organisations make that affect them. It does not refer to children and young people's participation in personal and family decision making.

There are many different ways that organisations can engage children and young people in their decision making processes. Advisory groups are becoming increasingly popular, although this is just one of a suite of mechanisms all of which vary in cost, time needed and degree of representation of the children and young people engaged.

This resource has been developed to guide organisations through the process of establishing and sustaining a children and young people's advisory group.

As you read through this guide, it is important to remember that while there are definite advantages of advisory groups, they only reach a select number of children and young people. It is therefore always a good idea to find additional ways to engage a wider range of children and young people in your decision making processes.

These can include surveys, focus groups, peer to peer consultation, forums, citizens' juries, internet discussions and a range of creative methods.

In developing this resource, we have drawn heavily on the advice of children and young people themselves.

About ACYP

The Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) is an independent statutory appointment overseen by the NSW Joint Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People. ACYP advocates for and promotes the safety, welfare, wellbeing and voice of all children and young people aged 0-24 years in NSW, with a focus on the needs of those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Under the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014, the functions of ACYP include:

- Making recommendations to Parliament, government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, practices and services that affect children and young people
- Promoting children and young people's participation in activities and decision-making about issues that affect their lives
- Conducting research into children's issues and monitoring children's wellbeing
- Holding inquiries into important issues relating to children and young people
- Providing information to help children and young people.

To date, the office has heard from more than 36,000 children and young people. Voice and having the opportunity to speak up and be heard has been a key theme raised throughout these consultations.

We have included recommendations throughout this guide made by children and young people and we thank them for giving their time and for their valuable contributions.

We have also included good practice examples of current existing children and young people's advisory groups from across NSW. These groups give some excellent examples of how to establish and involve children and young people in decision making and the benefits that can come from having children and young people's advisory groups.

We would like to thank all the children and young people involved in advisory groups across the state. We would also like to thank those organisations and services who continue to support children and young people to express their views when decisions are being made about their lives.

The organisations who have assisted ACYP in the development of this guide are:

- Albury Youth Council
- Shellharbour Youth Council
- Bathurst Youth Council
- Parramatta Youth Council
- Lake Macquarie Youth Council
- Blacktown Youth Council
- Camden Youth Council
- Northern Beaches Youth Advisory Groups
- Liverpool City Youth Council
- Cumberland Youth Council
- Northern Sydney Local Health District Youth Health Consultants
- YMCA NSW
- Swimming NSW
- Scouts NSW
- Tweed Shire Council

***“All children
should have
the right of
opinion.
Their opinion
should be taken
with respect and
seriousness.”***

- Strategic Plan Consultations 2015

Section 1

**Why we should include
children and young people
in decision making**

There are many benefits to involving children and young people in organisational decision making. Therefore, it is important to break down the barriers to their participation to ensure all children and young people can have the opportunity to participate.

In this section

- **Underlying assumptions and principles**
- **Benefits of involving children and young people in decision making**
- **Barriers to involving children and young people in decision making**

Children and young people have the capacity to form an opinion about decisions that affect their lives, and they have the right to voice that opinion.

This section ends with a Participation Charter that was developed by 150 children and young people from across NSW that were brought together by ACYP for a one day event called 'Speak For Yourself'. We encourage you to print this out and keep it in a prominent place in your organisation.



Underlying assumptions and principles

Assumptions

The participation of children and young people in organisational decision making is based on several underlying assumptions:

Children and young people have the capacity to participate (because they can).

Children and young people need to be recognised as agents capable of contributing to decisions that affect their lives (Fitzgerald, Graham, Smith & Taylor, 2010).

Children and young people have an important role to play both in service policy and practice. Beyond their legislated right to be heard on the issues that affect them, we know from the literature that children and young people can offer perspectives that build adult capacity in terms of understanding childhood and children's lives, and that these insights are essential to accurately identify the need and the development of service innovation. (Kellet, 2010).

Therefore, children and young people can and should participate in a range of decision-making activities in government and organisations. This includes governance activities, sitting on selection panels, working on program design, development, planning, implementation and evaluation and monitoring the level of participation within organisations.

“I believe the main barrier for any youth participating meaningfully and effectively is the stigma surrounding young people that older people have. Young people are often viewed as being too young to be valuable and able to contribute toward the discussions and ultimately the decision making of the organisation.”

- Consultation participant, ACYP Participation Guide 2019

Children and young people have the right to participate (because they should).

Listening to children and young people is central to recognising and respecting them as human beings.

Article 12 of the UNCRC requires that we recognise the value of children and young people’s own experience, views and concerns, and that we listen and respond with respect to what they say.

The UNCRC not only serves as international law but as a comprehensive framework for action. It highlights that children have a critical role to play as citizens and the importance of involving them in processes to improve both their own lives and the wider community.

Children and young people have critical and unique perspectives on their lives (because they do).

Childhood sociology has argued for a changed view of the child - from seeing the child as still developing (“becoming”) to regarding the child as a “being”. This re-framing highlights the critical role that children have as an active participant here and now.

Children and young people are experts in their own lives; they have experience and knowledge that is unique to their situation. As a result, they can tell adults things that adults do not know, and change adult perspectives.

Principles of Participation

Linked to these assumptions are the following principles of participation:

Participation of children and young people must be voluntary and informed.

The choice of children and young people to participate or not must be their own and not overly influenced by others; they have the right not to participate.

Children and young people must also understand what information is needed from them and why the information is important. This will enable them to make an informed choice about whether they want to participate.

Ensure that children and young people's participation will bring them no harm.

Organisations have a responsibility to minimise the risk of physical harm and other potential negative consequences of children and young people's participation. Such consequences can include distress, anxiety and embarrassment. Contingency arrangements should be in place in case children become distressed or situations of risk or harm arise.

Anticipate ethical considerations that may occur during their participation.

It is best to plan for ethical contingencies at the outset. However, the strategy should be flexible to deal with unanticipated ethical contingencies that can arise during the process. Ethical considerations could include things such as having an understanding about organisational limitations in regard to children and young people's participation so any participatory initiatives are framed within these limitations.

Should include a continuous process of reflection.

Your own beliefs and values, as well as broader social and cultural attitudes towards children, can affect children and young people's participation. While an organisation may hold well-intentioned, child-centred values, organisations can still act on beliefs that essentially negate those values.

Take steps to redress inherent power imbalances between children, young people and adults.

Children and young peoples' participation is an ongoing process of their active involvement in decision making (at different levels) in matters that concern them. It requires information sharing and dialogue between children and adults that is based on mutual respect and power sharing. Genuine participation gives children the power to shape both the process and outcome.

For children and young people's participation to be meaningful, adults need to be willing to share their power with children and young people. Adults need to be open to changing decisions or making decisions in response to what children and young people tell them. Children and young people need to clearly understand the intention of the advisory group and how they can influence decisions.

There are a number of ways to minimise adverse power relations within a participatory project. For example, choose a location in which children and young people feel comfortable. Also, speak with children at their height level rather than standing over them (Kellett, 2011).

Recognise that children and young people are a diverse group.

Children and young people should be consulted in ways that ensure they are all properly heard, so the diversity of their views is reflected in the outcomes of the process.

Ideally the membership of the advisory group should include children and young people who represent the diversity of children and young people in the community or organisation they are representing.

Develop the capacity of children and young people to participate.

Organisations need to support children and young people to develop the skills and knowledge required for effective participation. Children and young people can competently express their views when asked within the context of a supportive research environment, one in which the power imbalances are directly addressed and the methodologies are age appropriate and flexible in response to the support needs of the child. (Kellet, 2010).

The capacity of children and young people to participate varies depending upon their age, developmental stage, life experiences, and capabilities. It may be convenient to seek the participation of those who already have experience being part of decision making processes, but this would ignore the potential contribution of those who have not had those opportunities or who may have been excluded from these processes. Ignoring such potential disempowers and further marginalises those children and young people. It can also result in a failure to capture the diversity of views and experiences.

Developing the capacity of children and young people to participate may also involve building capacity of the organisation and its staff in participatory practices to be able to support children and young people in this process.

Scouts NSW

The group was established as a way to receive input from Youth Members into the youth section and major events. Over time, it has developed to seeing input on all aspects of the Scout youth section including the Scout Award Scheme, Child Protection, Major Events, Issues Management, and Policy Development.

Shellharbour Council NSW

Shellharbour Council is currently undertaking engagement with young people to develop a set of meeting practices and develop a model for the establishment of a Youth Council.

'SPEAK FOR YOURSELF'

Participation Charter

On 26 July 2016, ACYP and the 2016 NSW Youth Advisory Council co-hosted Speak for Yourself at the Sydney Opera House. This event brought together 150 children and young people aged 12-24 years from across NSW, to discuss their experiences of participating in organisational decision-making, and to hear their recommendations for how organisations can better engage with children and young people.

Young people at the event worked together to develop a Participation Charter for children and young people and organisations.



1

We respectfully request that adults assist us to make a meaningful contribution by:

- Providing guidance, balanced with independence
- Providing training and skill development
- Providing resources and financial support
- Understand we have many commitments
- Encouraging us to work collaboratively
- Fully inform us of our role and our rights in the decision making process

2

Children and young people together formulated the following key principles for meaningful participation in the decision making process:

- Respect
- Empowerment
- Giving and receiving constructive advice
- Trust
- Providing feedback
- Interaction and entertainment
- No stereotyping of young people
- Equity
- Collaboration

3

Children and young people recommend that when they are engaged in decision making processes, they undertake the following:

- Respect the views of others
- Be fully committed to the process
- Take accountability
- Show initiative
- Respect boundaries
- Be flexible with their time
- Meet deadlines

Section 2

Determining why you want to establish a children and young people's advisory group.

The most important aspect to establishing an advisory group of children and young people is to be clear about its purpose. How will the group be of benefit to your organisation? What contributions will the group be able to make to the work of your organisation? This should be made clear to all participants from the beginning of their involvement.

There can be situations when children and young people's participation is not meaningful or helpful, such as when it is clear decision makers have already formed an opinion which they are not willing to change and simply want to use children and young people to validate this decision.

It is also important to think about how the advisory group will benefit the children and young people themselves. This is both in terms of the children and young people directly involved, as well as the intended effects of having a powerful representative voice to benefit the wider population of children and young people who come into contact with your organisation or its services.

In order for children and young people's participation to be successful, it should be supported by an organisational culture that demonstrates that it values their meaningful participation. For example, including a statement of commitment in organisational strategic documents that integrate children and young people's participation as an ongoing activity, rather than a one off project.

It is advisable to develop clear terms of reference for the advisory group from the very beginning. This should be a two way process with staff and children and young people working together to set out the group's purpose and objectives. This will also help participants to become informed about the role and its expectations.

Advisory groups can be resource intensive in terms of both time and cost. It is important to be aware from the outset of the pros and cons of using this method of engagement, and to think of ways to counter the potential disadvantage of advisory groups. Table 1 presents the advantages, disadvantages and suggestions for establishing an advisory group.

“Adults need to learn that it doesn’t matter how old you are, we can still make a change.”


- Participant, Strategic Plan Consultations, 2015

Table 1. Advantages, disadvantages and suggestions for advisory groups.


 ADVANTAGES	 DISADVANTAGES	 SUGGESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides easy and ongoing access to a group of children and young people • Can be a starting point for other engagement processes for your organisation • Effectively enables children and young people to provide direct feedback and input into policies and programs on a regular basis • Assists children and young people to develop skills, experience and confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires time and resources to support the group • May not be representative of all children and young people • The formal approach of an advisory group may exclude some children and young people or discourage participation from marginalised young people • Requires a regular, ongoing commitment by children and young people (this may be difficult for participants with other commitments) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group may be more effective and children and young people will feel greater ownership if they assist in establishing the terms of reference and purpose • An advisory group should not be used as the only method of engagement

Source: Government of South Australia (2016). *Better together: A practical guide to effective engagement with young people.*

Swimming NSW


 *In June 2016, we launched a pilot program for 13-18 year old swimmers called Lane Ropes to Leadership. The goal of Lane Ropes to Leadership was to establish a Swimming NSW Youth Advisory Panel (YAP).*

The role of this panel is to discuss current issues related to swimming, and to develop ideas on how to improve the current state of swimming in NSW. The Swimming NSW Board and staff are committed to implementing the best ideas generated by this panel.



Camden Council NSW

The group was established by Camden Council in partnership with local young Harrington Park resident, Caterina Mazza back in 2011.

 Caterina moved to the Camden LGA after living in Liverpool and wanted to establish a Youth Council for residents of Camden to have an opportunity to raise local issues of concern and be involved in local youth initiatives and programs.

The group in the early stages worked on a number of key events, such as Youth Week. Now the group meets regularly to plan, deliver and organise a series of youth-led initiatives, and recently were successful in obtaining 2019 NSW State Government Youth Opportunities funding to implement the Camden Youth Empowerment Project. This project included organising a large-scale Youth Multicultural Festival, as well

as implementing and organising four Skill-based workshops around Barista-training, Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA), Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) and Lifeguard training.

The group also work in strong partnership with The Y NSW. In addition, the group have also had the opportunity to provide input and comment on Development Applications concerning young people and feedback provided to Council from the group has been taken on board in relation to the establishment and creation of a series of new outdoor Youth Play Recreational Spaces in the Camden LGA.



Benefits to children and young people

Being personally empowered to make a difference.

Through the participation process, children and young people develop their ability to investigate, evaluate and act on issues that are important to them. As a result, they may have increased skills to participate in other decisions that affect their lives. Young people are encouraged and empowered to claim their rights. This means that they are not seen as objects of charity but rather as individuals who are claiming their legal entitlements to make a difference.

Developing an awareness of the value of their own knowledge, understanding and insights

Participating in decision making helps children and young people gain a better understanding of their own wants and needs, and how these can be expressed to adults. It also helps them to accept that their views and understandings are respected, valued and can contribute to the knowledge and understanding of others. When young people are afforded opportunities for democratic participation this nourishes a sense of collective ownership and responsibility as well as skills to solve problems in collaborative ways (Cairns 2001).

Acting and being recognised as citizens.

Children and young people feel a sense of social inclusion when they are recognised by others as social actors with rights and the capacity for responsibilities. It also gives them a sense of social responsibility to the wider community.

Becoming familiar with group and democratic processes.

Through participation, children and young people can develop an understanding of different points of view and the need for compromise. They can also feel a sense of responsibility for group decisions (Smail, 2007).

Early opportunities for democratic participation nourish a sense of collective ownership and responsibility, as well as skills to solve problems in collaborative ways.

Acquiring and expanding their problem-solving, negotiation and communication skills.

These skills are particularly developed when decision making is group-based. Children and young people develop a belief in themselves as actors who have the power to impact the adverse conditions that shape their lives. They develop confidence and learn attitudes and practical lessons about how they can improve the quality of their lives.

Developing improved relationships with adults and peers.

This can include an improved ability to work with others, as well as social benefits such as making new friends (Kendall & Merrill, 2008) and creating contacts.

Improved wellbeing.

As recipients of high quality, responsive services and programs that are informed by the target group for whom they are designed. A UNICEF survey of children's and young people' subjective well-being in Spain concluded that those children and young people who had learned about their rights also reported higher levels of wellbeing than those who had not.

Additional methods of engagement

Young people who have attended various ACYP events, such as the Speak for Yourself event and the Youth Advisory Council recruitment events, told us that they value advisory groups as a mechanism to enhance children and young people's participation in an organisation. However, they would also like organisations to involve them in decision making in a range of other ways as well to help capture the diversity of views held by children and young people.

Research has found that there are varying types and levels of participation depending on the extent to which children share power:
Shier (2001)

- Children are listened to
- Children are supported in expressing their views
- Children's views are taken into account
- Children are involved in decision making processes
- Children share power and responsibility for decision making.

Other ways to involve children and young people in your organisation:

- Consultations
- Surveys
- Youth forums and events
- Young people interviewing new staff in organisations
- Through creative methods such as drama, movies, art
- Social media – promoting and marketing the work of the organisation.

“I expect that my opinions, ideas and contributions will be truly valued and will be taken into consideration seriously when developing new policy.”

- Participant, Speak for yourself event 2016

Other ideas and tools



Inviting young people to planning meetings that are already being held to contribute their opinions alongside other people's so that together ideas can be explored and decisions made.

Going to schools and communicating with youth rather than waiting for them to come to you.



More interactive surveys, using technology to have open discussions with lots of people.

Section 3

**Recruitment and selection
of members**

Before recruiting members to your advisory group, think about the composition of the group:

- How many members will there be?
- What will the age range of members be? – If the age range will be wide, consider asking older members to mentor the younger ones
- How can the members represent the diverse population of children and young people covered by your organisation's mandate?
- Do you want a mix of backgrounds? You should consider different cultural groups, socioeconomic groups, different life experiences, gender and sexual diversity, religious beliefs etc.
- What is the reach of your organisation?
- Will your members be recruited in order to represent the extent of this reach?
- Will this be economically available to your organisation? How long will members serve on the group? – If it is a one year term, this opens up the opportunity to more children and young people. Two years is a greater commitment, although it can take several months for the members to get a true understanding of what they are doing.



Recruiting children and young people

Depending on the purpose of your advisory group, it may be important that the group reflects the diversity of children and young people, in terms of gender identity, age, geographic location, sexual orientation, ability, socioeconomic and cultural background and life experiences.

“It is important to us that the diversity of young people is represented when organisations engage us, in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic status, rural and regional areas, gender and gender identities, age etc.”
- (participant, Speak for Yourself event)

Think about whether you want your group to be representative of the diversity of children and young people such as young people with previous advisory board and committee experience - as well as children and young people who have not had those experiences including children and young people who may have been excluded from these processes.

Organisations you may wish to contact include:

- Schools, TAFEs and universities
- Child and youth services
- Community organisations - e.g. Girl Guides, Scouts, Surf Life Saving, PCYC
- Organisations working with specific groups of children and young people such as Aboriginal, or other cultural organisations, or services working with children and young people living with disability
- Sports, arts, and recreational groups.

It is a good idea to use several different methods to recruit children and young people. Different avenues will catch the attention of different children and young people:

- Written announcements – in school and other newsletters, local newspapers and email lists
- Posters – displayed in schools and other youth organisations and services
- Social media – Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook pop-up advertisements, as well as Spotify and YouTube advertising are the most effective platforms according to children and young people involved in the ACYP Youth Week forum and NSW Youth Advisory Council recruitments events
- Have a booth/stall at community events
- Word of mouth – asking relevant adults (e.g. teachers, youth workers) to nominate children and young people or asking young people themselves to speak with their peers.

“I am part of a disadvantaged area where there are lots of things that can be done to fix this by voicing the disadvantaged people that live there. Personally I would like to see some youth members being part of the council meetings and be able to voice their opinions to get the real expert opinions.”

– Participant, NSW Children’s Parliament 2018

Involving children and young people in the design of your promotional materials can be a way to make sure your information is appealing to children and young people. Ensuring that the material is inclusive, accessible and visually representative of children and young people and the range of backgrounds that your organisation wishes to capture is critical.

Once your advisory group is up and running, consider involving current advisory group members to assist in the recruitment of new children and young people.

Children and Technology

One of the most significant social and cultural changes over recent decades has been the way that children and young people engage with and utilise digital technology, and the impact that this has had on their lives. Most children's homes in Australia have access to high speed Internet, the computers and hand held devices.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that 86 per cent of households had access to the Internet at home. This has transformed children's access to information, connection to their peers and communities, and created spaces for children to become the producers of rich digital content.

The Children's Rights in the Digital Age report, guided by views of children and young people, found that there must be a focus on promoting digital literacy, resilience and cyber safety. This builds on children and young people's expertise on their own experience online. A focus on equity of access, safety for all, digital literacy across generations, identity and privacy, participation and civic engagement is required.

There is an opportunity to utilise digital technology to more actively include children and young people directly in decision-making to inform policy development, particularly those children who live in regional and remote parts of Australia or who may be hard to reach. There is a further opportunity to encourage good digital citizenship as part of healthy childhood development.



Selecting children and young people

It is typical for children and young people wanting to join an advisory group to complete an application form.

You may wish to include questions such as:

- Child/young person's name, age and contact information
- Parent/carer's name and contact information
- Child/young person's current school or employment details
- Other important demographic and life experience questions – such as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status, cultural background, disability
- Selection questions – such as why they would like to be on the group; what skills and experience they would bring; what they would like to achieve by being part of the group; what they think are important issues affecting children and young people; involvement in voluntary or community activities
- Contact details for one or two referees to support their application.

It is important to be aware that some children and young people may find it difficult to answer particular questions and may feel uncomfortable if they feel obligated to identify themselves in a particular way. For example, when asking children and young people to specify a gender it is more inclusive to let them physically type in their answer, rather than provide boxes for them to tick. This allows children and young people to decide how they wish to identify themselves. A sample application form is included in the Appendix of the guide.

If you are using a written application process there are some potential pitfalls to keep in mind. For example, children and young people with literacy issues or for whom English is not their first language may be disadvantaged by having to apply in writing. Others may not be able to access the technology required to submit their applications.

“Normally, it’s just adults that get to tell the council what to say in Parliament, and stuff. And the kids never get to say anything.

So, I think it’s good that the government is hearing what us kids have to say and not just the adults.”

– Participant, Disaster consultations 2019

The following are ways to support children and young people in preparing their application (whether written or verbal). These have been suggested by the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (2004):

- Have a staff member available to answer questions from applicants
- Avoid asking children and young people to write long applications
- Consider whether technology, such as computers, could be made available to applicants if needed.
- Make it possible to return an application at no cost to the applicants, such as over the internet, reply paid postage or leave a box for applications in areas children and young people access
- Ensure there is adequate time for children and young people to put an application together; a reminder before the due date could also be useful
- Consider what personal encouragement can be given to get children and young people involved.

Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) Youth Health Consultants

We aim to employ a diverse team of Youth Consultants that represent our Local Health District (LHD). Candidates lived experience and skills are always considered within our broader team.

Things we look for:

- What area they live in (we want representation from across our LHD)
- Age
- Diverse lived experience (from school captains to kids who have had some hard knocks to others who are at greater risk of health risk behaviours)
- Ability to work within a team
- Experience within the health system
- Cultural, sexual orientation and gender diversity
- Availability and commitment to attend meetings
- Fulfilling skill gaps within the team e.g. graphic design skills.

Camden Council NSW

Young people can apply to be on the Camden Youth Council through completing an online application form that is available at www.camden.nsw.gov.au/camdenyouthcouncil.

The Camden Youth Council has a capacity to have up to 15 young people at this time, however due to strong partnerships that have been established with The Y NSW over the past six months, we are seeking to have The Y NSW Camden Youth Action Team (Young Leaders Group of Mount Annan) merge with the Camden Youth Council that will provide an even bigger group of youth participation. This would look like approximately 20 – 25 young people attend fortnightly/monthly meetings with support from the Camden Council Community Project Officer (Youth) and The Y NSW Mount Annan Youth Hub Youth Programs Coordinator.



Liverpool City Youth Council

The Liverpool City Youth Council is open to any young person aged 12 - 24 years who works/volunteers/studies in the Liverpool LGA. It is made up of 12 young people from a diverse mix of backgrounds who live across the Liverpool LGA.



Selection process

You may wish to set up a selection committee to review applications. There should be an agreed set of selection criteria for reviewing the applications. Your selection process may involve creating a shortlist of applicants based on the application forms, followed by interviews.

As an alternative to individual interviews, you may wish to observe how shortlisted applicants behave in a group situation. This is important given that advisory groups require individuals to work as part of a team.

When recruiting the NSW Youth Advisory Council, for example, ACYP has invited young people to be part of a series of Citizens' Juries and have the selection committee observe the young people during this process. This not only removes the formality of individual interviews, but also allows you to see how each young person relates to others in a group setting. It is important to ensure that members are able to work together respectfully and cooperatively, particularly in diverse groups. The key is looking for children and young people who listen to and represent the views of their peers, communicate effectively and participate in discussion, as well as encouraging other members to share their views and get everyone involved.

There are often multiple children and young people who could be suitable to be on your advisory group so you may have to make a choice between who will be successful or unsuccessful applicants. Being clear about the reasons for your organisation setting up such a body and the criteria you will use to select members who are representative of the diversity of ages, backgrounds and life experiences of the children and young people with whom you work can help with this process. It will also ensure your advisory group is a representative body who can provide feedback based on what is best for all children and young people.

Section 4

Induction of the group

A good induction is extremely important for helping members to get to know one another, as well as understanding what is expected of them.

The induction will typically happen at the first meeting of the group and you may wish to consider running it over two days or two meetings. This means you can include some initial training and skills development in addition to fun outings or activities to help the group to bond.

Induction Day

You may wish to prepare an induction and orientation pack to give to members at their first meeting. It could include things like background information about your organisation; purpose of the advisory group; what is expected from members in terms of attendance and participation; support staff contact details; list of potential meeting dates for the year; and tips on how to be an effective group member (such as preparing for meetings; reading and responding to emails promptly).

It is a good idea to discuss the proposed meeting dates together with group members at the initial meeting, so that they are able to discuss what days and times suit the majority.

The Induction Day could also include time for developing a group agreement/code of conduct. The agreement might include statements about how group members are expected to behave towards one another. Group members can generate these statements themselves through discussion during the first meeting.

Remember to make sure that all the information provided in the induction pack is written in language that is easily understood.

Fun activities

Your initial meeting is an opportunity for members to get to know one another and start to feel comfortable with each other. It is therefore important to provide plenty of time for informal chats and fun.

Consider incorporating some icebreakers into your agenda to allow members to share information about themselves. Other ideas for group bonding are a group dinner after the induction meeting or even a group outing that could be chosen by the young people.

At the induction meeting, it is also a good idea to support the group to choose ways that they can communicate with each other in between meetings e.g. a closed Facebook group or WhatsApp chat. If your group spans a wide range of ages, social media may not be appropriate as a communication method due to age restrictions.



“Doing something fun before talking about something serious.”



“Need to be mature and balance with fun.”



“Having fun in order to collaborate and work with each other.”

(Participants, Speak for Yourself event 2016)

The best participatory experiences have been ones I have planned or been involved in the planning.

The reason is, there was trust, reciprocity, respect, inclusion and consideration of the context of participants and the decision to be made.”

- Participant, Speak for Yourself event 2016

Training

A good way to give back to children and young people on youth advisory groups is to provide them with opportunities to learn and develop new skills.

For example, you may wish to schedule some initial training at your induction meeting to support members to feel comfortable about what will be expected of them in their role. Some examples include training on specific issues (e.g. child rights' advocacy), media presentation, or practical skills such as; working as a team, planning, communication, presentation and facilitation.

Training can also be an important way to establish a safe environment for all participants. Offering cultural awareness training is a good way to empower all young people to work cohesively and respectfully as well as address any biases or stereotypes.

It is a good idea to ask members of the group what skills and training they would like to receive. For example, at the *Speak for Yourself* event, young people told us that they would like training in the following to engage in effective organisational decision-making:

- Public speaking skills
- Training for all to work as a team.
- Cultural awareness – skills to work with diverse groups – “*General training on diversity e.g. racism, mental health, sexism, LGBT issues*”
- Problem solving and conflict resolution skills
- Conversational skills
- Listening skills
- Leadership skills
- Knowledge about the organisation and processes, including Government processes
- Time and resource management.

Albury City Council NSW

Each Youth Councillor takes on a responsibility to Council and the Community when they accept the role of Youth Councillor.

The Youth Councillor role is an important one with multiple layers including:

- An educational role to the wider community
- An advocate and voice for young people in the community
- A responsibility in decision making and governance
- Participate in community events/programs, there is an expectation that you attend at least four events per year.

In order to successfully fulfil these roles and responsibilities each Youth Councillor will be provided with training and personal development opportunities. The training will cover topics such as advocacy, leadership, meeting practice and effective decision-making. The training will predominantly take place during the first quarter of the Youth Councillors term.



Section 5

**Practicalities of managing
the group**

Provide for the needs of group members

Meeting Place

Having a regular meeting place is important. It is a good idea to have a meeting place that is close to public transport so that young people can get there independently.

Provide clear instructions on where the meeting place is, particularly for young people coming from outside of the area. If members of your organisation are meeting young people at a transport location, wearing recognisable branded clothing is helpful. If young people are coming independently and have not been to the location before you could provide a photo of the designated meeting place or office location.

If some group members are from rural or regional areas, consider holding one or two meetings in those locations.



Transport

Give consideration as to how your group members will get to and from meetings. If public transport is required, have a travel budget so that children and young people are not out of pocket.

Decide whether travel costs will be organised and paid for by the organisation in advance, or whether the costs will be reimbursed to members after meeting, and the process for doing so. Be mindful that not all young people will have the funds available to pay upfront.

If parents, guardians, or other support people will be transporting children and young people, make sure they have the meeting schedule well in advance so they are prepared.

If young people are travelling long distances, such as from rural or regional areas to metropolitan areas, flights or accommodation may need to be organised. Keep in mind that any young people aged under 18 years will be under your responsibility, if unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, and appropriate arrangements will need to be made. For example, consent from parents if they are travelling alone.

Trained and Qualified Staff

The advisory group should have a dedicated coordinator and point of contact person. The coordinator should be the person responsible for organising and planning of the meeting, contacting and supporting members, providing all details and relevant documents. The coordinator should be present at the meeting to support members and help with smooth running of the meeting.

All staff and guests attending the meeting must have a valid Working with Children Check.

In addition to this, if young people under the age of 18 require supervision outside of the meeting time, this must be arranged through an accredited social worker who can provide adequate supervision.

Room Set-Up

Make sure the meeting room is already set up and looks welcoming and appealing, whilst also reflecting that the young people are in a professional organisation. A long meeting table with chairs equally dispersed is helpful to facilitate discussion and participation of all members. If you are able to leave space around the table it can assist participants to move around if necessary, as well as participate in more physical or relaxed ice-breakers or activities during the day.

It is important to remember that some children and young people might not be used to sitting in one spot for long hours. The feedback received at many ACYP events is that children and young people enjoy the opportunity to stand up, walk around or get more physically active to refresh and rejuvenate before beginning the next session.

Providing young people with folders can work well to ensure that any loose sheets or important documents that are needed for upcoming meetings or events do not get misplaced and can be organised neatly. These folders can be kept at the organisation, particularly for young people who are travelling long distances and for whom carrying a heavy folder would be cumbersome or easy to lose. You can also have pens and notepads set up on the table.

Food

Providing food and drinks during meetings will help children and young people to concentrate, especially if they are lengthy ones. Sharing food can also be a good way to help group members socialise. Water and snacks such as fruit or muesli bars can be kept in the meeting room or meeting table for members to access at any time.

Technology

You may require technology to assist the group with their meetings, such as a SMART board or a computer, camera and microphone if you decide to hold some meetings via video conference. Ask your members what other forms of technology would be useful for assisting them with their work.

Technology is also critically important in making sure that meetings are accessible to all children and young people, regardless of ability. Try to be flexible and available to aid participants if they are unfamiliar with the technology or need extra help in accessing it.

Technology now plays a significant part in the way that we interact and meet. Many meetings have been unable to take place in person and the use of platforms such as Zoom, Skype, WEBex and Microsoft Teams have now become common practice.

Always be sensitive to dietary requirements and food allergies. Within reason and in regards to healthy eating parameters, it is nice to allow participants to decide what kinds of food they would like to be available to them.

These platforms offer a range of methods and tools in running successful meetings when meeting in person is difficult or not possible.

Things to consider when running an online meeting:

- Access to adequate technology, including internet, and assisting members where possible
- Information is provided about accessing and navigating the selected platform for members and guests
- Being conscious that group discussions can be more difficult to facilitate using online platforms
- Online meetings should be made shorter wherever possible
- Adequate breaks are included in planning

***“Let children
and young
people know
they have
power and
have their
own voice*”**

- Participant, Youth Week Forum 2019, Consultaion

Making meetings accessible to all members

If your group consists of a diverse range of young people, it is important to consider any specific needs for individual members. For example, ask vision impaired young people how they would like to receive written materials and consider seating them close to monitors and screens. If you have members who use a wheelchair ensure you have arranged their seating so there is clear path from the room entrance around the chairs to their place, as well as to other spaces they may go to such as kitchen or bathroom.

Preparing for meetings

It is a good idea to plan meetings well ahead of time. If there will be reading or other work that members are required to do before the meeting, be sure to give them sufficient time to complete this work.

Inviting guest speakers to present at meetings can provide variety and gives young people opportunities to hear different perspectives. It is empowering to have the leader of your organisation (e.g. CEO) attend meetings from time to time to demonstrate your organisation's commitment to the ideas and opinions of its advisory group. They could also give feedback regarding how the advisory group's advice has been useful and implemented within the organisation.

Specific roles for group members

Some youth advisory groups allocate specific roles for members. This can give young people a sense of responsibility and is also a learning opportunity. For example, you might consider having one member as the minute taker; one or two meeting chairs; one or two young people responsible for arranging social activities and possibly having subcommittees for different projects or areas of work.

You might also consider rotating these roles after every few meetings – this enables other group members to experience the same learning opportunities and also shares the workload around the group.

Communicating

Effective communication with group members in between meetings is extremely important. Discuss with the group how they would like this communication to occur; you may need to agree on a combination of ways, such as phone calls, email, SMS and social media. It is good to be mindful that younger members might not have the same access to social media platforms as older members.

Directing the Meeting

Whilst children and young people on the advisory group may be given a specific project or set of questions to discuss and work on, it is beneficial to provide time for the group to bring up their own topics and direct their own session. For example, the NSW Youth Advisory Council meetings typically begin with a 'Hot Topics' session during which members bring up and discuss three to five issues that they feel to be particularly current to children and young people and how this might be relevant to the work of the Office. They are given the opportunity to request more information from the organisation in the form of a "brief" that is presented at the next meeting to assist them to address the issue as a group and support them in their role of providing informed and relevant advice to the Advocate. This promotes meaningful participation and self-directed autonomy within the NSW Youth Advisory Council.

External Presenters or Guests

Where an outside organisation or guest has been organised to meet with the group the following information should be obtained:

- What are the main functions of the organisation requesting the meeting (to be provided to members as context as to why they are meeting)
- Name, position and contact information of the person(s) attending the meeting
- How long will the session go for?
- What is the purpose of the meeting? How will the information/ feedback provided by the group be used?
- Will the group be required to view any materials or documents?
- Working With Children Check Numbers of those attending
- Presenters and facilitators also need to be aware of their young audience – speakers used to adult audiences may not be as engaging to children and young people.

Section 6

Ethical issues

There are a number of ethical issues that need to be considered when working with children and young people, in order to avoid them any harm as a result of their participation in your organisation.

Duty of care and minimising harm

Care must be taken to minimise the risk that children and young people might be harmed, either physically or psychologically, as a result of their participation. They can be at risk in a number of ways, including:

- Sharing personal information that causes them distress or anxiety
- Harm caused by adults involved in the participation process.

Your organisation needs to consider the possible dangers of involving children and young people and have procedures in place to minimise these risks. For example, develop a procedure for what to do if a young person becomes distressed; such as notifying a parent/guardian, or having access to a counsellor.

Have an adult support person available if needed. Do not be alone with any young people – always have two of you present. It protects them and it protects you.

Be familiar with legal requirements that exist to protect children and young people from harm and abuse. In NSW, the Working With Children Check acts as a way of screening adults so that unsuitable people are prevented from working in roles where they have direct, unsupervised contact with children and young people.



Respecting privacy and confidentiality

Children and young people have the same rights to privacy and confidentiality as adults do. Take time to explain this in practical terms to the children and young people involved, in language they can understand. Sometimes children waive this right, for example when a child may feel uncomfortable being interviewed alone by someone they do not know, and they decide they would prefer having someone they know present.

Information provided by children and young people should be kept confidential, especially if it is in any way sensitive. Children and young people may be harmed if their confidentiality is broken. Consider confidentiality issues among the children and young people. When a group of children and young people participate together, agree to ground rules at the start – that topics discussed are kept confidential between the group members.

There are also specific issues around confidentiality and privacy for some groups of children and young people, such as those who are in care, or in juvenile justice institutions.

Mandatory reporting

Some professions are legally required to report any reasonable grounds they have to suspect that a child or young person under 16 is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect. However, anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person up to the age of 18 is at risk of significant harm can make a report to the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111. Concerns about physical, sexual or psychological harm, neglect, self-harming or serious risk-taking behaviours should also be reported.

Storing personal information

If you are collecting sensitive information from children and young people, you need to carefully consider how you will store the information.

- Store it in a secure place
- Protect electronic information with a password
- Back up data and keep the backup stored separately from computers.

These laws cover things such as: what information can be collected; what information children and young people should be given; what the information should be used for; how the information should be stored; and what access children and young people should have to information about them.

Gaining consent

It is important to have the consent of children and young people that you wish to have participate, and in most cases you will also need the consent of a parent or guardian. There are a few things you need to be aware of regarding consent:

- **Consent must be informed**
Children and young people need to understand what they are getting involved in
- **Consent must be voluntary**
Children and young people have the right to choose whether or not they wish to participate
- **Consent must be up to date**
If you are involving children and young people in an ongoing participation project, check in with them regularly to ensure they are still happy to be involved. If you are using photos/video recordings, make sure they are aware of how they will be used and for how long.

Be mindful of when you need to gain consent of parents or guardians. Although this is not always legally necessary, it is a good idea for you to seek consent whenever you are involving children and young people under the age of 18.

Section 7

Supporting the group

How much adult support?

Children and young people on advisory groups want adult support, but they also want to be able to make their own decisions.

At *Speak For Yourself*, young people spoke about wanting adults to balance guidance with independence:

- *“Be present, but respect the opinions of the young people.”*
- *“Adults should be involved with us, working alongside us, like an advisor.”*
- *“Be there for us when we don't know what to do.”*
- *“Letting us have a say/ responsibilities but providing support on formalities etc.”*
- *“Being a mentor rather than a “do this, do that” kind of person.”*
- *“Support us but don't direct us.”*
- *“Guidance in certain areas - don't necessarily leave it all to young people.”*
- *“Bringing in past experiences and expertise and knowledge that youth may lack.”*
- *“Adults need to be able to use their experience to best assist young people actually implement their ideas.”*

Young people also talked about the types of support from adults that would assist them in their decision making:

- *“Assist with things young people can't do, driving, financially, in areas where age restricts.”*
- *“Work within young people's schedules, time that suits both.”*
- *“Acknowledgement and appreciation.”*
- *“Presenting different types of opportunity.”*
- *“Understand that we have a very messy schedule.”*
- *“Give us all the information.”*
- *“Be open to all ideas, no prejudice during discussions.”*
- *“It's important that constructive criticism can be given so that our ideas can improve and go toward making a better decision.”*
- *“It's ok if things don't work out, encourage trial and error and accept that things don't always work.”*
- *“Adults need to be inspiring.”*

Qualities of adult support people

Here are some qualities that young people at the Speak For Yourself event told us they would like their adult support people to have:

- *“Be genuine – we can spot fakes.”*
- *“Open mindedness to all opinions.”*
- *“It is important that the adult interacting with young people is relaxed and open to building a relationship.”*
- *“Humour is critical.”*
- *“Approachable.”*
- *“Trustworthy.”*
- *“Passionate.”*
- *“Enthusiastic, but not overly.”*
- *“Be patient, giving young people time to make decisions.”*
- *“Respectful.”*
- *“Honesty.”*
- *“Be flexible.”*
- *“Encourage us.”*

Personal and administrative support

Children and young people will require different levels of personal support depending on their age, level of experience with committees, and life experiences. It is best to discuss the types of support needed with the young people themselves so that their individual needs are met.

Examples of support might include a mentor (either a young person on the committee or a suitable adult) or regular check-ins with the support worker for the group.

In addition to support for individuals, successful advisory groups benefit from having dedicated administrative support to ensure the completion of tasks such as preparation of meeting documents, coordinating notice of meeting communications, arranging food and refreshments, and managing other logistics like room bookings or set up.

The established youth advisory groups mentioned in this Guide are supported by a range of different positions within organisations including: Youth Development Officers, Mentors, Participation Officers, Youth Officers, Mayors, Community Development Officers, Managers, Directors and CEO's.

Section 8

Sustaining the group

Community linkages

Try to create linkages between your youth advisory group and important stakeholders and community groups. This can help to increase support for your group in the community and also lead to more opportunities and resources for your group and individual members.

Preparing for transition

You should always be prepared for the transition of group members. You may find it helpful to retain a few members from your current group when recruiting for new members. The longer standing group members can provide support and guidance to new members and it is also a way to ensure that knowledge within your group is retained over time. Another model is to retain one young person from the previous group to be the Chair for the incoming group.

Evaluate and improve

Like any project, your youth advisory group will likely grow and evolve over time. It is really important to have a review system in place so that you can continuously improve your processes.

The review system should include obtaining feedback from young members as well as organisational staff and other relevant stakeholders.

Members of your organisation should be involved in providing feedback to the advisory group, which a focus on outlining how their advice has been taken into account or implemented within the organisation's decisions and practices. If the group was recruited with a particular project or goal in mind, they should be regularly updated throughout their representative period on how their advice is having an effect, as well as having their contributions summarised at the end of their term.

Summarised below are just a few examples of good practice from established children's and young people's advisory groups across NSW. These include some new and innovative projects and ideas where children and young people have not only been given the opportunity to speak up but have been given the opportunity to plan, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate projects, programs and policy .

Shellharbour Youth Council

The Terms of Reference were developed following surveys and consultations with Youth Council members and other young people. It was designed to improve the Youth Council's structure and outputs, in line with the Shellharbour Youth Plan 2018-2021.

The Youth Council sends out the #youngshellharbour update. This is a community-wide update, on Youth Council activities, young people's achievements in the 6 month period as well as progress on implementation of the Shellharbour Youth Plan.

The Youth Council also runs the Shellharbour City Youth Summit. This will bring together Youth Councilors, young people, local representatives and Civic leaders to discuss young people's priorities for the City.

Bathurst Council Youth Advisory Committee

"How to Adult" workshops – idea proposed by a Youth Councillor. This is now an annual event attended by local secondary schools. Students learn life skills such as how to cook a basic meal, how to do their laundry, how to change a car tyre and job interview/resume skills.

NSLHD Youth Health Consultants

Our Youth Consultants recently contributed to the development of our program plan. This involved presenting the results of a needs assessment, which comprised of statistics and trends around youth health priority areas, to our team of young people.

Youth Consultants then provided anecdotes of either their own experience or observation of their peers relating to the health protective and health risk behaviours presented to them. This resulted in the identification of two new projects that would have been unlikely to come about without these collaborative processes.

YMCA NSW


 *Y NSW Young Leaders have access to range of personal development opportunities and below are some of our highlights from 2019:*

- Attendance to a creative arts conference in Sydney
- Training and establishment of a regional radio segment at the local community radio station
- Delivery of the annual MidCoast NAIDOC Indigenous Fashion
- Participation in YMCA Youth Parliament
- Participation in YMCA Young CEO for the Day
- Meeting with local and state politicians to discuss local youth issues
- Several members have reported improved mental health and overcoming personal challenges with anxiety as a result of their group participation
- A Young Leader was chosen as the Young Leader of the Year for the MidCoast region at the 2019 Australia Day Ceremony
- Taree Youth Leaders have been engaged in consultation after the announcement of a Headspace planned for the region.



Blacktown Youth Council

NSW Youth Council Conference

 The 2019 conference theme is 'Unleash the Future – tomorrow's change starts with you'. The conference provides a fantastic opportunity for delegates to network with like-minded young leaders from across the state to connect, share, unpack and develop innovative solutions to current issues and unlock their capacity as future leaders in their communities.



NSW Scout Youth Council

The Youth Council in 2017 requested a major Scouting event be moved from one location to another and also the format be changed.

Whilst doing this, they refreshed the logo, brand and promotion strategy. By implementing their ideas, the 2018 event saw an increase of youth attendance across the state from 850 Scouts to 1350 Scouts.

In 2019 there was a steady maintenance of numbers and an increase in Junior Service Leader and Adult support at the event.

Parramatta Youth Council

Taking the tag line from NSW Youth Week 'by young people for young people' Council has developed and implemented a project that has enabled young people to design and deliver Youth Week programs.

In 2017 Council engaged YLab to facilitate a series of co-design workshops for young people and community organisations. Thirty young people worked in groups to workshop their response to the issues that mattered to them the most. The issues that were identified include Homelessness, Discrimination, Mental Health and Unemployment.

Swimming NSW

Initiating contact with youth mental health support services (Headspace, Reach Out, Youth Beyond Blue) to partner with Swimming NSW.

Swimming can be a high pressure sport and being a predominantly individual endeavour can leave swimmers feeling isolated. The YAP Youth advisory panel want to partner with a support service to help young swimmers deal with the pressures of an individual competitive sport as well as raise awareness of the youth mental health across the swimming community in NSW.

A Young person was selected to be on the 2019 NSW Youth Advisory Council.

Section 9



Checklist

Checklist for arranging a meeting with your youth advisory group

- Are all group members able to travel to and from the meeting venue on their own or have appropriate arrangements been made?
- If the meeting is held virtually, do all members have the appropriate equipment to join virtually?
- Has a parent or guardian provided consent for under 18s to participate?
Do you have contact details in case of an emergency?
- Do group members have the contact details of at least one staff member who will attend the meeting, in case they have any queries or need help?
- Have the group members been reminded of the meeting details and travel arrangements in the week leading up to the meeting?
- Do any of the members have accessibility requirements and have they been catered to?
- Has food, drink and snacks been organised for the meeting, keeping in mind any allergies or dietary requirements?
- Are all materials and documents required for the meeting provided for members? If there are reading materials, have these been sent in advance?
- Do all adults attending the meeting have a valid Working With Children Check?
Required for all staff, guests and group members aged over 18.

Section 10

**Top ten 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 equals like you would any other adult. 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 children and 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

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 children and 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 give participants 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 children and 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 wherever 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" and "consultation".

Appendix & References



Appendix: Sample advisory group application form questions

Open –ended questions

1. What do you think are the important issues affecting children and young people in your area?
2. Please explain why you think these issues are important.
3. What life experiences have you had which would assist you in contributing to the work of the advisory group?
4. Please provide details of any current or past voluntary or community activities you have been involved in.

Demographic questions and background information

Name: _____ Date of birth: _____

Gender: Female Male Non-binary
 Transgender Intersex Agender/None
 Prefer not to say Prefer to specify

What is your current age?

What suburb do you live in?

Do you identify as having a disability?

Do you identify as being in out of home care?

Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Are you from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background?

Do you identify as a recently arrived refugee or migrant

Do you identify as LGBTIQ+?

Please give details of any experience or membership of an organisation, network, boards, committees or other government or community bodies?

Referees

Referee name: _____ Referee relationship: _____ Referee contact details: _____

Thank applicants and remember to provide dates for when applications close, as well as when they will be notified of the outcome e.g.

Thank you for submitting your application.

Applications close on <insert date>. You will be notified on the outcome of your application on <insert date>.

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