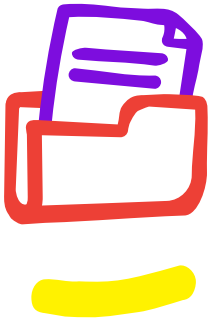


Voice and Influence Guide: activities to use when consulting with children and young people

Developed by the Voice, Influence and Change Team

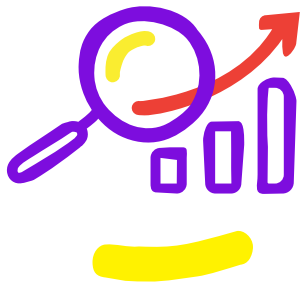


Background



- The VIC team evaluated how they were using voice and influence models in their everyday practice including advising teams and services about best practice.
 - They identified a need to explore different voice and influence models and felt there was significant value in the 'Pathways to Participation' model (Shier 2001), which identifies three stages of adult commitment (openings, opportunities and obligations).
 - The team decided to adapt 'Pathways to Participation' to include two additional commitments (outcome and ownership), resulting in 'The 5 Os' model.
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Purpose



- The purpose of the 5 Os model is to support the VIC team to plan and evaluate their voice and influence programmes, as well as support other teams and services to do the same.
- Teams and services can use the model as a guide when they are involving, consulting and gathering the views of children, young people, parents and carers.
- It aligns with our city's ambition to be the best city for children and young people, to be a Child Friendly City, and it demonstrates our commitment to working with children, young people, parents and carers so that their voices are at the heart of decisions that affect them.
- The model ensures that we are working towards, acting in accordance with and accountable to the Child Friendly Leeds wishes, Children and Young People's Plan and other statutory requirements.





Stages of the 5 Os model

1. Opening

Outline of the consultation or project including dates / timescales, who will be involved and the number of young people, parents and carers involved.

2. Opportunity

Explanation of how young people, parents and carers will be involved including identification of the mechanisms being used.

3. Obligation

Identification of strategic and statutory requirements that are fulfilled as a result of the consultation or project.

4. Outcome

Evaluation of the consultation or project including what will / has changed as a result. Provision of evidence of the short and term long impact, as well as a feedback to the young people involved.

5. Ownership

Details of the service and / or partnership responsible for overseeing the consultation or project.



Consultation activities

‘Stage 2: Opportunity’

Surveys

Surveys are an efficient way to gather views from a large group of people. They help you understand thoughts, opinions, and experiences by asking structured questions.

They are one of many tools for consulting with and asking the views of young people, parents and carers in order to understand their thoughts, opinions, and feelings.

They are written in a way that provides respondents with a quick and easy experience that enables them to answer questions truthfully.

Top Tips

Purpose

- Start by identifying your “Big Question”/ Theme – what are you trying to find out?
- Break this down into smaller, focused questions that build towards your goal.

Language

- Use clear and simple language
- Use language that is neutral and unbiased and does not lead respondents to a particular answer.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Use bulleted lists to break up text.

Accessibility

- Ensure your survey is compatible with screen readers.
- Use images with alt text to support questions.
- Make sure it can be completed using a keyboard.
- Use text alongside colour to convey meaning, rather than relying on colour alone.

Design

- Limit the number of questions to 5–10.
- Aim for completion within 10 minutes.



Polls

Polls are a quick way to gather opinions in real-time. They can be used during events or shared online to capture instant feedback.

Options include online polls, live shows of hands, suggestion sessions, or even pre-stamped postcards.

Top Tips

Format

- Use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, MS Teams, or Zoom.
- Keep polls short and focused on one question at a time.

Purpose

- Ideal for gauging preferences or making group decisions.
- Best used during topic discussions.

Data Type

- Quantitative – useful for counting responses and identifying trends.

Interviews

Interviews allow for deeper exploration of individual experiences and opinions. They are especially useful when you want to understand the “why” behind someone’s views. They can be conducted in person, over the phone, or online.

Top Tips

Preparation

- Start with your “Big Question” / Theme and break it down into a logical flow of smaller questions.
- Think about how the conversation will feel and whether the order makes sense.

Recording

- Decide whether to take notes or record the interview.
- Always ask for permission before recording.



Interviews (continued)

Participant Experience

- Consider sharing questions or topics in advance to help participants prepare.

Data Type

- Qualitative – rich, detailed responses that offer insight.

Focus Groups

Focus groups bring together small groups to discuss a specific topic. They're great for exploring shared experiences and generating ideas.

Ideal group size is 5–8 participants.

Top Tips

Planning

- Start with your “Big Question” / Theme and develop a topic guide.
- Include key areas for discussion, time allocation, and any planned activities.

Facilitation

- Encourage open conversation and make sure everyone has a chance to speak.
- Use creative activities to gather feedback in different ways.

Participant Experience

- Share questions or discussion topics in advance to help participants feel prepared.

Data Type

- Qualitative – useful for understanding group dynamics and shared views.



I Like / I wish / What if

(in person and online)

- On a piece of paper of three columns: I like, I wish, What if.
 - Ask young people a question and encourage them to answer using the three columns.
-

Round robin questions

(in person and online)

- Open questions for young people to answer.
 - Ask the question, and ask young people to share their answers either verbally or writing down on a post-it note.
-

Traffic lights

(in person or online)

A lot of young people will be very familiar with the ‘traffic light’ tool. Having a simple traffic light enables a young person to quickly inform your their feelings towards suggestions.

- Green: Positive / Good
 - Amber: Need additional help / Not Sure
 - Red: Negative / Not Good
-

Timelines

(in person and online)

- Give each young people a timeline for the topic you are consulting on.
- Ask young people to identify throughout that time their highs, lows and worries.



Voting with your feet

(in person)

- Ask young people a question with different choices.
 - Young people select an option by moving to the different options.
 - Ask young people to explain why they chose that option.
 - This could also be done on a scale, and doesn't have to be done with feet, for example, young people could respond by placing a dot.
-

Talking mats

(in person)

- Talking mats is an interactive resource can be used with young people to enable them to express their views and opinions in an interactive way.
 - Ask a question and provide a number of different pictures that can be used for answers.
 - The young people can then hold up / identify their answer to the question using the pictures available.
-

Debates

(in person)

- Debates are a great way to find out young people's views and feedback.
 - Split the young people into two groups.
 - Give them a topic and ask them to prepare their debate.
 - Take notes on what the young people share during the debate.
-

Sticky notes

(in person)

- Ask a question and give each young person sticky notes.
- Young people write their responses on the sticky notes and stick them next to a question.
- This mechanism is a good way to ensure those young people who aren't comfortable speaking get the opportunity to share their views and feedback.



Flipchart relay

(in person)

- Split the group of young people into two teams.
 - Each team line up in front of a sheet of flipchart.
 - Ask the group a question.
 - Each young person takes it in turns to write their response on the flipchart - all responses must be different.
 - The first team to finish wins.
-

Bead boxes

(in person)

- Ask young people to vote / express their opinions by providing them with different beads and have boxes that represent different possible answers (remember to use pictures).
 - Young people will then place their beads (or other items) in the box that relates to their opinion / answer.
-

Getting creative

(in person)

- Drawing is a great way to gather the views of young people, you can ask young people to answer questions by drawing how they feel or what they like to do.
 - This is a simple consultation exercise that involves pen, paper and art materials.
-

Graffiti / thought wall

(in person)

- Write a question on a sheet of flipchart paper.
- Ask young people to write their answers on the flipchart paper.



Mood board

(in person)

- This activity is getting people to think about how they feel about a particular thing.
 - Each young person is given a piece of paper and asked to write or draw how it makes them feel.
 - You could also use pre-prepared images and words that can be used by the young people.
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Priority dots

(in person)

- Priority dots can be used when asking young people to prioritise from a list of choices.
 - Give each young people a number of dots and ask them to use them to vote for their top priorities.
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Interactive whiteboards

(online)

- Interactive whiteboards enable young people to share their views and feedback by typing into the interactive whiteboards.
 - You can ask open and closed questions, and make the whiteboards as interactive as you like.
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Emoji Cards

(in person/online)

- Can be used to gather opinions about how people feel about a particular thing or topic.
 - Provide the group with a set of emojis and ask them to hold up/respond with the one which best reflects how they feel about the topic.
 - OR place emojis in different corners of the room and ask the young people
 - to stand by the one which best reflects their feelings.
- 

Speech Bubbles

(in person)

- Provide the group with sheets which have drawings of people on them each with a BLANK speech bubble attached.
 - Ask the young people to finish a sentences in the speech bubbles
 - e.g. What I really like about my local community is...
-

Barriers Wall

(in person)

- This activity can be used to get young people thinking about barriers and solutions to a problem.
 - Draw a wall on a flipchart and give out paper 'bricks'. Get the group to write one barrier per brick and assemble to form the wall.
 - Follow-up activity - for every barrier, write a solution on a balloon-shaped piece of paper.
 - Stick it to the brick to symbolise the barrier being pulled away.
-

Table Curling

(in person)

- Can be used to start discussions on a variety of topics.
- On one of a table mark out zones, each zone can be a question or a statement.
- The young people stand at the other end of the table and push a coin or counter into a zone, whichever zone it lands in, speak around the topic.
- You can make each topic hidden so the young people don't know what they might land on.



Ideas in a Hat

(in person)

- This activity allows questions or statements for discussion to be anonymous.
 - Using small pieces of paper, ask the young people to write down comments, statements or questions and place them in the hat.
 - Split the group into teams, they then take it in turns to read out each paper and discuss.
-

Think, Pair, Share

(in person)

- Present participants with a topic or problem and give them:
 - 2 minutes to think by themselves
 - 2 minutes to discuss as a pair
 - 2 minutes to share as a group.
-

Vlogs/Movie Showcase

(in person)

- Support young people to record and edit a vlog style video to capture their perspectives on an issue and present movies as showcases for stakeholders.
- Incorporate 'meet the young people' into showcases so that young people ask and answer questions/challenge stakeholders on provision or local issues.
- This would work well longitudinally with a project to chart the social action over vlog episodes.
- **Ensure you have consent from everyone being filmed.**



Dear Diary

(in person/online)

- This activity can be used to get insight into young people's lives around an issue.
 - Ask the young people to document each time they interact with a particular issue/topic during a fixed time period.
 - Collect and share data.
-

Game of Fives

(in person/online)

- In groups of 5, after reading the statement/question, on the count of 3, each person to hold out a number between 0-5 with their fingers, giving their score.
 - After they score, the group discusses why they scored what they scored and if they could all come to the same score.
 - Once group scores has been established, the whole room can discuss the topic.
-

Hot Air Balloon

(in person)

- Can be used to help young people prioritise.
- On each table you have a basket (the hot air balloon) and photos/words of relevant items.
- For example: if you were asking people what activities they would like to be provided at holiday clubs for teenagers you might have a photo of a climbing wall, bubble football, a camp fire, etc.
- First you ask them to pick all the items they want at the club and to put them into their hot air balloon.
- Then say: 'Your hot air balloon is losing power, what would you throw out first....what would you throw out second...' etc.



Diamond 9

(in person)

- Have 9 cards ready with different items/statements on them.
- e.g. What is most helpful: work experience, training, qualifications, awards, a mentor, funding, etc..)
- The young people arrange them into a diamond 9 shape – where the top of the diamond is the ‘best’ or highest priority
- This could also be done with blank post-it notes/cards, where users produce their own answers and then arrange them.



Ethics

- When consulting with young people, it is essential to inform them of what their participation involves and how the information they share will be used.
- The information provided must be clear and accessible, explaining:
 - Participation is voluntary
 - What the consultation involves, what it will cover
 - How parents/guardians can provide consent.

Top Tips

- Young people won't always come with idea for a consultation/voice project - offer opportunities to spark this!
- Make the topic authentic to the young people to ensure the work is as powerful as possible.
- Whether or not you achieve a voice project, providing a space for them to share their opinions is still valuable.
- Be prepared for attrition and things to go awry, it never hurts to have a backup plan!
- Be transparent and realistic with young people - manage their expectations.
- All young people should be given the opportunity to use their voice, professionalism, maturity and skills develop throughout a consultation/project.



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