Comhairle na nÓg

Your Local Youth Council

Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit

November 2026



List of Acronyms

CYPP	Children and Young People's Plans
CYPSC	Children and Young People's Services Committee
DCDE	Department of Children, Disability and Equality
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
ETBs	Education and Training Boards
FRCs	Family Resource Centres
HSE	Health Service Executive
LCDC	Local Community Development Committees
NPO	National Participation Office
PPN	Public Participation Networks
PPRU	Participation Play and Recreation Unit
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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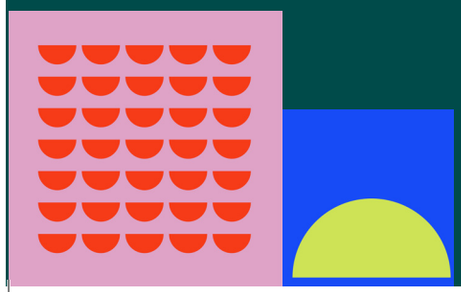
Introduction

Purpose of this toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide guidance and background information to Comhairle na nÓg coordinators to support them in the operation of an effective, impactful Comhairle in their Local Authority area.

How this toolkit was developed

This toolkit follows on from the second edition of the toolkit which was published in 2016. This third edition of the toolkit was developed in consultation with young people from the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators and Steering Committee members. Online and in-person consultations were conducted with members of the National Executive and separate online surveys were developed aimed at Comhairle Coordinators and Steering Committee members nationally. Advice from consultations with young people from the National Executive in relation to Comhairle na nÓg are included throughout the toolkit in boxes.



Background

Comhairle na nÓg (local youth councils) was established in 2002 under the National Children's Strategy in response to Ireland's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

What is Comhairle na nÓg?

Comhairle na nÓg:

- is the recognised permanent participation structure representing young voices in decision-making at local and national level in Ireland.
- operates in each of the 31 Local Authority areas across Ireland.
- is for young people aged 12-17 who become members of their local Comhairle na nÓg through their schools, youth organisations and community groups, including groups supporting seldom-heard young people.

Comhairle na nÓg 5-year Development Plan

The Comhairle na nÓg 5-year Development Plan sets out the Comhairle na nÓg vision, mission and values as well as the five goals of the Development Plan.

Comhairle na nÓg goals

Goal 1

Reach & influence

To extend our reach and engage more broadly with young people and decision-makers to strengthen the voice and influence of young peoplei local and national decision-making.

Goal 2

Operational delivery

To ensure that Comhairle na nÓg has resoures, systems, processes and supports to operate effectively and to enable young people to have a say in issues and decisions that affect their lives.

Goal 3

Cultural, recognition & Communication

To enhance the anwareness, recognition and understanding of Comhairle na nÓg among all yong people and to cultivate a culture of inclusion and participation in a diverse and vibrant Comhairle community.

Goal 4

Structures and relationships

To strengthen and enhance structures and relationships that underpin the work of Comhairle na nÓg, Dail na nÓg, and the National Executive, and build on these so that they are effective - enabling them to reach their potential and ensure the voices of young people are heard.

Goal 5

Evidence-based innovation

To build an evidence base that informs best practice, and actively seek new and innovative ways to develop and enhance Comhairle na nÓg.

Vision, mission and values of Comhairle na nÓg

Mission



Our mission is to be the permanent rights-based structure that represents the voice of young people in Ireland and provides them with a platform to meaningfully engage with decision-makers and influence matters that affect them.

Vision



Comhairle na nÓg is recognised locally and nationally as the go-to structure empowering young people of all backgrounds to speak up, be heard and influence decisions on matters that effect their lives.

Values



- Welcoming and inclusive
- Proactive
- Collaborative
- Mutual respect
- Making a difference
- Authentic
- Committed
- Enjoyable
- Visible and accountable

Who funds and runs Comhairle na nÓg?

Comhairle na nÓg is funded by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) through the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund. The Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund is overseen by the DCDE and administered in conjunction with Pobal.

Who runs Comhairle na nÓg?

The day-to-day support for the Comhairle na nÓg throughout the country is provided by the National Participation Office (NPO). The NPO was established in 2021 by DCDE to manage and coordinate the activities of Comhairle na nÓg, Dáil na nÓg, Seanad na nÓg, the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, the National Youth Assembly of Ireland and other related youth participation initiatives and structures. More information on each of these structures is provided in Section 2.

How does Comhairle na nÓg work?

Comhairle na nÓg allows young people's voices to be heard in two ways:

1. **Working on topics of importance to young people:** Identifying what is important to young people and working on that to achieve a targeted outcome or impact;
2. **Acting as a consultative forum to adult decision makers in the locality:** This can include participation in consultations where Comhairle na nÓg members are asked for their opinion, input, feedback and recommendations on new and existing services, policies and decisions that affect young people at local and national level.

Who can consult with Comhairle na nÓg?

Comhairle na nÓg can be consulted by many local and national bodies and organisations including:

- **Government departments**
- **Local schools**
- **Local Community Development Committees (LCDC)**
- **Public Participation Networks (PPN)**
- **State bodies e.g., Health Service Executive (HSE), Education and Training Boards (ETBs)**
- **Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs)**
- **Youth work organisations e.g., Foróige, Youth Work Ireland**
- **Youth organisations e.g., Jigsaw, Belong To**

What are the key roles in Comhairle na nÓg?

The key roles in Comhairle na nÓg are:

- **Comhairle na nÓg members (young people)**
- **Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator**
- **Comhairle na nÓg Local Authority contact**
- **Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee members**

Structure of this Toolkit

The Comhairle na nÓg Toolkit is structured in the following way:

Section 1: Key policies related to children and young people's participation in decision-making

Section 2: Key structures related to children and young people's participation in decision-making

Section 3: Comhairle na nÓg members

Section 4: Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator

Section 5: Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee and other support structures

Section 6: Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conference

Section 7: Comhairle na nÓg Work Programme

Section 1: Key Policies related to Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making.

Introduction

This section outlines the key national and international policies related to children and young people's participation in decision-making.

Definition of children and young people's participation in decision-making

The National Participation Framework defines children and young people's participation in decision-making as:

"Ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes" 1

In practice, this means that children and young people should be involved in decision-making in everyday spaces and situations such as early learning and care settings, classrooms, hospitals and clubs as well as in strategic developments, such as policies, programmes, services, legislation and research.

Key international policies related to children and young people's participation in decision-making

The key international policies on children and young people's participation in decision-making are:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
- European Commission EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1992, and therefore became a State Party e.g. a country that is legally bound by its provisions. Article 12 of the UNCRC states:

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

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2018. Article 7 of the UNCRPD states:

"Children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right".

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child

The EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child prioritises participation in political and democratic life, inviting member states to:

'establish, improve and provide adequate resources for new and existing mechanisms of child participation at local regional and national level.'

[1]UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009). General Comment No. 12: The right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12. Geneva: United Nations.

Key national policies related to children and young people's participation in decision-making

The key policies related to children and young people's participation in decision-making in Ireland are:

- **Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2021)**
- **Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan 2024 – 2028**
- **Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023 – 2028**

The National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making

The National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, which was published in 2021, provides tools and guidance to government departments, agencies and non-government organisations to improve their practice in listening to children and young people and giving them a voice in decision-making. The Framework was developed as a collaboration between the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Hub na nÓg and Professor Laura Lundy of Queens University, Belfast.

Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan

The Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan was published in 2024 and is a successor to the first National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making. The Participation Action Plan builds on the achievements of the National Participation Strategy. It focuses on the continuous development of participation structures and practice at local, national and international levels, among organisations, sectors, practitioners and government departments and agencies.

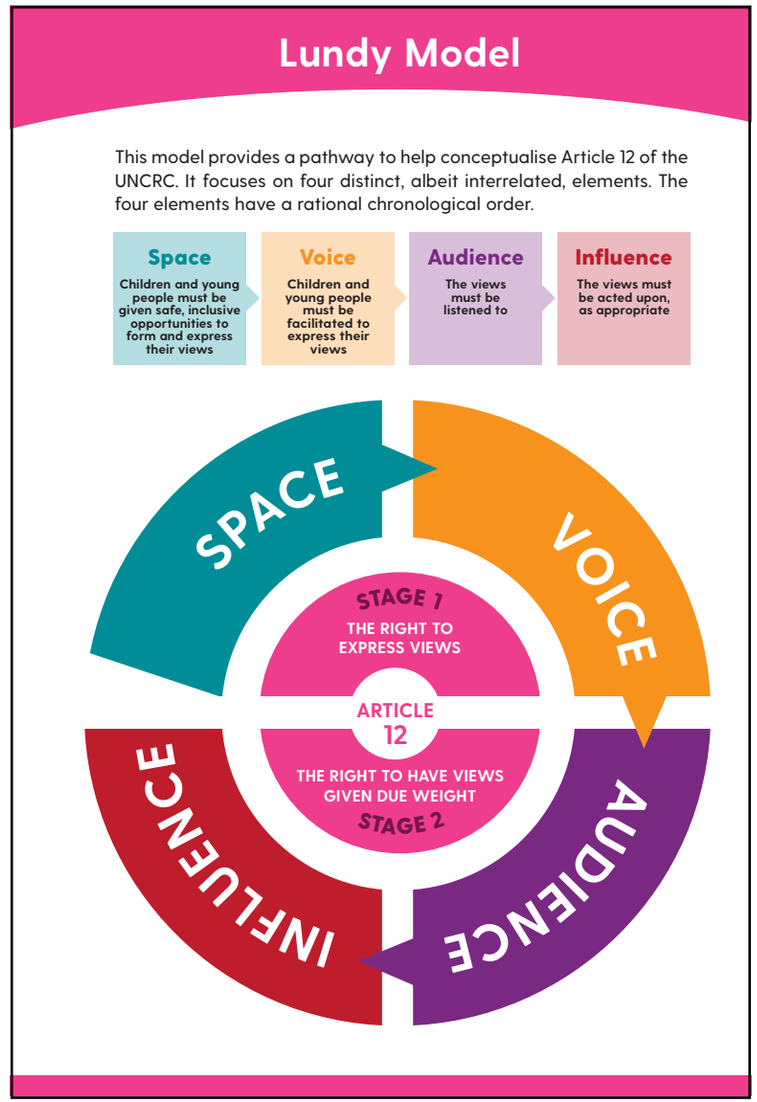
Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children Young People

The National Policy Framework identifies priority areas for children and young people requiring coordinated action across government. Section 3.1 of the National Policy Framework outlines the future obligations of government departments and policy makers to ensure that the voice of children and young people is heard in decisions that affect them.

The Participation Framework is underpinned by:

- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006);
- National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015-2020);
- Lundy Voice Model of Participation (based on Article 12 of the UNCRC – see below).

The Lundy Model



Participation Framework Principles

The Participation Framework is underpinned by the principles of Article 12 of the UNCRC which recommends that all processes in which children and young people are listened to, heard and participate, in person or online, must be:

- **Transparent and informative -** children and young people must be provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information. They must be told about their right to express their views freely, their right to have their views given due weight, and how their participation will take place, its scope, purpose and potential impact.

- **Voluntary -** children and young people should never be coerced into expressing their views against their wishes, and should be informed that they can stop participating at any stage.

- **Respectful -** children and young people should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities, and their views should be treated with respect. Adults also need to understand the socioeconomic, environmental and cultural context of their lives.

- **Relevant -** the issues on which children and young people are asked to express their views must be of real relevance to their lives, enabling them to draw on their knowledge, skills and abilities. They should also be asked to address issues they themselves identify as relevant and important.

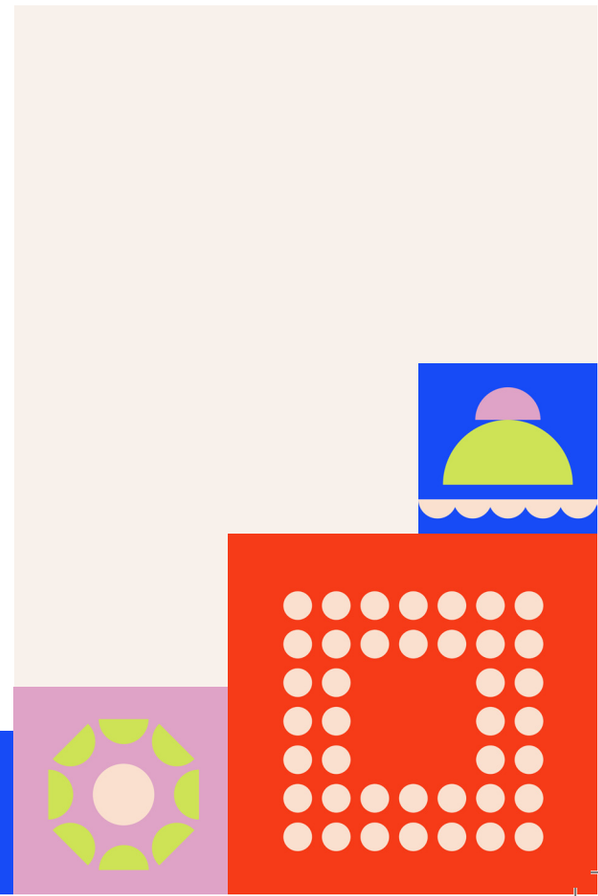
- **Child friendly -** all environments and working methods should be adapted to children and young people's capacities. Resources must be available to ensure that they are adequately prepared and given the necessary confidence and opportunity to contribute their views. Different levels of support and forms of involvement (according to age and evolving ability) are needed.

- **Inclusive (non-discriminatory)** - participation must be inclusive, avoid patterns of discrimination, and ensure opportunities for marginalised children. Consideration must be given to ensuring that children enjoy equal access to the digital environments necessary for online participation. Children and young people are not a homogenous group - it is essential that equal opportunity is provided for all individuals within that group, so that all voices are heard. Every effort should be made to ensure that programmes are culturally sensitive and free from discrimination.

- **Supported by training** - adults need preparation and support to facilitate children and young people's participation. This includes listening, effective cooperation and knowing how to engage with their evolving capacities.

- **Safe and sensitive to risk** - in certain situations, expressing their views may put children and young people at risk. Adults must take every precaution to minimise the risk of violence, exploitation or any other negative consequence of participating. This includes the development of a clear child protection strategy, which recognises the particular risks faced by some groups and the extra barriers they encounter. It should also pay particular consideration to the risks in the digital environment if children are participating online. Children and young people must be aware of their right to be protected from harm and know where to go for help. Investing in working with families and communities is important for building an understanding of the value and implications of participation, and for minimising the risks.

- **Accountable** - follow-up and evaluation is essential. This includes informing children and young people on how their views have been interpreted and used and, where necessary, giving them the opportunity to challenge and influence the analysis of the findings. Feedback on how their participation has influenced any outcomes is essential. Participation should be monitored and evaluated, where possible, with the children and young people themselves.



Participation Framework focus

The Participation Framework focuses on children and young people's individual and collective participation in decision-making, whether that takes place in person, online or both.

- **Individual decisions are those that affect one child, such as decisions about the health, education or social care that they receive.**

- **Collective decisions are those that affect children as a group in everyday settings like schools, early learning and care services, youth clubs and projects, and creative, artistic and sporting activities, or in the development of national and organisational projects, programmes, services, research, legislation and policies.**

Framework Checklists and Feedback Forms

The Participation Framework includes a number of useful checklists and feedback forms for involving children and young people in participation in decision-making based on the Lundy Voice Model of Participation:

- **Planning Checklist** provides guidance to departments, agencies and organisations on listening to children and young people and involving them in decision-making in the development of policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation at national, local and organisational level (see Appendix A).

- **Evaluation Checklist** is a tool for self-evaluation and external evaluation to be used by departments, agencies and organisations following the completion of policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation (see Appendix B).

- **Everyday Spaces Checklist** provides guidance to teachers, early years' practitioners, social workers, youth workers, youth club volunteers, sports coaches and other adults on listening to children and young people and giving them a voice in decision-making in everyday spaces or settings, in person or online. This checklist should not be used for developing policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation (see Appendix C).

- **Child and Youth Feedback Forms** are forms for both groups and individuals to enable children and young people to evaluate face-to-face and online consultations, meetings, events, surveys and other activities or projects during which they are asked for their views. These forms should be completed at the end of meetings, events or activities (see Appendix D and E). **https://learning.hubnanog.ie/**

Section 2: Key Structures for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making

Introduction

This section details the key structures in Ireland for children and young people's participation in decision-making, including:

- **Participation Play and Recreation Unit DCDE**
- **Comhairle na nÓg**
- **Dáil na nÓg**
- **Comhairle na nÓg National Executive**
- **Seanad na nÓg**
- **The National Youth Assembly of Ireland**
- **Hub na nÓg**
- **The National Participation Office**

Participation Play and Recreation Unit (PPRU)

The Participation Play and Recreation Unit of the Department of Children Disability and Equality is a dedicated Unit tasked with supporting, monitoring and developing child and youth participation structures in Ireland. PPRU has responsibility for securing, and through Pobal, monitoring and reporting on use of the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund. PPRU also engages directly with Government Departments and State Agencies to develop awareness of and make connections with Comhairle na nÓg.

Comhairle na nÓg

Comhairle na nÓg (local youth councils) was established in 2002 as part of the first National Children's Strategy and Ireland's commitment to the UNCRC. Comhairle na nÓg is the permanent structure that provides young people with the opportunity to have a voice in decision-making. Comhairle na nÓg local youth councils operate in each of the 31 Local Authority areas across Ireland, funded by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) and managed by the National Participation Office.



Comhairle na nÓg is recognised locally and nationally as the go-to structure empowering young people of all backgrounds to speak up, be heard and influence decisions on matters that affect their lives. The mission of Comhairle na nÓg is to be the permanent rights-based structure that represents the voice of young people in Ireland and provides them with a platform to meaningfully engage with decision makers and influence matters that affect them.

Dáil na nÓg

Dáil na nÓg is Ireland's national youth parliament for 12–17-year-olds. Since 2001, Dáil na nÓg is held every two years, hosted by the Minister for Children, Disability, and Equality. Approximately 200 elected delegates from the 31 Comhairlí na nÓg attend Dáil na nÓg to discuss issues as voted by each Comhairle as being of importance to young people in their area. Dáil na nÓg delegates vote on the issues and make a recommendation for their National Executive to work on over their two-year term.

A video about Dáil na nÓg can be seen **here.**

Comhairle na nÓg National Executive

The **Comhairle na nÓg National Executive is a representative** group of 31 young people elected from each Comhairle across Ireland. The National Executive works with Ministers, Oireachtas Committees and policy makers to make sure the recommendations from Dáil na nÓg are taken on board. Their mission is to progress one issue of national importance for young people over their two-year term, meeting once a month. The National Executive's work programme is supported by the NPO and DCDE, including facilitating effective engagement with relevant influencers, stakeholders and policy makers and to ensure their views are reflected appropriately and meaningfully in government decision-making.

An example of a positive achievement of a Comhairle na nÓg National Executive is the National Executive 2019 – 2021 Youth Travel Card proposal. The proposal, which grants a 50% discount on all public transport for young people up to the age of 23, was first presented to Ministers Roderic O'Gorman and Eamon Ryan in July 2021 and officially launched in May 2022. For more information on the Youth Travel Card click **here** and watch a video about it **here.**

Information about Comhairle na nÓg National Executive roles and nomination process can be seen in Appendix F.

Seanad na nÓg

In 2022, the first **Seanad na nÓg** (Youth Senate) took place to mark 100 years since the first sitting of the Upper House of Ireland's Parliament. A total of 60 youth delegates from the island of Ireland participated in

the first youth senate. Delegates of Seanad na nÓg were drawn from Comhairle na nÓg youth councils, An Gaisce – The President's Award, and the Joint Award Initiative in Northern Ireland. The opening session of the youth senate was addressed by Minister Roderic O'Gorman and chaired by the Leas Cathaoirleach, Senator Joe O'Reilly.

Seanad na nÓg 2025 took place in November 2025. This second sitting of Seanad na nÓg included 60 youth delegates from Comhairle na nÓg and other youth organisations across Ireland. The event was run in Leinster House and was co-chaired by Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, Senator Mark Daly, and a young person from Kerry Comhairle na nÓg. Delegates discussed their priorities for the Government to consider in advance of Ireland's EU Presidency in 2026 and agreed on a set of recommendations which have been submitted to the Government for consideration. More information about Seanad na nÓg 2025 can be found **here.**

The National Youth Assembly of Ireland

The National Youth Assembly of Ireland was established in 2022 by the DCEDIY (now DCDE) to meet key commitments in the Programme for Government to include young people in policy making processes.

DCDE collaborates closely with other Government Departments to convene Youth Assemblies on established and emerging policy areas. The Assembly makes recommendations to inform Government policy on areas such as climate, rural development and other issues of importance to young people. DCDE and the National Participation Office support the relevant Government Department to ensure young Assembly delegates are effectively facilitated to express their views.

The main function of the National Youth Assembly of Ireland is to provide a systematic means of capturing the voices of young people in Ireland and feeding this directly into Government policy. The messages and recommendations made by a National Youth Assembly may also feed into citizen assemblies and other broader citizen consultations. The National Youth Assembly can be convened up to four times a year on the different topics, including annually as the National Youth Assembly on Climate and the Rural Youth Assembly. For instance, in 2022, the Youth Assembly on Artificial Intelligence met to hear what young people had to say on artificial intelligence and what they think the government should be doing. In 2024, the National Youth Assembly convened to input into the development of the National strategy on Women and Girls.

Hub na nÓg

Hub na nÓg was established as a key commitment in the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making (2015 – 2020) to support implementation of the strategy. Hub na nÓg is a national centre of excellence and co-ordination of children and young people's participation in decision-making. It supports government departments, state agencies and non-government organisations to give children and young people a voice in decision-making on issues that affect their lives, with a particular focus on those who are seldom-heard.

National Participation Office (NPO)

The National Participation Office (NPO) was established in 2021 by DCEDIY (now DCDE) to manage and coordinate the activities of Comhairle na nÓg (youth councils), Dáil na nÓg (youth parliament), the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, The National Youth Assembly of Ireland and other related youth participation initiatives and structures.

The NPO operates under the guidance and oversight of DCDE Participation, Play and Recreation Unit (PPRU) and has responsibility for overseeing and implementing the Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan, which aims to strengthen and develop Comhairle to be the leading youth participation structure in Ireland. DCDE directs, oversees and supports the work of the NPO and collaborates with the Office on cross-Government engagement with Comhairle na nÓg and other participation structures, stakeholder engagement and relationship building.

Section 3: Comhairle na nÓg Members

Introduction

This section outlines the key roles, responsibilities and activities related to young people who are Comhairle na nÓg members.

Comhairle na nÓg members

Comhairle na nÓg (local youth councils) are aimed at young people aged 12 – 17 years. Young people become members of their local Comhairle na nÓg through their schools, youth organisations and community groups and have a two-year term.

Comhairle na nÓg allows young people's voices to be heard in two ways:

- **Working on issues that are important to young people e.g., where they identify what is important to young people and work on that to achieve a targeted outcome or impact**
- **Acting as a consultative forum for adult decision-making in the locality e.g., on new and existing services policies and decisions that affect young people.**

What is the role of Comhairle na nÓg members?

Individual role/responsibilities:

- **Attend regular meetings.**
- **Respect other members in the group and listen to what they have to say.**
- **Research issues and plan with the support of Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator to identify key decision makers to engage to consider their views and influence change in this area.**
- **Share ideas, speak out, be heard, participate, take action, engage with local and national decision-making bodies and have fun!**

Group role/responsibilities:

- **Be inclusive and a representative voice for all young people aged 12 – 17 years in your Comhairle area, regardless of nationality, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social economic status and other interests.**
- **Pursue a process that will seek to be open and transparent, flexible and responsible in its work.**
- **Take part in youth advisory groups and interest groups.**
- **Lobby on behalf of young people.**

- Take a partnership approach – work without prejudice with other groups/agencies towards the overall aim of the group.
- Take part in skills development training such as diversity training, communication skills and presentation skills, etc.
- Present important and relevant issues to decision makers.
- Influence policy at a local, regional and national level;
- Host an Annual Youth Conference to gather the views of young people in relation to youth issues of interest;
- Promote Comhairle na nÓg in a positive way.

Box 1: What young people want Coordinator to know about working with Comhairle na nÓg members:

- The importance of inclusivity and equality.
- Understand the different needs of young people e.g., young people with disabilities, from rural/urban areas, and from seldom-heard groups.
- The importance of young people's participation in decision-making.
- How to explain to young people how their opinion matters.
- How to encourage the regular participation of young people.
- How to put young people first.
- The issues that affect young people.
- How to help and support young people.
- How to keep young people engaged.
- How to understand young people's perspectives.
- How to protect the privacy of young people.
- How to bond with young people.
- How to help young people to use the skills they have.
- How to show young people the opportunities they have.
- How to delegate Comhairle work to young people.

Where and when do Comhairle na nÓg meetings take place?

- **Meetings can take place either fortnightly or monthly.**
- **Some Comhairle na nÓg meet in local areas on an ongoing basis and come together on a county-wide basis a set number of times per year – this is a particularly prevalent practice in larger counties like Galway or Cork.**
- **Meetings are usually run for two to four hours long depending on the number of items on the agenda and the time of year.**
- **Transport is sometimes arranged for participants depending on budget and location of meeting.**
- **Comhairle na nÓg meetings can take place in the office of the local authority, or in the premises of the youth service organising the meetings. Some Comhailí use a combination of these venues throughout the year, depending on the nature of the meetings, availability of premises etc.**

What happens at a Comhairle na nÓg meeting?

A Comhairle na nÓg meeting will typically last for 1 - 2 hours with occasional full day meetings.. No two meetings will be the same and will ultimately depend on the work programme of the Comhairle na nÓg. Comhairle na nÓg will initially be working on the issues that were identified at the Annual Youth Conference. They may also be engaging in work with external organisations, if requested.

Box 2: What young people want us to know about running Comhairle na nÓg meetings:

- **How to run and structure a Comhairle meeting e.g., agenda, checklist.**
- **Ensure that Comhairle meetings are fun but also productive.**
- **Have Comhairle meetings at regular intervals to allow consistency.**
- **Use youth friendly language.**
- **Use inclusive language**
- **Let young people introduce themselves.**
- **Use different ice-breakers.**
- **Have fidget toys.**
- **Staying on topic.**
- **Understanding healthy debating.**
- **Have good time management of meetings e.g., for each topic.**
- **Have short breaks during meetings to help young people stay productive.**
- **Involve young people in running meetings.**
- **Know how to manage conflict.**

"In Meath Comhairle we always write out our structure of the day so we can tick it off as we go and it helps is get through so much instead of blabbing on. And time management for each topic." [Young person].

Collaborative meetings

It is important that each meeting is collaborative and that Comhairle na nÓg members have the opportunity to have responsibility for agenda planning and facilitation at the meetings.

To facilitate this, some of the following points may help:

- **train the Comhairle na nÓg members in committee skills to enable young people to lead their own meetings;**
- **facilitate and empower young people to identify the issues that matter to them, both for the Annual Youth Conference and at committee stage. Adults are therefore not involved in the selection of issues;**

- **work with the elected chairperson on the agenda;**
- **allow all young people to give their input to the agenda for each meeting; provide the agenda in advance so that young people can prepare if necessary;**
- **provide capacity-building training for any young person who needs additional assistance to engage with the meeting in a meaningful way;**
- **allow young people to give their input on the dates that suit them for meetings; allow young people to conduct their own presentations to decision makers (where possible and appropriate).**

Additional opportunities for young people from Comhairle na nÓg

Additional opportunities for young people from Comhairle na nÓg include being selected as a delegate to represent their Comhairle to:

Dáil na nÓg: The national youth parliament, which meets every second year and is hosted by the Minister for Children Disability and Equality in the Dail chamber in Leinster House.

Seanad na nÓg: Where up to 60 young people from Comhairle and youth organisations across Ireland come together every two years to debate and vote on key issues of importance to young people in the Seanad chamber in Leinster House.

Comhairle na nÓg National Executive:

- **Has one representative from each Comhairle.**
- **Works on recommendations from Dáil na nÓg and local issues.**
- **Has a term of two years.**
- **Meets once a month, usually in the offices of DCDE**

The National Youth Assembly of Ireland

- **Consultative forum for young people between the ages of 12 – 24 years.**
- **Members of the assembly meet on different policy topics that are of importance to and impact on young people.**

Government consultations

Members of Comhairle na nÓg/National Executive can be invited to participate in consultations on issues/matters affecting young people. Examples of such consultations include:

- **Survey to inform the National Volunteer Strategy (2025)**
- **Consultative forum for Local Authorities making applications to the DCDE Making spaces for teenagers funding scheme (2025)**
- **Consultation on DCDE Stakeholder Communications Plan (2025)**
- **National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy: In 2024, DCEDIY consulted with young people on the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy on the development of the successor Strategy.**
- **Contribution to a child friendly version of the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making: Action Plan 2024-2028 (2024)**
- **Growing Up in Ireland: In 2023, DCEDIY consulted young people age 16-18 in relation to what things are important to their lives that the longitudinal Growing Up in Ireland study might be able to capture.**
- **Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying: In 2022, members of Comhairle na nÓg were involved in a Youth Advisory Committee to support the Department of Education to consult with children and young people on the development of an Action Plan on Bullying.**
- **Consultation with young people on Skin Cancer Prevention Behaviours: In 2021, members of Comhairle na nÓg participated in Consultations with young people on skin cancer prevention behaviours conducted by the DCEDIY, the HSE and the National Cancer Control Programme.**

Comhairle na nÓg members on Steering Committees

Sitting on the Steering Committee is a direct opportunity that Comhairle na nÓg members have to interact with and influence key local stakeholders.

Before each Steering Committee meeting members should:

- **be fully briefed before each Steering Committee meeting;**
- **be supported to present confidentially on what is happening in the wider Comhairle na nÓg to the Steering Committee;**
- **contribute their views and opinions at the meeting;**
- **provide feedback to the wider Comhairle na nÓg after the meeting.**

Comhairle na nÓg members working with external committees

Members of Comhairle na nÓg may be invited to sit on an adult committee in their local area. Young people's role on these committees is to bring the voice of young people to discussions on issues that are relevant to young people and to represent their Comhairle.

- **Comhairle na nÓg members who are invited or selected to sit on largely adult committees should be provided with a briefing or training in advance on what to expect, the issues that will be discussed and what the format of the meeting will be.**
- **Where appropriate, the Comhairle na nÓg member should provide a report to their Comhairle na nÓg on the meeting they have attended, summarising the relevant points that were discussed.**
- **Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators should support young people in providing this report.**
- **It is also important to remember that young people's participation in external committees is not mandatory and that young people should always be given the choice to participate or not.**

For more information, see the National Participation Office document, Including young people on Committees - A brief guide for government departments and agencies

Section 4: Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator

Introduction

This section outlines:

- **The role of the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator**
- **The role and responsibilities of local authorities**
- **Recruitment of Comhairle na nÓg members**
- **Inclusion of young people who are seldom-heard in Comhairle**

About the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator

The Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator is a driving force in the delivery and coordination of the work of Comhairle na nÓg. In some areas, the Coordinator is employed within the local authority, while in others they are employed by the external agency that has been contracted to deliver Comhairle na nÓg. The role of the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator can vary from area to area.

Role of the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator:

The role of the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator is to:

- **work within the values and mission set out in the Comhairle na nÓg 5-year Development Plan;**
- **support, enable and empower young people in Comhairle na nÓg to engage fully in the implementation of the Comhairle na nÓg agenda and annual cycle;**
- **provide additional support to seldom-heard young people and the organisations that work on their behalf;**
- **facilitate the involvement of young people in local decision-making;**
- **organise and attend Comhairle na nÓg meetings in partnership with members of Comhairle na nÓg and the Steering Committee;**
- **have a commitment to youth participation and to work within the values, policies and procedures of the overseeing organisation e.g., organisation employing the coordinator, and in the context of current legislation and regulations;**

- **work in partnership with the National Participation Office, DCDE and various appropriate bodies and partner organisations;**
- **liaise with all schools, youth organisations, Youthreach centres and training centres as well as seldom-heard young people in the city/ county in order to ensure maximum participation in Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **attend and report at Steering Committee meetings;**
- **promote Dáil na nÓg and other national events such as the National Youth Assemblies;**
- **maintain a public relations profile for Comhairle na nÓg, to include press releases and social media;**
- **take responsibility for the administration of all finances and reporting required in relation to Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **adhere to best practice in child welfare and protection guidelines and legislation;**
- **be vigilant about health, safety and welfare risks in their work environment.**

Committees/networks Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators sit on include:

- **Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee**
- **Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs)**
- **Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs)**
- **Public Participation Network (PPN)**
- **Online Comhairle na nÓg Cluster Meetings which enable Coordinator's and Local Authority staff to connect with each other, discuss any updates or challenges they are experiencing and share good examples of influencing decision making.**

Box 3: Advice from young people to Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator – Practical skills and traits

What practical skills should a Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator have?

- **Time management**
- **Leadership**
- **Diplomacy**
- **Effective communication**
- **Problem solving**
- **Know how to use technology e.g., Zoom**

What personality traits should a Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator have?

- **Fair and equal**
- **Confident**
- **Honest**
- **Understanding**
- **Balanced**

Role and responsibilities of local authorities

In some instances, the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator is a direct employee of the local authority. In other instances, Comhairle na nÓg is outsourced to an external agency or consultant. Delivery by many Comhairlí na nÓg is organised in a 'partnership' between the local youth service and the local authority. In some instances, an external part-time worker has been employed by either the youth service or the local authority to drive the work of the Comhairle na nÓg. Whether the Comhairle Coordinator is employed internally or externally, the local authority has ultimate responsibility for Comhairle na nÓg.

If Comhairle na nÓg is organised by an external agency, it is vital that the local authorities maintain a firm sense of ownership of and connection to their local Comhairle na nÓg. Therefore, a formal structure to link Comhairle na nÓg and the local authority must be maintained. This might be achieved by appointing a key member of staff to formally liaise with and take responsibility for Comhairle na nÓg. Relevant staff members from local authorities must also be appointed to the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee.

The role and support of senior local authority personnel is critical in ensuring that all sections of the local authority are aware of the work of Comhairle na nÓg and, more importantly, that the views of Comhairle na nÓg are sought and considered in the development of any relevant policies or services. They also ensure that all necessary child safeguarding policies, governance and financial arrangements are in place.

Recruitment of Comhairle na nÓg members

When recruiting Comhairle na nÓg members, Coordinators should always try to achieve a membership profile of young people that balances:

- **Age**
- **Gender**
- **Geographical location**
- **Inclusion of young people who are seldom-heard**

Strategies To Achieve Equal Representation at the Annual Youth Conference

Age:

- Ask the organisation selecting young people to attend the Comhairle Youth Conference to select young people from all age groups.
- Request that schools send both Junior and Senior cycle students.
- Ask Youth Groups and others organisations to send members from across their entire age range, not just from the older cohort.
- Ensure that the information that is sent to schools and organisations is child friendly and clearly explains what the event is and what will happen on the day.
- Invite primary schools to send children aged 12 (6th class) to the event.
- Visit schools and organisations to inform staff, volunteers and young people of the age range and purpose of the day.

Gender:

- It should be the aim of the Comhairle to have even participation by all genders.

Geographical Location

- Ensure that there is equal representation of young people from urban, rural and/or disadvantaged areas.
- This is best achieved by working with schools, youth organisations and any other organisations that work with young people in the area to ensure a balanced profile of nominees.
- Larger counties can also operate their Comhairle on a regional or municipal level due to the large geographical spread of their Council areas. This allows for young people to attend on a more local level. For example, Kerry Comhairle na nÓg has previously operated four subgroups of Comhairle na nÓg in their four Municipal Districts which resulted in a significant increase in membership.

Inclusion of young people who are seldom-heard in Comhairle

'Seldom-heard' is a term used to describe children and young people who have fewer opportunities to participate and/or who encounter more obstacles when attempting to participate, including but not limited to seldom-heard children and young people who are:

- **bullied;**
- **children in care;**
- **experiencing domestic violence;**
- **from a minority ethnic background;**
- **homeless or at risk of losing their home/living in temporary/ unsuitable accommodation;**
- **in hospital (including those with mental health issues);**
- **LGBTI+;**
- **living in poverty;**
- **living in rural isolation;**
- **living with mental health issues;**
- **living with parental addiction;**
- **living with strained family relationships;**
- **not in school;**
- **persons with physical and intellectual disabilities;**
- **refugees, asylum-seekers and unaccompanied minors;**
- **Traveller and Roma;**
- **unemployed;**
- **young carers.**

Strategies to support the participation of seldom-heard young people

Strategies to help achieve the participation of seldom-heard young people include:

- **Ensure organisations representing seldom-heard are on the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee;**
- **Establish an expert advisory subcommittee to develop a strategy for social inclusion;**
- **Link with the School Completion Programme;**

- **Ask schools not to nominate young people from student councils only;**
- **Ensure that information and documentation on Comhairle na nÓg is presented in a child/youth friendly manner;**
- **Use Social Media platforms to engage all young people;**
- **Invite young people from Youth Projects (UBU) and Youth Diversion Programme;**
- **Create links with Youthreach and youth training workshops;**
- **Work with youth services that can provide links to seldom-heard young people;**
- **Engage with representatives from RAPID programmes;**
- **Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator visits seldom-heard groups;**
- **Link with school staff members nominated as Comhairle na nÓg Champions to support pupils who are members of Comhairle na nÓg in each relevant school and to build the profile of Comhairle na nÓg even when there is no active member in a school. (Sharing information, speaking at school events, notifying upcoming events, taking part in the recognition system).**

Consulting with Comhairle na nÓg members

When working with Comhairle na nÓg members, Coordinator will need to ask their opinions on issues/ matters important to them. This video shows the consultation methods that have been tried and tested by the National Participation Office and Hub na nÓg in practice.

Appendix K provides more details related to consultation methodologies.

Engaging local stakeholders when working on a chosen issue

- **When the Comhairle na nÓg members are working on their chosen issue it is important that they identify the key stakeholders who can have influence in the area to help them achieve their desired outcome or impact.**
- **With the coordinators support the group should draw up a list of all the people or groups in the area that are connected to the issue being worked on.**
- **These key stakeholders may include the Steering Committee**

members, who can also help to make introductions to additional stakeholders.

- These stakeholders should be asked for their advice and direction on how best to achieve the desired outcome.
- Meeting key stakeholders at an early stage engages them in the process from the outset and ensures they have a personal investment in achieving a positive outcome for Comhairle na nÓg. These meetings can be informal or formal, as appropriate.
- Comhairle members may draw up a presentation on the issue to present to the stakeholders as a means of getting their input and advice on the issue.

Box 4: Advice from young people to Coordinators about working with other stakeholders

- Understand the possibilities and limitations of the work of Comhairle na nÓg.
- Support Comhairle members in relation to local issues and projects in their area.
- Comhairle Coordinator should be transparent and honest e.g., in terms of reporting interactions with organisations, funders etc.
- Run Comhairle events to help progress issues.
- Engage with local authorities/decision makers on a regular basis.
- Comhairle going to County Council to discuss issues with County Councillors.
- Engage with the Mayor and local authority CEO with an annual meeting.
- Keep in contact with local politicians.
- Engaging with other organisations and groups to progress research on issues.

Additional opportunities for Comhairle na nÓg members

Members of Comhairle na nÓg can be invited to participate in other events/groups during their term with Comhairle na nÓg. Part of the role as Coordinator is to inform members of these opportunities and to support them in preparing for and attending these events. Such additional opportunities include:

- **Dáil na nÓg**
- **Seanad na nÓg**
- **Comhairle na nÓg National Executive**
- **The National Youth Assembly of Ireland**
- **Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase**
- **(More details on these opportunities/ structures can be found in Section 2)**

Consultations

Members of Comhairle na nÓg/National Executive can be invited to participate in consultations on issues/matters affecting young people by government departments or organisations. Examples of such consultations are:

- **Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying**
- **Growing Up in Ireland**
- **Consultation with young people on Skin Cancer Prevention Behaviours**
- **Night Time Economy Consultation**
- **LGBTIQ+ National Strategy Consultation**
- **National Volunteering Strategy**
- **DCDE Communications Strategy**

Tips on running an effective Comhairle na nÓg

The following tips will help Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators to run an effective Comhairle Comhairle na nÓg:

- **Create good relationships and lines of communications with schools, youth organisation, training centres and other organisations working with children and young people in the area. This should support a representative attendance at the Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conference.**
- **In so far as possible, ensure that the membership profile is balanced including engagement of seldom-heard young people.**

- **Connect your Comhairle na nÓg with local decision-making structures and decision makers, and include these connections in the annual reporting process.**
- **Ensure young people have an understanding of the role of Comhairle na nÓg.**
- **Complete Induction training and Committee skills training with Comhairle na nÓg members.**
- **Use methodologies for youth participation - blue sky thinking, open space, world café, consensus building (see appendix K).**
- **Facilitate members to invite experts to speak on their issue in order for them to gain knowledge on the issue.**
- **Ensure decision makers are at Comhairle na nÓg meetings to make sure that work on the issue is heard and can have influence.**
- **Use Comhairle na nÓg Making Recommendations Templates (see appendix L).**
- **Advocate on behalf of Comhairle na nÓg at council level and with other decision makers in the area.**
- **Create awareness of Comhairle na nÓg and their chosen issue of work through print and social media.**
- **Ensure Comhairle na nÓg involvement in decision making on matters affecting young people in the area.**
- **Attend relevant meetings.**
- **Ensure funding requirements and good governance are being adhered to.**
- **Ensure adherence to your organisations child protection and data protection policies.**
- **Record and report on all the activity of your Comhairle na nÓg to present a full picture of activities, influence and impact of the young people work.**

Request decision makers to complete the Comhairle na nÓg Decision Maker Feedback sheet in Appendix M when they have consulted Comhairle na nÓg on matters affecting young people. The Link is **here.**

Box 5: Advice from young people to Coordinators about communicating with Comhairle na nÓg members

- **Frequent communication between Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator and members to let them know what is going on.**
- **Being aware that young people communicate differently and adapting to this.**
- **Letting young people know they can communicate their opinions directly to the Coordinator if they feel uncomfortable or shy speaking in a group setting.**
- **Having a shared calendar for Comhairle na nÓg where events can be inputted.**

"My Coordinator goes through upcoming dates and we revise our Comhairle na nÓg calendar every meeting. We are planning to make a shared calendar that everyone can input events in."

Tips for Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators on using social media

- **Use the Comhairle na nÓg Brand Toolkit which includes social media profile graphics, headers and profile images, local and national Comhairle na nÓg logos, brand guidelines etc.**
- **Create engaging content e.g., use authentic visuals, tell a story, be interactive (use polls/quizzes), make it eye catching, tag venues/ people and use hashtags.**
- **Make sure social media content is accessible e.g., use alt text, readable fonts, video subtitles, example tools.**
- **Involve young people e.g., encourage young people to contribute to event photography, social media posts ideas and captions.**
- **Share news updates from your Comhairle na nÓg with the Comhairle na nÓg national website/social media accounts**
- **Use useful tools e.g., Canva, LinkedIn and accessibility checkers to ensure content is inclusive.**
- **Reach out to the Comhairle na nÓg Communications Officer for supports and advice e.g., on branding, templates, content ideas etc.**
- **To access Comhairle na nÓg brand toolkits and guidelines or for advice, contact participation@wtp.ie**

Involving Comhairle na nÓg members on external committees

What Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators need to consider when young people are invited to join a committee:

- **Is there an understanding on why the voice of children and young people is needed on the Committee by the host/inviting organisation?**
- **How will including the voice of young people on the committee make a difference?**
- **What issues or themes are being discussed that are of relevance to young people?**
- **What demographic of young people are required to be on the committee (age, gender, location, and ethnicity)?**
- **Will membership of the Committee be made accessible to young people? (i.e.: venue, time meeting is held).**
- **Will a young person's membership be kept meaningful and relevant to matters affecting their lives and are there mitigation factors to ensure a young person does not feel overwhelmed at committee meetings? (Please see example of risk factors in next section).**
- **Is the issue and setting age appropriate for a young person? (For example, themes discussed, age-appropriate language, venue the meeting is held in, appropriate sharing of personal details/contact information).**
- **How will child safeguarding be managed when a child or young person joins the committee.**

Risk Assessment

Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators should discuss/advise the organising committee of the following (especially if they are not experienced in working with children and young people):

- **The organising committee should carry out a risk assessment to pre-empt potential risks with regards to child safeguarding and put mitigating factors in place.**
- **It should be an essential requirement that at least one member (two where possible) of the committee has completed Children First E-Learning Programme.**

Risk assessment ahead of Committee meeting

- Potential absence of any attendee with sufficient safeguarding training – ensure that a trained person is present.
- Appropriate consent/assent procedures not in place prior to first meeting
- Adult members of committee directly engaged with young members outside confines of meeting
- Potential for youth members feeling overwhelmed or unable to fully participate if not sufficiently prepared for each meeting.

Potential Risk Mitigation Measures

- More than one adult member of the committee complete Children First E-Learning Programme (e.g., chair and secretary).
- On foot of this training, trained committee members will address potential safeguarding issues in the unlikely event of absence of sufficiently trained designated adult members.
- Appropriate consent/assent forms for each young member must be signed ahead of first meeting
- Clause on operating protocol should include that "no member of the committee is to attempt to directly engage with young members outside the confines of the meeting. If a committee member has a request/query /issue relevant to a young person on the Committee they should raise the matter with the lead designated adult members, who will access such requests and relay them to the relevant young person if deemed appropriate.
- Email addresses for young members will be held by the lead organiser of the committee who holds consent and assent forms. All youth members will be bcc'd on relevant communications to ensure that email addresses of youth members are not shared with other members.
- If possible, the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator should facilitate a preparatory meeting for the youth cohort in advance of each committee meeting as required. This will give the young members an overview of the agenda for the meeting and current status of progress.

Once a child or young person has accepted an invitation to join a committee:

- Young people should be provided with the Terms of Reference of the group. This should be written in plain English language.
- This should also include the scope of the work and how feedback will be given to the young person on the influence they have on decision making processes.
- For Committee members under 18 years, parental or guardian consent is required as well as the young person's assent.
- If the young person is over 18, they can provide their own consent.
- The Designated Liaison person on the Committee must be identified to the young person/people on the committee and the role this person has should be explained
- Financial assistance to young people to cover costs of travel to attend meetings must be available
- Young people should be informed that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw at any time.

Preparing young people for adult committees

- Adult committees can be challenging for young people because of their formal structure and the use of language.
- Coordinators should provide Comhairle na nÓg members who are invited or selected to sit on largely adult committees with a briefing or training in advance on what to expect, issues that will be discussed and methodologies that will be used.
- Coordinators should hold a debriefing session with the Comhairle na nÓg member(s) after adult committee members session to ensure that it was a positive experience for them.
- Coordinators should encourage and support Comhairle na nÓg member(s) on adult committees to provide feedback to Comhairle na nÓg members where appropriate.
- It is also important to remember that participation is not mandatory and young people should always be given the choice to participate or not.
- For more information, see the National Participation Office document, Including young people on Committees - A brief guide for government departments and agencies

Section 5: The Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee and other support structures

Introduction

This section provides information on the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee and other support structures.

What is the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee?

Each Comhairle na nÓg must have a Steering Committee in place that is made up of key stakeholders and decision makers. The Steering Committee is designed to advise and assist the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator in organising the Comhairle na nÓg throughout the year.

What is the role of the Steering Committee?

The role of the Steering Committee is to ensure that:

- **Comhairle na nÓg is formally connected to local decision makers and key stakeholders in the area, particularly in relation to issue(s) being worked on in any given year;**
- **Comhairle na nÓg has an opportunity to influence decision-making and service development that will affect young people in the city/county;**
- **organisations representing seldom-heard young people are engaged in the process and can contribute to all aspects of the Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **Comhairle na nÓg is promoted and championed in every key local agency in the area.**

How to establish a Steering Committee

If a Steering Committee is not already in place, it should be established at the earliest opportunity. There are some simple steps to facilitate this process, including:

- **send a formal letter/email of invitation to the key agencies in the area asking them to nominate a representative to sit on the committee. This invitation should include information on the purpose and function of CNN as well as a description of the role of the Steering Committee and the time commitment/expectation on the suggested nominee. It may be necessary to follow up on this invitation with a second email or phone call for the agency.**
- **Once the membership of the committee is finalised organise the first meeting of the Steering Committee at a convenient time and location;**

- **the first meeting that might include a presentation from Comhairle na nÓg members and/or the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator on:**
    - **What is Comhairle na nÓg? How is it structured?**
    - **What are the core functions?**
    - **What issues are currently being worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg members?**
    - **Information on the role and purpose of the Steering Committee.**
    - **A discussion on the draft Terms of Reference (see Appendix G).**
    - **Organise the follow-up meeting at a time convenient to Steering Committee members.**

How often should the steering committee meet?

The majority of Steering Committees meet once a quarter. Others meet more regularly at busier times of the year.

Membership of the Steering Committee

Membership of the Steering Committee is specific to each Comhairle. The membership in any one year may differ depending on what agencies are most relevant for the issue(s) that is being pursued by the Comhairle na nÓg. For example, if the issue being pursued is 'safety in the local area', it would be very helpful to have representation from An Garda Síochána and any local resident committees, whereas if the issue being pursued is 'mental health', it would be essential to have representation from the Health Service Executive (HSE) and any organisations involved locally in mental health, such as Jigsaw.

Who sits on the Steering Committee?

Core members of the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee should include:

- **members of the Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **local authority contact who has responsibility for Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator;**
- **National Participation Office Participation Officer;**
- **Representative from youth services in the area.**

Other members of the Steering Committee might be drawn from key local agencies, such as:

- **An Garda Síochána, Garda SAFE Projects, Youth Diversion Projects,**
- **Joint Policing Committee;**
- **Children and Young People Services Committees (CYPSC);**
- **Community support groups;**
- **Elected representatives;**
- **Family Resource Centres (FRCs);**
- **Garda Youth Liaison Officers;**
- **Health Service Executive (HSE);**
- **Local Partnership Committees, including Sports Partnership Committees;**
- **Organisations representing children and young people who are seldom-heard;**
- **schools and Youthreach;**
- **Student Council representatives;**
- **Tusla – Child and Family Agency;**
- **Youth Officer from the Education Training Board**

Benefits for Steering Committee members

To help attract members, it may be useful to outline some of the benefits of membership of the Steering Committee, which include:

- **meeting requirements of the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund;**
- **fulfilling their responsibility to include young people in decision-making processes;**
- **engaging with young people in a meaningful way, which is likely to benefit their own agency or organisation;**
- **networking with key decision makers in the local area.**

Training for Steering Committee members

Most Steering Committee members would welcome an initial induction on Comhairle na nÓg. This could form the basis of the introductory presentation at the first meeting and include information on:

- **Principles of Youth Participation and the Participation Framework (overview)**
- **What is Comhairle na nÓg?**
- **How is it structured?**
- **What are the core functions?**
- **What issues are currently being worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg members?**

New Coordinator commencing work with existing Steering Committee

New Comhairle Coordinators should make contact with the members of the Steering Committee as soon as possible. This could be done via an email or phone call. Following this initial introduction, it would be advisable to call a Steering Committee meeting as soon as the Coordinator is settled in position and has their work plan in place so that this can be presented to the Steering Committee.

Training and Support for Young People who are members of the Steering Committee

It is very important that the Comhairle na nÓg members who sit on the Steering Committee are provided with information and training before they take up their roles. Sitting on the Steering Committee is one of the biggest opportunities that Comhairle na nÓg members will have to interact with and influence key local stakeholders.

Therefore, the selected Comhairle na nÓg members need to:

- **be fully briefed before each Steering Committee meeting;**
- **be supported to present on what is happening in Comhairle na nÓg to the Steering Committee;**
- **be supported to negotiate and exert influence on members of the Steering Committee;**
- **be aware of the need to report back to the wider Comhairle na nÓg after the Steering Committee meeting.**

In addition, it is vital that the meetings are organised in such a way

that young people can attend meetings and, most importantly, that they can engage in the meeting. To this end, the meetings should be conducted using youth-friendly language and material, and happen at a time that does not clash with the young person's school day or other responsibilities.

Terms of reference for Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committees can be found in Appendix G.

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs)

Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) follow local authority (city and county council) boundaries and plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people aged between 0 – 24 years in their geographic area. They are the strategic interagency structure that brings together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services for children, young people and families in the county/local authority area. Their role is to enhance interagency co-operation and to realise the five National Outcomes for children and young people, as set out in Young Ireland National Policy Framework for Children and Young People, 2023 - 2028.
Consultation with children and young people is an integral part of the development of Children and Young People's Services Committees and the three-year Children and Young People's Plans (CYPP) for the county/area that the committees develop. This is manifested through co-operative work with Comhairle na nÓg and additional activities undertaken by a CYPSC and its members.

Responsibilities of CYPSC in relation to Comhairle na nÓg

- **All Children and Young People's Services Committees will involve Comhairle na nÓg in the development of their three-year Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).**
- **CYPSC will report on engagement with the local Comhairle na nÓg in the CYPSC Annual Programme of Work.**
- **A member of the CYPSC should attend the Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conference each year and where appropriate use the event to inform its work.**
- **An appropriate representative from the CYPSC will develop a relationship with the Comhairle na nÓg or become a member of the Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee.**

- **The Children and Young People's Services Committee will seek support or information from the Comhairle na nÓg on relevant issues.**
- **The Children and Young People's Services Committee will provide feedback to the Comhairle na nÓg on relevant issues.**
- **The Children and Young People's Services Committee will invite a member of Comhairle na nÓg to sit on the committee, with support provided by the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator.**

Responsibilities of Comhairle na nÓg in relation to CYPSCs

- **Comhairle na nÓg will feed into the three-year CYPSC Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).**
- **Comhairle na nÓg will engage with the CYPSC at appropriate points, when an issue has been identified and young people have sufficient capacity to address it directly.**
- **Comhairle na nÓg members/adult organisers/DCDE Participation Officers will attend CYPSC meetings, as agreed with the CYPSC Chairperson.**
- **Comhairle na nÓg members or adult organisers will seek support and information on relevant projects from the CYPSC.**
- **Comhairle na nÓg will provide feedback to the CYPSC on relevant issues.**
- **Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator will provide support for the young person who is a member of the CYPSC.**

Local Authority responsibilities in relation to Comhairle na nÓg and CYPSCs:

- **Local authorities will report on the level of engagement between the Comhairle na nÓg and the local CYPSC in the Annual Report of the DCDE Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund.**

Participation Officers

The National Participation Office has a number of Participation Officers who support Comhairle na nÓg coordinators, facilitate national youth consultations, coordinate National Executive meetings, and oversee training and development initiatives.

The role of the Participation Officers is to:

- **provide support for the effective development of all 31 Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **support the operation and development of national events and the National Executive and to support other children and young people's participation initiatives.**

To support the development of an effective Comhairle na nÓg, the Participation Officers provide advice, support, training and resources.

Training

- **Training for adult Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators;**
- **Preparation for Comhairle na nÓg National Showcase, Seanad na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg event;**
- **Training of Comhairle na nÓg members when required.**

Support of Comhairle na nÓg structures

- **Guidance and insight on the development of a Steering Committee;**
- **Provision of information on Annual Conferences and recruiting seldom-heard young people;**
- **Advice and assistance on the preparation for the National Showcase event;**
- **Advice on development of working structures and examples from other Comhairlí na nÓg.**

Practical support

- **Provide an immediate link between the Comhairle na nÓg and the DCDE;**
- **Attendance at Comhairle na nÓg meetings from time to time, where appropriate;**
- **Assistance with facilitation;**
- **Telephone support;**
- **Advice on plans and ideas;**
- **Advice on what works and what does not work;**
- **Information on the availability of resources;**
- **Promotion of Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **Providing a national view and sharing ideas from other Comhairlí na nÓg;**
- **Provision of resources;**
- **Guidance on completion of DCDE funding application forms;**
- **Funding and budgeting;**
- **Providing templates.**

A full list of National Participation Office staff and their roles can be found here.

Senior Inclusivity Participation Officers

The National Participation Office recently established two Senior Inclusivity Participation Officer roles. Their main role is to lead out and assist the National Participation Office in recruitment, retention and good practice in engaging underrepresented cohorts of children and young people (in particular young Travellers) in their work.

Senior Inclusivity Participation Officers will support Comhairle na nÓg in relation to:

- **Developing a Comhairle na nÓg Inclusivity Plan.**
- **Contributing to the relevant actions on the Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan and National Participation of Children and Young People in Decision Making Action Plan.**
- **Working and liaising with relevant Comhairle na nÓg personnel in the 31 Local Authorities**
- **Maintaining and developing relationships and supporting staff, partners and other relevant stakeholders within the Comhairlí providing them with appropriate training, advice and consultancy on inclusivity in child and youth participation in particular stakeholders engaging with young travellers.**
- **Reviewing best practice in collaboration with Hub na nÓg and relevant agencies on collating data on seldom-heard voices or young people in Comhairle na nÓg and the National Youth Assembly of Ireland.**

Box 6: Example of Best Practice in Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committees

"As a long-term Steering Committee member, I have seen huge progression in terms of young person's active participation. The main being, a key good practice in Limerick Comhairle na nÓg, has been the active inclusion of young people at Steering Committee meetings. Their presence has genuinely changed the focus of the committee for the better. Having young voices consistently represented ensures that decisions remain grounded in the lived experiences and priorities of young people. It has helped shift the tone of discussions to be more youth-centred and responsive, making the work of the Comhairle more meaningful and impactful. This practice highlights the importance of not only involving young people, but also creating space for their input to shape direction and decision-making. It's a simple but powerful example of youth participation done right."

[Limerick Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee Member]

Section 6: Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conference

Introduction

This section outlines key information on the Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conference.

What is a Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conference?

- A Comhairle na nÓg Youth Conference is an annual meeting held in each of the 31 local authority areas that brings together a diverse group of invited and interested young people, aged 12–17.
- The Youth Conference is usually held between September and December typically during school time.
- At the conference the issues/matters to be pursued by the Comhairle na nÓg members are identified, discussed and sometimes prioritised by all the young people in attendance.
- At the conference the Comhairle na nÓg members can be elected.
- Each Comhairle na nÓg Youth Council will set the dates for their conference locally.
- The issues identified at the local Youth Conference will feed into the reporting structure for Young Ireland, the National Framework for Children and Young People, through national level participation structures.

Who attends the Annual Youth Conference?

- The Annual Youth Conference is attended by a wide group of young people, from schools, youth organisations and organisations that work with and/or represent young people, including seldom-heard young people.
- 'Seldom-heard' is a term used to describe children and young people who have fewer opportunities and more obstacles in their lives. A full list of young people who are considered to be seldom-heard can be found in Appendix J.

What happens at the Annual Youth Conference?

- The day consists of a series of facilitated workshops where young people get an opportunity to discuss issues of interest to them.
- After the discussion the young people prioritise the issues most important to them.
- Then they make suggestions or recommendations on how to achieve a desired impact or outcome in relation to each issue.
- The issues can be of local or national importance to the young people.
- A guest speaker of interest to the young people may also attend the Annual Youth Conference.

Who decides on the issues discussed at the Annual Youth Conference?

- **The process to identify issues for discussion at the Annual Youth Conference usually takes place with the current Comhairle committee prior to the Youth Conference.**
- **The issues are then discussed at the Annual Youth Conference with a view to determining key recommendations on what outcome, impact or change should be sought.**

Comhairle na nÓg Guidance for Schools

The new Comhairle na nÓg Guidance for Schools document provides important information on:

- **The role of the School Officer**
- **Providing support for students to engage with Comhairle na nÓg**
- **Comhairle na nÓg School Officer responsibilities**
- **Support from the National Participation Office**
- **What is the Comhairle na nÓg Youth Conference**
- **Who attends the Youth Conference**
- **What happens at the Youth Conference**
- **Tips for Schools after the Youth Conference**

What to be aware of in terms of the selection of young people for the Annual Youth Conference

- **Send invitations to schools, youth organisations and organisations representing seldom-heard young people.**
- **Ensure nominations are representative of age, gender, geographical spread within local authority area, balance with schools and youth organisations and places available for seldom-heard young people to be co-opted during the term.**
- **Support seldom-heard young people to attend, where necessary.**
- **Seek Consent Forms for all young people nominated.**

A sample form for schools and organisations to nominate delegates or young people to attend the Annual Youth Conference is available in Appendix H.

What to be aware of when inviting young people to an Annual Youth Conference?

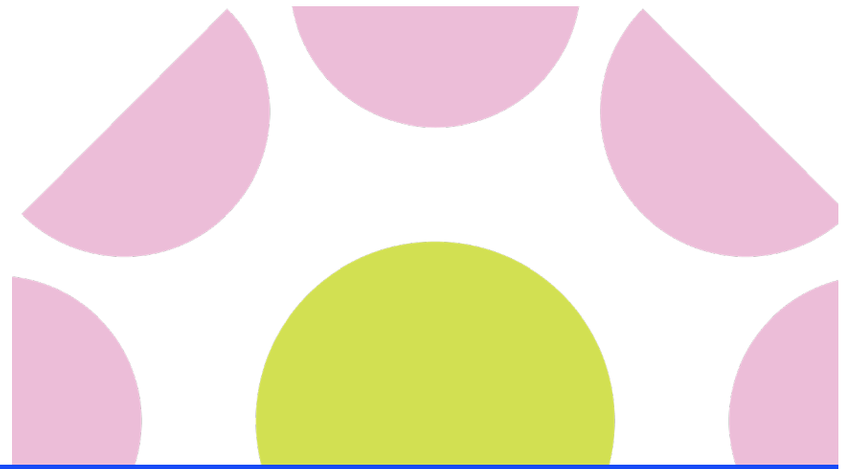
- **When inviting and selecting young people to attend the Annual Youth Conference schools are asked to not exclusively nominate young people from the student council or from transition year.**
- **Schools are encouraged to nominate young people from the age range 12-17.**
- **The inclusion of young people from the seldom-heard groups is encouraged.**

After the Annual Youth Conference in schools – Tips for Schools

Young people who attend from schools should be encouraged to provide feedback on the Youth Conference to the whole school community. This could be done in the following ways:

- **At assembly announcements**
- **Via the school notice board**
- **Article in the school newsletter**
- **Article in the school magazine.**
- **On school social media platforms always tagging your local Comhairle and the national Comhairle pages.**

Attendees at the Annual Youth Conference should be encouraged to feed back to their schools on the issues discussed and the plans for working on those issues. If a young person from a school is (s)elected on to Comhairle na nÓg then this should be celebrated in the school community and that young person should be encouraged to feed back on the work they are doing via the methods above also.



Selection process for young people to be part of Comhairle na nÓg

The following selection process for young people to be part of the Comhairle na nÓg local youth council is recommended:

1. **(S)electing by electoral area ensures a good geographical spread of delegates. The electoral areas and number of seats per electoral area can be based on the corresponding number in the local authority. Delegates vote for candidates from the electoral area in which they go to school/training centre. Provision for age, gender and seldom-heard young people can be made by allocating a minimum number of seats to these groups.**

2. **Places held by each Coordinator to enable to co-opt seldom-heard young people during the Comhairle na nÓg term.**

3. **Expression of interest outside of the Annual Youth Conference in the event of any drop-off in members attending.**

4. **Young people who are interested can contact the local Coordinator in writing through the website and/or can be approached and co-opted by the Coordinator onto Comhairle na nÓg if places become available**.

Opportunities for young people after the Annual Youth Conference

- **Comhairle na nÓg members are (s)elected at the Comhairle na nÓg Youth Conference, and meet on an ongoing basis to pursue and work on the issues, recommendations, outcomes and impacts as determined by the young people at the Youth Conference.**

- **Participation in Comhairle na nÓg is totally voluntary and young people can decide if they want to volunteer for election to this role or not at the Youth Conference.**

- **Comhairle na nÓg meetings usually take place outside of school hours.**

- **Comhairle na nÓg members may be invited to attend meetings, conferences and other events that may take place during the school day. The school will be informed in writing of such events in advance.**

A checklist for planning a Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conference can be seen in Appendix I.

Box 7: Example of Shining Light on Youth Mental Health, Kerry Comhairle na nÓg's Impact

At the 2021 Annual Youth Conference in Co. Kerry, young people identified 'Youth Mental Health' as the most critical issue facing their peers. This marked the second consecutive year this issue was chosen, underscoring its significance. In response, Kerry Comhairle na nÓg members developed bookmarks and pocket information leaflets containing valuable resources on available services and advice on managing panic attacks. These materials were launched by Minister of State Frank Feighan and distributed to every secondary school in the county.

The main recommendation from the 2021 Youth Conference was to 'Educate the Oldies' on the challenges young people face. To address this, Comhairle members decided to create a short film illustrating how adults can positively or negatively influence young people's mental health. Over several months, they collaborated with filmmaker Shane O'Ceallaigh to produce 'The Bag.' The film, shot at various locations in Tralee, featured Comhairle members in all roles. This project was funded by Healthy Ireland through the Kerry Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC).

Keira, who plays the main character, shared her experience:

"We created this to educate people on the stress that young people carry around as it can be a lot and not many people acknowledge that. It took a long time and a lot of hard work to film, but we did it. To be honest, I never really saw myself at the age of 15 being an actor, but this was a great opportunity and one that I will be forever grateful for."

'The Bag' has been presented at various Comhairle events, including two Youth Conferences, Student Support Teams Training, and the Kerry Mental Health and Wellbeing Fest. This initiative highlights the importance of youth mental health and the positive impact young people can have on raising awareness and educating others about their challenges.

https://comhairlenanog.ie/shining-light-on-youth-mental-health-kerry-comhairle-na-nogs-impact/

Section 7: Comhairle na nÓg Work Programme

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the Comhairle na nÓg work programme.

What is the Comhairle na nÓg work programme?

The work programme of Comhairle na nÓg centres on two core mechanisms that enable Comhairle na nÓg members to have a voice on the services, policies and issues that affect them in the local area in which they live, namely:

Working on issues of importance to young people:

- **Identifying what is important to young people and working on that to achieve a targeted outcome or impact is the first way that young people can have a voice through Comhairle na nÓg.**
- **It is central to the core programme of Comhairle na nÓg that young people are facilitated to select and work on their own issue(s) or things of importance to pursue and progress.**
- **The process starts with the selection of issues for discussion at the Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conference, which is held in September/October.**
- **Examples of the issues selected by young people in Comhairlí to date include mental health awareness and services for young people, facilities for young people, how young people are treated by the adult world and homophobic bullying.**
- **The issues raised are discussed, and where necessary, prioritised at the Annual Youth Conference, before a smaller committee of young people is (s)elected to pursue these issues and particular outcomes throughout the year.**
- **Comhairle na nÓg may spend some further time prioritising the issues before deciding on the precise change or outcome that they aspire to on each issue, or on one issue, and then develop a work or action plan to help them achieve that target.**
- **Committee members usually have a lot of preparation work to do on the issue before bringing it to a stage where they can present their findings or proposed changes and desired outcome to relevant decision makers, who may be able to help them achieve their targeted outcome.**
- **This work includes getting the views of other young people, doing background research, meeting with local decision makers, developing surveys, organising meetings, making videos, producing leaflets or posters, developing online materials and other activities.**

- The work culminates in the Comhairle na nÓg members seeking to make an impact or change to improve the lives of young people.

- Comhairle na nÓg members often chart and present its progress to the wider cohort of young people who were at the Annual Youth Conference through the Comhairle's website, using social media, or in the local media.

- Comhairle na nÓg members also have a chance to present their progress on the issues at the following year's Annual Youth Conference. This process helps the conference attendees and Comhairle na nÓg members to decide whether they wish to pursue that particular issue for their second term of office or whether they will choose a new issue or issues.

- In some instances, Comhairlí choose to divide their time between completing an issue from the previous year and also commencing work on a new issue.

Acting as a consultative forum for adult decision makers in the locality:

- It is also central to the core programme of Comhairle na nÓg that they can act as a consultative forum for adult decision makers in the locality.

- This can include participation in consultations where Comhairle na nÓg members are asked for their opinion, input and feedback on new and existing services, policies and decisions that affect young people.

- The input may be on the process itself; for example, helping to design or giving feedback on a youth-friendly questionnaire to be distributed in schools on 'facilities in the area'.

- The input can also be on the actual content of the policy or the service itself for example; a local Sports Partnership may consult with the Comhairle na nÓg to get members' opinions on the location or type of new sports facility to be established in the area.

- Comhairlí na nÓg are also often asked for (or volunteer) formal submissions on local policies or to take part in public consultation processes.

- Acting as a consultative forum also means that representatives from Comhairlí na nÓg often sit on adult committees where they input the views of young people on such committees and also report information and decisions back to the wider Comhairle na nÓg group.

- In addition, Comhairle na nÓg may join the Public Participation Network (PPN) in each local authority area or be involved in the development of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

- Comhairlí na nÓg members are also often asked to participate in a diversity of other local initiatives e.g., local festival committees or anti-litter drives.

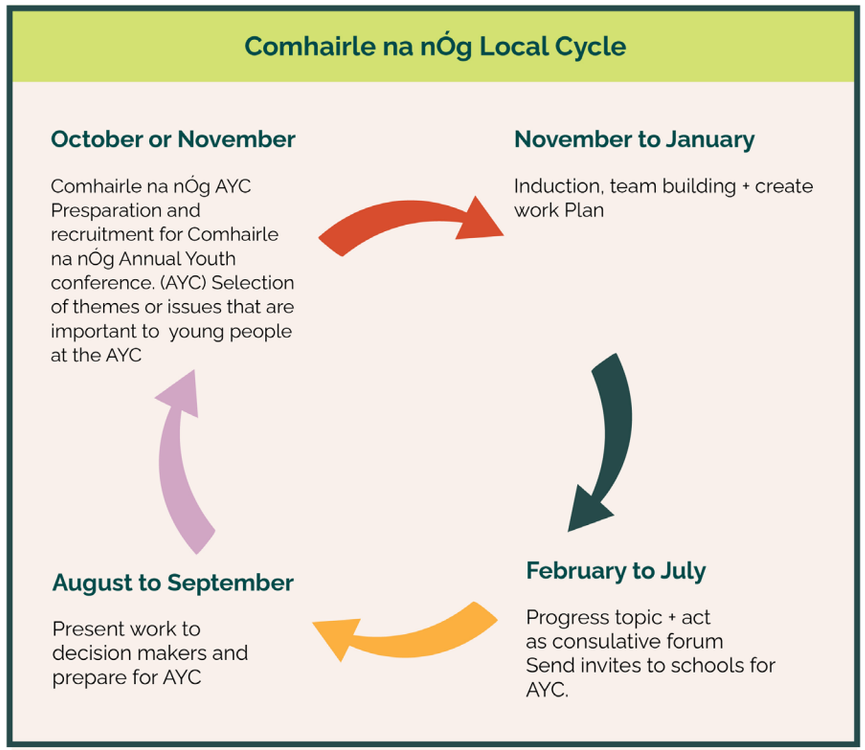
- They also link in with elected officials to seek their support for a particular issue or the general work of the Comhairle.

The Comhairle na nÓg lifecycle

The Comhairle na nÓg cycle has both a local and national cycle.

Local Cycle

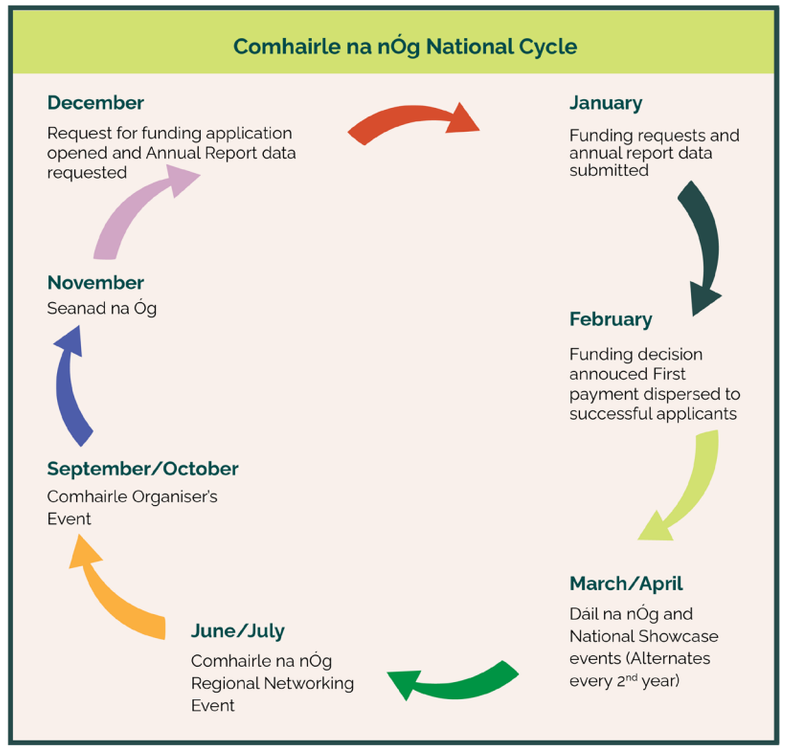
The local cycle outlines all of the key stages necessary to select and make the necessary progress on an issue to achieve a desired outcome, impact or change.



Comhairle na nÓg National Cycle

National Cycle

The national cycle outlines the stages of the funding process as well as national events that take place for both Comhairle na nÓg members and adults.



References

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2024) **Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making Action Plan 2024 – 2028**

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2023) Young Ireland - **National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028**

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2023) **Including Young People on Committees**

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2021) **National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making**

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (2021) **Comhairle na Óg 5-Year Development Plan**

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2016) **Comhairle-na-nOg-Toolkit-2nd-edition**

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2015) Na**tional Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015 – 2020**

Department of Education (2022) **Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying, Ireland's Whole Education Approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools**

European Commission (2016) **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**

Government of Ireland (2024) **National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II 2024 – 2028**

United Nations (1989) **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. UN: Geneva.

United Nations (2006) **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.** UN: Geneva.

Appendix A: Planning Checklist

Planning Checklist

This checklist guides you on how to listen to children and young people and involve them in decision-making when you are developing policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation at national, local and organisational level.

You should inform children and young people that they have the right to a voice in decision-making and that you will take their views seriously.

SPACE

- How will you ensure that children and young people are involved as early as possible?
- How will their involvement be sustained?
- How will those who have been, or may be, directly affected by the topic be involved?
- What steps will be taken to ensure the process is inclusive and accessible?
- How will they be supported to feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves?
- What support will be provided to those who become anxious, upset or uncomfortable?

VOICE

- Have you made a clear list of the topics on which you want to hear the views of children and young people?
- How will you ensure that the key focus of the process stays on the topics you identified?
- How will they know that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time?
- How will you support them in giving their own views, while including age-appropriate and accessible information?
- How will you ensure that they are given a range of ways to express themselves that best suits their needs and choices?
- How will the process allow them to identify topics they want to discuss?

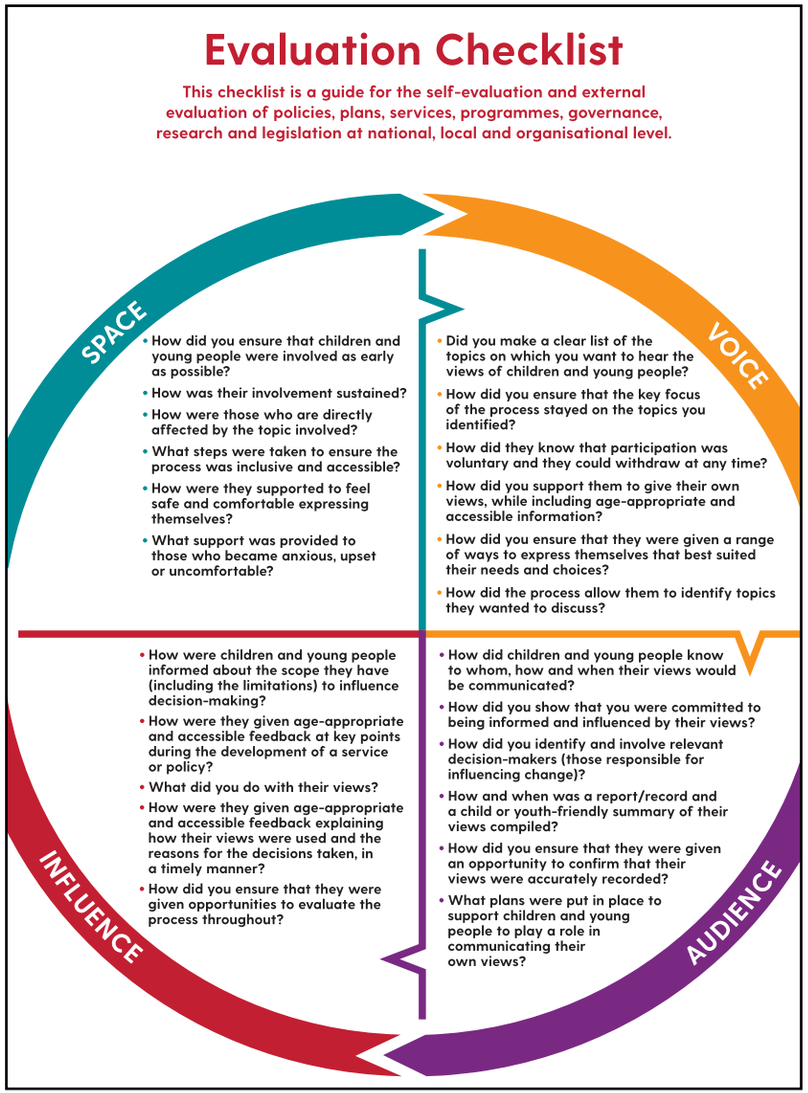
INFLUENCE

- How will children and young people be informed about the scope they have (including the limitations) to influence decision-making?
- How will they be given age-appropriate and accessible feedback at key points during the development of a service or policy?
- What are your plans to make sure that children and young people's views impact on decisions?
- How will they be given age-appropriate and accessible feedback explaining how their views were used and the reasons for the decisions taken, in a timely manner?
- How will you ensure that they are given opportunities to evaluate the process throughout?

AUDIENCE

- How will children and young people know to whom, how and when their views will be communicated?
- How will you show your commitment to being informed and influenced by their views?
- How will you identify and involve relevant decision-makers (those responsible for influencing change)?
- How and when will a report/record and a child or youth friendly summary of their views be compiled?
- How will you ensure that they are given an opportunity to confirm that their views are accurately recorded?
- What plans are in place to support them to play a role in communicating their own views?

Appendix B: Evaluation Checklist



Appendix C: Everyday Spaces Checklist

Everyday Spaces Checklist

This checklist is designed as a guide to help you ensure that children and young people have a voice in decision-making. It can be applied in many everyday situations including in classrooms, hospitals, childcare settings, child and youth services, youth and sports clubs, youth projects, arts and creative initiatives and other spaces.

Please do not use this checklist for developing policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation – use the Planning Checklist.

Please make sure that the ways you involve children and young people in decision-making are age-appropriate and accessible for all, whether in person or online.



Appendix D: Children and Young People's

Children and Young People's Online Feedback Form (for groups)

Boy ☐ Girl ☐ Other ☐ I don't know ☐ Age ____

Tick the number of stars you would give to everything below. Five stars is the best.

SPACE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I have been listened to from the start					
I felt comfortable giving my opinions					
I felt safe giving my opinions					
A lot of different voices were included					

VOICE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I got the chance to give my opinions					
I got enough information to help me give my opinion					
I got support to have my voice heard					
I understood what was being discussed					
I could give my opinions whatever way I wanted					
I had enough time to talk					

AUDIENCE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I know who wants to hear our opinions					
I know why they want the opinions of young people					
They were honest about what they would try to do with our opinions					

INFLUENCE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I know where our opinions are going next					
I know how we will be told about what happens to our opinions					
I think what we said today will be taken seriously					

Were you able to get onto the platform?

Was it easy to use?

The ONLINE SPACE was... ☹ ☐ 😐 ☐ ☺ ☐

THANK YOU!

Children and Young People's Feedback Form (for groups)

Boy ☐ Girl ☐ Other ☐ I dont know ☐ ____ Age

Tick the number of stars you would give to everything below. Five stars is the best.

SPACE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I have been listened to from the start					
I felt comfortable giving my opinions					
I felt safe giving my opinions					
A lot of different voices were included					

VOICE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I got the chance to give my opinions					
I got enough information to help me give my opinion					
I got support to have my voice heard					
I understood what was being discussed					
I could give my opinions whatever way I wanted					
I had enough time to talk					

AUDIENCE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I know who wants to hear our opinions					
I know why they want the opinions of young people					
They were honest about what they would try to do with our opinions					

INFLUENCE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I know where our opinions are going next					
I know how we will be told about what happens to our opinions					
I think what we said today will be taken seriously					

What were the best things about today?

What would you change about today?

The FOOD was... ☹ ☐ 😐 ☐ ☺ ☐

The ROOM was... ☹ ☐ 😐 ☐ ☺ ☐

THANK YOU!

Appendix E: Children and Young People's Feedback Form for individuals

Children and Young People's Feedback Form
(for individuals)

Boy ☐ Girl ☐ Other ☐ I dont know ☐ ____ Age

Tick the number of stars you would give to everything below. Five stars is the best.

SPACE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I was listened to from the start					
I felt comfortable giving my opinions					
I felt safe giving my opinions					

VOICE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I got the chance to give my opinions					
I got enough information to help me give my opinions					
I got support to have my voice heard					
I understood what was being discussed					
I could give my opinions whatever way I wanted					
I had enough time to talk					

AUDIENCE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I know who wants to hear my opinions					
I know why they want my opinions					
They were honest about what they would try to do with my opinions					

INFLUENCE	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
I know where my opinions are going next					
I know how I will be told about what happens to my opinions					
I think what I said today will be taken seriously					

Is there anything else that would have helped you in giving your opinions?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

THANK YOU! ☺

Appendix F: Comhairle na nÓg National Executive Roles 2024-2026

The roles for the National Executive are the following:

Chairperson (2x, 7-month terms)

- **The Chairpersons will plan and prepare National Executive meetings with the support of the National Participation Office staff. One Chairperson will Chair the meetings and the other will take the minutes of the meeting. Ensure that the participants stick to the agenda and timeframes. They will also ensure that the group obeys the conventions of the meeting as per National Executive Contract, and that everyone's voice is heard during the meetings.**

Vice Chairperson (x1, 7-month term)

- **The Vice Chairperson will support the Chairpersons where needed. They will take upon any Chairperson duties in the absence of one of the Chairpersons. During the meetings, they will take notes and work alongside the Chairpersons to compile notes post meeting.**

Steering Committee Member (3x. 10-month terms)

- **Steering Committee members will represent the National Executive on the Steering Committee. They will attend quarterly meetings (4 times a year) with experts, and report on the work of the National Executive – and bring the feedback from the meetings to the National Executive.**

Social Media Representative (x2, 10-month terms)

- **The Social Media Representatives will work with the National Participation Office staff to create content and updates to (social) media on the work of the National Executive and Comhairle na nÓg. This includes taking and making photographs, videos and texts.**

Inclusivity and Wellbeing Representatives (x2, term is for the whole term of National Executive)

- **Inclusivity and Wellbeing Representatives will ensure that the participants in the meeting are treated fairly and equally. They will monitor that everyone is behaving according to the National Executive Contract. They will offer peer support and bring any possible emerging issues to the attention of the National Participation Office staff.**

Irish Language Representative (x2, whole term)

- The Irish Language Representatives will promote the use of Irish language within the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive. They will support other members in speaking Irish (and other languages), and support translation where applicable.

Nomination Process:

- All Comhairle na nÓg National Executive members can nominate themselves up to 2 different roles. They can write a short manifesto (written description of themselves and why they should be selected for the role) when nominating themself for the role.

- Nominations are open until Sunday 4th August.

- Voting will take place online after the nominations, in the following week, and is open until Sunday 18th August. The candidates will be displayed on the voting form anonymously with their written manifestos. All National Executive members can vote once for each role (fill out the nomination form once).

- The National Participation Office staff will allocate the positions based on the vote and fair distribution of roles. When allocating the roles, the NPO will take into consideration that the roles are distributed equally so that as many people as possible get a role during the term of 2024-2026. This means that primarily, where possible, there will be one role per one member, and the roles will rotate with the members evenly with everyone who expresses interest, starting with the people who received most votes in the first round.

- Any questions about the roles or the process, please contact info@youthparticipation.ie

Appendix G: Comhairle na nÓg Steering Committee Terms of Reference

COMHAIRLE NA NÓG STEERING COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

Comhairle na nÓg (www.comhairlenanog.ie) are local councils for children and young people, aged 12 -17, that give them a voice on the development of local policies and services. They are the recognised key national structure for participation by children and young people in local decision-making in all 31 local authorities of the country. Local Community Development Committees (LCDC) are required to engage with Comhairle na nÓg. The first National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision Making 2015-2020 reiterates the fact that Comhairle na nÓg is the nationally recognised structure that enables children and young people to have a voice in local decision-making.

Comhairle na nÓg is organised by [organisation] on behalf of [Name of Council]. This process is driven by the Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator. The local authority is responsible for the delivery of Comhairle na nÓg.

Role of the Steering Committee

A steering committee, or a committee of key stakeholders and decision makers, should be put in place to oversee Comhairle na nÓg. The Steering Committee is designed to advise and assist the organiser/ coordinator of Comhairle na nÓg throughout the year. The role of the Steering Committee includes ensuring that:

- **Comhairle na nÓg primary function is to be formally connected to local decision makers and key stakeholders in the area, particularly in relation to the issue(s) being worked on by the Comhairle na nÓg in any given year;**
- **Comhairle na nÓg has an opportunity to influence decision-making and service development that will affect young people in the County;**
- **Organisations representing seldom-heard young people are engaged in the process and can contribute to all aspects of the Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **Comhairle na nÓg is promoted and championed in every key local agency in the area.**

Members of the Steering Committee selected on an annual basis are:

steering Committee members	No. of representatives
An Garda Siochana	
Chair of County Council	
Chair of County Council Joint Policing Committee	
Chair of Strategic Policy Committee	
Community Sector	
County ETB – Youth Officer	
Department of Social Protection	
Drugs Tasks Force	
Health Service Executive (HSE)	
Leader Partnership	
Mayor of Council	
Sports & Recreation Partnership	
Stakeholders specific to particular issue being worked on by Comhairle	
Voluntary Youth Work Committee	
Youth Organisations	

Membership

Permanent members	**No. of representatives**
Comhairle na nÓg members	**2 (min)**
Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator	**1**
A representative from the local authority	**2**
Education Training Board Youth Officer	**1**
Coordinator of CYPSC	**1**
[Youth Organisation]	**1**

Chairperson

The Chairing of the group will be carried out using a hybrid method. The [pre-identified Adult Chair] will carry out the opening and closing of the meetings, whilst a member of Comhairle na nÓg will Co-Chair the items to be discussed. Provision of a rotational model will be provided in order to provide opportunity for several members to Co-Chair. In the absence of whom an alternative chairperson and co-chair will be appointed from the members of the Steering Committee.

Frequency of meetings

- **Under normal circumstances, the group will meet approximately four times per year, for no more than two hours per meeting;**
- **In exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of members, the group may meet more often, as necessary.**

Role of members

The role of the Steering Committee members includes:

- **Contribute to the effective operation and development of Comhairle na nÓg on the basis of their experience and position;**
- **Utilise the influence of their position to facilitate the input of Comhairle na nÓg into adult decision-making bodies in the Local Authority and other relevant organisations;**
- **Advise on upcoming policy developments that would benefit from input from Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **Give insights into the work of Comhairle na nÓg from the point of view of the organisations they represent;**
- **Assist Comhairle na nÓg to link with the wider community and to assist the wider community to link with Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **Suggest any new ideas or innovations for the development of the work of Comhairle na nÓg;**
- **Contribute to any reviews/evaluations of the work of Comhairle na nÓg.**

Appendix H: Sample Schools/ Organisations Nomination Form

Kerry Comhairle na nÓg Youth Conference 2023

Name of Nominating Schools/Organisations:
Kerry Comhairle na nÓg is pleased to announce that our Youth Conference will be held in person on Tuesday 7th November 2023 in the Brandon Hotel Conference Centre.
The event is inclusive of young people from varying backgrounds, abilities and age groups. To this end, the nominations from your school should be balanced in terms of age (12-17), gender, ability and background. It is also important that the young people have volunteered to attend and participate as opposed to being directed to do so by the school.

With that in mind, we are asking you to support a maximum of 6 young people to attend the Youth Conference.

Please submit the names of your nominated students no later than 5pm on Friday 20th October. We will be unable to accept names after this date.

	Name	Age
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Our Schools/Organisations would like to avail of bus transport to and from the Youth Conference organised by Kerry Comhairle na nÓg

I understand that in order for our students to avail of this transport a staff member from our school must travel on the bus to and from the Youth Conference with our students as Kerry Comhairle na nÓg is not in a position to provide supervision on the bus. Students will not be able to travel on the bus without school supervision.

Signed:

Principal or staff member with responsibility for Civic/Social Development

Date:

All Nomination Forms to be returned by Friday, 20th October 2023 to:

Ms Ann Marie Spillane, Comhairle Coordinator, at annmariespillane@kdys.ie

Appendix I: Annual Youth Conference Checklist

Practical preparations	Set Youth Conference date at earliest opportunity – send 'save this date' correspondence as soon as date is confirmed Book youth-friendly venue Book youth-friendly catering and confirm numbers close to the date Arrange transport for young people: book buses and arrange pick-up times for young people, as appropriate Book key equipment, such as projectors, laptops, AV equipment Send invitations to key stakeholders, as appropriate
Key roles	Select facilitators (these should be current members of CNN - if possible) Select co-facilitators (These should be fellow youth workers, steering committee members) (Co-Facilitators should also take notes where possible) Arrange briefing meeting/rehearsal for facilitators Select and brief note-takers Select and brief speakers Select young people for administrative tasks: Registration refunding costs on day coordinating entertainment
Resources	Prepare presentations and displays of work from previous year Prepare and print information pack for Youth Conference delegates Prepare and print information pack for facilitators Prepare and print letter/certificate of attendance for each attendee Arrange registration sheets, reimbursement sheets, name badges, signs for the venue Methodology Equipment (Markers, pencils, pens, flipcharts, blue tack, Table mats, sticky notes, sticky dots)
Promotion	Print and disseminate promotional poster/leaflet for noticeboards Update information on any websites/social networking sites Send diary note to photographers Book photographer for the day Work up draft press releases Send press release to media
Selection of young people	Send invitations to schools, youth organisations and organisations representing seldom-heard young people State need to send representation that is balanced in terms of age, gender and geographic location Seek Consent Forms for all young people nominated Fill minimum percentage of places for girls Fill minimum percentage of places for boys Fill percentage of places for young people aged under 15 Fill percentage of places for seldom-heard young people Support seldom-heard young people to attend, where necessary

Topics for discussion	
	Identify and rehearse methodology to select topics on the day Agree methodology and final agenda Set up all rooms/breakout spaces/workshop spaces with any necessary equipment,, e.g. flipchart and pens Set up all necessary IT equipment, including laptops, projectors, presentations loaded Set up Registration Desk with registration and reimbursement sheets and name badges Check that the caterers have arrived and are set up Check that all facilitators have arrived Check that all key speakers and guests have arrived Check that all participants have arrived and follow up unexplained absences Distribute information packs with agenda/speaker profiles/evaluations and pens Put all evaluation tools in place (don't forget to collect after the evaluation has been conducted) Distribute all certificates of attendance

Appendix J: List of seldom-heard children and young people

'Seldom-heard' is a term used to describe children and young people who have fewer opportunities and more obstacles in their lives.

This includes but is not confined to children and young people who are:

- **Disabled**
- **Neurodiverse**
- **Experiencing mental health issues**
- **In care**
- **In aftercare**
- **From ethnic minorities,**
- **Living in rural areas**
- **Living in disadvantaged areas**
- **Experiencing homelessness**
- **Young carers**
- **Children of prisoners**
- **LGBTQI+**
- **Quiet**
- **Aged out unaccompanied minors**
- **From minority backgrounds.**

Appendix K: Consultation Methodologies

Open Space Method: Used for Creating Categories or Themes

The Open Space method is used to identify discussion topics or themes on two questions. It is an adaptation of a well-known technique called Open Space Technology.

EQUIPMENT

- **A large wall area or blank display boards**
- **Post-it notes**
- **Markers**
- **Flip chart paper**
- **Blu-tack**
- **Consultation questions**

METHOD

Identify clear and simple questions for use in your consultation.

Examples might include:
What affects teenagers' mental health?

What helps teenagers' mental health?

1. Write the two questions on separate large cards and put them on two empty wall spaces or at either end of the same wall
2. Explain the process
3. Announce the first question
4. Give each participant a number of post-it notes and a marker on

   which to write the answers to the first question, using one post-it note per answer or idea. Ask participants to keep their answers short. The number of post-its given to participants depends on how many children or young people are in the group
5. The participants stick the post-it notes on the wall under the question
6. Announce the second question and repeat steps 4 and 5
7. When all post-it notes are on the wall, two small groups of volunteer

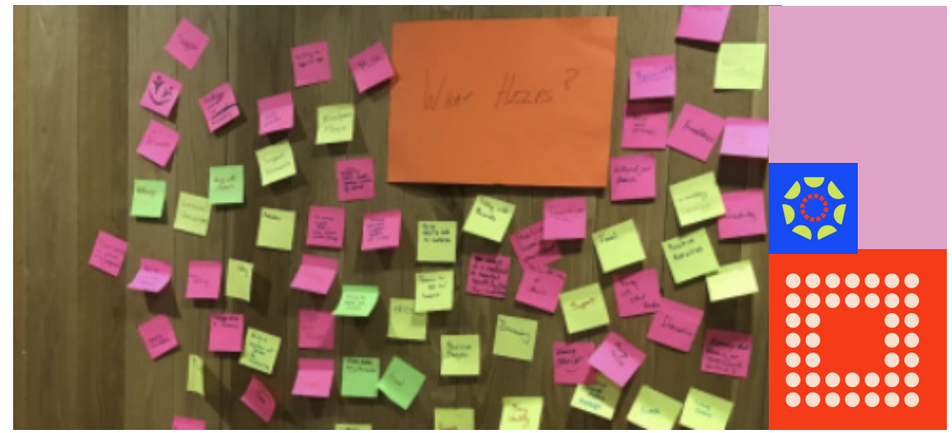
   participants are asked to help in categorising the post-it notes under the two questions
8. The volunteer participants are supported by facilitators to review the post-it notes and decide on categories under which to group them
9. All post-it notes are grouped under categories by the volunteer participants, who assign a name to each category.

10. The two groups of volunteers review the category names and identify any that are identical or very similar. Where possible, they combine categories and re-name them to capture the full meaning of the issues on the post-its

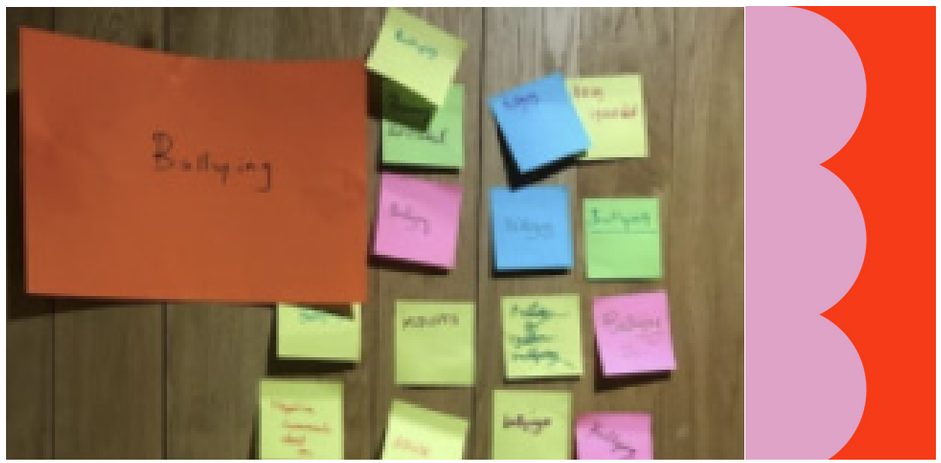
11. Each category and accompanying post-it notes are transferred onto flip chart pages, which can be used for further discussion

12. The categories become the topics for workshop discussions and the issues on the post-it notes provide background for participants to go deeper into the issue

13. Workshop discussions can be carried out with large groups by using a World Café method and with smaller groups by using a Jotter Page method



Teen mental health consultation: Post-its under the question 'what helps teenagers' mental health?'



Mental health categories with relevant post-its



Consultation with children on after school care:
Post-its under the question 'where do children go after school?'

World Café method (for large groups) to discuss a chosen topic

PURPOSE

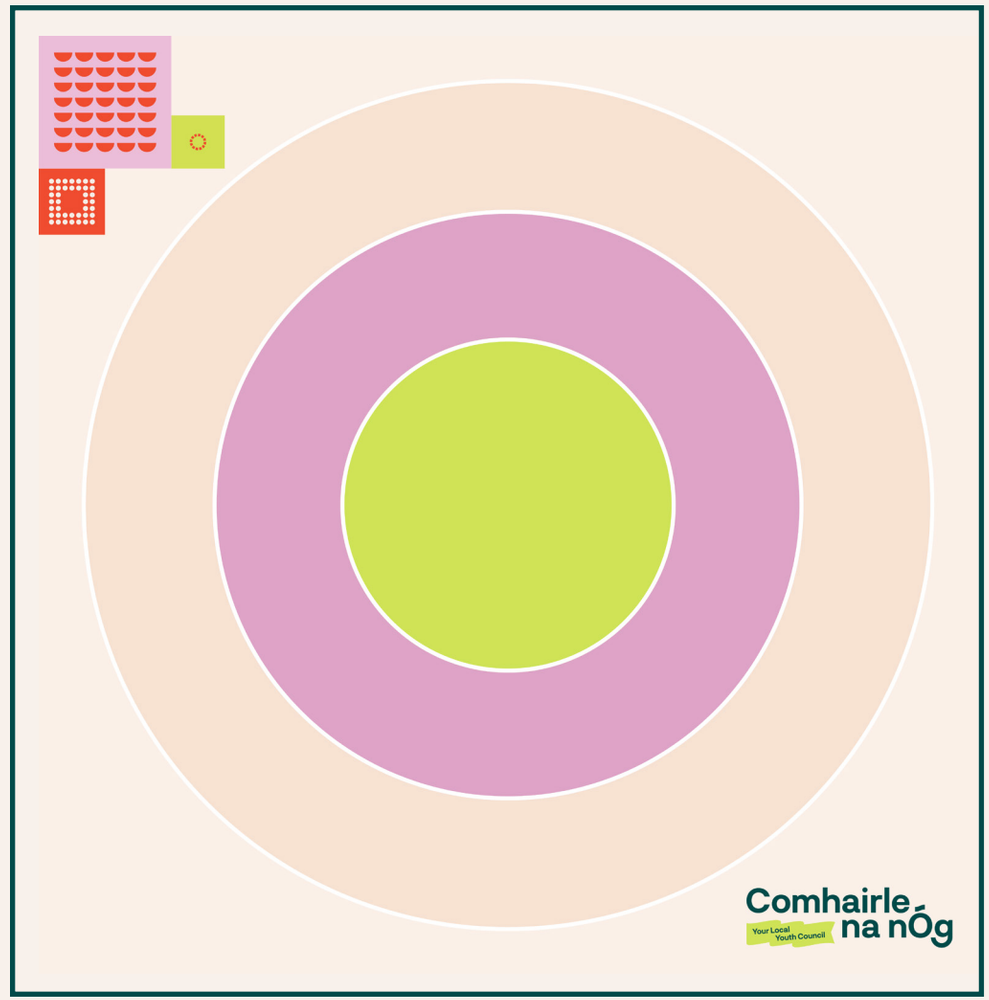
This technique offers the opportunity for large groups of children and young people to discuss a number of topics at different tables and go deeper into topics.

EQUIPMENT

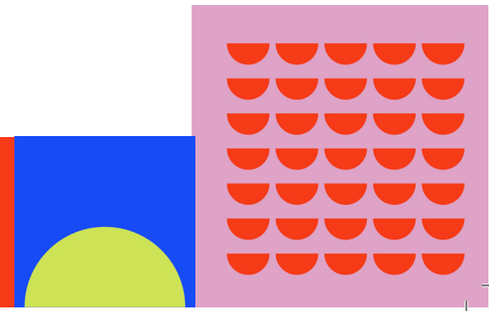
- **Paper placemats (5-foot square) for participants to record their ideas on each topic (see below)**
- **The flip chart pages with the categories and post-it notes from the Open Space session**
- **Markers**

Example: The placemats for a training were prepared with the following text:

- **Tell us more about this topic**
- **What barriers might you meet in addressing this topic?**
- **What will help you address this topic?**



1. Identify the topics that participants want to discuss (often decided earlier in the consultation through an open space method, or identified in advance of the consultation)
2. Assign one topic to each table in the room
3. Place the flip chart paper with the relevant categories and post-it notes from the Open Space session on a flip chart stand or on the wall beside each table
4. Each table has a facilitator and a placemat prepared in advance
5. The facilitator writes the topic being discussed at the table on the placemat
6. The facilitator starts by asking participants to read the post-it notes on the topic
7. The facilitator asks the group to have a broad discussion on the topic assigned to the table
8. After about five minutes, the facilitator asks the group to address the questions on the placemat, as a full group or in groups of twos or threes. Participants write and draw their ideas on the placemat. If they have difficulties with writing, the facilitator can write their exact words on the placemat or write the meaning of their drawings
9. The facilitator ensures that participant's link related issues from different sections of the placemat with arrows and circles.
10. The full group or small groups of two or three work on each question on the placemat until everyone has had their say on the topic.
11. After twenty minutes, participants move to the next table and a new topic. They examine the views of the first group and add their own ideas or make notes beside the ideas of the previous group. They may not delete the ideas of other participants
12. After ten minutes everybody moves to a new table and repeats step 11
13. Every ten minutes there is another move and step 11 is repeated until everybody has visited every topic
14. Participants return to the table at which they started and review what has been added by other participants
15. If there is a lot of writing and/or illustration on the placemat, participants are asked to draw circles around individual ideas or ideas that are linked.



Jotter Page method: getting more information on topics (for small groups)

PURPOSE

This method offers the opportunity for groups of up to 12 children and young people to discuss the topics identified in an Open Space session at different tables or parts of a room.

EQUIPMENT

- **Dedicated designed A2 Jotter Page templates for participants to record their ideas (see below)**
- **Markers**
- **The categorised topics and post-its identified at the Open Space session**



METHOD

1. Assign one topic to each Jotter Page template in the room (up to six topics) and write the topic name in the blank space at the top of the page
2. Children or young people work in groups of 2 or 3 on each Jotter Page template
3. Place the flip chart paper with the relevant categories and post-it notes from the Open Space session on a flip chart stand or on the wall beside each Jotter Page
4. The facilitators move from group to group supporting the participants
5. The facilitator starts by asking participants to read the post-its noted on the topic they are discussing
6. The facilitator asks the groups of two or three participants to have a general discussion on the topic
7. After a few minutes, the facilitator asks the group to address the specific questions on the Jotter Page template. Participants write and draw (if appropriate) their ideas on the Jotter Page template
8. The facilitator asks participants to link ideas or sugge stions that go together by drawing arrows to connect them or writing a note about their connection.
9. After fifteen or twenty minutes, participants move to the next table and a new topic or the Jotter Page templates are moved around the room from one group to another.
10. They examine the views of the first group and discuss the topic for five or ten minutes in a similar way to steps 6 - 8. They add their own ideas or make notes beside the ideas of the previous group. They may not delete the ideas of other participants.
11. After ten minutes everybody moves to a new topic and repeats the process above.
12. Every ten minutes there is another move until everybody has visited each Jotter Page topic.

Sticky dot prioritising

PURPOSE

To prioritise ideas, issues or themes that emerged during a consultation or discussion

EQUIPMENT

Sheets of small coloured sticky dots

METHOD

- **Participants are asked to review what has been written or drawn on each placemat or jotter page and prioritise the most important issues.**
- **Each participant is given an equal number of sticky dots for some or all, of the questions at every placemat or jotter page, which they place beside the ideas they feel are most important.**
- **Some questions or statements don't need to be prioritised, such as 'tell us more about this topic'.**
- **Participants stick their dots on the points they consider most important.**
- **They can use their dots however they want and can place more than one dot beside an idea that they feel is particularly important.**
- **The priority issues are those that have most sticky dots.**
- **On every placemat or jotter page, the number of sticky dots on each question is recorded to highlight the issues or ideas that are most important to participants.**
- **The top priorities from each table can then be used to conduct an anonymous vote (see next page).**



Voting

Ballot box voting

This method allows participants to vote anonymously

PURPOSE

To identify a list of issues in order of importance

EQUIPMENT

- **Ballot boxes**
- **Small blank cards**
- **Markers**

METHOD

1. **Participants are each given an equal number of blank cards.**
2. **The voting options are displayed on a screen or on the wall with a corresponding number for each option.**
3. **Participants write the numbers of their top priorities on individual cards.**
4. **Participants place their votes in the ballot box.**
5. **The priority issues are those that receive most votes.**





Individual lifeline method

PURPOSE

Individual lifelines can be used as a way of easing children and young people into a consultation or discussion by recording important moments in their life or things they like about an activity, project or programme. They can also be used for children and young people to record things they did or experienced in the past or things they would like to do or to happen in the future.

EQUIPMENT

- **Designed individual lifelines (A3) – see below**
- **Markers**

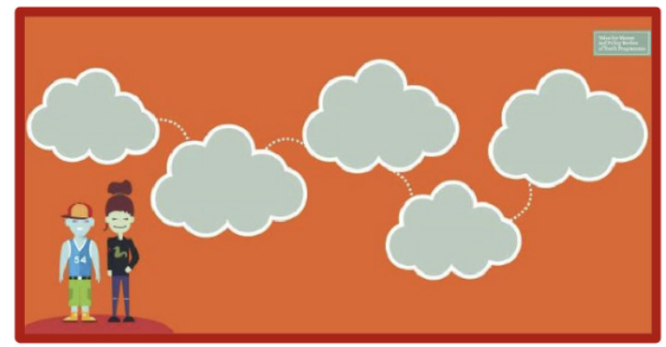
METHOD

1. Participants sit at tables or on the floor in groups (maximum six).
2. The facilitator starts by asking a question or making a statement and inviting a group discussion (see examples below).
3. Once everyone who wants to contribute has spoken, participants work individually to answer the question by drawing, designing and/or writing on their own lifeline.
4. They are asked to work from left to right if responding to a question or statement about something that takes place over time (e.g., what did you enjoy about the project, programme or activity?).
5. Once all participants are finished their lifelines, the facilitator offers them the opportunity to share some, or all, of what they have written or drawn. The facilitator stresses that participants can choose how much to share or if they want to share anything

Under 12s lifeline: What I do after school everyday?



Teen lifeline: What do you like about your youth service?



Group Lifeline method

PURPOSE

Lifelines are used for children and young people to record things that they experience over time

EQUIPMENT

- **Designed group lifelines (6 foot x 3 foot)**
- **Markers**
- **Fun children's stickers (optional)**

METHOD

1. Participants are divided into groups to respond to a specific question or statement, or the positives and negatives of a statement, which are written on the lifeline.
2. The group lifeline topic for the DCYA training is 'How we have engaged with children and young people since the team started working together'.
3. Below are examples of other lifeline questions and statements used -with children and young people: What helps children have a -healthy lifestyle at different stages of their lives?
4. What were the highs and lows of the summer programme?
5. What children like to read (from Junior Infants upwards)
6. Participants draw and write their views on the lifeline:
7. Starting on the left and working to the right.
8. Positives are listed above the river.
9. Challenges are listed below the river.
10. The positives can be illustrated in the river with rapids, boats, rafts etc. – with accompanying words in the clouds above.



The lifeline can be divided into stages (e.g. last year, this year) or ages (e.g. 0-12, 13-17)



Children working on a lifeline about healthy lifestyles

Moving Debate

PURPOSE

- Moving debates are used to get the views of participants on controversial issues or on a range of options.
- They can also be used for evaluation.
- It is a very useful and powerful exercise to use with large groups

EQUIPMENT

- A controversial statement or a series of statements or options.
- An AGREE sign and a DISAGREE sign.
- Amplification and roving microphones are needed, if working in a large room.
- A facilitator or note taker to record the conversation in the debate and note the final number of people standing at each point in the room.

PRINCIPLES AND GROUND RULES

- Participants express their opinion by where they physically position themselves or stand in the debate.
- Participants can make statements but should not disagree with, or disrespect other opinions.
- Allow enough time for sharing of opinions.
- Make sure there is enough space for people to stand where they want

METHOD

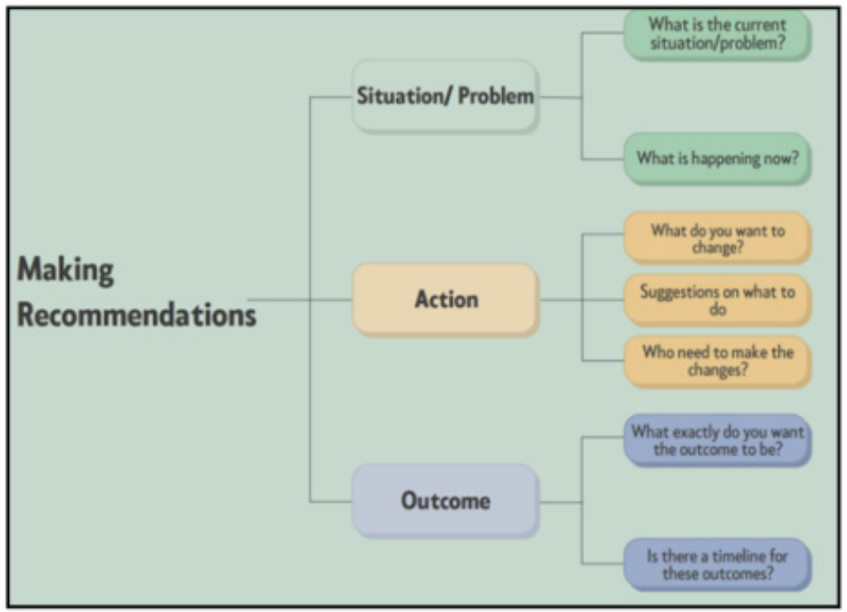
1. All participants stand in the centre of the space available.
2. At one end of the space, you place a large sign with the word AGREE and at the other end a large sign with the word DISAGREE.
3. The facilitator reads a statement.
4. Participants who fully agree, stand beside the AGREE sign.
5. Participants who fully disagree, stand beside the DISAGREE sign.
6. Participants who are not certain, stand at the point in between AGREE and DISAGREE that reflects their opinion.
7. The facilitator invites people at different places in the room to explain to the group why they have chosen to stand in that place.
8. Participants can raise their hands to share why they have chosen to stand in that place.
9. After a number of different viewpoints have been expressed, participants are asked if they would like to move on the basis of having been persuaded by other people's opinions.
10. Repeat steps 7, 8 and 9 a number of times until everyone is happy with the place they are standing.
11. Have a facilitator or other person count the number of people at different places in the room and keep a record of this for feedback to decision makers.

Appendix L: Comhairle na nÓg Making Recommendations Templates

Making Recommendations

Comhairle na nÓg
Your Local Youth Council

In order to make a strong recommendation, it is really important that we begin by identifying a problem or issue which needs to be addressed or solved. By identifying a situation or problem, we can identify what we would like to see change. We could then identify the action that needs to be taken.



Comhairle na nÓg recommendation sheet

Comhairle na nÓg
Your Local Youth Council

Recommendation 1

Checklist

- Is the recommendation in clear, simple language?
- Is it achievable and specific and not too narrow or broad?
- If someone who did not hear any of your discussions read this recommendation, would they:
  - Understand exactly what it means?
  - Understand any jargon used?
- Finally, does it reflect on the suggestion that was voted on?



Write the suggestion/recommendation from the placemat here.(Use exact words if you can)

Using the Checklist, what are the main points of this recommendation?

Draft versions of the recommendation

Please transfer your final version to the recommendation sheet

Comhairle na nÓg recommendation sheet

Comhairle na nÓg
Your Local Youth Council

Recommendation 2

Checklist

- Is the recommendation in clear, simple language?
- Is it achievable and specific and not too narrow or broad?
- If someone who did not hear any of your discussions read this recommendation, would they:
  - Understand exactly what it means?
  - Understand any jargon used?
- Finally, does it reflect on the suggestion that was voted on?



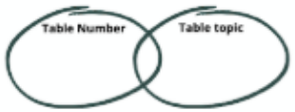
Write the suggestion/recommendation from the placemat here. (Use exact words if you can)

Using the Checklist, what are the main points of this recommendation?

Draft versions of the recommendation

Please transfer your final version to the recommendation sheet

Comhairle na nÓg recommendation sheet



Final Recommendations

Comhairle na nÓg
Your Local Youth Council

Final wording as agreed with table. Remember, clear, consice and focused.

1

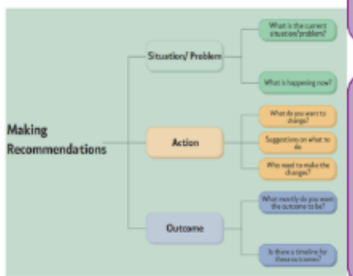
2

Dáil na nÓg

Recommendation

Checklist

- Do you know anything about the topic?
- Is anything already happening in the area?
- Have you included a timeline?
- Is your recommendation in clear, simple language?
- Does it reflect on the suggestion that was voted on?
- Is it achievable and specific and not too narrow?

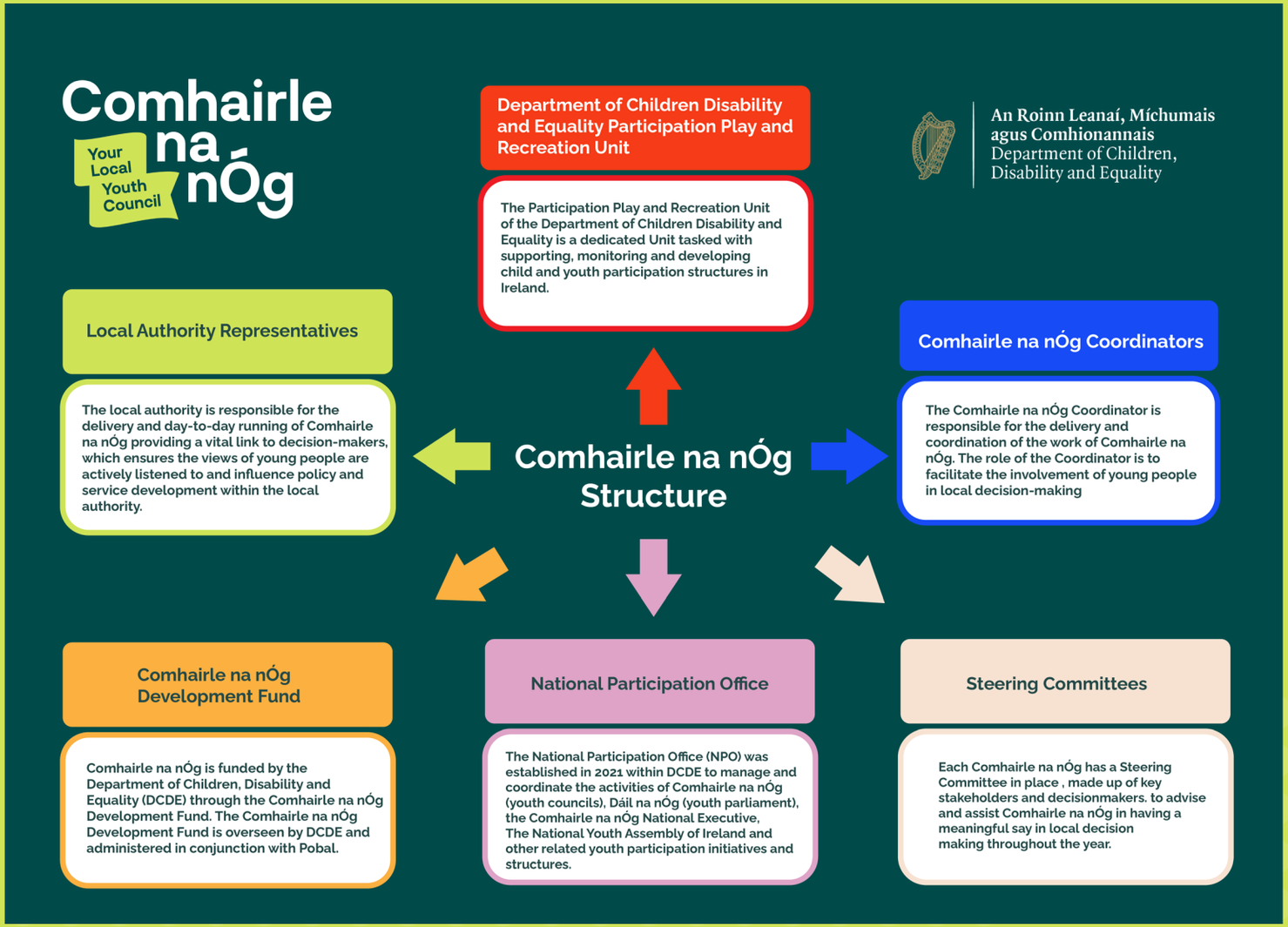


Challenge or Barrier to the issue outlined?

What's already working or happening on this? Within Ireland and Internationally?

What do you want to happen or change?

Recommendation


Comhairle na nÓg
Your Local Youth Council
Department of Children Disability and Equality Participation Play and Recreation Unit
The Participation Play and Recreation Unit of the Department of Children Disability and Equality is a dedicated Unit tasked with supporting, monitoring and developing child and youth participation structures in Ireland.
An Roinn Leanaí, Míchumais agus Comhionannais
Department of Children, Disability and Equality
Local Authority Representatives
The local authority is responsible for the delivery and day-to-day running of Comhairle na nÓg providing a vital link to decision-makers, which ensures the views of young people are actively listened to and influence policy and service development within the local authority.
Comhairle na nÓg Structure
Comhairle na nÓg Coordinators
The Comhairle na nÓg Coordinator is responsible for the delivery and coordination of the work of Comhairle na nÓg. The role of the Coordinator is to facilitate the involvement of young people in local decision-making
Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund
Comhairle na nÓg is funded by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) through the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund. The Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund is overseen by DCDE and administered in conjunction with Pobal.
National Participation Office
The National Participation Office (NPO) was established in 2021 within DCDE to manage and coordinate the activities of Comhairle na nÓg (youth councils), Dáil na nÓg (youth parliament), the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, The National Youth Assembly of Ireland and other related youth participation initiatives and structures.
Steering Committees
Each Comhairle na nÓg has a Steering Committee in place , made up of key stakeholders and decisionmakers. to advise and assist Comhairle na nÓg in having a meaningful say in local decision making throughout the year.

Dáil na nÓg 2026

Dáil na nÓg Preparation Session 2026

Summary of Theme

Table Number

Table topic

List all of the important areas from the Tablet:

If there are any similar areas, please combine them here:

Create a short summary of our hopes for the education system within this theme:

Please transfer your final version to the Draft Statement sheet

Checklist

- Is the Summary in clear, simple language?
- If someone who did not hear any of your discussions read this Summary, would they:
  - *Understand exactly what it means?*
  - *Understand any jargon used?*
- Finally, does it reflect everything that was written on the theme tablet?

Appendix M: Decision Maker Feedback Sheet

Your Organisation ----------

Comhairle na nÓg
Your Local Youth Council

Here's what we did, with what you said

We listened to your opinion. Summary of what the young people said:

It is our responsibility to take your views seriously. This is what we've done:

This is what we can do and what will happen next:

This is what we are unable to do and why:

Next action to be taken:

For decision makers to fill in with follow up information on what actions have or have not been taken

We promise to acknowledge the input from Comhraile na nÓg in our reportn and name them in any decision that eas influenced by their in put

Thank you. You can still send us any further communications at: _____



