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Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making **ACTION PLAN 2024-2028**



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Glossary

CYPSC	Children and Young People's Services Committees
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DOH	Department of Health
ELC	Early Learning and Care
HSE	Health Service Executive
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Others
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency
MHC	Mental Health Commission
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NDP	National Development Plan
NPO	National Participation Office
NYAI	National Youth Assembly of Ireland
SAC	School Age Childcare
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Minister's Foreword



I am pleased to present the *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028*, which continues the important work of ensuring that children and young people have their say on policies and services which affect their lives. Children and young people must be heard on key decisions influencing their current experiences and future possibilities. This Action Plan builds on the achievements of the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020*. (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015) It will strengthen existing good practice and expand capacity to include more children and young people in decision-making, maximising opportunities for them to engage meaningfully with the issues relevant to them.

We are entering a new phase in realising the right of children and young people to be heard on matters which affect them. Inclusivity is a key factor in this phase: all children, regardless of their circumstances or abilities, must be given the chance to have their opinions heard and taken into account when decisions that impact on their lives are being taken. As with all complex endeavours, this takes commitment, resources and time. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth will continue to advance knowledge and provide practical supports to Government Departments and State agencies undertaking this work. These supports are also key to the implementation of the actions included in this document, as well as the future actions to be developed throughout the lifetime of this Action Plan.

Ireland's leadership in child and youth participation is recognised internationally. This includes providing support for the substantial permanent structures and evidence-based mechanisms that we have in place to facilitate participation at local and national level. The Lundy Model of Participation, on which Ireland's participation framework and this Action Plan are based, provides clear direction as to what constitutes good practice when engaging children and young people in decision-making. We have the opportunity to maintain our leadership position through the implementation of this Action Plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Roderic O'Gorman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roderic" and the last name "O'Gorman" clearly distinguishable.

Roderic O'Gorman TD

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth



Chapter 1

Context and background

This *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028* is the second national plan to support children and young people to participate in decision-making. It builds on the ambition and achievements of the first *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020*, which set out and delivered on the government's commitment to realise the right of children and young people to be heard when decisions that affect their lives are being made.

The first *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020* was ground breaking in Ireland and was the first of its kind in Europe. It was also the first constituent strategy of *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014), embracing the five outcome areas of that framework:

- Active and healthy,
- Achieving in learning and development,
- Safe and protected from harm,
- Economic security and opportunity,
- Connected, respected and contributing to their world.

These outcome areas have been carried forward into *Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028* (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), 2023) and they will also guide the focus of this Action Plan.

Children and young people aged under 18 years have the right under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to have their voice heard. Children and young people in this age group are the predominant focus of this Action Plan. The government also recognises that young people aged 18-24 years may have unique difficulties exercising their rights, including their right to have their voice heard in decision-making processes. Accordingly, this Action Plan includes young people aged up to 24 years.

Many Government Departments and State agencies have already begun the process of including the views of children and young people in their policy development processes. This includes those Government Departments and State agencies with responsibility for policy research, legislation and service provision relating to:

- health,
- education,
- transport,
- climate action,
- rural life,
- arts and culture,
- play and recreation, and
- life in care.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has supported many of these processes. DCEDIY has provided support, expertise and practical assistance through Hub na nÓg (the national centre for excellence on child and youth participation), the National Participation Office, and focused consultations and engagement with Comhairle na nÓg (the nationwide youth council structure supported by DCEDIY and local authorities). In 2022, the National Youth Assembly of Ireland was established to provide a forum for consultation and discussion with children and young people aged 12-24 years on issues of national importance.

Hub na nÓg provides methodological expertise and training through structured training programmes that involve assessment of need and tailored modules across government and non-government sectors. In 2023, Hub na nÓg and the National Participation Office developed and delivered the first tailored training for civil and public servants, which was aimed at building capacity among civil and public servants to engage meaningfully with children and young people when national policy decisions that will impact on their lives are being taken. A significant ambition of this Action Plan is to embed structured rights-based online training in participation principles and practice across all professions working with and for children at the academic, policy and practice levels.

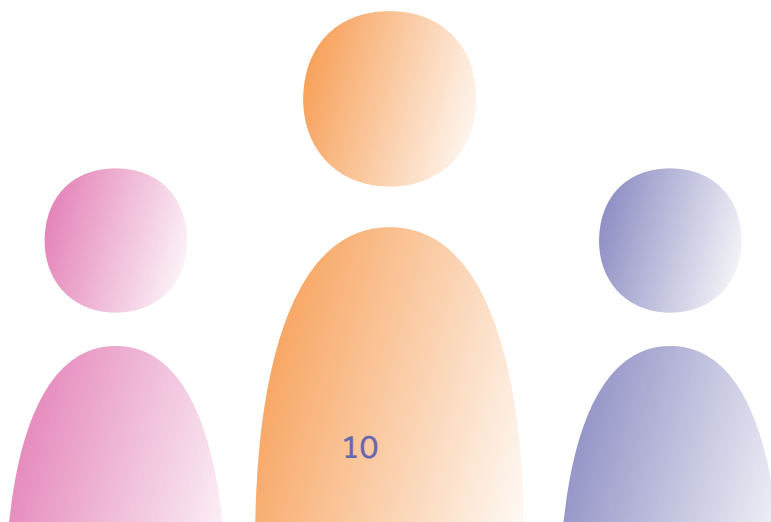
Why is a second participation action plan needed?

Much progress has been made towards realising the rights of children and young people to have a voice in decisions which have an impact on their lives. Ireland has developed a strong platform from which to develop and expand good practice in child and youth participation. However, more work remains to be done in order to ensure that the voices of children and young people are fully heard on the range of decisions affecting them. The overall aim of this Action Plan is to promote the inclusion of children and young people in decision-making at all levels: in the home, in school, in their community and at national level. This second Action Plan provides a framework to support all Government Departments and State agencies to have meaningful engagements with children and young people when developing relevant policy, legislation, research and services.

This Action Plan will enable the voice of children and young people to be included in decision-making across a wider range of areas. New areas in which it is important for children and young people's voices to be heard have emerged since the first participation strategy was published in 2015. These include children and young people's engagement in the digital space, in situations where families are living in emergency accommodation, or where they are part of a migrant community.

Successive annual update reports have indicated areas where more work needs to be done. Areas where more work is needed and which are addressed in this Action Plan include:

- gathering data on the scale, types of engagement and cohorts of children and young people involved in participative events;
- closing the feedback loop when a consultation is held with children and young people – as outlined in the *National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (DCEDIY, 2021) children and young people should be told where and how their input was used and what, if any, impact it had on the final decisions made;
- broadening the reach of government-funded participation structures to include the voices of children and young people who are not typically heard or empowered to participate;
- maximising the opportunities presented by technology for including children and young people safely in decision-making through online fora;
- supporting parents to include the voices of their children and young people in decision-making in the home;
- contributing to and supporting the international momentum for hearing and acting on the voices of children and young people;
- building capacity across all sectors and among all practitioners working with and for children and young people effectively and safely to consult them on issues relevant to their lives; and
- elevating training in participation to the status of formal training and continuing professional development for all professionals working with and for children and young people.



What does participation involve?

Participation: Definition and model

The UNCRC 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." (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009)

This requires that children and young people are involved in decision-making processes in everyday settings, such as at home, in classrooms, in childcare settings, in healthcare, in out-of-school settings, and in national policy decisions that affect their lives.

Children and young people are recognised as rights holders and "citizens of today" rather than merely as "beings in becoming" (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009), and their capacity to participate in decisions that affect them evolves as they grow and mature.

Children and young people have expertise in their own lives. Adults do not always know how children feel, what they think or what they like, and accordingly have a duty to give due weight to children and young people's views in decision-making processes.

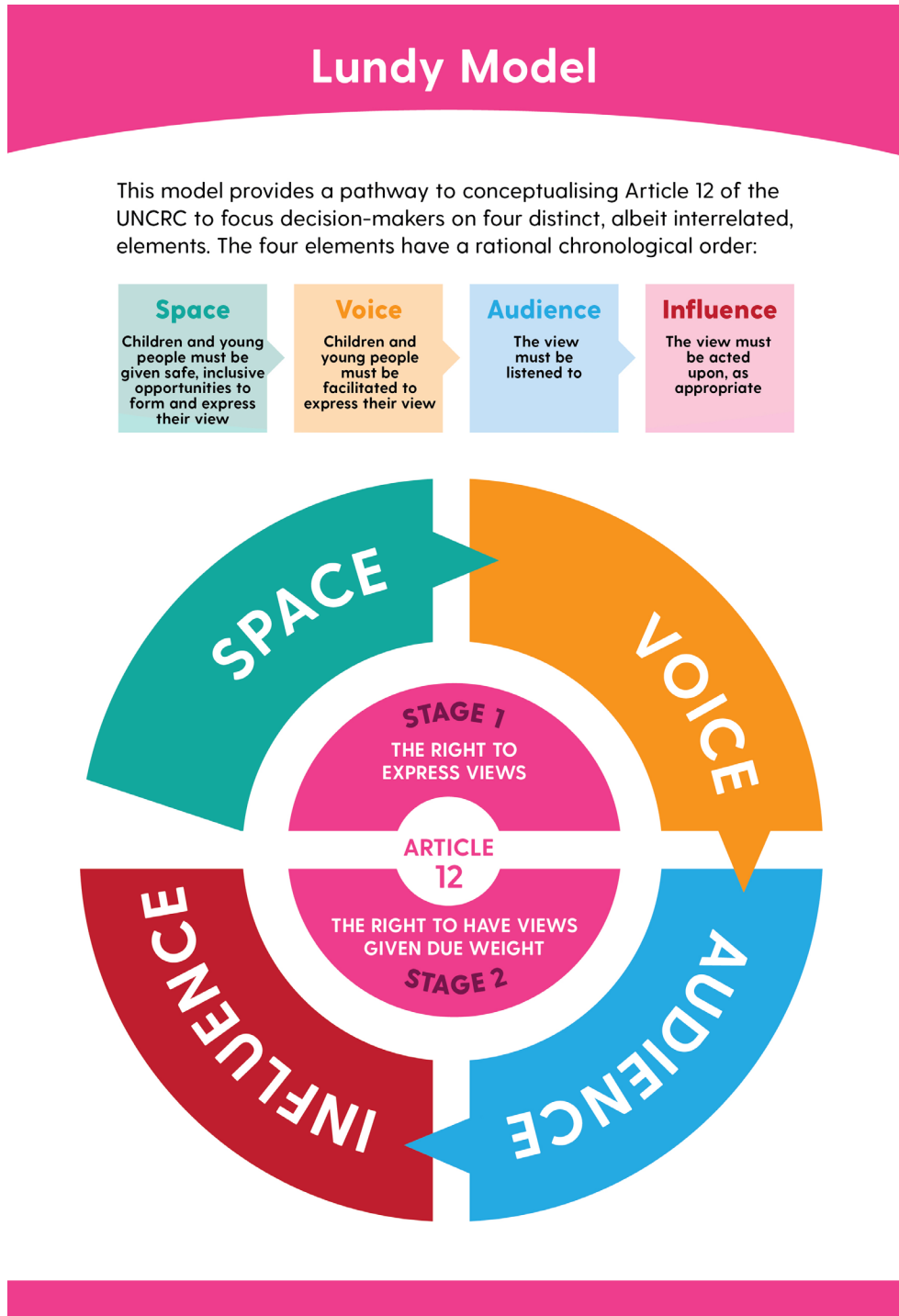
Lundy model of participation

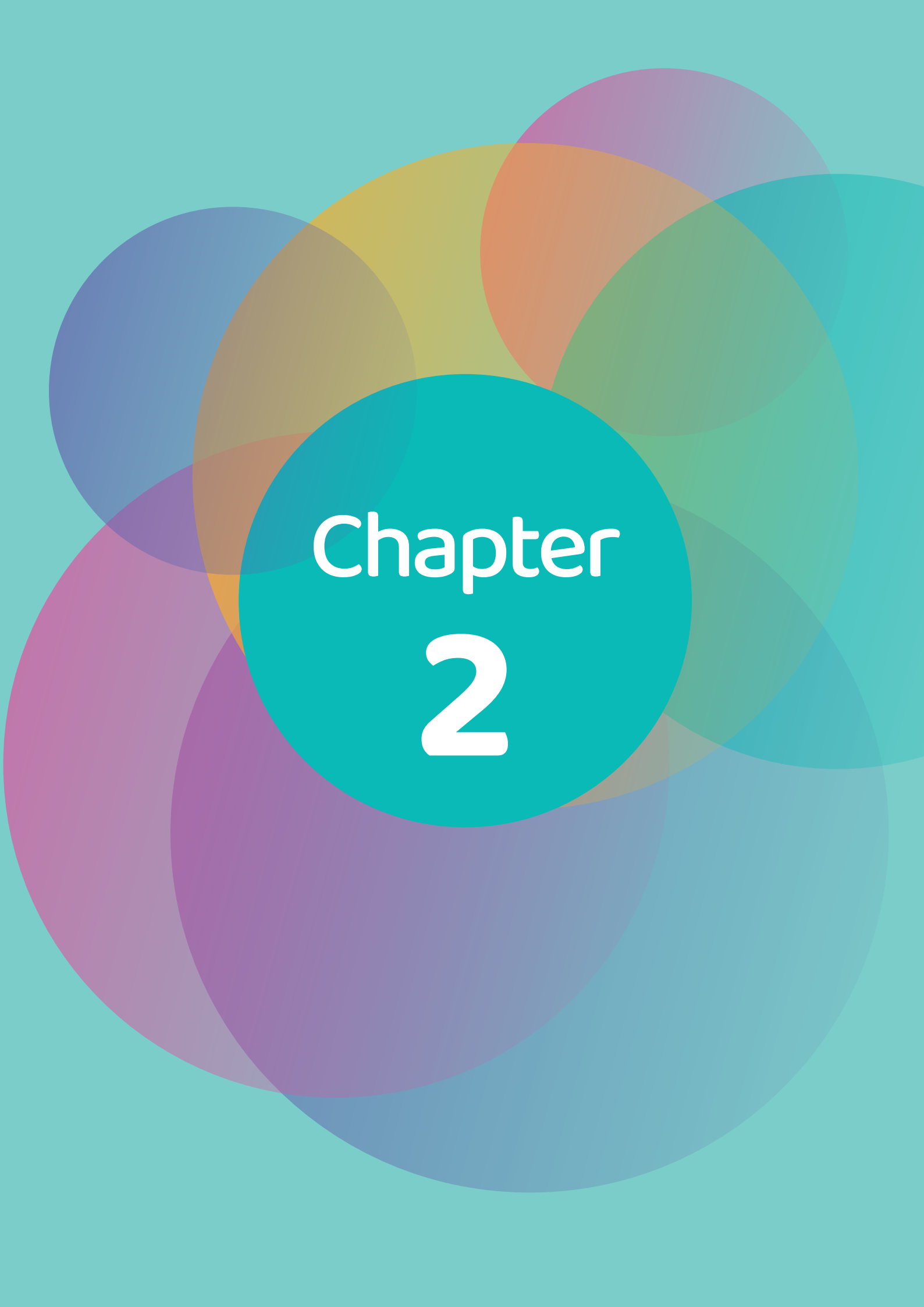
This *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028* is underpinned by a rights-based model of participation developed by Professor Laura Lundy. In collaboration with Professor Lundy, a revised version of the Lundy model of participation was developed for the *Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* (DCEDIY, 2021).

The Framework is the strategic foundation from which Hub na nÓg develops targeted policy and practical guidance. To date, actions that have been taken in order to implement the Framework include the delivery of a capacity-building grant and training programme across sectors, including organisations that support seldom-heard children and young people, youth services, and early years and arts organisations. Plans to support further sectors are in development.

Figure 1: The Lundy model of participation

The National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (DCEDIY, 2021)





Chapter 2

What does this second Action Plan contain?

Priority objectives

The seven priority objectives of the first National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020 will remain as priorities for this new Action Plan. These objectives are that children and young people will have a voice in decisions:

- in their local communities;
- in early education, schools and the wider formal and non-formal education systems;
- that affect their health and well-being, including on the health and social services delivered to them; and
- in the courts and legal system.

In addition to the priority objectives from the previous strategy, this new Action Plan is also underpinned by the following objectives:

- The voice of children and young people will be embedded in government decision-making and in the development of policy, legislation and research.
- Effective leadership to champion and promote the participation of children and young people will be promoted.
- Education and training for professionals working with and on behalf of children and young people will be developed.

Fundamental principles of the *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028*

The commitments and actions of this Action Plan are also underpinned by the following fundamental principles:

- That the right of children and young people to participate in decisions that affect their lives is recognised.
- That the protection and welfare of children and young people are ensured in accordance with *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Tusla, 2017).
- That the participation of seldom-heard and vulnerable children and young people in decision-making is ensured by means of establishing and improving mechanisms for their participation.
- That participation initiatives are underpinned by robust data collection, monitoring and evaluation.

Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028: Action areas

The *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028* will focus on eight action areas. These are to:

- embed the voice of children and young people in decision-making and in the development of policy, legislation and research across government;
- build capacity across all sectors relevant to the lives of children and young people in order to include them in decision-making;
- promote the inclusion of children and young people in decision-making in their communities and in their homes;
- embed the voice of children and young people in decision-making in the education system;
- ensure that children and young people are included in decision-making in the health and social services that they receive;
- enable decision-making in court and in the courts system to include the voice of children and young people;
- support the safe, equitable participation of children and young people in decision-making online; and
- develop participation structures that are inclusive, accessible and safe for all children and young people, including those who need additional supports in order to engage and participate.

What will success look like?

The successful implementation of this Action Plan will result in the views of children and young people being harnessed in order to inform policy, services, legislation and research in areas relevant to their lives. Their views will also be sought in the evaluation and monitoring of relevant services and policies. The benefits of involving children and young people in this way that have been identified include improving the quality and impact of policy and legislation; engaging the interest and involvement of young people in the life of their communities; and increasing children and young people's sense of belonging and involvement with decision-making at home, in school and in their communities.

The implementation of the overarching actions in this Action Plan will:

- give children and young people and their parents, caregivers, teachers and service providers, as well as policy-makers, a greater awareness of the right of children and young people to have a voice in decisions that will impact on their lives;
- provide those working with and for children and young people (including policy-makers, legislators and public service providers) access to structured, rights-based online training in participation principles and practice across all professions working with and for children at academic, policy and practice level;

- provide continued support for the international participation agenda and contribute to international platforms for the online sharing of innovative practices, methodologies and training initiatives;
- encourage a focus on collecting data on participation practice in order to inform future developments and to allow better assessment of the impacts and outcomes of participative mechanisms;
- further develop permanent participation mechanisms to be inclusive, welcoming spaces so that all children and young people will be welcome regardless of their living situation, ethnicity, physical ability or any other consideration or requirements they may have, and that the appropriate mechanisms needed for their participation will be provided;
- promote full implementation of the *Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* with a focus on providing information to children and young people on how their input has been used in the process with which they engaged; and
- normalise the inclusion of children and young people in decision-making processes so that it is an element of each relevant process, and so that policy-makers have the capacity to undertake such inclusion or knowledge of where they can access the expertise they need to do so.

This Action Plan will drive the continued development of participation structures and practice at local, national and international level among organisations, sectors, practitioners, and Government Departments and State agencies. Through the implementation of these actions, and by using and enhancing existing resources and supports, DCEDIY will continue to innovate and lead the participation of children and young people in decision-making across government and internationally.

What are the key new initiatives in this Action Plan?

The key initiatives that this Action Plan introduces are as follows:

- The Action Plan will expand participation initiatives into a series of new areas, including the home, the courts and care settings.
- A new Student Participation Unit will be established in the Department of Education in order to develop and improve the participation process in the education sector.
- Guidance will be produced and provided for participation processes involving children and young people with a disability.
- Training modules will be developed for policy-makers, service providers and professionals working with and for children and young people in order to enable them to undertake participation initiatives with children and young people.

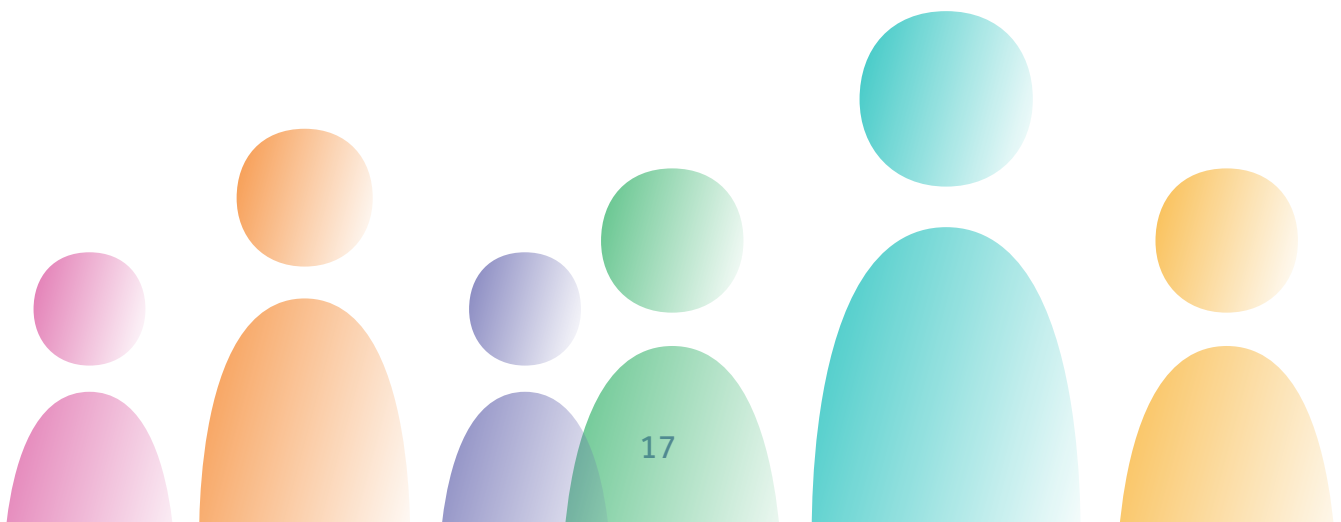
How will this Action Plan be implemented and monitored?

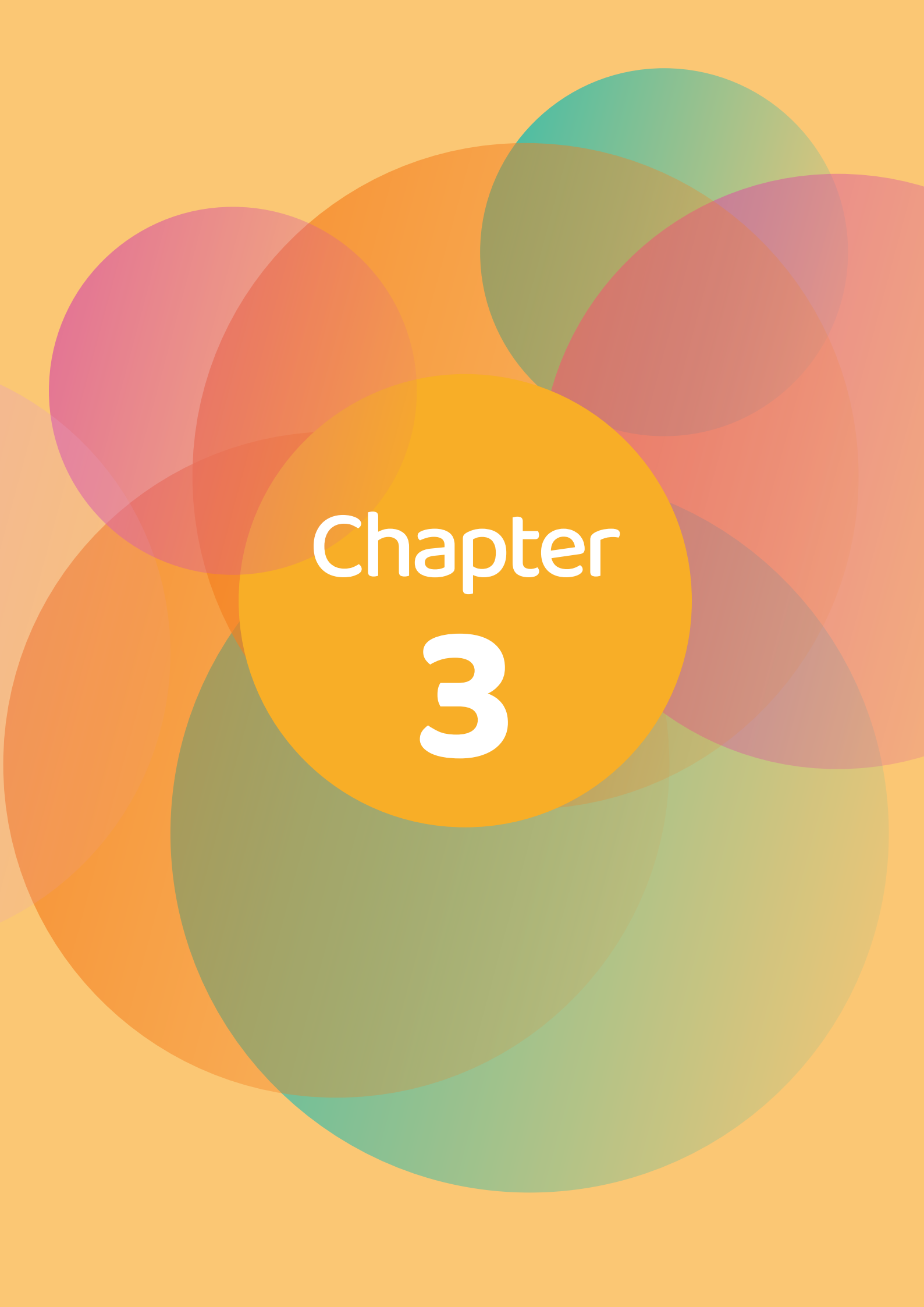
Each action in this Action Plan is assigned to a lead or joint lead Government Department or State agency, with partner Government Departments and State agencies also named where relevant. An indicative time frame within the lifetime of the Action Plan is given for each action. In the case of actions which apply to all Government Departments and State agencies, or that represent a particular approach to embedding the voice of children and young people, this time frame may span the lifetime of the Action Plan, i.e. 2024-2028. An annual progress report will be collated and published on the DCEDIY website.

DCEDIY will establish an interdepartmental group in order to raise awareness and share information on best practice, learning and developments in relation to including the voice of children and young people in decision-making.

New actions will be developed throughout the life span of this Action Plan in response to changing needs and the policy focus of DCEDIY and other Government Departments. New areas may also be identified through research and evaluation processes. The requirements of Ireland's international commitments may also generate new actions, including in relation to data collection and reporting.

Overall monitoring of the implementation of actions in the *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028* will be closely aligned with, and subject to, the cross-sectoral Advisory Committee established to monitor and report progress on the implementation of *Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028*.





Chapter 3

How the *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028* was developed

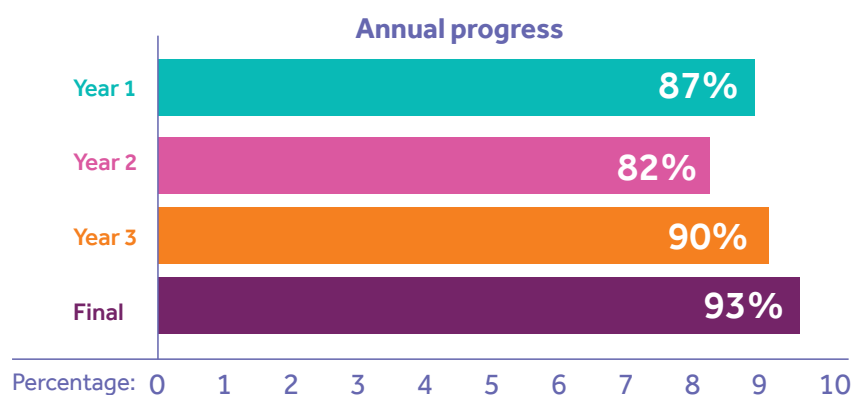
The *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028* was developed on the basis of the following review and consultation processes:

- A review of the implementation of actions in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020*.
- A public consultation and open submission process.
- Targeted consultations with children and young people on the implementation of their rights.
- A review of recent consultations undertaken by Government Departments and State agencies in order to identify key issues for children and young people.

A review of the implementation of actions in the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020

The *Final Review of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015-2020*, (DCEDIY, 2023) indicates that 93% of the agreed actions have reached completion or are in progress. It also confirms that Government Departments and State agencies are actively progressing 92 of the 99 agreed actions that were identified in the *Mid-Term Review and Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2019).

Figure 2: Annual progress of the implementation of actions in the *Final Review of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015-2020* (DCEDIY, 2023)



Actions progressed

Positive progress was made on key actions for including the voices of children and young people in the development of government policy and in the delivery of services for children and young people. Progress was made on implementing the following actions:

- Action 1.1: Government Departments and State agencies will consult with children and young people appropriately in the development of policy, legislation, research and services, with the support of DCEDIY.
- Action 1.2: All Statements of Strategy published by Government Departments and State agencies will include participation of children and young people as an objective and an action.
- Action 1.3: Building on existing mechanisms, incremental progress will be made on funding criteria for publicly funded programmes and schemes that are relevant to children and young people, requiring consultation with children and young people.

Actions for further development

A number of actions in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020* were viewed as requiring ongoing monitoring and focus in order to ensure that all Government Departments and State agencies maintain the required standards. These actions are as follows:

- Action 1.4: Government Departments and State agencies and their funded bodies that provide services for children and young people will develop child- and youth-friendly feedback and complaints mechanisms.
- Action 6.2: Data collection, evaluation and monitoring of children and young people's participation initiatives will be conducted to ensure robust findings and outcomes that influence the development of policies and services.

All shared actions will be carried forward into the 2024-2028 Action Plan, and are applicable to all Government Departments and State agencies.

A public consultation and open submission process

In December 2022, Roderic O’Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, launched a public consultation to secure the views and opinions of the public in order to inform this new Action Plan.

Two consultation options were offered:

- open submissions from individuals or organisations using a template which asked questions in order to capture what is working well, what is not going well, which new actions are needed, and what priorities should be included in the new policy framework on child and youth participation; and
- an online questionnaire which sought respondents’ views on support for children and young people to have a voice in decision-making in four settings – in communities, in education, in health and social services, and in the courts and legal sector – and on new areas for the policy framework, as well as their views on ways to secure the perspectives of under-represented children and young people.

Four organisations undertook consultations within their networks in order to inform their written responses. One organisation, the National Parents Council (Primary), developed two online surveys (one for parents and one for children and young people) which asked the questions posed as part of the open submission process but with a focus on education. The results of this consultation have been integrated within the DCEDIY survey findings.

Profile of respondents

There were 961 responses from the 3 consultation processes, including 146 responses to the DCEDIY online survey and 51 written submissions. The National Parents Council survey (with the focus on children and young people’s voices in education) was completed by 764 individuals (598 parents and 166 children and young people).

Figure 3: Overview of responses to the different consultation processes

Summary of findings

The findings of the consultation processes are outlined in the following two subsections.

What is working well?

- Respondents indicated that current policy, strategies and legislation that support the participation of children and young people are working well, including the ratification of the UNCRC and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD); the *Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025* (Department of Justice, 2022); the Review of the Child Care Act 1991; national-level strategies such as the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020*; and organisational strategies such as *The Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023* (Tusla, 2019) and the *Oberstown Strategy for the Participation of Young People in Decision-making* (Oberstown, 2017).
- Participation structures/consultations (e.g. the range of formal participation structures such as Comhairle na nÓg, Dáil na nÓg, National Youth Assemblies, school councils, etc.), as well as structures within youth organisations (e.g. Foróige/the National Youth Council of Ireland).
- Participation methodologies using the Lundy model of participation, the use of creative and appropriate methodologies to secure children and young people's voices, and the increased use of online and digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic were noted as widening participation.
- Increased awareness among children and young people of their right to a voice, as well as the provision of support and advocacy to children and young people in order to enable them to make their voices heard.
- Improved capacity building by means of research, training and awareness has contributed to the growing evidence base for and awareness of children and young people's right to a voice in decision-making.

What is not working well?

- Respondents highlighted a low awareness of rights and limited understanding of the current participation structures, as well as a lack of awareness among some adults of the value of youth voices and the benefits of seeking and listening to children and young people.
- There were concerns that not all children and young people are represented in consultations, participation structures and decision-making.
- Limited follow-up, feedback and influence, with not enough attention being given to feedback loops.
- The voices of some seldom-heard children and young people were indicated as being absent from national policies and legislation and from local decision-making (e.g. in relation to local area development, housing, school buildings, and social and leisure spaces).
- The impact of children's and young people's basic needs not being met is detrimental to their capacity to participate meaningfully in decision-making; for example, in terms of lack of housing, lack of services/long waiting lists, digital poverty, or the effect of hidden harm.

The full report of the consultations that informed the *Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Plan 2024-2028* is available to view at: <https://hubnanog.ie/report-on-the-public-consultation-on-the-next-government-policy-framework-for-the-participation-of-children-and-young-people-in-decision-making>

Targeted consultations with children and young people on the implementation of their rights

DCEDIY undertook a series of consultations with children and young people to secure their views on the implementation of children and young people's rights in Ireland. The consultations were carried out in the context of the State's preparations for Ireland's reports to the United Nations (UN) Committees on the Rights of the Child and on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and to the UN Human Rights Committee under the Universal Periodic Review process in 2022.

Two consultation processes were undertaken. In the first, 1,215 children aged between 4 and 13 years were identified in 21 primary schools, and in the second, 46 young people aged 13-18 years were identified from selected Comhairle na nÓg (youth councils). The report of these consultations was published in *What WE think: Consultation with Children and Young People on Children's Rights* (DCEDIY 2021).

Participating children and young people came from a variety of locations (urban/rural) and were fairly representative of harder-to-reach populations (children living in disadvantaged areas, non-English speakers or children with special educational needs (including Autism Spectrum Disorder)).

Additional consultations took place in 2022 with young carers, minority ethnic young people and young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

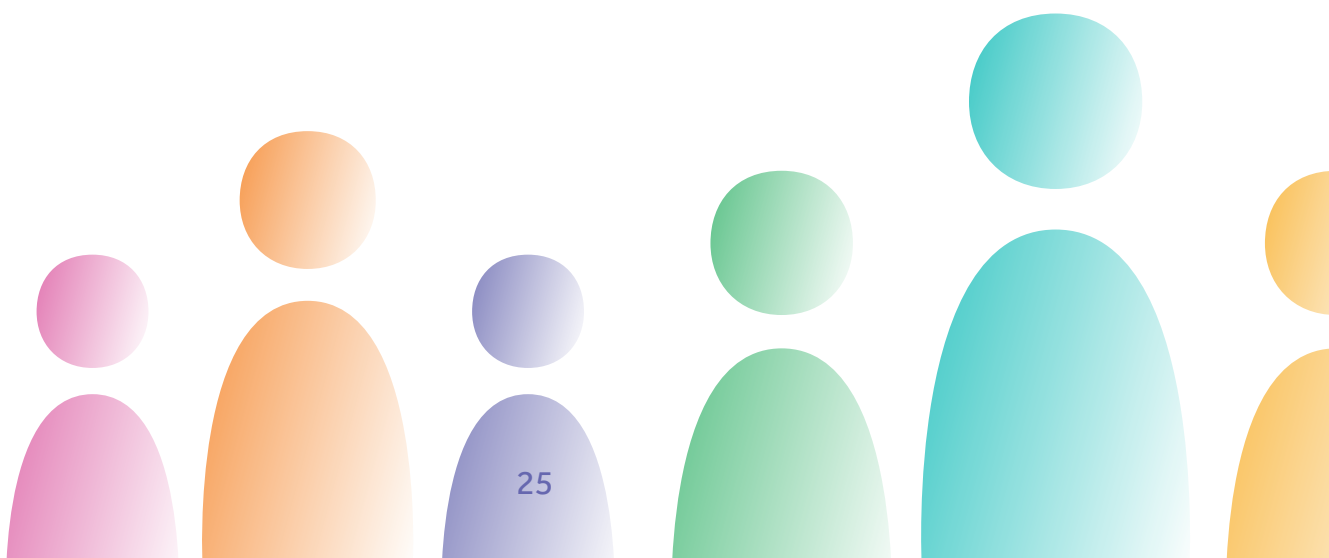
A review of recent consultations undertaken by Government Departments and State agencies in order to identify key issues for children and young people

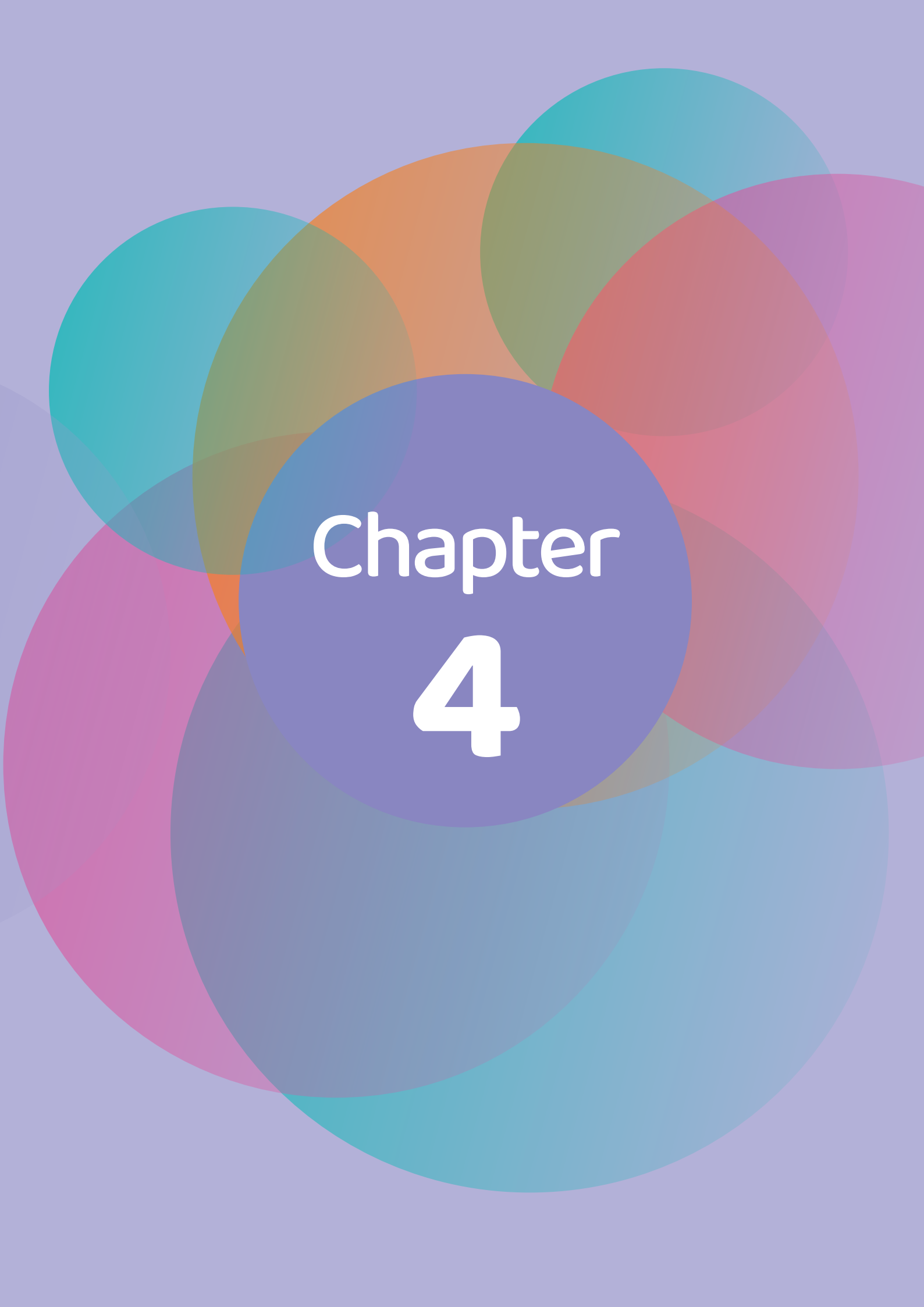
Additionally, as part of the preparations for Ireland's report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, DCEDIY commissioned a review of recent consultations undertaken by Government Departments and State agencies in order to:

- identify key issues raised by children and young people relevant to the UNCRC;
- provide an overview of the emerging themes relevant to the implementation of the rights of children (including specific groups); and
- highlight any gaps raised by the consultations.

In total, 20 consultations with 14,567 children and young people aged between 5 and 26 years were included in this review, published in 2022 as *What WE think: A review of past consultations with children and young people* (DCEDIY, 2022) as part of the UNCRC reporting process.

Children and young people shared their experiences of specific services, such as the childcare system, adoption regulations, direct provision, and the Garda Youth Diversion Projects.





Chapter 4

DCEDIY-funded structures and mechanisms that support the participation of children and young people in decision-making

DCEDIY funds a wide range of structures and mechanisms to support the participation of children and young people in decision-making. These constitute the key architecture for the implementation of this Action Plan.

The structures and mechanisms funded by DCEDIY are as follows:

- Hub na nÓg, the centre for excellence on child and youth participation
- The *National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015- 2020* based on the Lundy model of child participation
- Capacity-building training programmes
- The National Participation Office
- Comhairle na nÓg
- The *Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan* (DCEDIY, 2021)
- Dáil na nÓg, the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive and Seanad na nÓg
- The National Youth Assembly of Ireland.

Hub na nÓg

The establishment of Hub na nÓg was a key commitment in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making, 2015-2020* as a means to support the strategy's implementation.

Hub na nÓg is a national centre of excellence and coordination. 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 the voices of those that are seldom heard. Hub na nÓg also leads on innovation in methods and approaches for including all children and young people in decision-making in order to ensure accessibility and inclusivity in participation in decision-making practices.

'Seldom heard' is a term used to describe children and young people who have fewer opportunities and more obstacles in their lives. This may include, but is not confined to: babies, toddlers and children aged under 5 years; children and young people with a disability; children and young people with neurodiversity, experiencing mental health issues, in care, and/or in aftercare; children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, rural areas, and/or

disadvantaged areas; children and young people experiencing homelessness; young carers; children of prisoners; children and young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and others (LGBTQI+); quiet children and young people; and aged out unaccompanied minors.

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

Hub na nÓg published the [*Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making*](#) in 2021 in collaboration with Professor Laura Lundy. This Framework supports Government Departments, State agencies and other organisations to improve their practices in terms of listening to children and young people and giving them a voice in decision-making. The Framework focuses on children and young people's individual and collective participation in decision-making, whether that takes place in person, online or both.

Meaningful and sustained participation by children and young people in decision-making requires strong organisational commitment, and the implementation of the Framework is supported by four enabling factors: organisational buy-in, training and capacity building for decision-makers, resources (financial, human, time), and monitoring and feedback.

National Participation Office

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

The NPO operates under the guidance and oversight of DCEDIY and has responsibility for overseeing and implementing the *Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan*, which aims to strengthen and develop Comhairle na nÓg to be the leading youth participation structure in Ireland. DCEDIY directs, oversees and supports the work of the NPO in collaborating on cross-government engagement with Comhairle na nÓg and other participation structures, stakeholder engagement and relationship building.

Comhairle na nÓg

Since 2002, Comhairle na nÓg (local youth councils) have been giving young people in Ireland a voice on the development of local policies and services in each of the 31 local authorities. Young people aged 12-18 years become members of their local Comhairle na nÓg through their schools, youth organisations and community groups.

In addition to being the recognised national structure for children and young people's participation in decision-making in all 31 local authorities, Comhairle na nÓg also provides young people with a voice in decision-making nationally through Dáil na nÓg (national youth parliament), Seanad na nÓg (youth senate), the NYAI, and government consultations on national policy. The Comhairle na nÓg network of youth councils is supported by the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund and the NPO's team of Participation Officers.

The Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan

[The Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan](#) launched in 2021, is currently being implemented. The Five Year Development Plan builds on the strengths of Comhairle na nÓg as a structure for allowing children and young people to have a say in decisions that affect them. The Plan aims for Comhairle na nÓg to reach more children and young people, influence more decision-makers and deliver on Article 12 of the UNCRC in order to make a true difference in the lives of young people.

The *Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan* sets out a clear vision and mission for Comhairle na nÓg for the 5 years covered by the Plan, supported by a set of values that express the shared beliefs of what is important to the Comhairle na nÓg community.

Dáil na nÓg and the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive

Since 2001, a national youth parliament for 12-18-year-olds, Dáil na nÓg has been held every 2 years, hosted by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Approximately 200 elected delegates from the 31 Comhairle na nÓg attend Dáil na nÓg to discuss issues voted on by each Comhairle as being of importance to young people in their area. From 2024 onward, this event will take place in the Dáil Chamber, with the assistance of the Citizen Engagement Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The delegates vote on the issues and make a recommendation for the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive to work on over its 2-year term. The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive is a representative group of 31 young people from each Comhairle who are tasked with progressing an issue of national importance for young people.

DCEDIY supports the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive's work programme to engage with relevant influencers, stakeholders and policy-makers and to ensure that the views of children and young people are reflected appropriately and meaningfully in government decision-making.

Seanad na nÓg

The inaugural Seanad na nÓg was held in 2022 as part of the Seanad100 celebrations. Building on the success of the event, DCEDIY and the Houses of the Oireachtas will work together to facilitate the ongoing connection between Comhairle and the Seanad, in conjunction with other youth organisations.

Every 2 years, and alternating with Dáil na nÓg, the young people of Comhairle will request access to the Seanad Chamber to discuss, debate and vote on key issues they wish the Seanad to debate.

Comhairle na nÓg Showcase

The biennial Comhairle na nÓg Showcase brings up to 500 young people together to represent their Comhairle, present their work to invited local and national representatives, and network with each other. The second part of the day is structured around workshops on topics previously selected at the local Comhairle level. In future years this event will be focused on identifying an agreed topic for Seanad na nÓg, which will be held in the same year as each Comhairle na nÓg Showcase.

The National Youth Assembly of Ireland (NYAI)

DCEDIY established the NYAI in 2022 to meet key commitments in the Programme for Government by collaborating closely with other Government Departments to convene National Youth Assemblies on specific policy areas. The NYAI makes recommendations to inform government policy on areas such as climate, rural development and other issues of importance to young people. DCEDIY and the NPO support the relevant Government Departments to ensure that young NYAI delegates are effectively facilitated to express their views and to be informed about what influence their views have.

The main function of the NYAI 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 the NYAI may also feed into citizen assemblies and other broader citizen consultations.

EU Youth Dialogue

The EU Youth Dialogue process gives young people all over Europe a chance to have their say about decisions affecting their lives. It is a process that brings together young people and policy-makers from across the European Union (EU) to jointly discuss, formulate and put forward proposals for the development of youth policy at national and EU level.

The EU Youth Dialogue is implemented in work cycles of 18 months, each focusing on one topic (overall thematic priority), which is discussed by young people and policy-makers in all EU member states. The results of these discussions serve as a common basis for the joint deliberations between young people and ministry representatives from all EU member states at the EU Youth Conferences, which are organised successively by each EU Presidency every 6 months.

The policy proposals resulting from the EU Youth Dialogue are then brought to the member states in the Council of the European Union, which decides on whether to include them in Council documents setting common practices and standards for youth policy in the EU.

A National Working Group, with representatives from the relevant stakeholders and chaired by DCEDIY, has overall responsibility for the EU Youth Dialogue in Ireland. The National Youth Council of Ireland plays a key role in supporting the implementation of the EU Youth Dialogue through its Young Voices programme.

Young Voices programme

Young Voices is implemented by the NYCI in partnership with DCEDIY and the National Working Group on EU Youth Dialogue.

Young Voices is a programme that offers ongoing opportunities for young people aged 16-30 years who have an interest in making change, and works on the thematic areas identified by the EU Presidencies.

The challenge for Young Voices is to explore the issues, consult as many young people as possible and, ultimately, to propose actions that might have a positive outcome for young people at national and EU level.

Participation training programmes

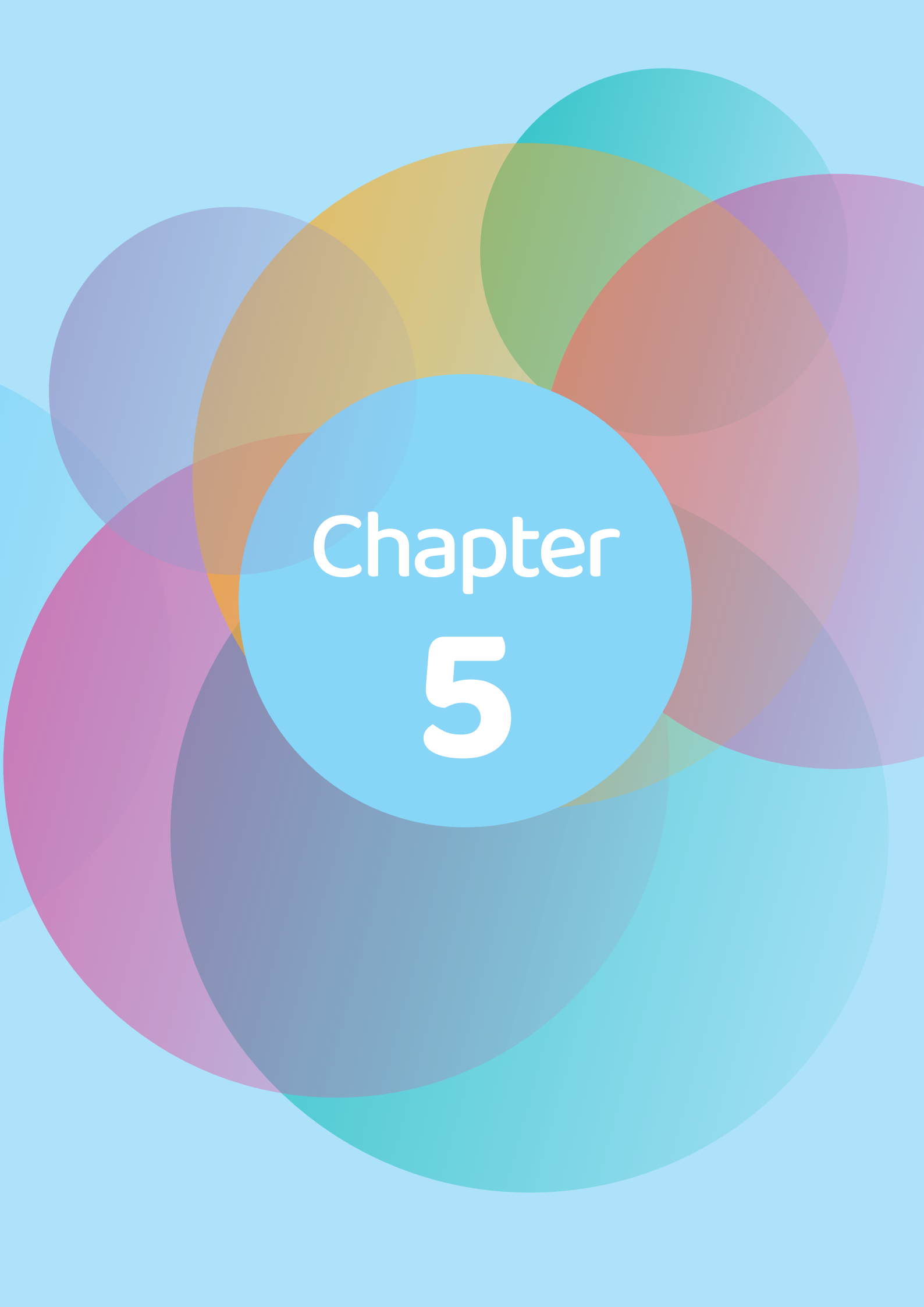
Hub na nÓg provides both bespoke training and sectorally targeted training programmes based on a child rights approach to involving children and young people in decision-making in line with the UNCRC and measures in the UNCRPD regarding the voice of the child. The training supports organisations to involve children and young people in decision-making in all aspects of their policy, planning, practice, services and culture.

Training and development consists of theoretical learning, planning skills and practical skills based on a child rights approach to involving children and young people in decision-making.

Hub na nÓg training and development design is based on a Training Needs Analysis process conducted with Government Departments/State agencies, State bodies and other organisations that request training or development. Hub na nÓg also designs and delivers training which takes a targeted sectoral approach to building capacity for children and young people's involvement in decision-making processes in everyday settings. This includes direct training that Hub na nÓg designs and provides to participants, as well as the use of 'train the trainer' training programmes, increasing capacity within sectors to train others and broaden the reach of training for participation in decision-making in everyday spaces in the lives of children and young people.

Stakeholders trained by Hub na nÓg report the value of gaining theoretical learning and practical skills that are tailored to the role and work of their organisations. They also note their ability to plan children and young people's participation processes, and to more effectively listen to children and young people and ensure that their views are taken seriously, with the possibility of leading to a positive outcome or change.





Chapter 5

Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028

This Action Plan will be implemented in tandem with [Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028](#), (DCEDIY, 2023) which was launched on 21 November 2023. The Young Ireland Framework:

- sets out current issues impacting on children and young people that they have identified, as demonstrated by the Children and Young People's Indicator Set and as recently highlighted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child;
- sets out the work necessary in order to create an environment that ensures that children and young people are a central part of everyone's agenda;
- announces spotlight programmes to focus on the most significant challenges for children and young people, with resources from across the government;
- re-establishes governance structures through which the State will work with civil society partners in order to provide renewed leadership and impetus to realise new and existing policy commitments;
- identifies the priority areas requiring coordinated action across the government; and
- identifies a number of complementary actions to address issues that were identified during the development of the Framework.

The Young Ireland Framework retains the five outcome areas of [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014-2020](#), which are that children and young people:

- are active and healthy,
- are achieving in learning and development,
- are safe and protected from harm,
- have economic security and opportunity, and
- are connected, respected and contributing to their world.

This requires a number of actions at a systemic level to build an enabling environment within which to place their rights and well-being as a core part of policy and decision-making. The participation of children and young people in decision-making is a core component of the enabling environment to support the full realisation of children and young people's rights.

Involvement of young people in monitoring *Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028*

The National Youth Assembly of Ireland – which consists of members from Comhairle na nÓg (aged 12-18 years), Young Voices, and young people aged 18-24 years nominated by national youth organisations – has been chosen as the structure through which to provide a youth perspective on the focus areas of the Young Ireland Framework, and to feed in to the cross-sectoral Advisory Committee established to monitor and report on the progress of the implementation of the Young Ireland Framework. In relation to youth representation on the Advisory Committee, one young person aged under 18 years and one young person aged 18-24 years will be identified to be the NYAI representatives through an expressions of interest process.

Young people's input on the focus issues of the Young Ireland Framework

The Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conferences and regional networking events will be used to gather views from Comhairle na nÓg members on the focus issues, feeding into the broader NYAI discussions and providing a broader base for voices of those aged under 18 years. This will allow both regional and local interests to be brought to the Young Ireland Framework and ensure that the process is representative.

For the purposes of input into the policy framework, an additional question will be added to the Comhairle na nÓg Annual Youth Conferences in which young people will discuss issues of importance to young people locally, and the young people attending will vote on a topic for the local Comhairle to progress.

Regional networking events gather representatives from each Comhairle to discuss regional issues, where a similar question can be added. This option would therefore allow both regional and local interests to be brought to the Young Ireland Framework monitoring structure, and would ensure that the process is representative.

The NYAI delegates will discuss the focus issues in smaller groups two to three times per year. In these cases, the representatives of Young Voices on the NYAI will be involved in the discussion groups, ensuring that a link to the broader EU structure is maintained.

The views of the young people will be represented at the Advisory Committee by the NYAI representatives.

These structures will also be used to inform the Communications Youth Advisory Panel (for children and young people aged 12-24 years) in relation to identifying key messages and key areas of relevance to young people, arising from the focus of the Young Ireland Framework.

Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making: Action Framework 2024-2028

Action area 1	Embed the voice of children and young people in decision-making and in the development of policy, legislation and research across government	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024-2028				
1.1	Consult with children and young people appropriately in the development of policy, legislation, research and services, with the support of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) if required. Provide feedback in a timely manner on the outcome of the participation processes.	All Government Departments and State agencies		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.1a	Convene a Rural Youth Assembly each year under the National Youth Assembly of Ireland to provide a forum for young people to identify and discuss policy issues relating to national rural development policy-making, and to provide updates on recommendations arising from the previous Rural Youth Assembly.	DCEDIY/ Department of Rural and Community Development	National Participation Office (NPO)	24 ✓	25 ✓	26	27	28
1.1b	Convene the National Youth Assembly on Climate each year to provide a forum for discussion and for capturing the views of young people from across Ireland in relation to climate issues for potential inclusion in Ireland's Climate Action Plan.	DCEDIY/ Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications	NPO	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.1c	Include young people in the National Economic Dialogue process.	Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform/ Department of Finance	DCEDIY	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.1d	Use Comhairle na nÓg and the National Youth Assembly of Ireland, the recognised permanent children and young people's participation structures, as a consultative mechanism.	All Government Departments and State agencies		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.1e	Seek representation through Comhairle na nÓg/the National Youth Assembly of Ireland/Young Voices or an alternative youth forum when including young people on committees or advisory groups.	All Government Departments and State agencies		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.2	Include the participation of children and young people as an objective in the Statements of Strategy of Government Departments and State agencies and include specific actions to this end in annual business plans.	All Government Departments and State agencies		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.3	Include the requirement to consult children and young people in funding criteria for publicly funded programmes and schemes relevant to children and young people.	All Government Departments and State agencies		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓

Action area 1	Embed the voice of children and young people in decision-making and in the development of policy, legislation and research across government	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024-2028				
1.4	Ensure that child- and youth-friendly feedback and complaints mechanisms are in place when Government Departments and State agencies and their funded bodies are providing services for children and young people	All Government Departments and State agencies		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.5	Consult with children and young people as part of the process of reporting on international instruments relevant to their lives and well-being, including but not limited to the Universal Periodic Review of Ireland, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, World Health Organization reviews and strategies, and Council of Europe reviews and strategies.	All Government Departments and State agencies		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.6	Ensure that consultations are undertaken with a broad range of children and young people for the Growing Up in Ireland study and similar research projects so as to inform data collection and policy development.	DCEDIY		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.7	Ensure that the EU Youth Dialogue process continues to provide young people with a chance to have their say about decisions affecting their lives. It will bring together young people and policy-makers across the European Union to jointly discuss, formulate and put forward proposals for the development of youth policy at national and European level.	DCEDIY		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
1.8	Consult children and young people as part of the Programme for Government's commitment to establish the State agency for Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC).	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25	26	27	28
1.9	Establish a cross-government working group to promote the inclusion of children and young people in decision-making and develop capacity to ensure effective implementation of the National Participation Framework in all Government Departments.	DCEDIY		24 ✓	25	26	27	28
1.10	Use established government child participation structures to ensure that children are aware of, and feed directly into, the Young Ireland: <i>National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028</i> cross-government Spotlight action on child poverty and well-being, and into the development of child-friendly versions of key outputs.	Department of the Taoiseach	Hub na nÓg/ DCEDIY	24 ✓	25 ✓	26	27	28

Action area 2	Build capacity across all sectors relevant to the lives of children and young people in order to include them in decision-making	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024-2028				
2.1	Continue to strengthen and improve youth participation structures and broaden the reach and influence of young people's voices in decision-making.	DCEDIY	NPO	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
2.1a	Enhance engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas Service to deliver youth engagement initiatives in the Oireachtas.	Houses of the Oireachtas/ DCEDIY	NPO	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
2.2	Support the implementation of the National Participation Framework through the provision of training, education, resources and supports across all sectors providing services to children and young people, including education, health services, social services, justice, early years, youth work, and local authorities.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
2.3	Develop and provide a free online module on the National Participation Framework (that is aligned with professional learning structures, accreditation and networks) which sets out the legal, policy and research context, as well as the benefits of the participation of children and young people in decision-making across all sectors.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
2.4	Develop awareness campaigns to nurture a culture of listening to children and young people, and of facilitating their participation in decision-making in their family homes, schools, communities and civic institutions.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
2.5	Build an evidence base on the benefits of including children and young people's voices in decision-making and on child-friendly methodologies.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
2.6	Develop educational materials for children and young people on their right to participate, build their capacity to express their views, and raise awareness of participation opportunities.	Department of Education		24 ✓	25 ✓	26	27	28
2.7	Develop pathways, supports and methodologies to ensure equity of participation for all children and young people and work to remove barriers to participation for seldom-heard children and young people.	DCEDIY	All Government Departments	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
2.8	Commission a retrospective study to examine levels of influence on decision-making of participation initiatives, and develop monitoring mechanisms to ensure that future initiatives lead to the voice of children and young people being given attention in decision-making and that timely feedback is given to those participating in participation initiatives.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓

Action area 2	Build capacity across all sectors relevant to the lives of children and young people in order to include them in decision-making	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024-2028				
2.9	Commission research to identify evidence-based examples of good practice from other countries.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
2.10	Develop a code of ethical guidance for participation practice.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
2.11	Develop a guidance document for policy-makers and those who facilitate the participation of children and young people with a disability, in decision-making.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25	26	27	28
2.12	Develop creative methodologies, informed by the arts, for children and young people's participation in decision-making.	Creative Ireland	DCEDIY/ Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓

Action area 3	Promote the inclusion of children and young people in decision-making in their communities and in their homes	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024-2028				
3.1	Work with local authorities to implement relevant actions from the Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan.	DCEDIY/NPO	Local authorities	24 ✓	25 ✓	26	27	28
3.2	Examine how Comhairle na nÓg membership can broaden the influence of children and young people's voices in decision-making at local community level beyond the Comhairle structures, reaching out to community groups/youth services, sporting organisations, and schools.	NPO	Local authorities	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
3.3	Ensure that local authorities include children and young people's views in the drafting of all local plans that have an impact on children and young people's lives across all topics, including but not exclusive to the arts, libraries, sports partnerships, strategic policy committees, local community development committees, leaders programmes, PEACEPLUS action plans, and county development plans. These engagements must be reported in a youth-friendly manner.	Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)	Local authorities	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
3.4	Promote completion of free online training, made available through Hub na nÓg to all local authority officials, community organisations and others, to support the involvement of children and young people in decision-making.	LGMA	Local authorities	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
3.5	Build the evidence base and produce guidance to enable parents to appropriately support their children's participation in decision-making in the home.	DCEDIY/Hub na nÓg	Parenting Support Policy Unit (DCEDIY)	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
3.6	Ensure that Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) consult children and young people in the development of their children and young people's plans, including children and young people with disabilities and those who are seldom heard.	CYPSC	DCEDIY	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
3.7	Ensure that children and young people, including those with disabilities and those who are seldom heard, are included as members on the main CYPSC and relevant subgroups.	CYPSC	DCEDIY	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓

Action area 4	Embed the voice of children and young people in decision-making in the education system	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024–2028				
4.1	Establish a Student Participation Unit in the Department of Education in order to ensure the participation of children and young people in the development and implementation of Department of Education policy.	Department of Education		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
4.2	Raise awareness of the importance and benefits of students' participation in decision-making among teachers, school leaders, boards of management and students.	Department of Education		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
4.3	Enhance participation structures in schools (including the role and meaningful influence of student councils) and remove barriers to participation, thus ensuring a full and equitable representation of all children and young people's voices.	Department of Education		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
4.4	Support the participation of children and young people in school inspections/school self-evaluations.	Department of Education		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
4.4a	Include consultation with children and young people in all National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) consultations on curriculum development and reform.	NCCA		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
4.4b	Ensure that Oide, the Department of Education-funded teaching professional learning service, seeks the views of learners in relation to the development of teacher professional learning.	Department of Education		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
4.5	Engage the Teaching Council to align the free online module on the Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in decision-making with teachers and early years educators continuing professional development and pre-service requirements and accreditations.	Department of Education	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25	26	27	28

Action area 5	Ensure that children and young people are included in decision-making in the health and social services that they receive	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024–2028				
5.1	Review the participation of children and young people in care in their own care planning and reviews, and provide guidance on how to resource and facilitate their participation in care and aftercare planning and reviews.	Tusla		24 ✓	25	26	27	28
5.2	Develop training and guidance for healthcare staff on the participation of children and young people in healthcare decisions.	Department of Health (DOH)/ Health Service Executive (HSE)		24 ✓	25	26	27	28
5.3	Develop and implement guidelines to ensure that children and young people with mental illnesses have a meaningful voice in mental health interventions and programmes.	DOH/Mental Health Commission (MHC)/HSE		24 ✓	25	26	27	28
5.4	Engage together to align the online free module on the Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in decision-making with professional learning structures and accreditation.	HSE/Tusla/ Health Information and Quality Authority/MHC/ Irish Medical Organisation/ DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25	26	27	28
5.5	Engage with children and young people in relation to the Spotlight on Disability Services, in line with Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028, where their views are captured and progressed to inform policy and service developments.	DCEDIY – Disability Division		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
5.6	Ensure that the voices of children and young people are central to the work of the Youth Mental Health Spotlight under the Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028.	DOH	DCEDIY	24 ✓	25	26	27	28

Action area 6	Enable decision-making in court and in the courts system to include the voice of children and young people	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024–2028				
6.1	Ensure that children and young people, including younger children (aged 0–6 years), are afforded the opportunity to have their views heard and are given due weight in decision-making in legal processes directly in a manner that best suits the child's needs, or supported appropriately by parents, advocates and/or guardians ad litem.	All relevant Government Departments and State agencies		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
6.2	Support children and young people to participate in court and legal systems with age-appropriate education, information and preparation in advance.	All relevant Government Departments and State agencies		24 ✓	25	26	27	28
6.3	Commission an international comparative review on incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law.	DCEDIY		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
6.4	Work to incorporate the online module on the Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in decision-making into relevant professional learning structures and accreditation for legal professionals, court officials and professionals engaging with children and young people in the context of the justice system.	DCEDIY	Department of Justice/ Courts Service/ Tusla/Judicial Council/Legal Aid Board/Bar Council	24 ✓	25	26	27	28
6.5	Ensure full participation by young people in the Joint Policing Committees and in youth justice structures.	Department of Justice/An Garda Síochána		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓

Action area 7	Support the safe, equitable participation of children and young people in decision-making online	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024–2028				
7.1	Expand participation initiatives, consultations and structures into online/digital spaces.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg/NPO	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
7.2	Develop methods to provide equity of access to online participation opportunities.	NPO/Hub na nÓg		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
7.3	Promote safe participation in decision-making online/digitally by examining issues such as consent and assent, as well as training of children and young people and of practitioners.	Hub na nÓg		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
7.4	Share children and young people's views on different policy issues on an online platform for policy-makers.	Hub na nÓg		24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓

Action area 8	Develop participation structures that are inclusive, accessible and safe for all children and young people, including those who need additional supports in order to engage and participate	Responsibility		Time frame				
		Lead/joint lead	Partner	2024–2028				
8.1	Identify barriers to participation in decision-making for children and young people who are seldom heard and identify ways to remove or overcome these barriers.	DCEDIY	Hub na nÓg/NPO	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
8.2	Give special consideration to recruitment into participation structures and the use of inclusive methodologies in order to ensure that children and young people who are seldom heard are involved in decision-making.	All Government Departments	NPO/Hub na nÓg	24 ✓	25 ✓	26 ✓	27 ✓	28 ✓
8.3	Establish an inter-agency Network of Practice to share knowledge and approaches to inclusive, meaningful participation.	DCEDIY/Hub na nÓg	Relevant Government Departments and State agencies	24 ✓	25	26	27	28



Appendix

European Union and United Nations Commitments on the Participation of Children and Young People in Decision-making

The process of supporting greater participation by children and young people in decision-making fulfils key United Nations (UN) commitments and aligns with a series of European Union (EU) initiatives to promote greater involvement of children and young people in decision-making.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) include obligations which require States to facilitate the participation of children and young people in decision-making.

Article 12 of the UNCRC

Article 12 requires all countries that have ratified the UNCRC to enable children to express their views on matters affecting them; the Article reads: "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".(UNCRC, 2009)

Article 4(3) of the UNCRPD

Article 4(3) of the UNCRPD (2007) states: "In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including disabled children, through their representative organizations". (*United Nations Enable*, 2007)

EU commitments on youth and participation

The EU is guided by the principles set out in the UNCRC, which has been ratified by all EU member states. Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union establishes the EU objective to promote the rights of the child. Article 24(1) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union guarantees the protection of the rights of children to express their views and have them considered on matters that concern them, in accordance with their age and maturity.

EU participation structures

The EU is undertaking a number of initiatives aimed at supporting the participation of children and young people in decision-making. The [European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#) seeks to:

- create more opportunities for young people,
- reach out to more diverse young people, and
- work towards youth social inclusion and the eradication of youth poverty.

The EU Youth Strategy includes youth participation as one of its key guiding principles:

Participation: recognising that all young people are a resource to society, all policies and activities concerning young people should uphold young people's right to participate in the development, implementation and follow-up of policies affecting them by means of meaningful participation of young people and youth organisations. In this context, policies should be built in recognition of the changes brought about by digital communication affecting democratic and civic participation.

The EU strategy on the rights of the child and the European Child Guarantee

[The EU strategy on the rights of the child and the European Child Guarantee](#) (European Commission, 2019) together form a new comprehensive EU policy framework to ensure the protection of the rights of all children, and to secure access to basic services for vulnerable children.

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, including through the Council of Europe's Child Participation Assessment Tool;
- increase awareness and knowledge of the rights of the child, including for professionals working with and for children, through awareness campaigns and training activities;
- strengthen education on citizenship, equality and participation in democratic processes in school curricula at local, regional, national and EU level; and
- support schools in their efforts to engage pupils in the school's daily life and decision-making.

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