ESSS Outline

Frameworks for child participation in social care

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Introduction

This evidence summary seeks to address the following questions relating to the participation of children and young people:

- *How can frameworks increase the participation of children and young people in social care?*
- *What do examples of good practice/frameworks look like?*

About the evidence presented below

We drew on a wide range of evidence, including academic research in the fields of social work and education in relevant databases (e.g. ASSIA), using the Iriss National Social Services Search, on Google Scholar and institutional repositories, as well as the websites of key organisations (e.g. NSPCC, SCCYP, SCRA, Children's Hearings Scotland, Local Authorities, SCIE).

We focused specifically on the participation of children and young people in social care, however there is a wealth of evidence examining participation in broader contexts (e.g. Save The Children), especially in schools (e.g. the 7 Golden Rules of Participation). In addition to this, we included academic literature looking at specific contexts where challenges for participation most commonly occur, such as child protection, BAME and disability.

We found that while there was no shortage of resources on participation, there were still limitations around evaluations of the effectiveness of structures and procedures to enable very young children to have their wishes taken into account ([Kennan et al. 2016](#)). In addition to this, our search was limited because the definition of children's participation is contested, and can be defined in different ways ([Križ and Skivenes 2017](#)).

Accessing resources

We have provided links to the materials referenced in the summary. Some materials are paywalled, which means they are published in academic

journals and are only available with a subscription. Some of these are available through the The Knowledge Network with an NHS Scotland OpenAthens username. The Knowledge Network offers accounts to everyone who helps provide health and social care in Scotland in conjunction with the NHS and Scottish Local Authorities, including many in the third and independent sectors. You can register here. Where resources are identified as 'available through document delivery', these have been provided to the original enquirer and may be requested through NHS Scotland's Fetch item service (subject to eligibility).

Where possible we identify where evidence is published Open Access, which means the author has chosen to publish their work in a way that makes it freely available to the public. Some are identified as author repository copies, manuscripts, or other copies, which means the author has made a version of the otherwise paywalled publication available to the public. Other referenced sources are pdfs and websites that are available publicly.

Background

Defining participation

Participation is a multifaceted concept (McDowall 2016) and has been described as "messy, fluid and relational" (Larkins et al. 2014). There is little agreement on what participation entails and how the rights of children and young people to participate can be ensured in different contexts (Fylkesnes et al. 2018; Križ and Skivenes 2017; McNeilly et al. 2015). Children and young people's involvement in decision-making is frequently mentioned as a key component of participation (Mannion 2012), often with reference to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989), which states:

States 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.

There are longstanding debates around how to interpret what it means for a child to have the ability to form an opinion and for a child to be able to express their views freely (Križ and Skivenes 2017). While age is not explicitly mentioned in Article 12 (UNCRC 1989), age is sometimes used in social care to determine the weight of a child or young person's opinion. In their study looking at the perceptions of child welfare workers on participation, Križ and Skivenes (2017) found professionals from England, Norway and the USA had differing views about what age a child had an ability to form an opinion, ranging from 3 in England to 10-12 in the USA. However, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (2009) discourages the use of age limits in legislation or practice and emphasises the importance to respect non-verbal forms of communication and any modes of communication for children with disabilities (Bouma et al. 2018), so age is not always an appropriate method of determining "due weight".

Reaching a definition of participation is further complicated by the terminology of participation, involvement and consultation being used on an interchangeable basis (Care Inspectorate 2012). The Care Inspectorate (2012) offers the following definitions:

- **Consultation:** gathering children's or young people's views on a particular issue or question
- **Participation:** children and young people joining in in decision-making
- **Involvement:** where adults give children and young people opportunities and support to take part.

Križ and Skivenes (2017) found that workers often mistake consultation for participation, with 40% of English and 35% of US workers interviewed

embraced views of children's participation that can be considered token or non-participation. [Havlicek et al. (2018)](#) also found discrepancies between workers' conceptualisations of youth participation and the strategies they enact within programmes.

In the literature reviewed, we were able to identify two key components of children's participation:

- It is a process and not a one-off event ([Council of Europe 2012](#); [Fylkesnes et al. 2018](#); [Larkins et al. 2014](#))
- It enables the child or young person to have an influence on their outcomes ([Kennan et al. 2016](#); [McDowall 2016](#))

This is consistent with the [Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2013)](#) definition of participation as being "widely used to describe 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."

Types of participation can be divided into two categories: individual participation and collective participation ([Kennan et al. 2016](#)).

Individual participation

In their systematic literature review, [Kennan et al. (2016)](#) found that evidence on children's individual participation in social care primarily focuses on three areas of practice: child protection meetings; family welfare conferences; and care planning and review meetings. They identified the following structures and procedures related to the participation of individuals:

- **One-to-one consultation with their case manager or coordinator**. There are numerous studies on different methods for conducting consultations, but not whether this form of engagement is effective
- **Submission of their views in writing to assessment, planning and review meetings.** Not found to be very effective in documenting the

child's authentic views, as they may be intentionally or unintentionally filtered

- **Attending and being actively involved in meetings.** A child's attendance at a meeting is more likely to result in their involvement in decisions, depending on the size of the meeting, formality and language used
- **Using an advocate to bring their views to the attention of the decision-makers.** This allows children's views to be represented in a relatively systematic way and can help reduce power imbalances, but must be independent of social work services to be effective
- **Engaging in a process of family-led decision-making.** There is a risk that dominant child protection discourses and institutional practices can impede effectiveness
- **Making a complaint through a designated complaints procedure.** Young people rarely access this mechanism, possibly due to their capacity to engage with bureaucratic and drawn-out processes

Križ and Skivenes (2017) found workers perceived children's participation as hearing the child's opinion and information gathering, which both focus on the involvement of the individual.

Collective participation

Larkins et al. (2014) found there is relatively little research focused on collective participation. In addition to this, there is little evaluation or monitoring to measure the effectiveness of collective structures or procedures intended to support children (Kennan et al. 2016).

The following structures and procedures for collective participation were identified by Kennan et al. (2016):

- **National, regional or local advisory forums convened by service providers, central government or local authorities comprising children receiving services**. This may have a positive influence on

personal development but little direct influence on decisions relating to service planning and delivery

- **Involving a panel of children in the recruitment of personnel**
- **Involving children in the development and delivery of training**
- **Including children's views in inspection reports.** This is often a requirement, however children could only influence the outcome if their views speak to matters of compliance
- **Consultations or research conducted with children in receipt of services**
- **Child- or youth-led action research**

The Care Inspectorate (2012) found that there is a risk for collective participation to be restricted to the most able, articulate, and accessible children and young people, raising concerns over whether participatory forums can be properly representative. Larkins et al. (2014) state that in welfare settings, the question of which children and young people participate and whether they can represent the interests and experiences of others is central.

Benefits

Involving children and young people in the decision-making process can profoundly affect their lives (Kennan et al. 2016), safety (Križ and Skivenes 2017) and wellbeing (Bouma et al. 2018). Participation also ensures decisions are responsive to their needs (Kennan et al. 2016) and are more likely to be respected and accepted (Bouma et al. 2018). Some evidence also shows children and young people are empowered through participating and demonstrate an increase in confidence (Care Inspectorate 2012).

From a service development perspective, Care Inspectorate (2012) identifies the following potential benefits:

- Improving the quality of services
- Helping services become more child-centred
- Generating enthusiasm and creativity

- Improving staff morale
- Raising the public profile of services
- Challenging the thinking of staff and decision-makers

Challenges

There is limited understanding of the necessary conditions to create and support participatory practices in child welfare systems (Havlicek et al. 2018), particularly:

- In child protection practice (Bouma et al. 2018)
- For children and young people with a disability (McNeilly et al. 2015)
- Those from a minority ethnic background (Fylkesnes et al. 2018)
- Those who do not have access to the key resources that support participation (for example, communicative spaces and social position) (Larkins et al. 2014)

The Council of Europe (2012) state that particular efforts should be made to enable participation of children and young people with fewer opportunities, including those who are vulnerable or affected by discrimination. Hearing children whose lived realities are different from the majority norm might require more time, resources and particularly knowledgeable social workers (Fylkesnes et al. 2018). Flexibility and informal structures and procedures have been found to be especially attractive for seldom-heard children and young people (Kennan et al. 2016).

There is no one definitive structure or procedure that is effective in supporting children to participate in decision-making; there is a need for a range of options to accommodate individual preferences and abilities (Kennan et al. 2016). Fylkesnes et al. (2018) found that participation hinges on a climate promoting information sharing and trusting relationships with professionals, which is difficult in a context with scarce resources, case procedures, staff turnover and parent's negative attitudes. Kennan et al. (2016) found that despite clear mandates to engage children, professionals experience three primary obstacles to participation:

- A lack of the communication skills needed to elicit and interpret the views of children
- Emphasis in the system on protectionism rather than on empowering children
- Degree to which professionals 'bought into' the participation principle and advocated for children's involvement in decision-making

Children's participation can also be particularly challenging for workers because it affects the power relations between children and adults ([Križ and Skivenes 2017](#)) and challenges prevailing ideas about children's vulnerability and incompetence ([Fylkesnes et al. 2018](#)).

Frameworks

Embedding the participation of children and young people in legislation and policy is considered by [Bouma et al. (2018)](#) to be the first building block for meaningful participation. Guidelines can give professionals concrete tools to engage children ([Bouma et al. 2018](#)) and help to prioritise participation within the competing demands of social welfare ([Kennan et al. 2016](#)). Policy concerning children's participation and rights, along with commitment by senior managers and policymakers to implement that policy, are needed in order to guarantee children's participation ([Bouma et al. 2018](#)). Frameworks can also provide starting points for monitoring and evaluation of practice ([Mannion 2012](#)).

The purposes of participatory frameworks for children and young people within the Scottish context were examined by [Mannion (2012)](#), who found they were mostly developed because organisations "felt that this age group are a minority excluded group whose participation is not assured without support". Other rationales for frameworks identified in this review include:

- As a "developmental tool"
- As a mechanism for demonstrating good practice, and the ability to secure funding as a result

- As a way of helping organisations understand and meet legal obligations
- A response to a "general culture developing in the public sector" around participation

Mannion (2012) also found that frameworks tend to centre around two themes, either child-led or focused on intergenerational dialogue, and commonly contained the following overarching principles:

- Inclusion
- Voluntary participation
- Transparency
- Respect for children and young people
- Fair and equal opportunities
- Being relevant
- Being purposeful

This review also looked at some of the key challenges organisations face when developing a framework, including: whether to use explicitly child-friendly language; the tension between the framework as an advocacy tool versus a development tool; having a bespoke, contextualised framework versus a generic model; and downward accountability versus upward accountability for accountability. Many of these frameworks emphasise the importance of local "champions" of children and young people's participation, without whom the frameworks were very unlikely to make a difference (Mannion 2012).

Models

Many of the frameworks we looked at in this summary are based on models for children and young people's participation. Below we have included summaries of some of these models. However, traditional frameworks have been criticised for presenting participation as a linear process that is overly prescriptive, assumes that participation is the end goal in all circumstances,

and fails to consider the ways that unique forms of participation may unfold in diverse contexts ([Havlicek et al. 2018](#)).

Hart, R (1992) *Children's participation: from tokenism to citizenship.* **Unicef: Innocenti Essays ([pdf](#))**

Hart's ladder of participation was the most commonly referred to model in the literature, and appeared to be the most influential on policy. As well as being criticised for being linear, [Mannion (2012)](#) found one stakeholder purposefully omitted Hart's ladder when developing a participation framework because it is seen as being "so hierarchical".

Steps	Action	Level of participation
1	Manipulation	Non-participation
2	Decoration	Non-participation
3	Tokenism	Non-participation
4	Assigned but informed	Participation
5	Consulted and informed	Participation
6	Adult initiated, shared decisions with children	Participation
7	Child initiated and directed	Participation
8	Child initiated, shared decision with adults	Participation

Table 1: Hart's ladder of participation
(from [Children's participation](#))

Lundy, L (2007) "Voice" is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal,* **33(6), pp.927–942 ([paywalled](#))**

Similar to Hart, Lundy's model also outlines chronological steps in the realisation of a child's right to participate:

Space	Must be safe and exclusive
Voice	Facilitated to express their view

Audience	Listened to
Influence	View is acted upon and feedback for the decision taken is communicated

Table 2: Lundy model of participation
(from "Voice" is not enough)

Shier, H (2001) Pathways to participation: openings, opportunities and obligations: a new model for enhancing children's participation in decision-making in line with Article 12.1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Children & Society*, **15(2), pp.107–117 (paywalled)**

Shier's theoretical model, like Hart's ladder of participation, includes two dimensions: hearing the child; and giving the child the opportunity to influence decision-making.

Level of participation	Openings	Opportunities	Obligations
1. Children are listened to	Are you ready to listen to children?	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?
2. Children are supported in expressing their views	Are you ready to support children expressing their views?	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be supported in expressing their views?
3. Children's views are taken into account	Are you ready to take children's views into account?	Does your decision-making process enable you to take children's views into account?	Is it a policy requirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision making?
4. Children are involved in decision-making processes	Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making processes?	Is there a procedure that enables children to join in your decision-making processes?	Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in your decision-making processes?

5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making	Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?	Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?	Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?

Table 3: Shier's pathways to participation
(from Pathways to participation)

Evidence

In this summary, we look at examples of participatory frameworks for children and young people, primarily sourced from grey literature. Some of these examples also share the processes used to establish these guidelines. We also included academic literature looking at specific contexts where challenges for participation most commonly occur, which may be useful for informing the development of a framework.

Frameworks

Children's Commissioner for Wales (2017) *The right way: a children's rights approach in Wales* (**pdf**)

This framework provides clear recommendations for integrating children's rights into planning and service delivery. In order to put participation into practice, authorities should aim to:

- Include a clear commitment to participation of children in all significant policy statements
- Carry out initial and regular assessment of children's participation
- Prioritise children's participation throughout the commissioning cycle
- Develop appropriate priorities, targets and programmes of action to increase participation

- Involve children directly in the design, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery
- Identify safe places and space, including time, for children to participate
- Involve children in the recruitment of all staff who have responsibilities that impact on children
- Provide feedback to children and staff on the outcomes of children's involvement
- Provide information to children to support their involvement
- Ensure resources are identified in budgets to support participation

Children's Hearings Scotland (2015) *Framework for the participation of children and young people in the work of CHS* **([pdf](pdf))**

This framework was developed in consultation with over 50 children and young people aged between 11 and 25 who had experience of the Children's Hearings System, and a draft was read by four care experienced young people. Children participate in recruitment, training, communication, planning priorities, research, and policy, and this is written into National Standards, the Corporate Plan and the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011. In addition to the framework, the organisation has an action plan which lays out all the work that needs to be done as a part of the framework and when this work will happen. They also allocated a significant portion of their budget to support children's participation.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2015) *Child-friendly justice: perspectives and experiences of professionals on children's participation in civil and criminal judicial proceedings* **([pdf](pdf))**

This report highlights how child participation in criminal and civil judicial proceedings vary considerably not just across, but also within Member States, pointing to a need for clear and consistent standards and guidelines and the systematic monitoring of their implementation. Two key areas are examined in detail in this report: the right to be heard; and the right to

information. Some of the recommendations to ensure children's right to be heard is fulfilled include:

- Ensuring children are heard in the most favourable settings
- Ensuring professionals receive appropriate training
- Encouraging multidisciplinary cooperation

Fulfilling the child's right to information can be addressed by:

- Ensuring children are informed in the most appropriate way
- Ensuring there is information material adapted to children's needs
- Providing information and advice to children through targeted, adapted information services

Mannion, G (2012) *Children and young people's participation in Scotland: frameworks, standards and principles for practice.* **Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People ([pdf](pdf))**

This report provides a comparison of ten frameworks of participation across Scotland, as well as the findings from interviews with key stakeholders. The following operational principles to support participation were identified:

- Employing safe practices for children and young people
- Being child-friendly in language
- Incorporating training and development for adults and the organisations involved
- Incorporating capacity building for children and young people
- Involving (preferably direct) contact and liaison with the relevant adults (e.g. decision makers)
- Having systems for internal and external monitoring and evaluation
- Involving feedback to children and young people and to the wider public

Northumberland County Council (2017) *Northumberland Children and Young People's Participation Strategy (*[pdf](#)*)*

This framework refers to [Article 12 (UNCRC 1989)](#) in its opening paragraph, and contains a broader vision statement along with aims in line with the ethos of "participation is a way of working rather than an event". Implementation of this framework is supported by the Northumberland Children and Young People's Strategic Participation Group, which has representatives from different sectors, including local authority, voluntary and health.

Seven core standards based on Hart's ladder of participation are identified, which are:

1. We listen to children and young people and respond appropriately to what they say
2. We ensure that children and young people's views inform our work
3. We respond to and support children and young people's individual needs by encouraging them to feel good about themselves and building their confidence
4. We have a welcoming approach and show children and young people our appreciation of their involvement and contribution towards the development of the service
5. We are respectful of children and young people's opinions, knowledge and experience
6. We invest sufficient time to ensure that children and young people can participate in a meaningful way
7. We ensure that children and young people receive meaningful feedback following their input

Redmond, S et al. (2015) *Toward the development of a participation strategy for children and young people: national guidance and local implementation*. **Tusla Child and Family Agency ([pdf](pdf))**

This document provides a background for developing a participation strategy for children and young people, with reference to both Article 12 (UNCRC 1989) and Lundy's model of participation (Lundy 2007). As well as providing a definition of participation and conducting a review of existing participation infrastructure, this report anticipates the following strategic outcomes:

1. 'Champions' drive the participation agenda
2. Staff training and support will increase staff capacity to hear and include the views of children
3. Participation-proofing existing policies, guidelines and procedures of the agency
4. Sustaining existing individual and collective participation structures and establishing additional ones
5. All organisations in receipt of funding by the agency to adhere to participation strategies
6. Ongoing monitoring, reviewing and evaluation to support the development of participation practice

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (2017) Participation and Engagement in SCRA Areas of participatory practice Ensuring positive futures for children and young people in Scotland. ([pdf](pdf))

In this brief fact sheet, four main areas of participatory practice are identified. These are:

- Modern Apprenticeships and funded temporary work experience placements for young people who have been involved in the Children's Hearings System or who have been looked after and accommodated
- Improved communication with, and support to, children, young people, parents and carers, including electronic, paper and personalised services

- Provision of child and young person friendly reception areas and hearing suites to promote a safe and inclusive environment
- Ongoing participative work with - and training of - key partners to improve their overall knowledge and understanding of the Children's Hearings System and service delivery

Participation in social care

Kennan, D et al. (2016) *Children's participation: a systematic literature review exploring the effectiveness of structures and procedures intended to support children's participation in child welfare child protection and alternative care services*. **Galway: The UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre. The National University of Ireland, Galway ([pdf](#))**

This systematic review focuses on structures and procedures to support children's participation in decision-making in child welfare, child protection and alternative care services. 26 studies were located and included in this review, with mixed findings on the effectiveness of structures and procedures to support participation. The use of advocates emerges from the literature as an effective means of enabling children to communicate their views and to influence decisions regarding their personal welfare, protection and care. Other enabling factors include:

- Giving practitioners the time to establish a trusting and stable relationship with the child
- Equipping practitioners with the skills required to communicate effectively with children of all ages and abilities
- Supporting children to engage and adequately preparing them to contribute to decisions being taken
- Providing the openings to communicate the child's views to those with the power to effect change

Križ, K and Skivenes, M (2017) Child welfare workers' perceptions of children's participation: a comparative study of England, Norway and the USA (California). *Child and Family Social Work*, **22(S2), pp.11–22 ([paywalled](#))**

This study consisted of 91 qualitative interviews of practitioners in England, Norway and the USA and used Hart's ladder of participation to assess the level of perceived participation of children. They found that all Norwegian workers perceived children's participation as some form of decision-making, whereas 40% of English and 35% of US workers embraced views of children's participation that can be considered token or non- participation. In addition to this, they found that financial concerns and resource issues may overrule children's opinion in later stages of a case.

Larkins, C et al. (2014) A lattice of participation: reflecting on examples of children's and young people's collective engagement in influencing social welfare policies and practices. *European Journal of Social Work*, **17(5), pp.718–736. ([paywalled](#))**

This article looks at collective participation in welfare settings by examining four case studies from Wales, France and Finland. These case studies represent a range of forms of collective engagement and highlight some key resources which supported children's participation, which were: communicative spaces; time; money; knowledge; social position; attitudes; social networks; institutional commitment; equipment; and food and transport.

The authors found that it is necessary to consider the following to enable children and young people to exercise influence:

- With which children should current resource holder share resources, to enable them to initiate participatory projects?
- What support do children and young people need, and how can their influence in each of the project-stages be encouraged?

- How can formal and informal, physical and virtual communicative spaces and relationships be developed?
- What are the structural constraints and how might they be challenged?

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (2013) *Children and young people's views on participation and principles for practice* **([pdf](#))**

A series of workshops were undertaken with a total of 76 children and young people between the ages of five and 18 years. These workshops aimed to complement the scoping study conducted by [Mannion (2012)](#) by finding out directly from children them their views and experiences of participation. Throughout these workshops, some key recurring themes were identified by the children and young people:

- Understanding of rights
- Honesty and respect
- Being valued and listened to
- Being supported
- Children and adults working together
- Making assumptions
- Feedback and communication

Child protection

Balsells, MÁ et al. (2017) Listening to the voices of children in decision-making: a challenge for the child protection system in Spain. *Children and Youth Services Review*, **79(6), pp.418–425 ([paywalled](#))**

This study collected data using discussion groups and semi-structured interviews from 30 care experience children and young people, 42 parents, and 63 professionals, totalling 135 participants. The authors identified the following challenges when addressing participation in child protection processes:

- Lack of attention paid to the voices of children in decision-making

- Dilemmas arising when the child's perspective contradict the professional opinion concerning child protection
- Lack of information and participation of children in many processes, adding greater anguish and confusion to the situation
- Children facing difficulties in assimilating information during a time of shock and disbelief
- Lack of general information given in the reunification process

Bouma, H et al. (2018) Meaningful participation for children in the Dutch child protection system: a critical analysis of relevant provisions in policy documents. *Child Abuse and Neglect,* **79(June 2017), pp.279–292 ([paywalled](#))**

This research involved the analysis of key policy documents to explore whether and how the participation of children is embedded within the Dutch child protection system. The findings indicate that terminology used in policy documents needs to be specifically focused on children and explicit in how children should be involved. They also found many policy documents do not specify the need for children to be informed, nor do they address how information should be presented to children and young people to ensure they are fully able to participate.

Ethnic minority background

Fylkesnes, MK et al. (2018) Precarious participation: exploring ethnic minority youth's narratives about out-of-home placement in Norway. *Children and Youth Services Review*, **88(March), pp.341–347 ([paywalled](#))**

This research looked at how ethnic minority youth talked about their participation in out-of-home placements and involved interviews with six minority ethnic youth aged 17-19 years in Norway, who had experienced contact with children's welfare services. The findings indicate that successful participation and negotiation relied upon the young people's ability to construct a credible story. This involved striking a balance between maturity and vulnerability, or being perceived as a "competent child". Those who did not succeed in articulating their experiences and wishes in a credible way

risked being marginalised as participants. The authors found, therefore, that embedded cultural ideas of "how children should act" emerged as a potential barrier for participation, silencing youth's everyday experiences and wishes.

Disabled children and young people

McNeilly, P et al. (2015) The participation of disabled children and young people: a social justice perspective. *Child Care in Practice*, 21(3), pp.266–286 ([author manuscript](#))

This article explores the participation of disabled children and young people through a social justice lens. Participants included 18 disabled children and young people, 77 parents and 90 professionals from one Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland. Results showed that for most disabled children and young people, decision-making was firmly grounded in a family-centred model. However, when children and young people were drawn into participatory processes by adults and recognised as partners in interactions with professionals, they wanted more say and were more confident about expressing their views. This study also found that choices and resources were at times limited and this had a key impact on participation and the lives of these children, young people and their parents. The authors recommend the following to ensure children with disabilities are involved with decision-making processes:

- Parents and professionals able to actively encourage participatory practices
- Children and young people are provided with the information they need
- Professionals further develop the necessary communication skills to meet the needs of individuals

Sandland, R (2017) A clash of conventions? Participation, power and the rights of disabled children. *Social Inclusion*, 5(3), p.93-103 ([Open Access](#))

This article analyzes the relationship between [Article 12 (UNCR 1989)](#) and [Article 7 (CRPD 2006)](#) with regard to the participation rights of disabled

children. The author found that these rights have not been clarified by either committee, and that much work on this topic fails to develop an adequate understanding of power relations around childhood, which, like disability, construct a set of barriers to participation.

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