



# Young Voices in Sport

Sport Ireland Toolkit for  
Involving Young Members  
in Decision-Making



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## Activity cards

### ICEBREAKERS (ORANGE CARDS)

- Name Game
- Wink
- Communication Challenge
- Pair and Share
- Pictionary of Me

### VOTING (GREEN CARDS)

- Stand Up
- Hands Up and Invisible Hands
- Yes or No
- Sticky Dot Voting
- Secret Ballot

### EXPLORING (PINK CARDS)

- Comments Box
- Graffiti Wall
- Ideas Post-its

### WORKSHOPS (PURPLE CARDS)

- Moving Debate
- Pros and Cons Post-its
- Rotation
- Evaluation Target

# ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT



Young members of sporting organisations have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their sporting lives. Volunteers and members of staff in sporting organisations can support the long-term engagement of their young members in the sports they love by listening to their views and acting on them. Sporting organisations that involve young members in decision-making are more relevant to them, more sustainable and more likely to thrive.

By using the activities in this toolkit, it will be possible for sporting organisations to find out what is important to their members in the 10-18 age group, to support their involvement in on-the-spot decision-making and to consult with them in more depth on any topic.

# 1

# GETTING IT RIGHT

## 1.1 Best practice (The Voice Model Checklist)

The Voice Model Checklist (also known as the Lundy Model Checklist) was developed as part of Ireland's first National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making.<sup>2</sup> It aims to help all organisations working with children and young people to make sure that: they have the **SPACE** to express their views; their **VOICE** is enabled; their views have an **AUDIENCE**; and their views have **INFLUENCE**.

### SPACE

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

- Have children's views been actively sought?
- Was there a safe space in which children can express themselves freely?
- Have steps been taken to ensure that all children can take part?

### VOICE

**Provide appropriate information and facilitate 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

**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

**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 the decisions taken?

<sup>2</sup> [www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/playandrec/20150617NatStratonChildrenandYoungPeoplesParticipationinDecisionMaking2015-2020.pdf](http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/playandrec/20150617NatStratonChildrenandYoungPeoplesParticipationinDecisionMaking2015-2020.pdf)

**Below are some examples of what this means for sporting organisations:**

**SPACE**

Find somewhere young people feel comfortable and safe to freely express themselves. Make sure to include as many young people as possible and give them a chance to bring up issues that matter to them.

**VOICE**

Be careful not to tell young members what adults involved in their sport think before asking them for their own opinion. Don't assume you know what young members think, instead set aside 10 minutes after a training session to ask young members to vote on a simple decision or organise a workshop to discuss a broader topic.

**AUDIENCE**

Make sure the views of young members are conveyed to the relevant decision makers. For example, decisions may be taken by local sports clubs, at county or provincial level or at national level by a board of directors.

**INFLUENCE**

Find out how the views of young members were included in the decision-making process and give feedback to young members on the outcome.

**When you facilitate the participation of young members in decision-making:**

- You recognise that they have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect their lives.
- You recognise that they have unique perspectives that are as valid as those of adults.
- Your primary purpose is to enable them to develop and express their own opinions.

## **1.2 Preparation**

**When planning your activities:**

1. Check the consent and child protection policies published by your national governing body.
2. Make sure young members know that taking part is voluntary.
3. Make sure young members know that they will not be named or identifiable in any report or conversation about the views of young members.
4. Make sure the venue is insured, safe, easy to get to and suitable for what you have planned.
5. Always have a Plan B in mind in case something unexpected happens.

## 1.3 Top tips for working with young members of sporting organisations

### 1 Be aware of the power dynamics.

Sporting organisations can be very hierarchical with all the power in the hands of adults, so it may take time for young members to trust the process and say what they actually think. Consider what can be done to support this. For example, if there is a chance that young members may want to talk about coaching during a workshop then the team coach should not facilitate or attend.

### 2 Be aware of competitive behaviour

especially during icebreaker activities. Competition is at the heart of much sporting activity, so make sure young members know they cannot win or lose when they are involved in decision-making.

### 3 Take advantage of key moments

to seek the views of young members, such as the start or end of the season for example.

### 4 Keep it active.

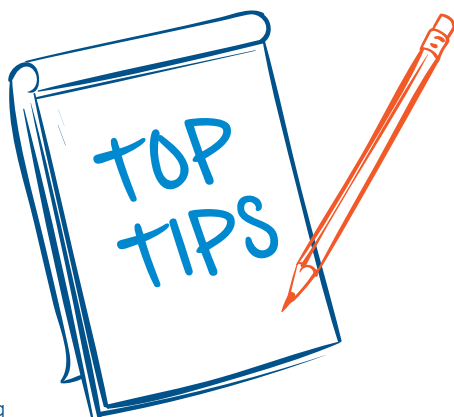
The more movement and interaction you can bring into your activities the better.

### 5 Limit the amount of reading and writing.

Demonstrate every activity and repeat the instructions as often as necessary using gestures and visual aids. Make accurate spelling 'optional' and invite young members to draw or state their ideas if preferred.

### 6 Make sure everyone in the group knows that help is available

if needed but avoid jumping in to help too quickly.



## 1.4 Top-tips for including young members with disabilities

As in any group, one or more of the young members in your group may have a disability. This could be:

- A physical disability (for example, Cerebral Palsy, Spina Bifida, amputee)
- An intellectual disability (for example, Downs Syndrome, Angelman Syndrome)
- A sensory disability (for example, vision impairment, hearing impairment)
- Or another disability such as autism or dyslexia.

If there are young members in the group with disabilities it is essential that you understand their particular needs. To do this, when you are planning your activities consider:

- Speaking informally with any young member in your group with disabilities,
- Or meeting with them and their chosen support person (parent, guardian, carer, support worker and so on).

### Remember:

- When you speak with any young member, including young members with disabilities, maintain eye contact and address what you say to them.
- Some young members with disabilities may choose to bring a support person along to the activities you are planning so include this possibility in your discussions with them beforehand.
- If a young member does decide to bring a support person along to the activities it is important to make sure the young member has the space they need to develop their own views. To do this it may be a good idea to agree in advance that the support person will sit out until the young member decides they are needed.

Once you understand the particular needs of any young person in your group with disabilities you can formulate, review and if necessary adjust the activities you are planning using the TREE model.

# The TREE Model

The four elements of the TREE Model can help volunteers and staff members in sporting organisations to ensure that young members with disabilities can participate in decision-making. To do this think about:

**T Teaching or facilitation style** – how best can you facilitate the activities you have planned so that all young members can take part?

**R Rules** – what might you need to change about the actual activities themselves – are they suitable for everyone?

**E Equipment** – what might you need to change about any equipment or other resources you are planning to use?

**E Environment** – what you might need to change about the venue?

**Below are a few examples of how you might adapt your activities based on these four elements.**

## Teaching/facilitation:

- Some young members, including those with autism, may take longer to digest information before answering so allow extra time for this.
- A lot of what is said will be missed by young members with hearing impairments so think of ways to compensate for this (for example, position yourself closed by to assist with lip-reading, enable them to work with a note taker or scribe and so on).

## Rules:

- Some young members with sensory processing issues may be under or over sensitive to touch so make sure they don't have to touch or be touched as part of any activity if they don't want to.
- A person's wheelchair is part of their personal space so make sure everyone knows not to touch or lean on a wheelchair without being invited to.

## Equipment:

- Use a large black font on a white background to aid those with vision impairments and consider multiple different versions of any printed material (for example, large print format, picture format, braille etc).
- Consider additional methods of communication (for example, note takers or scribes, sign language interpreters, assistive technology etc).

## Environment:

- Ensure the venue is accessible.
- Think about how the room is set-up (for example, working on the floor may not be suitable for wheelchair users; a busy noisy environment may not be suitable for individuals with autism or sensory processing issues).



# 2

## ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES

### 2.1 Icebreakers - Getting to know each other

#### When to use:

The Ice Breaker activities on the orange activity cards can be used to help young members to relax and to get to know each other better before working together on some of the other activities in this toolkit. They are especially useful at the beginning of a workshop but they can also be used to energise young members if they are a bit flat.



*Ice breakers should be fun and non-competitive. The aim is for the group to relax and for young members to get to know each other if they don't already so make sure everyone understands this. Choose games that encourage young members to talk about themselves. Choose games that encourage team work. Avoid games that reward or showcase individual skill in any sport.*

### 2.2 Exploring - Finding out what is important to young members

#### When to use:

The Exploring activities on the pink activity cards are useful for getting young members to identify the topics they think are the most important to work on if they don't already know or you don't have a topic in mind that requires their input to inform the work of your organisation.

*The purpose of these activities is for young members to identify what is important to them, so make sure you ask open questions. For example, 'What things about this club would you most like to work on as a group?'*



## 2.3 Voting - Identifying and prioritising preferences

### When to use:

The Voting activities on the green activity cards take no more than 10 minutes each. They allow young members to vote in favour of or against a proposal and to select their preferred options from a list of possibilities. They are very useful for on-the-spot decision-making, for selecting a topic to work on from a number of options or for prioritising a list of ideas produced by young members in a workshop. They can also be used to vote on proposals put forward by other people, for example a coach, club management or even a national governing body.



*Explain to young members that they should vote for what they really want, not what is popular or what their friends want. Make sure young members understand that all proposals and ideas are of equal value even if they do not attract many votes. If you think young members will influence each other when voting, chose an anonymous voting activity (Invisible Hands; Yes or No; Secret Ballot). But keep in mind that if you want young members to openly discuss the reasons why they voted the way they did, a public vote is important.*



## 2.4 Workshops - Going deeper into any topic

### When to use:

The Workshop activities on the purple activity cards can be used to enable young members to share their views about a topic that is important to them in more detail.

### Workshop preparation:

As well as the general preparation outlined in section 1.2, there are a number of additional issues to consider if you are planning a workshop.

- You may need additional facilitators on the day if, for example, you are working with a large group or if some young members have additional needs.
- You may need to cover transportation costs for young members.
- You should agree 'ground rules' for your workshop with young members at the outset (for example, all voices are equal, one speaker at a time, no mobile phones).
- If possible, arrange for a note taker to work with you on the day so nothing is missed.
- Decide how you will follow up with young members to let them know how their views have influenced decision-making in their sporting organisation.



*To keep the young members taking part engaged, your workshop should be no more than about an hour from start to finish. It is best to start with a game, even if the members of the group know each other because this helps to set the tone: fun! It is best to end by asking the young members what they thought about the workshop.*

*And remember, it is a good idea to take photos of the views gathered at the workshop for your records, (for example flipchart pages, Post-its and so on).*

### Typical structure of a workshop

|                           |                   |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Ice breaker               | 10-20 mins        |
| Introduce the topic       |                   |
| Explain the purpose       | 5 mins            |
| Workshop activity         | 40 mins           |
| Evaluation and conclusion | 5 mins            |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>60-70 mins</b> |

# 3

## SOCIAL MEDIA & ONLINE TOOLS

### When to use:

Young members of sporting organisations, like all young people, are part of the information age. They routinely express their views through online communities and social networks and may even feel more comfortable using these tools to communicate than taking part in face-to-face alternatives.

The tools introduced in this section can be useful for exploring the views of young members in the 16+ age group, especially when you want to engage large numbers of young members. In addition, using them can show young members that that you understand and value the tools they use to communicate, which could have the added benefit of enhancing the credibility of your consultation process.



## Examples of useful tools:

*The examples introduced below represent a small selection of the tools currently available. There are many others and new tools are being developed all the time.*



### Instagram

Lets you create simple 'Yes' or 'No' polls. But remember, at present, all responses are attributed so until this changes make sure young members know that everyone will be able to see the way they vote. [Instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com)



### Snapchat

Currently, Snapchat does not have an embedded polling function. But it is possible to create a multiple choice poll on Snapchat using third party apps like, for example, Pollsgo. At present, voting through Pollsgo is anonymous. [pollsgo.com](https://www.pollsgo.com)



### Facebook

It is also possible to create a simple two option poll on Facebook. And if you poll through a Facebook group you can also create multiple choice polls. But remember, at present, responses are attributed and public. [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)



**Poll Everywhere** With Poll Everywhere you can create multiple choice, Q&A and word cloud polls. Currently, all polls are anonymous. Young members can respond to a live poll, during a workshop for example, or they can respond to a survey in their own time using email, social media or text messaging. [polleverywhere.com](https://www.polleverywhere.com)



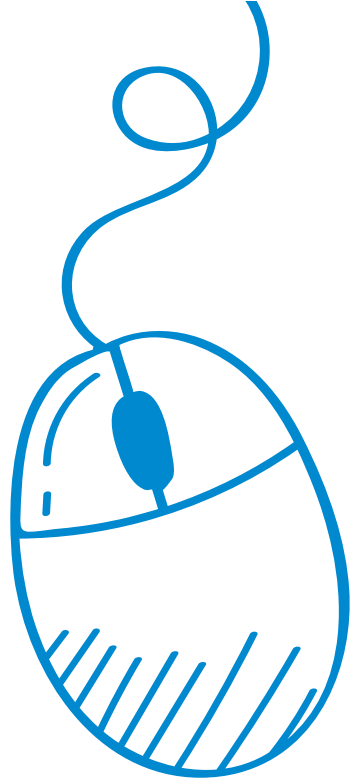
### Survey Monkey

With Survey Monkey you can create online surveys. At present, surveys are anonymous and can be created, shared and responded to using a smartphone app or on a computer. Unlike Poll Everywhere, live polls during workshops are not possible. Basic polls are free but more complex ones require a subscription. [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com)



**There are a few issues to be aware of when using tools like these:**

- Consider the consent and child protection policies published by your national governing body.
- Involve young members in choosing the tools you will use and designing your poll or survey questions.
- Choose tools that can be used with smart phones since more young members in the 16+ age group will either have access to a phone or a phone of their own than a computer.
- Provide hardcopy or face-to-face alternatives for young members who do not have access to phones or computers (for example, a printed sheet that can be filled out in writing and hand delivered or posted).
- Use these tools in addition to the other activities set out in the toolkit, not instead of them, especially when planning a workshop.
- Remember you cannot be 100% sure who provided the responses you receive to polls and surveys answered off-site.
- Make absolutely sure you have up-to-date information on whether or not the responses submitted will be anonymous or attributed. If attributed, remind young members of this a couple of times to make sure there can be no misunderstanding.



# 4

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The activities in this toolkit have been adapted for use by sporting organisations from the 'Practical guide to including seldom-heard children and young people in decision-making', published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2015. It contains a great many additional tips and activities that you may find useful.

[www.dcyu.gov.ie/documents/publications/20150903PracticalGuideSeldomHeardChildren.pdf](http://www.dcyu.gov.ie/documents/publications/20150903PracticalGuideSeldomHeardChildren.pdf)

