

2. Child participation in advocacy

Purpose

To plan appropriate children's involvement in the advocacy strategy

How to use it

- At the planning stage, to consider how children might be involved in different ways.
- For monitoring and evaluation: to assess the levels of children's involvement.

The tools in this toolkit can be adapted for use with children and young people where appropriate, by modifying the language where necessary and ensuring they are used in accordance with the practice standards. To ensure that children and young people's participation in advocacy is safe, meaningful and ethical:

- ◆ Plan around the needs of children and young people and bear in mind that they might have other commitments such as school etc.
- ◆ Ensure venues and spaces are child friendly
- ◆ Think about language and information – is it accessible to children and young people?
- ◆ Make sure that children and young people are kept at the centre of advocacy initiatives

Overview of practice standards in child participation¹

1. **An ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability.** Adult organisation and workers are committed to ethical participatory practice and to the primacy of children's best interests.
2. **Children's participation is relevant and voluntary.** Children participate in processes and address issues that affect them – either directly or indirectly – and have the choice as to whether to participate or not.
3. **A child friendly, enabling environment.** Children experience a safe, welcoming and encouraging environment for their participation.
4. **Equality of opportunity.** Child participation work challenges and does not reinforce existing patterns of discrimination and exclusion. It encourages those groups of children who typically suffer discrimination and who are often excluded from activities to be involved in participatory processes.
5. **Staff is effective and confident.** Adult staff and managers involved in supporting/ facilitating children's participation are trained and supported to do their jobs to a high standard.
6. **Participation promotes the safety and protection of children.** Child protection policies and procedures form an essential part of participatory work with children.
7. **Ensuring follow-up and evaluation.** Respect for children's involvement is indicated by a commitment to provide feedback and/ or follow-up and to evaluate the quality and impact of children's participation.

¹ Practice Standards in Children's participation. Save the Children Alliance, 2005.

Adapted from Save the Children UK's *Advocacy Toolkit*, Second Edition January 2007

Use the following matrix to plan how to involve children at different stages of the advocacy strategy: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The matrix shows degrees of “participation” as a spectrum ranging from “being informed” to “being in control”. Different degrees of participation will be appropriate at different stages of the advocacy process. Save the Children Alliance Practice Standards apply in deciding if and when to involve children. It is important to consider their best interests at all times and to consider all possible consequences of their participation, particularly if they are involved in public advocacy.

	Kept Informed about activities	Consultation	Provide inputs	Partnership	Control
Planning	E.g. Children are informed about advocacy plans.	Children's views are incorporated into advocacy plans	Children help to collect information,	Children have significant influence on decisions at planning stage, e.g. Determining when, where and how advocacy activities should take place.	Children have controlling influence on advocacy at planning stage
Implement-ation	Children are provided with information.	Children are consulted and their views incorporated, for example in advocacy materials,	Children take part in implementation for example they produce materials, attend meetings, etc.	Children have partnership role in advocacy—including decision-making responsibility	Children are in charge of running advocacy
Monitoring	Children are provided with information about how the advocacy is running	Children are asked for their opinions on how the advocacy working	Children help to collect information on the progress of the advocacy	Children have influence on how monitoring is done: What questions are asked, what data is collected, how it is presented, analysing findings etc.	Children are in control of monitoring process -
Evaluation	Children are given information about advocacy and its effects/impact	Children are asked for their views on the effects and impact of the project on their lives.	Children help to collect information about advocacy effectiveness.	Children involved in analysis and conclusions about effectiveness	Children are in control of evaluation.

The following key questions might also be useful when evaluating children's participation in advocacy:

- How many children were involved?
- Which children were not involved and why? (girls/boys, age, ethnic background, working children etc.)
- What was the process by which they were genuinely involved? Are there factors that may have prevented them from freely giving their opinion?
- What key successes/impacts in your advocacy work can be ascribed to children's participation?
- Did you face any ethical issues and/or challenges during the process?