

“ Listen – Act – Change

Council of Europe Handbook on children’s participation

For professionals working for and with children



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Building a Europe
for and with children



Annex 3

ENSURING SAFETY AND WELL-BEING: A CHECKLIST



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One of the nine basic requirements for effective and ethical children's participation is that it is safe and sensitive to risk (see Annex 1 for information on all of the nine basic requirements contained in the *UN General Comment 12*). Adults working with children have a duty of care. Staff must take every precaution to minimise the risks to children of abuse and exploitation and any other negative consequences of participation. Children should enjoy the experience and feel that they benefit in some way.

Making sure that the activities are safe for everyone requires forethought in the preparation and planning stage, this checklist can help organisers think through what should be in place:

As you prepare your organisation

- ▶ Does your organisation have:
 - a child safeguarding policy
 - risk assessment process
 - contacts with organisations or staff that can provide practical and emotional support to children on any arising issues
 - a code of conduct for how staff and accompanying adults are expected to behave when working with children?
 - a formal complaints procedure that allows children involved in participatory activities to make complaints in confidence?
 - media (including photography and social media) use with and by children?
- ▶ Do these cover the sort of activity you are planning?
- ▶ Are there accessible versions of information about safeguarding, support, conduct and complaints?
- ▶ Do staff have relevant safeguarding training?

Before you start an activity

- ▶ Have you conducted a risk assessment and put in place a plan to minimise risks to children?
- ▶ Have you identified the skilled, knowledgeable staff who are delegated to address and coordinate child protection and wellbeing issues during this participatory process? Are they clear of their roles and responsibilities?
- ▶ Are responsibilities relating to liability and comfort - safety, travel and medical insurance, food and catering - clearly delegated and effectively planned for?
- ▶ Have you communicated information about the activity, safeguarding and support to all who will be involved?
- ▶ Have you obtained consent from all relevant parties?

At the start and during the activity

With children and the adults involved, have you gone over and made sure you all have a shared understanding of:

- The way you will be working together or 'ground rules' and any expectations?
- Consent to take part and how confidentiality will be protected?
- Rights to be safe and how to raise concerns and who too?
- When concerns about a child will have to be shared with other professionals?
- Who can offer support with practical and emotional issues?
- How children can take time out or decide to withdraw their participation?
- How photographs, videos or digital images can be taken or published, including for professional and personal purposes?
- The implication of media and social media coverage for any children involved, including from accidental inclusion of the event or livestreaming.

At the end of the activity

- ▶ Have you reminded everyone of how to raise concerns and who can offer on-going support with practical and emotional issues?
- ▶ Have you explained how children can review any of the ways in which they might be represented in outputs from the event?
- ▶ Have you communicated any concerns to the relevant people?
- ▶ Have you evaluated how you can learn from the activity to improve safeguarding in the future?

Since coming into force over 30 years ago, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has affirmed children’s right to express their views on all matters that affect them. The Council of Europe has sought to make this right real and concrete in the member states through its Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18, and has also embedded child participation in its own standard-setting, monitoring and capacity building work as well as at its international events. This Handbook represents a substantive contribution to the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016 to 2021) promoting child participation under its second priority area.

The Handbook was produced by the Children’s Rights Division of the Council of Europe in collaboration with international child participation experts and following the consultation of more than 50 children and young people on the challenges to be addressed.

It is meant to be a hands-on tool for people who work with children in a professional capacity, for example in schools, hospitals, alternative care settings, child protection services, and other social services. It is designed for social workers, teachers, judges, lawyers, immigration officers, psychologists, civil servants, youth workers and day care workers, offering them practical approaches to “do” children’s participation and make it work for all children, including those in vulnerable situations, both at an individual and a collective level.

Professionals using this Handbook are invited to improve their capacities and skills to “listen” to children, to “act” upon the lessons learned and to “change” any decision making involving or concerning children. They are also invited to spread the good practice promoted through this tool and thus, in the end, to make a life-changing impact for children in those contexts where decisions are made without truly listening to them.

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The Council of Europe is the continent’s leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.