THE CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

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Building on Rainbows: Supporting Children's Participation in Shaping Responses to COVID-19

See full report here http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/33087/

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has recently restated that children's views should be inform responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not a luxury, it is a protective measure. This research, led by Prof Cath Larkins, University of Central Lancashire, shows, across Europe:

- Exposure to additional challenges for care-experienced children and young people, young Roma, migrant children, children with experience of vulnerable family situations, poverty and disability, and risk of violence, CSE or trafficking.
- Of the 95 professionals, from 16 sectors and 20 countries, surveyed in one week in April 2020, 30% provided examples showing children's participation in promoting wellbeing, information design, shaping services and critiquing practice. They reported little evidence of children's views informing public decision-making.

In summary, the research highlights the need to:

1. **Provide Recognition**. Commit to children's participation in shaping responses to COVID-19. Celebrate children's everyday contributions. Challenge age-based judgements.
2. **Support Individual Children:** Enable child participation in decisions and their meetings. Improve the coordination between adult professionals. Ensure children have regular direct contact with named individuals, in education and social care, and respond in line with children's views.
3. **Support Collective Influence:** Increase opportunities for children to collectively highlight concerns, inform decisions, and hold decision-makers to account. Share safe, accessible platforms for children's digital participation. Ensure that decision-makers engage with these. Also use paper, post, face-to-face, phone, television and radio.
4. **Promote Inclusion:** Adopt a critical Children's Rights Based Approach, guided by marginalised children (including children in care and care leavers, young Roma, migrant children and children with experience of vulnerable family situations, poverty and disabilities).
5. **Coordinate Digital and Offline Solutions**: Ensure provision of digital equipment, electricity, access to data and internet safety information. Upgrade professionals' digital skills and guidance. Provide personal support in use of digital equipment in situations where parents do not have these skills. Provide print copies of materials.
6. **Resources for Professionals:** Safeguard professionals' time for participation activities. Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for individual case work. Provide secure funding to grassroots and youth work organisations to maintain direct relationships with marginalised children and communities.
7. **Public Health Inclusion**. Ensure children's inclusion in formal processes for community and public engagement, ensuring their involvement in governance of, children's services, public health and other structures.
8. **Economic Measures.** Promote children's best interests in economic decision-making, learning from children about how to achieve this. Promote actions to support children and families financially, access to high quality services, and their participation in decision-making. Ensure immediate and long-term provision of nutrition, medication, housing and essential services, for children and families in vulnerable situations, and an adequate minimum income, to promote conditions in which children can access opportunities, participate and thrive.