

An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach Child and Family Agency

B

 $\mathbf{x}$ 

3

\*

# 

A

\*



(1),

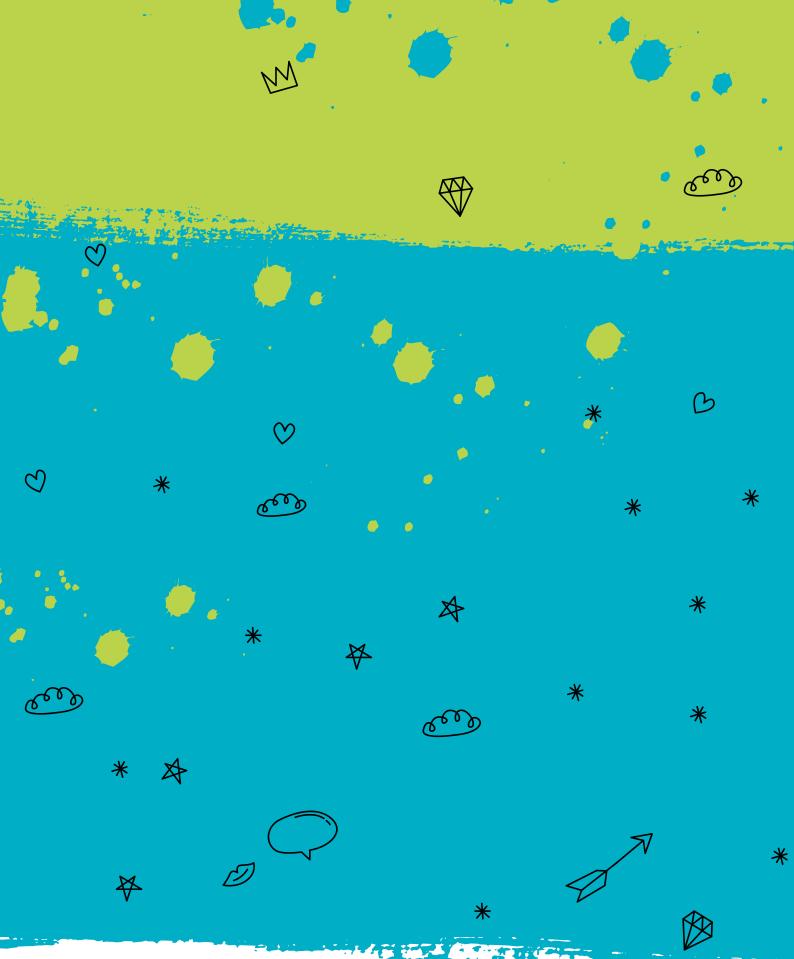
 $\mathbf{x}$ 

\*

M







© Tusla – Child and Family Agency, 2019 Email: info@tusla.ie Web: www.tusla.ie

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission of the Child and Family Agency.

Design: www.penhouse.ie





# Contents

46

Æ

\*

Foreword	02 🧡 .
Lundy Model	03
Background to Fora	05
What are fora?	06
Top Tips for Children and Young People's Participation	07
Getting started: a suggested guide	08
Case Study: Donegal Fora	09
Fora Governance Structure	13
Template – Terms of Reference for Planning Committee	15
Template – Planning Committee Checklist	17
Template – Invitation Letter to Child/Young Person	18
Template – Invitation Letter to Parents	19
Template – Fora Consent Form	20
Template – Fora Initial Meeting	21
Template – Fora Group Contract	22
Template – Evaluation form for children and young people	23
Acknowledgments	24
References	25

\*

\*

3

## Foreword

Tusla – Child and Family Agency, has always been committed to supporting children and young people in care to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Participation must be embedded in the very core of all our work. True participation is attained through engagement in dialogue in an interactive, on-going and inclusive process. True dialogue and change require space, voice, audience and influence (Lundy Model).

In 2015, as part of the Atlantic Philanthropies PPFS funding, Tusla committed to developing the ethos and practice in relation to participation across a range of services, including children in care. Under this commitment, 12 area-based children's fora were established in partnership between Tusla and Empowering People in Care (EPIC), an independent advocacy organisation for children and young people in care.

These fora were established to create a space for children and young people in care to give voice to their experiences, to meet other young people in care and to use the forum to influence national policy and national and local practice. The fora were also established to support participatory practice in promoting and engaging in dialogue with children and young people in care.

With the commitment of staff and support from EPIC under the Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023, the fora are now sustainable within Tusla and have the ability to flourish. This document is a guide to support staff in establishing fora in their area. There is recognition that each fora is individual to each area and every group of children and young people may have different identified needs and requests, which are negotiated with staff. This starter kit was developed as a framework for staff to work within.

Tusla would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the commitment of staff around the country, to hearing the voices of children and young people in care, for supporting the children and young people to participate in their local fora and for engaging children and young people in the process of improving Tusla services.

Grainne Collins

**Grainne Collins** National Policy Manager for Alternative Care

Please read this Starter Kit in conjunction with Tusla's Child and Youth Participation Toolkit. Please note the information in this Starter Kit can be applied to the set up of any group of children or young people.



⋇



## Lundy Model

Participation of children and young people is a legal right, and this is aligned with international and national legislation, policies and standards.

The right of children and young people to have their views heard in the decision-making process is enshrined in Article 12(1) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), which was ratified by Ireland in 1992.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs has adopted the Lundy Model of Participation (Lundy 2007), which is grounded in Article 12 of the UNCRC, as its preferred model of practice. Tusla has also adopted this model to underpin its approach and training in participatory practice (see Figure 1).

## 

#### Figure 1: Lundy Model of Participation

This model provides a way of conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus educational decision-makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of the provision. The four elements have a rational chronological order:

**SPACE:** Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view

VOICE: Children must be facilitated to express their view

AUDIENCE: The view must be listened to

**INFLUENCE:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.



⋇

The Lundy model and accompanying checklist (see Figure 2) provides a framework to ensure that children and young people's participation in the fora is true and meaningful. Implementation of the Lundy Model requires more time and energy to create safe emotional spaces for children to fully form and express their views. This extra time and energy should not be viewed as a barrier to participation in the fora but rather an investment in valuable feedback and improved services.

#### Figure 2: Checklist for the Lundy Model of Participation



#### **HOW:** Provide a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views

- Have children's views been actively sought?
- Have steps been taken to ensure that all children can take part?

## VOICE

⋇

⋇

#### **HOW:** Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views

- Have children been given the information they need to form a view
- Do children know that they do not have to take part?
- Have children been given a range of options as to how they might choose to express themselves?

## **AUDIENCE**

**HOW: Ensure that children's** views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen

- Is there a process for communicating children's views?
- Do children know who their views are being communicated to?
- Does that person/body have the power to make decisions?

## INFLUENCE

**HOW: Ensure that children's** views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate

- Were the children's views considered by those with the power to effect change?
- Are there procedures in place that ensure that the children's views have been taken seriously?
- Have the children and young people been provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken?

A a a a set and

Under Article 12, children and young people do not have the definitive say in the decisionmaking process, but their views should be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. As expressed by Lansdown (2010), adults retain responsibility for the outcome, while being informed and influenced by the views of the child or young person. However, the decisionmaker must inform the child or young person on the outcome of the process and explain how their views were taken into consideration (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009).



## **Background to Fora**

Tusla has implemented a comprehensive programme of action related to participation. As part of this programme, in 2015, Tusla initiated a model of collective participation for children in care, in partnership with EPIC. This initiative involved the establishment of local groups for children and young people in care, known as the Tusla/EPIC Fora.

The initiative aimed to improve service delivery and prompt policy development by ensuring that the views and experiences of children and young people in care were articulated to Tusla management. An additional aim of the fora was to promote the social and emotional well-being of young people in care through participation in group processes.

Many of these fora wanted to create materials which they felt would benefit other children and young people in care and support improved practice based on their own experiences. After a national consultation process, the materials listed below are now available to all staff nationally and copies are available on the Tusla website.

*	Animation Awareness Video	Louth/Meath
*	Awareness Video	Mid-West
*	Accessing Files Leaflet	Dublin South Central
*	Care Dictionary	Dublin North City
*	Top Tips Poster	Dublin North City
*	Placement Move Booklet	Donegal
*	Rap - My Life My Choice	Cork
*	Rap - Whatever they say; I will do my own thing	Cork
*	Calendar	Mavo

In 2018 the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre (UCFRC) found that there were important benefits for the children and young people who took part in the fora. The primary benefit was the opportunity to be social in a space free of stigma where it was not necessary to explain any differences in your lived experience to your peers.

The research also highlighted the opportunity for young people to access help, guidance and support on aspects of the care experience. There was also evidence of direct changes to social work processes arising from the work of the fora. The research found that for some young participants, the transformative output was not necessarily the most vital component of fora participation but rather the social support was considered a vital resource.

To the end of July 2019 there were 5,990 children in care. All of these children and young people have the right to participation opportunities and to have their voice heard. "This group has taught me that my opinion matters." YOUNG PERSON

"We think we're different from everybody else but we're not." YOUNG PERSON

## What are fora?

⋇

"A forum is a safe, comfortable and inclusive space where children and young people aged 8 to 17 can come together to share and explore their positive and challenging experiences of being in care and the services they are engaged in. The aim is that the views, opinions and experiences of the children and young people participating in the fora will positively influence service delivery, policy and practice change both locally and nationally."

⋇

#### Suzanne O'Brien, EPIC



The functions of the fora are to bring together children and young people who have a shared experience of being in care, in order to:

- \* Hear the voices of young people in care and listen to those views as experts on their own experience
- \* Engage young people in dynamic interactive group work which facilitates empowerment and informal support through participation
- \* Facilitate consultation with young people as key stakeholders on specific policies and practices
- \* Identify areas for change within policy and practice from the young person's perspective
- \* Empower young people to work together to make positive changes in the care system
- \* Create a consistent communication stream between the fora and Tusla at local, regional and national levels
- \* Create opportunities for Tusla to consult, collaborate and develop policy with fora members who are invested stakeholders

Have fun!!!

## Top Tips for Children and Young People's Participation

Treat children and young people with respect. Do things with them, not to them or for them. By repeating back to them what you think they have said children and young people will see that you are hearing them and that their involvement is genuine.

\*

600

\*

Tell young people how they will be involved and always provide feedback. Be clear, realistic and honest with children and young people about what you are trying to achieve and what is involved in achieving it. Always provide feedback to them on the decision-making process.

Activity-based communication helps children and young people feel more comfortable expressing their views. Working creatively shows that you are listening and that their contributions are valued and taken seriously. Don't make assumptions about what children and young people are capable of. Don't assume that children and young people, because of age or other circumstances, will not want to be engaged or make a valuable contribution. Remember that children and young people are as diverse as any other population group. Children and young people are not a homogenous group. They have different views, experiences, beliefs and backgrounds. Do not ask children and young people what all children and young people think, ask them what they know and experience.

Don't be a "try hard". Children and Young people are not expecting you to be COOL - be authentic. Be open to new ideas, especially ones you may not have thought of. One of the best things about involving children and young people is that they often have a different way of looking at things. Inform them that there are no right or wrong answers and this can create all sorts of new ideas and possibilities.

Give young people time and space to say what they mean. Be open to silence. Often involving children and young people in decisions that affect them is new to them, so just give participants some time to get comfortable and think about what they want to say.

Give clear objectives and limits for decision making. Be clear and honest about the things that young people have control over or a say in, and those areas where they don't. That is, set clear boundaries with children and young people, and take time to discuss expectations, both theirs and yours.

Steer clear of professional jargon whenever possible. If you must use jargon, take time to explain it clearly.
Also, take time to explain and discuss different words and phrases related to their participation like "represent", "having a voice", "consultation".

Adapted from the Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth People, New South Wales Government. *Top Tips for Children and Young People*. Accessed 10.10.2019 from <u>https://cdn2.hubspot.net/</u> <u>hubfs/522228/documents/top-tips-for-children-and-young-peoples-participation.pdf</u>

## Getting started: a suggested guide

- 1. Put together a fora planning committee that might include a Principal Social Worker or Team Leader, Social Worker, Social Care Leader or Social Care Worker from children in care and fostering teams (Fostering staff will know the foster carers which can be key!).
- 2. Identify a suitable child friendly venue (e.g. youth club, community hall) which is accessible to children and young people and contact the management.
- 3. Decide on target age group and get names, addresses and contact details of children and young people in this target group from the relevant teams.
- 4. Decide on the day, time and venue for the first fora as children and young people need to know where they are meeting and at what time, well in advance. From here, staff, children and young people can negotiate days and times for future fora (usually a mixture of weekends, midterms and evenings).
- 5. Compose a letter of invitation to the children and young people letting them know the date, time and place of the first fora meeting and a little about what they can expect on the day (*See template on page 18*). Usually one member of the planning committee takes responsibility for composing and sends to the group for approval. Compose a similar letter for the foster carers (*see template on page 19*). Ensure social workers' and fostering link workers' contact details are included on the letter in case the foster carers or children and young people have any queries.
- 6. Send out letters of invitation and consent forms two weeks before the first fora meeting. A copy must go to each foster carer, child/young person and birth parents. (*Depending on circumstances, the relevant social worker can advise where this may be an issue*). This is the most labour intensive task and you may need administrative support.
- 7. Follow up with phone calls once letters are received. **This is an important step and how most children and young people are recruited**. It is common to send out 100-150 letters and only get 8-10 participants for the first fora. Hopefully this will increase as the fora continues. Phone 'maybes' in the week before to see if they have changed their minds. Send a text reminder to children and young people who have confirmed the day before. A fora runs best with a minimum of 5 children and young people and a maximum of 18.
- 8. Let social workers (not on planning committee) know if their allocated child is attending the fora so they can check in with them and provide support if necessary.
- 9. Decide on how many staff from the planning committee will attend each fora meeting. This will depend on the numbers of children and young people who have confirmed. (e.g. for eight participants, no more than four staff, two of which will co-facilitate the discussion, one designated as the child safe guarding person if a child gets upset and wants to leave the room, and one note taker jotting down the children and young people's suggestions).
- 10. Plan the first session (see template on page 20).







✻

⋇

## **Case Study: Donegal Fora**

Suzanne O'Brien from EPIC describes the life cycle of a fora through the case study below. The Donegal fora is considered according to Lundy's Model of Participation (2007).

It is important to note that prior to the first meeting an invitation letter was posted to each young person letting them know the purpose of the fora, what to expect, who they could contact if they had any questions or concerns and how they might benefit from being part of the group. A similar letter was posted to their foster carers and their birth parents to inform them of the same.

## SPACE:

All young people in Donegal living in foster care and aged 12 -17 were invited to participate in the fora. A total of 96 invitation letters were sent out. In agreement with the local social work team a neutral venue was chosen; one where family access, child in care reviews or other meetings did not occur as these places can often represent mixed feelings and experiences for young people. Other considerations at this time included having enough space for icebreakers and games, break out rooms for discussions and accessibility of the venue to children, young people and their foster carers.

For the first meeting particular efforts were made to support young people to get to know each other and overcome any anxieties that they may have. This was done through icebreakers/games and generally creating a fun, happy, light and engaging atmosphere. During this first meeting, the group were also asked to come up with their own set of rules/ group contract and what we should all expect from each other during our time together.

#### Their contract was as follows:

- \* Phones on silent
- \* Listen to each other
- \* No posting on social media about being in the group
- \* When someone is speaking, everyone should listen
- \* What's said here; stays here
- \* Respect each other
- \* Don't bully each other
- ✤ Have fun
- \* Try not to swear

"It's really fun and I feel the same as everyone else here, I don't have to explain why I don't live at home." YOUNG PERSON (14)

"We can make a difference when given the opportunity to be heard."

⋇

## VOICE:

In all meetings the young people were asked to explore at their own pace their experiences of being in care including both the positives and the challenges. For the initial meeting we explored care in a very broad and general way by asking three questions:

- \* What is good/positive about being in care?
- \* What is not so good about being in care? What is challenging about being in care?
- \* What would you like to change about being in care?

Through this open discussion, young people felt comfortable to explore their experiences as part of the group process as they knew that the professionals involved had no set agenda or questions that they would like an answer to. The professionals involved genuinely wanted to hear what the young people had to say and so this gave the young people a great sense of autonomy over the direction of the conversation. These open discussions also gave the young people a better insight into the lives of other young people in care and supported them to understand that they are not the only one who has had these experiences or feelings. A common theme emerged from the young people. The theme that they identified with most was 'Placement Moves'; how upsetting, frustrating and worrying moving placements can be and how they often felt that they were not given enough notice or information prior to these moves. This group also explored how awkward it can be to start conversations with people that you do not know and how difficult it can be to build relationships with their foster carers. During these initial discussions, it was important to highlight what changes the young people could actually make. It was explored with the young people that they would not always be in a position to choose where they lived or who they would live with but to think about ways that they could, based on their own lived experiences improve this and make these placement moves easier for future young people.

They identified "an information booklet would be the best way to meet this need." (YOUNG PERSON) "It's important that we are listened to and taken seriously about our opinions of what it's like to be in care." YOUNG PERSON (15)

⋇

⋇

\*

Specifically they felt that "there should be a standard information booklet" containing "up-to-date, practical information about foster carers." YOUNG PERSON



Following a series of group discussions, it was clear that what the young people wanted most when moving placements was information about the home and the people they would be moving to. From this, the young people decided that they would like to create a booklet that foster carers would fill in, that could be given to a young person before they moved into their home. The young people wanted this booklet to contain all of the questions that caused them concern and anxiety about a placement move and they hope that this booklet will support an easier and less stressful move for future young people.

Some of the questions in the booklet include:

- \* What is the name of everyone in the house and what are their hobbies?
- \* Do other foster children live there?
- \* Do you have any pets?
- \* Is there Wi-Fi and is access limited?
- \* What is my room like and can I decorate it myself?
- \* Where is my school and how will I get there?
- \* What activities, sports clubs or youth clubs could I join?
- \* What are the house rules?
- \* How much pocket money will I receive?

## **"This group has taught me that my opinion matters."** YOUNG PERSON (16)

#### AUDIENCE:

As the Donegal fora decided to create a 'Placement Move' booklet it was important at this stage to have agreement and support from both local and national senior management within Tusla. As this initiative was a partnership between EPIC and Tusla, a National Oversight Committee was established to support the work of the fora. This group included relevant professionals and senior management from both EPIC and Tusla. This group met monthly to discuss the progress and any challenges faced in relation to the development of the fora throughout Ireland.

A local Tusla planning committee consisting of the Principal Social Worker, Social Care Leaders and Aftercare Workers was also established to fully support the Donegal fora and to facilitate the meetings. The meetings with the young people usually took place every six weeks and a further planning meeting was held prior to each fora meeting to ensure that any needs (e.g. transport) were taken into consideration. This group had responsibility for updating their local area management on the progress of the fora and feeding back to them the themes or issues that the young people were discussing as part of the group process.

"I hadn't done anything like that before. It was scary but I did it." YOUNG PERSON "It's important for Social Workers to hear what young people in care have to say about their experience. These projects will support Social Workers to be more in tune to what is going on for young people in care and the individual experiences of children in care." SOCIAL WORKER (TUSLA) ⋇

✻

#### INFLUENCE:

Working in partnership with active, open, dedicated and engaged young people, senior management and planning committees were central to the success of the fora. The wishes of the young people involved were actively listened to and responded to throughout the life span of the fora which was one year. During each fora meeting, comprehensive notes were taken and a report/feedback of our time together was posted out to the young people. This feedback included any follow on actions that needed to be undertaken including the date/time for our next meeting. The young people made several changes to their booklet over time until they reached the point where they were happy with the content, design and layout. The young people also designed their own logo 'Athrú'.

#### The name of their group was Athrú, meaning 'change' in Irish

and this was because the group wanted to *"make things better"* for children and young people in foster care in Donegal and across Ireland.

After completion of the booklet their next task in conjunction with the national oversight committee was to find out how they would ensure dissemination of this invaluable booklet. Following a national consultation the booklet and the young people received glowing feedback from other young people, professionals and Tusla senior management for their honesty and courage in designing a very valuable resource. The Donegal fora's determination and commitment to be part of change has been hugely recognised and their booklet is now available for national use to support both young people moving placements and the professionals who work with them.

The Donegal fora had the opportunity to present their work at their local social work team meeting, which on the day included the Ombudsman for Children, Niall Muldoon. They also presented their work at the National Fora conference titled *Our Say, Our Way – A Collaborative Approach to Influence Change*.



## Fora Governance Structure

#### **Role of Local Facilitators**

"With determination and commitment we can make a change". YOUNG PERSON

Local facilitators are required to commit for the life span of the fora and must hold current Garda vetting i.e. being obtained within the previous two years. There must be consistency in facilitators for this agreed period as this is a key operational component that ensures good facilitation. The role of facilitators is:

- \* To make children and young people feel welcome and their contribution is valued and that the purpose and function of the fora is explained to children and young people in a child friendly manner
- \* To develop a group contract regarding behaviour within the group in collaboration with children and young people
- \* To manage the expectations of children and young people on how their participation in the fora will allow them to influence change and improve services having regard to the statutory and legislative context in a child friendly manner
- \* To ensure that there are appropriate records kept of the children's fora
- \* To ensure that the children's fora operates within the agreed budget
- \* To plan and prepare for the fora e.g. venue, schedule for the day etc., in collaboration with children and young people
- \* To respond to individual issues, queries or concerns raised during the fora
- To collate the views and opinions expressed by children in the fora on specific issues and provide a formal report to the local planning committee and area manager
- Provide appropriate feedback on other issues and/ or queries raised by children and young people in the fora to the local planning committee and area manager
- \* To facilitate how children and young people feedback to the local area management
- \* To report any child protection or welfare concerns that arise to the relevant area in line with Children First

"The process of this group was as powerful as the outcomes, being part of a group in which children and young people set the agenda and are empowered as young citizens has been amazing as a Social Worker." SOCIAL WORKER (TUSLA)

### The Planning Committee has responsibility for:

- \* Promoting the participation of children and young people in the planning committee and in the planning process
- \* Developing their own terms of reference in consultation with children and young people
- \* Ensuring all items on the planning committee checklist are completed
- \* Gathering and holding written parental consent forms
- \* Maximising the use and experience of other available agencies, voluntary and community organisations etc.
- \* Developing an invitation letter for children, carers and birth parents regarding the purpose and function of the fora
- \* Agreeing the age profile of the children they wish to consult
- \* Agreeing a list of priority local issues for consideration by the fora
- \* Selecting suitable facilitators who must commit to being available for the identified timeframe
- \* Making all children in care aware of the fora and give them an opportunity to participate
- \* Promoting the fora within their local area and support the participation of all stakeholders
- \* Providing regular updates on the fora to Tusla area management

#### Each Area Manager or Principal Social Worker is requested to:

- \* Promote the fora within their local area and support the participation of all stakeholders
- \* Liaise with their local CYPSC (Children and Young People's Services Committee) to advise them of the fora and provide feedback on same
- \* Ensure that implementation of the fora becomes a permanent model of service delivery within their area and that children and young people are consulted a minimum of twice a year on service development
- \* Nominate a local planning committee which should comprise of at least 3 people
- \* Receive regular updates from the local planning committee
- \* Be a visible presence for the children and young people participating in the fora e.g. the Area Manager may attend the first or final fora meeting
- \* Provide formal feedback, as required, to the children and young people's fora
- \* Provide regular updates from the fora at regional management meetings

"I am very impressed with the powerful way the groups have been able to let us know how/what we do affects them and how they remember what we do and how we do it long into their lives." SOCIAL WORKER (TUSLA)



## Template – Terms of Reference for Planning Committee

Name of Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Fora; Planning Committee

#### PURPOSE/ROLE OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE:

The role of the planning committee will be to provide guidance, support and leadership on the development of a fora for children and young people in care.

The planning committee is being established in <u>insert date</u> to support the collaboration of staff involved in the fora under the leadership of Tusla area management. The aim is to develop local fora for children and young people in care. The group will remain in place until completion of the fora which is expected to be insert date

#### **KEY PRINCIPLES**

- Partnership working
- Culture of respect, trust and integrity
- Transparency and accountability
- Hearing the voices of young people in care
- Listening to their views as experts in their own experiences
- Identifying areas for change within policy and practice from the young people's expertise and perspective
- Empowering young people to work together to make positive changes in the care system
- Creating a consistent communication stream between the fora and Tusla at local, regional and national level

#### MEMBERSHIP

Example Principle Social Worker, Tusla Children in Care Team Leader, Tusla Fostering Link Worker, Tusla Social Care Leader, Children in Care Team, Tusla EPIC Advocacy Worker Young person

#### ACCOUNTABILITY

The planning committee has a responsibility to link in with their Tusla Area Management Team.

continued

#### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

To be discussed at first meeting but it may include:

- To foster collaboration
- To assist the children and young people in deciding the scope of the fora
- To support children and young people to achieve the overall outcome (problem solving any obstacles/barriers, supporting achievement within fora lifespan)
- To input into decisions around the funding
- To plan with the children and young people as the fora is progressing and recognise their increased capacity over time
- To create opportunities for children and young people to present on the work of the fora should they wish to

#### THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE WILL COMMIT TO:

- Attend all scheduled meetings as is practicable
- Champion the work of the fora and its members
- Promote a culture of youth engagement and participation
- Ensure the fora progresses in a timely manner

#### **MEETINGS:**

- All meetings will be chaired by \_\_\_\_\_\_
- Decisions will be made by consensus (i.e. members are satisfied with the decision even though it may not be their first choice).
- The chair will record key actions and circulate minutes of meetings
- Frequency of meetings will be every 6-8 weeks until completion of fora



\*



## **Template – Planning Committee Checklist**

Checklist	Completed
<b>Terms of Reference</b> Have the terms of reference for the planning committee been completed?	
<b>Consent</b> Is it clear who will obtain consent and who will hold the written consents?	
<b>Child Protection</b> Are the Child Protection arrangements clear?	
<b>Fora Plan</b> Is the duration of the fora and number of meetings agreed?	
Is the age range and profile of children/young people agreed and clear?	
Has an appropriate venue been identified?	
<ul><li>Have staff resources been allocated to:</li><li>Contact and recruit young people?</li><li>Attend fora meetings?</li><li>Arrange transport for children and young people?</li></ul>	
Has funding been received for the venue and catering costs?	
<b>Communication Plan</b> Have you identified how the information generated by the fora can be communicated to Tusla management?	
Have you identified how the planning committee will link with Tusla management?	

\*

⋇

\*

D

# Template – Letter of Invitation to Child/Young Person

\*

\*



\*

ୢ୷ୖ

#### Dear insert name

We are inviting you to come along to meet with other young people in foster care on **Saturday 23rd November in the F2 Centre, Rialto, Dublin 8.** 

There will also be some fun activities, art, games and pizza.

#### ALL THE INFO YOU NEED:

WHEN:	Saturday 23rd November
WHERE:	F2 Centre, Rialto
TIME:	3:00pm – 6:00pm (Food will be provided!)
TO DO WHAT:	1. Meet up with other young people aged 12 to 16 2. Have fun 3. Have your say
WHAT DO I DO NEXT?:	Talk to your foster carer and let them know if you want to come. They will also be a getting a letter to tell them all about the day.

## Sam Smith,

Social Worker, Tusla 087 123 4567

## Template – Letter of Invitation to Foster Carer



#### Dear Foster Carer,

We are inviting your foster child to come along to meet with other young people in foster care on **Saturday 23rd November in the F2 Centre, Rialto, Dublin 8.** 

We are inviting each young person from the area in foster care to take part in the group and we would really appreciate if you could encourage your foster child/children to attend.

There will also be some fun activities, art, games and pizza.

#### ALL THE INFO YOU NEED:

WHEN:	Saturday 23rd November	
WHERE:	F2 Centre, Rialto	
TIME:	3:00pm - 6:00pm (Food will be provided!)	
WHAT DO I DO NEXT?:	Contact me or your fostering link worker Susan Daly 087 7654321 if you have any questions about the day or to confirm your foster child's attendance.	
	They will also be a getting a letter to tell them all about the day.	

Your local Social Work team will be in contact with you to arrange transport for the young people on the day.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your support and encouragement of the young people in your care to participate in this group.

#### Sam Smith,

Social Worker, Tusla 087 123 4567 \*

\*

\*

⋪

6.0

の

权

## **Template – Fora Consent Form**

✻

A

A

\*

\*

l,	, parent/carer of,	
	ission for them to attend the fora for children in care.	
Tusla - Child and F with your child.	amily Agency may develop best practice materials/posters/leaflets	
	can withdraw my consent for my child to attend the fora at any time. d I will let the social worker know either verbally or in writing.	Ľ
I understand that I	can access more information on how Tusla approaches data	
	<pre>vacy at https://www.tusla.ie/about/your-personal-information/new-</pre>	
data-protection/a	nd <u>https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_Privacy_Policy.pdf</u> .	
I can also find out i	nore about how to raise a data protection concern with the Data	
Protection Commis	sion at https://www.dataprotection.ie/docs/Raise-a-Concern/1716.htm.	
Name (printed):	(parent/carer)	
Signed:		
Date:		



\*

12

## **Template – Fora Initial Meeting**

3.00-3.15pm:	<b>Welcome, refreshments and introductions</b> (Collect consent forms if they were not returned by post)			
3.15-4.15pm:	<b>Icebreakers/games</b> (See <i>Child and Youth Participation Toolkit</i> for ideas)			
4.15-4.45pm:	Pizza/Fruit			
4.45-5.45pm:	<ol> <li>Consultation/Discussion</li> <li>First complete group contract</li> <li>Ask what is good about care?</li> <li>Ask what is not so good about care and what would you like to change?</li> <li>If children and young people prefer to write down their feedback give them paper, coloured card and markers.</li> </ol>			
5.45-6.00pm:	Check in, arrange date and time for next meeting and close. The close may also include setting the agenda with the group for the next meeting particularly if the children/ young people have a particular topic they wish to explore and discuss more. This then informs the planning process for the next meeting.			

\*

C<sup>CC</sup>

\*

 $\mathbf{A}$ 

## Template – Fora Group Contract

✻

X

Purpose:	To ensure the meeting is a safe place for young people and that young people are clear on the purpose of the fora					
Time:	15 - 30 mins					
Materials needed:	Flip chart and markers					
Method:	Facilitator explains that young people will be invited to share their opinions and views. This means that they may talk personally about things that are important to them. It is important that they feel comfortable and safe in doing this. Young people are asked to suggest ground rules that will make them feel safe. These may include: • I don't have to take sides • I can ask a question if I don't understand anything • I can ask to be left alone if I want to be • I can talk to someone if I need to • I can talk to someone if I need to • I can say what I feel • I won't be interrupted when I speak • I can step outside if I am finding it hard • I will not tell other people's stories • What's said in the room will not be said again outside • I don't have to talk if I don't feel like it • I will respect other's opinions even when they are different from mine	ĺ				
	• I will not put others down					
suggests ground ru or from elsewhere a	he young people are written on a flip chart by a facilitator. The facilitator les that have not been suggested by young people from the list above and gets agreement from the group on these additions. The agreed ted on the flip chart and then blue-tacked to the wall for the duration of					

the fora.





\*

\*

\*

# Template – Evaluation form for children and young people

This evaluation sheet can be handed out at the end of every fora meeting and children or young people can tick the appropriate box. Let them know that an evaluation is done so that changes can be made if possible. Remind them that if there is something 'not so good' it's more likely to be changed if the adults know why.

		Very good	Good	<b>…</b>	ок	Not so good
Welcome, Introductions						
Games						
Food						
Discussion						
Any other comm	ents or sug	ggestion	s?		*	

Note: This evaluation could also be done collectively by re-creating the form on a flip chart and inviting young people to tick their box of choice.

⋇

## Acknowledgements

The overall Tusla – Child and Family Agency Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) programme of work has been led by Dr Aisling Gillen, National Manager for PPFS and Service Director, West. Thank you to the national oversight committee for their guidance and support in ensuring the voice of the child was heard at a national senior management level.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to the children and young people from across the four regions that participated in the Tusla/EPIC fora for their honesty, bravery and commitment and acknowledge the projects that have been developed. The booklets, leaflets, videos, raps and calendars which were developed and all the events which have taken place have helped to shape practice. We would also like to thank the children and young people who for various reasons did not complete projects but who showed such dedication to their groups.

Thanks also to the Tusla and EPIC staff who shared their information and experiences to help compose this Starter Kit and the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre for their research study.

Special thanks to Participation Officer Suzanne O'Brien from EPIC. Empowering People in Care (EPIC) is a national voluntary organisation that works with and for children and young people who are currently living in care or those who have care experience. EPIC provides advocacy support to children and young people who have care experience.

This Starter Kit was developed by Michelle Sheehan, Regional Implementation Manager for Prevention, Partnership and Family Support in Dublin Mid Leinster.



✻

## Ē

## References

- Jackson, Rebecca, Brady, Bernadine, Forkan, Cormac, Tierney, Edel, and Kennan, Danielle (2018). *Collective Participation of Children in Care: A formative evaluation of the Tusla / EPIC foster care action groups*. UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway.
- Lansdown, G. (2010). The realisation of children's participation rights: Critical reflections. In B. PercySmith & N. Thomas (eds.), *A handbook of children's and young people's participation: Perspectives from theory and practice, pp.11-23.* London: Routledge.
- 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*, Vol. 33, No. 6, pp. 927-42.
- Office of the Advocate for Children and Youth People, New South Wales Government. *Top Tips for Children and Young People*. Accessed 10.10.2019 from <u>https://cdn2.hubspot.net/</u> <u>hubfs/522228/documents/top-tips-for-children-and-young-peoples-participation.pdf</u>

Tusla Child and Youth Participation Strategy (2019-2023). Available on www.tusla.ie

- UN (1989) *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Geneva: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: <u>http://www.ohchr.org/en/</u><u>professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx</u>
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) *General Comment No. 12: The right of the child to be heard* (Article 12). Geneva: UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

