



INNOVATIONS IN OOHC

DISCUSSION STARTER ON
PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE IN OOHC



WHY



- Sector current focus on implementing Youth Voice Strategies
- Youth participation is not simple in OOHC
- Common for children and young people in OOHC to experience limited participation opportunities
- Children, young people and organisations benefit when children have a say
- It's our responsibility to uphold their rights



OUR PROJECT

Project Aim: Explore the literature & field expertise on practices in OOHC that successfully facilitate children and young people to participate in decisions made about them.

How: Review of the literature internationally & across Australia THEN validated evidence through interviews with key practitioners in the field.

Scope: 3-month project completed 2023; all types of OOHC, non-exhaustive > discussion starter

Why:

- 1)** To provide the sector a collection of practices as suggestions for implementation in day-to-day case work > things that might not have been tried before
- 2)** Back up what you are already doing with evidence > justification and hope in your practice

MAJOR FINDING

- **Children and young people benefit:**
 - increased sense of belonging, self-worth and confidence improving their overall well-being
 - positive life-long outcomes such as an improved sense of self-advocacy when faced with challenges and increased interest and active participation in civic life (i.e., voting).
 - OOHC services are appropriately tailored to them and meet their individual needs, leading to better individual outcomes.
- **Organisational benefit:**
 - improved outputs and more engaged clients who are invested in the OOHC organisation they are a part of





**ENABLERS & BARRIERS
TO YOUTH
PARTICIPATION IN OOHC**

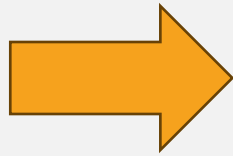
ORGANISATIONAL

**PRACTICE/
PROCEDURAL**

INDIVIDUAL

ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL BARRIERS & ENABLERS

➤ Risk averse cultures that view children and young people as inherently vulnerable and in need of protection



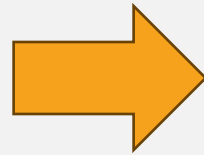
Culture fosters a genuine belief in the **expertise** of the whole care team, child/young person included

Leadership models and supports **children's rights** in all aspects of policy & practice

Organisational **child participation framework** suitable to the agency, **co-designed** with youth

PROCEDURAL LEVEL BARRIERS & ENABLERS

➤ Overburdened and resource poor OOHC system where children/young people are not given enough information to make informed decisions



Time is allocated for relationship-based practice to occur

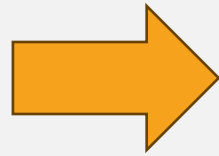
Varied resources are used to encourage participation

Information is shared in child-friendly formats that enable them to make **informed decisions**

Simple, **direct pathway** between children/young people and decision makers

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL BARRIERS & ENABLERS

➤ Engagement skills are limited reducing the ability to employ relationship-based practice



Confidence and **ability** to engage all children and young people and explain complex concepts like decision making

Value children and young people as **equal partners/collaborators** in decision making

Able to build a **safe, trusting relationship** from which children and young people feel valued, heard and respected

MAJOR FINDING

We don't need to turn the whole system upside down, to make change.

BUT...

There are significant ways we can **enhance** current, every-day practice that can make a huge difference to kids in OOHC.





**DAY-TO-DAY OOHC CASE
WORK PRACTICES THAT
SUPPORT YOUTH
PARTICIPATION**

MEETINGS

ACTIVITY TOOLS

YOUTH FRIENDLY
DOCUMENTATION

FAMILY GROUP
CONFERENCES

ADVOCATES

MEETINGS



dedicated **time and space** to share their views.

choice about **how** they want to participate: in person or via a representative, where and who should attend the meeting.

consult on the **agenda topics** before the meeting.

share information about the **purpose** of the meeting before they choose whether to attend

Make available a **representative** to share the child or young person's views at the meeting if they so wish

ensure that the **decision makers** are at the meeting and identified to the child or young person

ACTIVITY TOOLS

adults use **child-friendly** forms of **interaction** like play, art, or music

adults become **attuned** to the needs and wishes of all children (*age, developmental stage, cultural background*) in creative ways

clarity is provided to children and young people on what will happen once they share their views

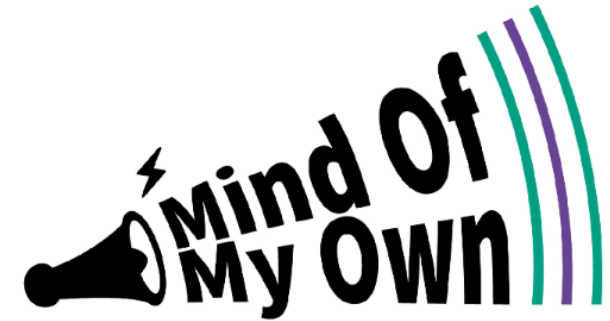
<https://statewidechildrensresourceprogram.weebly.com/resources.html>

Hear My Voice Conversation Cards

Supporting practitioners to have thoughtful, inclusive and meaningful conversations with infants, children and young people about their experiences of family violence and living without a home



<https://mindofmyown.org.uk/>



<https://yaalcollective.com.au/shop/p/yarning-cards>



<https://shop.childhood.org.au/products/action-feedback-kit>

YOUTH FRIENDLY DOCUMENTATION



convey **complex topics** in **creative ways** by converting adult-centric documents into **easily digestible information**, using concise language/images.

provide information that explains their **right to participate** in decision-making in a manner that they can understand.

appropriately and accurately **document their views** as essential consultants in decision-making processes.

provide access to **organisational policies** and procedures in **child friendly formats** including digitally

Consider the **language!**
Use this Australian Childhood Foundation link as guide:

Words Matters

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCES



ensure that the child or young person is seen as an **equal partner** in the process by the convenor

adequately **prepare** for the conference, by sharing the purpose and logistics of the process beforehand.

dedicate time during the discussion to hear their views and **manage adult expectations** and responses to what is said.

consider the child or young person's wishes regarding location.

ensure they have a **direct pathway** to the decision maker either before, during or after the conference

ensure that **culturally appropriate supports** are available throughout the conference where necessary

independent from the OOHC organisation, or independent from the child or young person's **direct care team**.

see their **primary role** as seeking the voice of the child or young person.

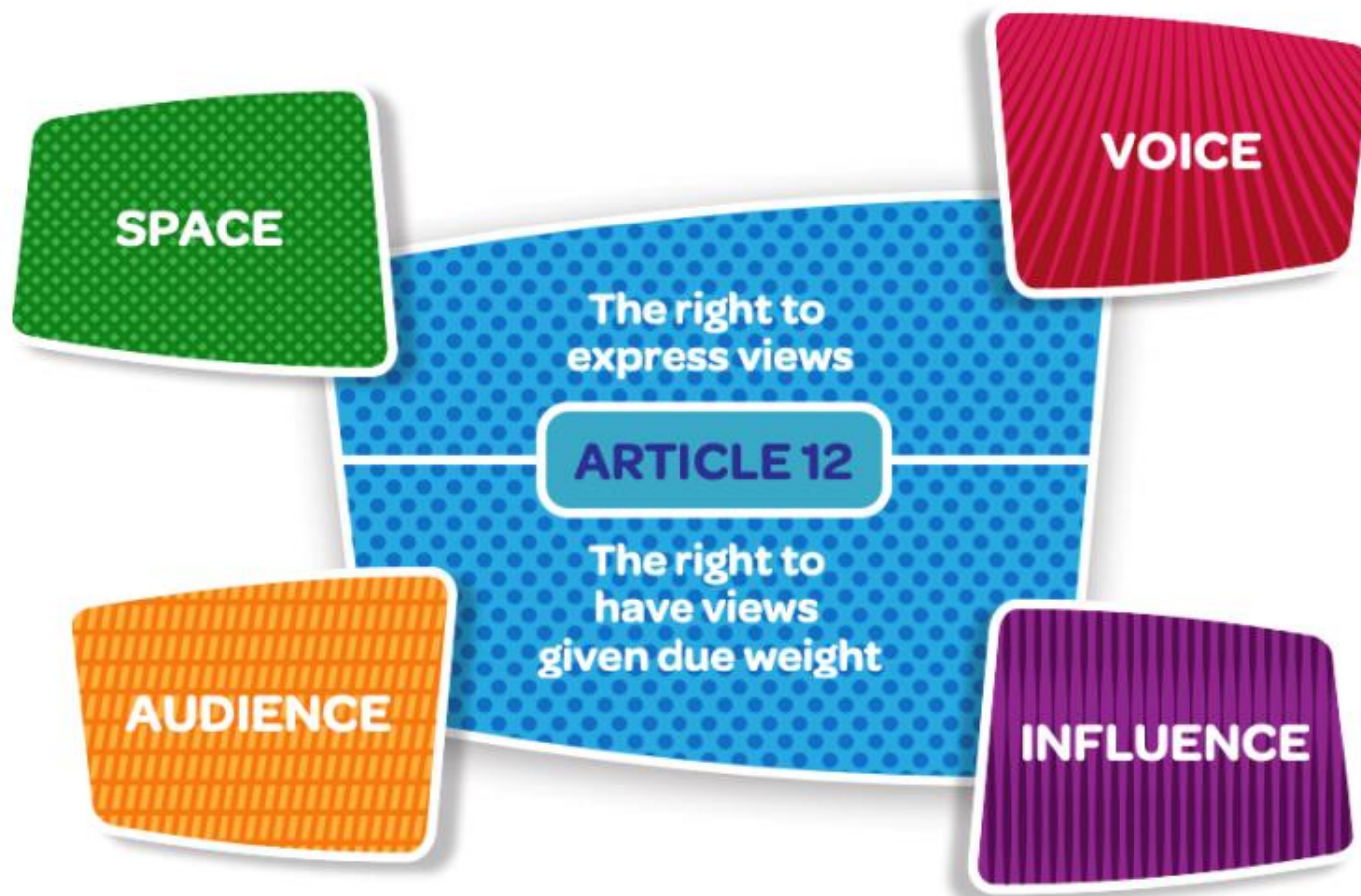
ADVOCATES

are allocated the resources to build a **meaningful relationship** with a child or young person over time.

use their advocacy to keep the **needs** of the child or young person **front and centre** in the minds of decision makers.

engage other members of the child or young person's **community or cultural group as advocates**





LUNDY MODEL OF PARTICIPATION

- Project used the Lundy Model Checklist to identify practices
- Useful model for any level of practice/organisation
- More details here: [Lundy Model](#)

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.



**THANK
YOU**

Acknowledgement of appreciation:

Berry Street

Melbourne City Mission

OzChild

Anchor

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare