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# PARTICIPATION Young Spice

A brilliant companion to  
the critically acclaimed

'Spice it Up'.

Fun participation activities  
for the under 11's

**DYNAMIX**  
Serious  
Fun



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# PART 1

## SETTING THE SCENE







# FOREWORDS

## What is good about the way Dynamix helps you participate?

by Rhiannon, Ellie and Anna, aged ten, Terrace Road Primary School, Swansea

It's fun, it's play and if we didn't participate people wouldn't play and that would ruin their imagination and they would always be boring people. If people didn't take part they wouldn't know how to learn the fun way. It is very important to learn the fun way as when you grow up there would be nothing exciting or new to do and there would be little point in living. Basically joining in is very very very very important. It is excellently excellent and awesomely awesome, what has happened in our school.

## Being young shouldn't stop you from having a say

by Keith Towler, Children's Commissioner for Wales

Meaningful participation transcends all equality and diversity considerations. It is also the keystone of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ultimately, we are all active citizens and we all have the right to have a say in decisions that affect us. Yet, for the younger members of our society this is not always the case.

This guide provides practical advice on how to involve younger children under the age of 11. Professionals working with children must realise that every child has a right to be involved and that any child who wants to take part can be included in the process. The most important factor for adults to consider is that the methods used to engage with younger children suit their needs. Children and young people of all ages and backgrounds have a valuable contribution to make; we just need to make sure we provide them with suitable platforms on which to do so.

## Having a voice, having a choice

by Jane Hutt, Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Welsh Assembly Government

The Welsh Assembly Government is totally committed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 of the Convention states that all children should be able to express their opinion and have their voices heard on decisions that affect them.

The Welsh Assembly Government has adopted a soundbite to explain what we mean by this:

"Participation means that it is my right to be involved in making decisions, planning and reviewing an action that might affect me. Having a voice, having a choice."

This book is warmly welcomed and will provide a very valuable resource for professionals working with children.

It is extremely important that children and young people are given the opportunity to participate and to be involved in decision-making. The activities within 'Participation - young spice' will provide children with the necessary tools in order to make valuable contributions and to become actively involved in participation not only for today, but also to build foundations for future years.

I would recommend this resource to all those who work with children and hope that you will be able to use it to help you work even better to develop children's knowledge and skills so that they can participate more fully in all aspects of their lives.

## Introducing this book

In 2002, Dynamix (that's us) and Save the Children's Wales Programme/Achub y Plant created a book of practical tools for engaging children and young people in planning and consultations, called 'Participation - Spice it up!'. \*

Readers found the book really useful, but asked for something that would help younger children to participate.

We firmly believe that there is no minimum age when a child can start to take part in decisions that affect their lives. Although many activities in 'Participation - Spice it up!' are easily adaptable for under-11s, we have also developed other activities for this age group over the last 20 years.

Working with very young people is about listening and sharing ideas, then recording and acting on them, ideally by involving the children in the process. It is the same as with any group, but there are other factors worth considering - and that is what this book is about.

Please read the 'Things to think about' sections as well as the activities and techniques. We believe that thinking around and about this stuff is useful. Knowing the why and the how helps you to adapt and devise so that you can help children and young people have a brilliant experience of participation, one that will get them saying "more please".

The Participation Team at the Welsh Assembly Government had the insight and foresight to commission this book and circulate it to all organisations providing learning, play or childcare to under-11s in Wales, including early learning centres, primary and junior schools and afterschool clubs. We hope you find it useful.

\* Participation - Spice it up! was written by Dynamix and published in 2002 by The Save the Children Fund ISBN 1 84187 062 5

## Introducing the authors

The authors of this book are all directors of Dynamix, which has been working to make social change happen since 1988. It is a worker's co-operative based in Swansea, South Wales. See page 186 for more information about Dynamix.

### Phill Burton

Phill has been involved in children's rights and play work for more than 30 years. He is a founder member of Dynamix and has an MSc Econ Early Childhood Studies, a BSc (Hons) Psychology degree, a CQSW (DipASS) Social Work diploma and a training qualification (PGCE Stage 1 - Post 16).

He has written two books about co-operative games and helped to write packs about equality, parenting, social enterprise and anti-bullying. Phill has worked in a number of different organisations and agencies including being a National Development Officer for Arts and Disability and a Volunteering Project Co-ordinator for what was then West Glamorgan Council for Voluntary Services. He directed Interplay, an integrated play and leisure project, for a decade and started Circus Eruption. He can still stilt walk and unicycle. He is inordinately fond of puppets.

### Jo Stephens

Jo has worked for Dynamix since 2000, and in her time there has developed all of the skills appropriate for standing on cold moonlit corners of Welsh valleys, finding out what the local young people would like to see and be involved with in their communities.

She is also happy to consult/facilitate/train and play in warm, comfortable, biscuit-providing environments, and has a wealth of experience of doing so. Jo is a key trainer for the ASSIST peer support programme, and is a Play Wales trainer. Asked what her favourite pieces of work have been, she says that there have been too many to mention, but that probably the most memorable was being a key trainer for the International Congress for Young Disabled People.

She has co-written a pack on anti-bullying for the under fives ('Happy Suns, Sad Sheep') and a parenting order pack for the Swansea Youth Offending Team. Jo really does like children and animals.

## Chris Dow

Chris has been with Dynamix since 2000 and has worked on a wide variety of projects over the last nine years. Chris has a BSc (Hons) degree in Human Ecology (don't ask), a training qualification (PGCE Stage 1 - Post 16) and is a qualified Forest School Leader, Level 3. Before coming to Dynamix, Chris was a Countryside Projects Officer. He looked after community woodlands and nature reserves across Swansea, working with children and local communities to help them care for their neighbourhood wildernesses.

Since being at Dynamix Chris has developed and piloted a wide range of outdoor learning resources in primary settings, delivered across the whole school age range. He has trained play workers in play work and worked with young people directly in school, youth and play work settings.

Chris was a co-author on the 'Not Just for Profit' pack, a resource designed to teach young people about social enterprise. Chris is a bubbleologist and is regularly mixing up new concoctions to achieve bigger and better bubbles.

## The important laws and agreements

To make children's participation a reality, it is important to know about these agreements and pieces of legislation, but not necessarily all their details.

### The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international agreement that protects the human rights of children under the age of 18.



Human rights are guarantees that protect individuals and groups from actions that affect their freedom and human dignity. They are things that you are entitled to simply by being a person, and are:

- universal: the same for everyone
- indivisible: equally important
- inalienable: all humans have them and they cannot be taken away

In December 1991, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland formally agreed to make sure that every child in the UK has all the rights as listed in the Convention.

There are 54 articles in the Convention. Articles 1-42 set out how children should be treated and Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments should work together to make sure all children are entitled to their rights.

The Welsh Assembly Government has shown its commitment to the Convention by adopting it as the basis for policy-making for children and young people in Wales.



## Children Acts 1989-2008

The Children Act was brought into law to introduce the idea of legal parental responsibility. Later laws amended certain parts of the Children Act to cover universal services which every child accesses, and to encourage integrated working to improve the lives of children and young people.

These laws cover all children and young people in the UK up to the age of 18. They are about making sure that children's needs and interests are at the centre of any decisions made about them.



## Rights to Action Wales

'Rights to Action' is a policy document issued by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2004. It states that:

"Children and young people should be seen as citizens, with rights and opinions to be taken into account now. They are not a species apart, to be alternately demonised and sentimentalised, nor trainee adults who do not yet have a full place in society."

'Rights to Action' adopts seven broad policy aims for children, which are presented as a direct translation of the UNCRC's articles as follows:

- a flying start in life: **articles 3, 29, 36**
- a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities: **articles 23, 28, 29, 32**
- the best possible health and freedom from abuse, victimisation and exploitation: **articles 6, 18-20, 24, 26-29, 32-35, 37, 40**
- access to play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities: **articles 15, 20, 29, 31**
- children and young people are listened to, treated with respect and have their race and cultural identity recognised: **articles 2, 7, 8, 12-17, 20**
- a safe home and community that supports physical and emotional well-being: **articles 19, 20, 25, 27, 32-35, 37-40**
- children and young people not disadvantaged by poverty: **articles 6, 26, 27, 28**

## Participation standards for Wales

There are eight standards agreed by the Welsh Assembly Government, the Participation Consortium (a group of organisations that want to make genuine participation happen) as well as children and young people in Wales.

Each standard is a guide to good practice for anyone wanting to make more participation happen. They are as follows:

- information ... that is easy to understand and get hold of and workers who are well informed
- it's your choice ... young people can get involved and work on things they find important and can opt out when they want to
- no discrimination ... no matter who the children or young people are, they all have the same right to be involved
- respect ... children and young people's opinions are important and should be respected
- you get something out of it ... children and young people should enjoy the experience of participating and get some benefit from the process
- feedback ... during and after the process the participants are kept informed about the outcomes
- improving how we work ... there is no perfect goal to be achieved, every organisation needs to realise they can improve





# PART 2

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

We have thought about this stuff and have some useful ideas for making it make more sense!



It would be good if you read this as it can help you make up new methods yourself





## Getting to grips with the concept

Whether you are laying the foundations and building a solid culture where participation is an obvious daily occurrence, or trying the pie, climbing up the ladder or rocketing out of the black hole (see below), you have to be careful of 'plastic imitation participation' - ie ticking that box without taking notice of the contents.

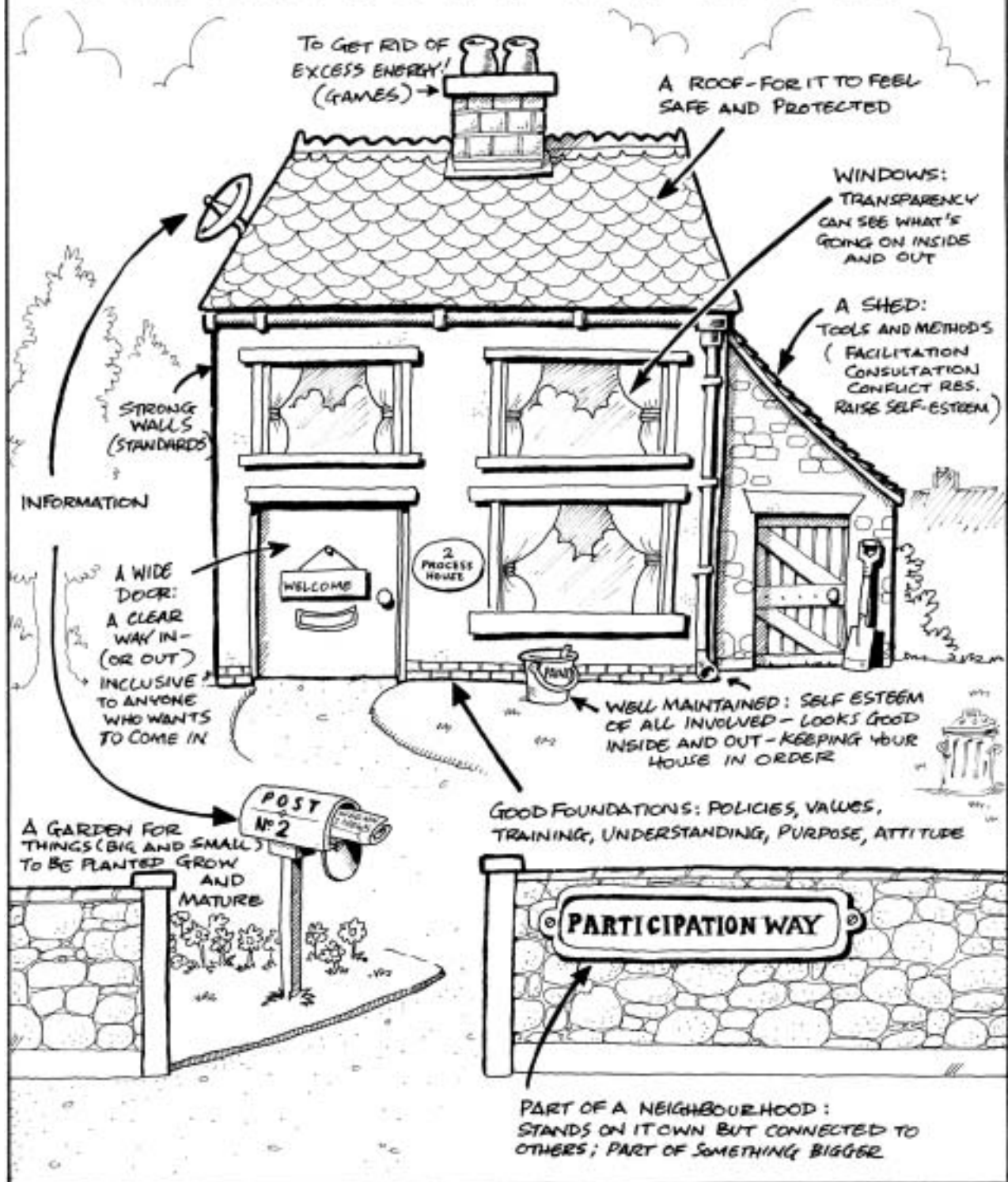
Participation is a meaningful process that we should all be carrying out if children's rights and the UNCRC (explained earlier) are ever going to be more than ageing and useless pieces of paper.

The following models will help you to get your head around what can be a complex process.

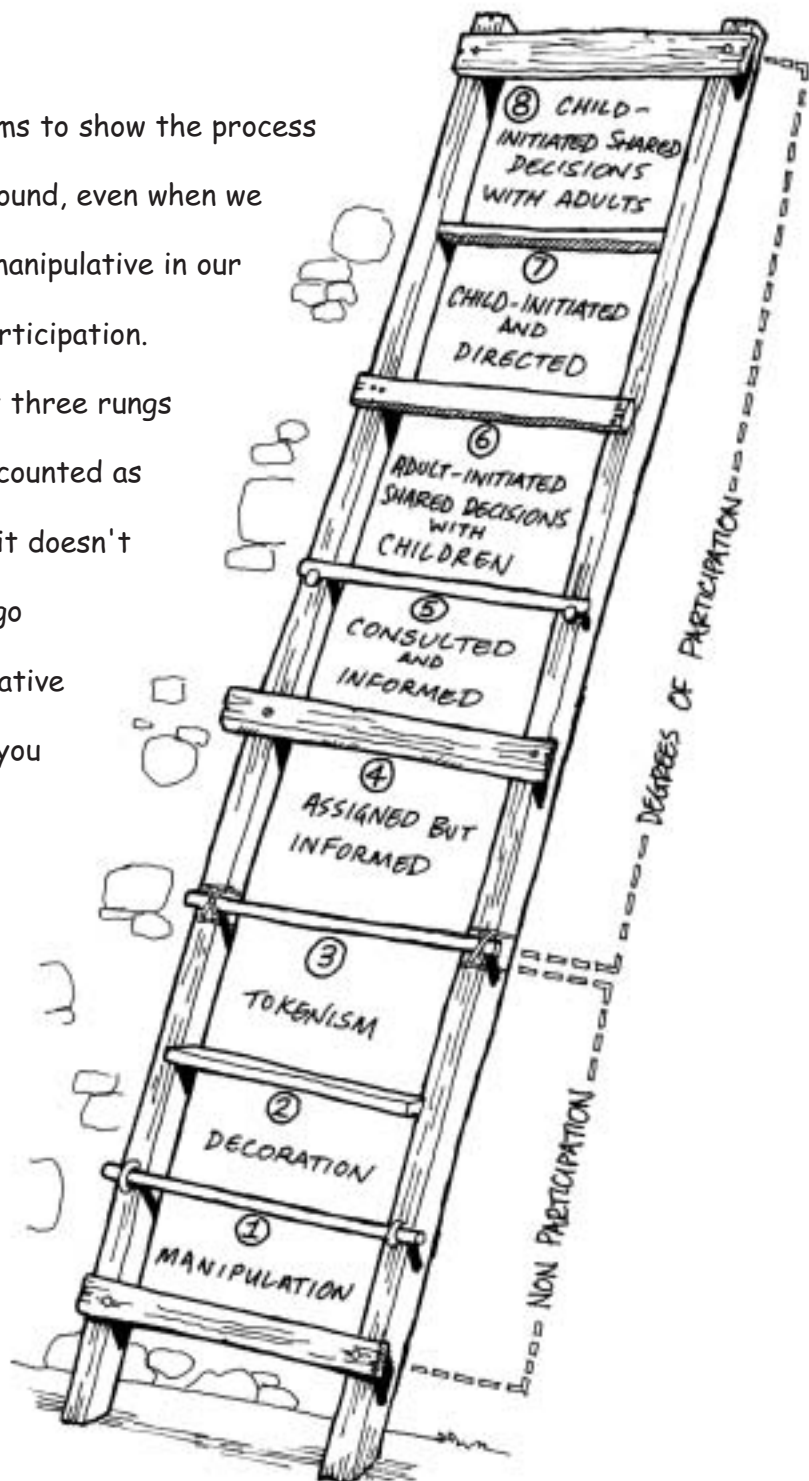
### Participation: is it a house, a ladder, a pie, or a black hole?

**Jo's house** is a way of showing that participation needs to have a range of elements to make it work well. Ideally the house should be designed and constructed by the participants, though there is nothing wrong with using and adapting other people's plans and ideas. Where you build it, and the materials you use, will differ from group to group and place to place. Although we are making suggestions and giving ideas in this book, we encourage people to adapt and make the ideas fit their circumstances.

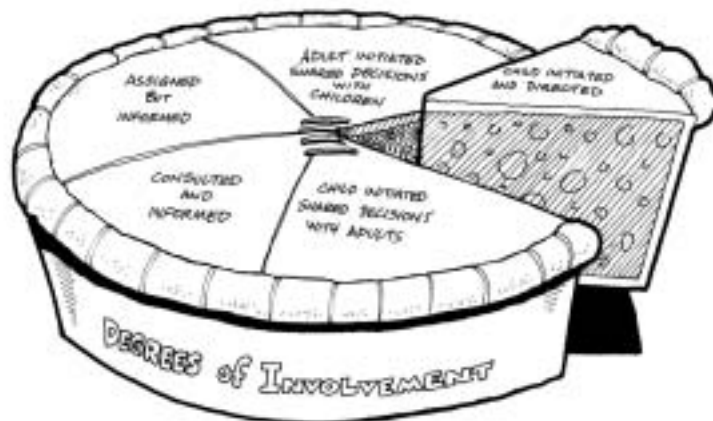
# BUILDING PARTICIPATION



Hart's ladder seems to show the process getting off the ground, even when we are tokenistic or manipulative in our way of enabling participation. Although the first three rungs of the ladder are counted as non-participation, it doesn't mean you have to go through those negative processes before you reach the start of real participation.



**Treseder's pie (or degrees)** shows that there are different participation experiences and different allocations of power to the adults and children taking part, and tries to avoid giving them a hierarchy of importance.

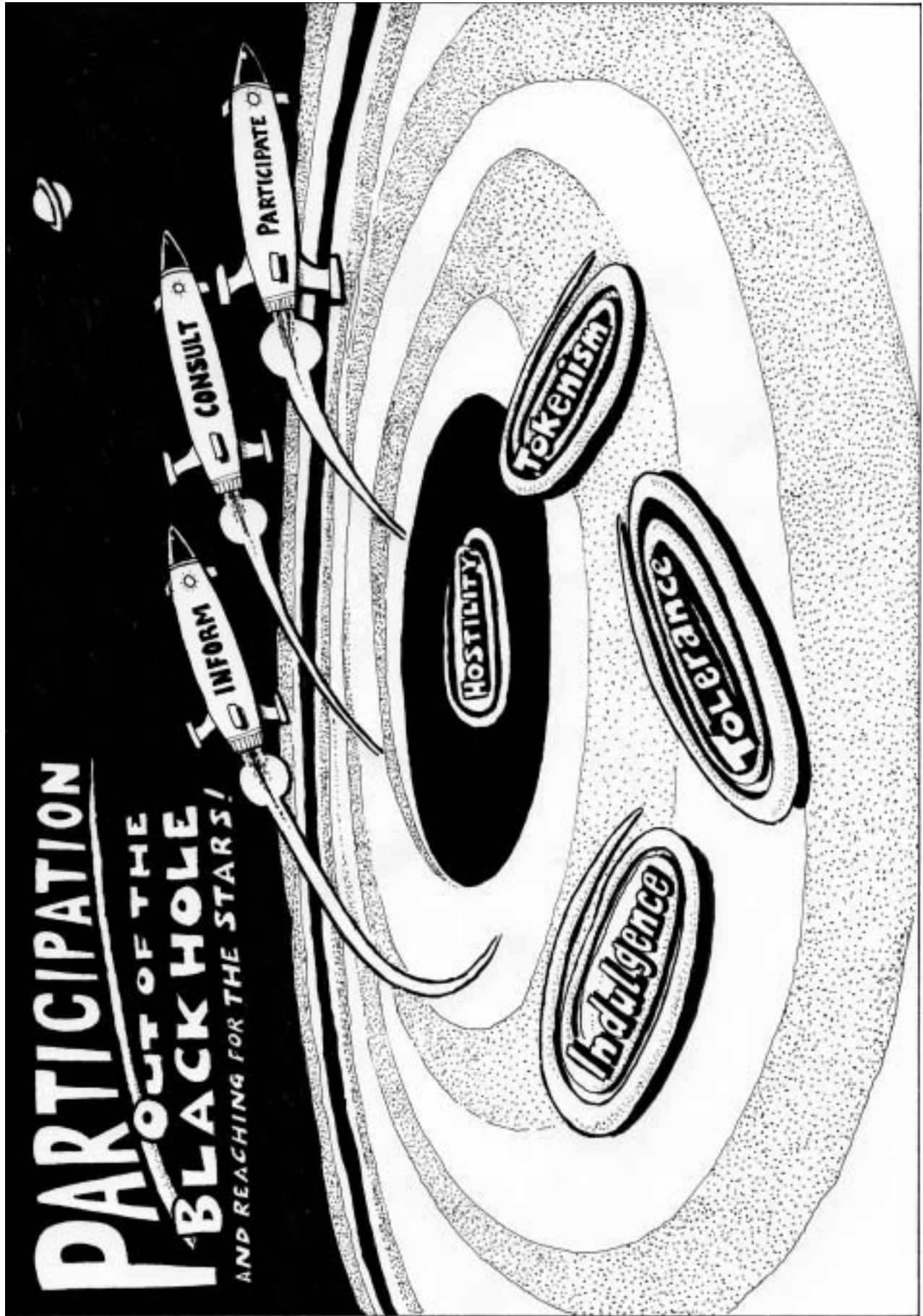


**Phill's black hole** shows that in order to make participation strong and sustainable, those taking part need to: 1) have information (this will lead to better consultation) and 2) be consulted (this will lead to greater ownership). The diagram also suggests that participants who are patronised or treated with overt hostility will not only fail to get a positive experience, but may be lost to the process of participation in the longer term.

Poorly organised experiences can inoculate us all against participating in the future. Because of that, we developed a diagram that incorporates the black hole of poor participation practice. Participation without feedback, without results, and without some positive reward may be doing the opposite of its primary aim, and can disempower rather than empower participants. The black hole is something that we need to avoid in the early stages and years if we are to empower and challenge children and young people to active citizenship.

If participation is about making your preference known, then babies can participate before they can understand the concepts involved. Any parent will recognise how their child shows them what food they like - and their spectacularly messy methods of rejecting what they don't like.

However, it's understanding the concepts involved in participation - the process, the information - that helps to make a consultation real. It can then support a virtuous cycle, leading to a more genuine consultation process and a richer participation.



## How can you know you're getting it right?

Measuring the effectiveness of participation includes looking at what the participant did, what effect it had, and how they felt about their action. One important way to measure participation is by asking, "Was the experience a positive one?" and perhaps ... "Would you do something like that again?"

Poor participation is rarely a conspiracy to keep children unseen and unheard. Most often it is a lack of clear thinking, understanding and planning. When you don't get it quite right, the best way to improve is by asking the children to help you make it better while you are working with them.

## Five top tips

- 1 Be clear about why you want children and young people to participate.
- 2 If the children and young people are involved from the planning stage it will usually work better.
- 3 Start with participative processes at the design and planning stage.
- 4 Monitor and reflect as the project develops.
- 5 Review together.



## You can't participate, you're too little

### Myths and excuses for denying participation.

When setting up participation work with the under 11s, you may find other adults present you with excuses and attempt to block you.

It is useful to have considered those excuses and have some responses to them. Here is a list of a few that we have heard - and a few suggested responses.



Under 11s are too immature. *It's our job to make it appropriate.*

They don't know what they want. *We can show them ideas and examples to get them started.*

They are unrealistic. *We can explain realistic parameters, and even unrealistic ideas can be adapted to fit reality. It is good to have someone thinking outside our normal boundaries.*

They don't want to. *They do not have to, but they should be offered a chance to know what it really involves.*

They are not interested, they will find it boring. *We can make it relevant and consequently interesting.*

They just need to play and develop naturally free from responsibility. *We will not impose on their time too much and we will respect the other things they want in their lives.*

They don't understand. *We can explain, illustrate and check their understanding.*

They cannot express themselves and do not have a grasp of the language or concepts. *We can use many ways for children to express themselves.*

They don't have the attention span. *We can keep it snappy.*

They are not competent. *We can support and train them.*

They are easily led by their peers. *We can give them clear information about the importance of their views and build their self-esteem so they realise how important their views can be.*

They will just try to please adults. *We will give them clear information about not having to please adults.*

They cannot concentrate. *We will use short and involving methods.*

Their thinking is too polarised (black and white). *It is ok to give simple responses.*

By the time anything happens they will have moved on. *We will think of how to keep them in touch with the process as well as the final result. Their time frame is different: they want immediate results. See above!*

We're sure you'll come up with much better responses and so will children.

## A short guide to consultation

The purpose of this book is to provide you with the understanding and methods to encourage the children you work with to participate more fully.

If we ask people (and that includes children) what they think about how things should be, we are **more** likely to get it right for **more** people. And if we ask them what they thought about the changes that have happened and the way they happened, we are more likely to get it right next time.

An obvious place for consultation to fit into the participation process is early on. It also plays a vital role at the end of a process for reflection and feedback.

It's important to remember that people change and things change. If someone asked you what your favourite TV programme was a year ago, there's a good chance that you will have changed your mind by now. As such, consultation should be **ongoing, dynamic and reactive**. It doesn't always need to be done 'formally', but by using some of the activities in the book or by observation, you can keep up-to-date with the views of the children you are working with. It also means that children who join in with the process later on can still let you know what they think.



Here are a few pointers for making the consultation process useful and worthwhile.

**1. Give information.** Before you start a consultation, you should provide your group with information, for the following reasons:

- It's very hard to comment on something that you know nothing about. Giving some simple background information, including the reason you are asking for their views, means that you are more likely to get useful answers. You also need to tell them what will happen with any information that you gather.
- It's hard to ask for something that you haven't heard of or seen before. If you've only ever seen a flat concrete playground, it can be hard to imagine one with a nature trail or exciting things to climb on. Share what other children have in their settings or where they live. You can tell them about it, show pictures or visit other sites.

**2. Remind the group that you want to hear from them.** It may be that you want to consult very informally on a regular basis rather than running a specific session. It's still important to remind them that you want to hear what they think about things, and of anything that may have changed because of what they or their peers have suggested.

**3. Think carefully about your questions.** What exactly do you need/want to find out? Don't be afraid to ask the same questions in different ways, in order to get more depth of understanding, or to check if the responses are consistent.

**4. Gather information through observation.** Sometimes the information you need will arrive very informally - observing which toys do/don't get used, where the hang-out spots are, noticing energy levels and so on.

**5. What you want to find out should be relevant to the children.** If it's not, then they won't be interested, and the information that you get will most likely be useless. Past experiences and future dreams are one thing, asking them about what the bowls club should have at their annual dinner is another!

**6. Use warm-ups.** Use activities initially that will get everyone's brains 'oiled' and introduced to the topics that you would like to ask them about, for example by doing Picture bingo - see page 46. You can still start collecting information at this stage, but the main point is that they're not starting from scratch once you get onto the 'meatier' activities.

**7. No-one has to participate.** Respect the fact that - as with participation in general - some children may not want to join in. It should be their choice whether they want to have their voices heard. Using playful methods may encourage them to share their thoughts, but for some a suggestion box, or being able to approach you quietly, may work better. It's your job to make these options available.

**8. Avoid false promises or assumptions.** Be clear from the start that consultation doesn't mean that everybody gets exactly what they do or don't want! For one thing, there will be realistic parameters. If you have a small pot of funding or a very small space to work in, it's unlikely you're going to be able to build the world's biggest roller coaster! It's fairly unlikely too that all the children in your group want the same thing - and that's without considering anybody else that the results might affect (eg other local residents). Explain these things to the group, but also explain that everyone's views will be carefully considered - and that they may well be able to take part in the final say, and even in any actual changes.

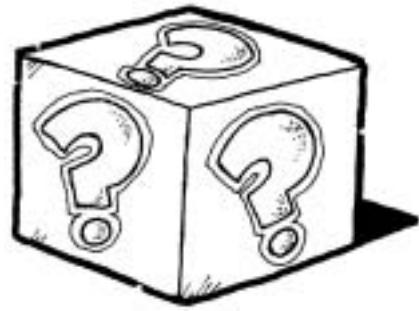
**9. All ideas are sacred.** Don't dismiss ideas just because they seem too unlikely or ridiculous at first glance. They may suddenly seem possible when you look more closely, or at least they may be a good starting point for something that is slightly reined in!

One consultation that we carried out in the past suggested that the best way to combat bullying and unwanted playground behaviour was to put armed dinner ladies on the roof of the school, overlooking the yard. This of course was entirely unrealistic, not least because of getting them up there in the first place. But what did come out of it was an understanding of how the lunchtime staff in the school were viewed - that nobody would mess with them. From this, we realised how useful it could be to supply the lunchtime supervisors with training of various kinds - from playground games to mediation skills, so that they could enhance the respect that they already had, and arm them not with Uzi guns, but with the tools to help them spot and diffuse any problems in a positive way.

**10. Check that you understand.** Be aware of your own agendas and jumping to conclusions early on. Check that you understand exactly what it is that the children are suggesting, requesting or feeding back (more of this in the next section).

## Asking questions

How do we normally ask children questions?  
There are a few things to think about.



### Closed or open?

A closed question gets a very short answer like yes, no or maybe. Closed questions are often factual questions but the main thing about those sorts of questions is that it feels like there is no space to elaborate.

eg "Would you like pasta for dinner?"

An open question allows a more detailed answer and the person questioned may feel free or sometimes a little exposed.

eg "What would you like to eat?"

### Quiz, bluff, enquiry or patronising?

We can also split questions into four different types, each of which can be open or closed.

QUIZ QUESTIONS	BLUFF QUESTIONS
The person asking already knows the answer.  The person being asked knows this.	The person asking does not know the answer, but behaves as if they did.  The person being asked believes the questioner has the answer!
ENQUIRY QUESTIONS	PATRONISING QUESTIONS
The person asking does not know the answer.  The person being asked knows this.	The person asking knows the answer but pretends they don't.  The person being asked believes the questioner does not know the answer.

In a small research project in a primary school we found that the enquiry questions were the rarest types. Quiz questions were most common, and in some lessons enquiry question types (which are genuine consultations) were just not there!

It is important if you are consulting children to use enquiry questions.

Bluff and patronising questions may help an adult to maintain a sense of control in the short term, but if your bluff is called or the children respond to your patronising questions with hostility, the end result will be confrontation. If you own up to bluffing that can be a useful technique for proving your fallibility to children.

It's also important to help them understand the type of question you're asking. Otherwise some of them might believe there is an answer that you are expecting (ie it's a 'quiz' question), and they will try to get it 'right'.

Here are a few statements which could help:

"We really don't know the answer to these questions."

"There are no right answers. We want to know what you think."

"We really need your answer."

"You don't have to answer the same way your friend does."

"Thank you for taking the risk of giving your ideas, they are exactly what we need."

"We are asking you because you are the experts in this subject, you are the people who know what is going on ... locally ... with this subject."

## Recording and interpreting information

### Recording

A short flick through this book will remind you that very few of the methods we use involve sitting around a table while someone takes 'minutes'. As adults, this is a method that we are generally very familiar with, and indeed, find it a very useful time to plan our shopping lists!



However, this break from tradition doesn't mean that there isn't a need to record information. As we know, when making plans and decisions it's crucial that we have something to look back on, and that the information is both accurate and easy to understand.

So, how do we make sure we're accurately recording and portraying what the children we're working with are saying?

A number of the methods in this book involve the group recording their own ideas, either in words (written or verbal) or pictures. There are many other methods they can use - including voice recorders, video and cameras - and it doesn't need to be an adult holding the pen or the camera.

Sometimes, though, you do need to write down the thoughts of the children for them - either from the front onto a flip chart, or alongside them onto smaller paper or a laptop. This may be because you may want to retain the information in a more ordered fashion or to include in newsletters or other documents for the group and other people.

### Interpreting

There may be times when you aren't clear about what is being said or portrayed - particularly with art-based activities. It can be tempting to brush over these instances, or be satisfied with your own interpretation ("Ah, they're obviously suggesting that the staffroom is extended to include a free bar"). But it's important to find out the facts. This may have to be done gently - none of us really like to hear the words "Yes, but what is it?". A kinder alternative might be "Tell me about your picture". It's also a more open question - so you're likely to get a deeper description.

Another time when you need to be careful to find out the facts is when you are doing an 'observational' consultation. This is not to say that you can't just quietly respond to what you have noticed, but it may be useful to check. Questions starting with "I've noticed that ..." or "Why do you think ...?" and so on can be used to confirm whether your interpretation is correct.

When someone is verbally telling you what they think, there can be a lot of room for ambiguity too. In this situation, as well as with written information, it's okay to say what you think they mean, with an invitation to let you know if you're wrong. It's better to do this than to discard information that you're not sure you 'get' due to lack of clarity. Some brilliantly clear points can come out of what may initially look like chaos, and you don't want to miss them. Sometimes merely repeating what a child has said in their own words allows them to feel heard and not judged.

### A word about personal agendas

Once you have gathered information, and you are trying to make sense of it (eg to make recommendations or affect change), it can be difficult not to colour it with your own take on things. For example, if you get a number of comments in a consultation that suggest that all bullies should be tied up in the corner of a playground and have eggs thrown at them, you could respond to that in a couple of ways, depending on your own judgement of the situation. You could go out and buy rope and eggs, or you could raise awareness of bullying and implement some other preventative strategies.

So, without pushing your own agenda, how do you know what to do?

- Try to be aware of your own strong feelings about issues (personal and political) and check whether they are unduly influencing your thinking.
- Laws and guidelines may help you to decide - eg tying people up and throwing eggs at them is not allowable, and a school would get into LOTS of trouble for letting it happen.
- Consider whether the wilder sounding suggestions have been given serious thought - though it's best to find this out at the time, rather than just dismiss them afterwards.
- Chat to colleagues or other experts - sometimes it's really not obvious what is meant or what should be done about an issue. By getting someone else's opinion, things may become clearer.
- Consultation and participation require feedback, with explanations of what has/will/hasn't happened. If any results are twisted to fit an agenda, it may be obvious to the children involved, and they may well become disillusioned with the process.



## Feedback

Ideally, participation is an ongoing process. But whether it's used for one project, or as a continual part of the way you work, it is always important to give participants feedback. This can be done verbally, in a newsletter or article in the local newspaper, or in a number of other creative ways.

It's useful for all of us to know how we've affected change: how things were and how they are now, or will be in the future. Even if we don't have our name on it, it's valuable to see that we have genuinely been a part of something that's changed things for the better.

## The importance of play

Play is central to the life of under 11s (and quite a lot of over 11s too). We define play as the things that children choose to do for their own reasons, with no external goals or rewards from adults. It is therefore some of the most empowered and participative behaviour that children do on a regular basis.

Here is a list of some participation skills that children develop while they play without adults intervening: decision making; prioritising; negotiating; creative thinking; testing ideas in a trial environment; co-operation; using the available resources.



Recognising the value of play, and allowing the children to get as much play time as possible within any participation process will help you develop a way of working that is playful.

Asking children "What is important in your life?" has regularly produced the answer "Play". If we are serious about listening to children, then each time we impose on their day - even if it is with their permission - they would probably rather be playing! If we stop play, we need to have a clear understanding of why we are doing so, and if it is in the best interests of the child and also the process.

If you want to encourage participation, getting some play work training will help you to make the child the centre of the process, without pressurising them to perform or come out with a specific set of responses. A play worker should also recognise the value of stepping back from intervention, and be able to reflect on their agenda.

When we incorporate playful activity or free time for play, we are showing respect for the wishes, needs and rights of the child.

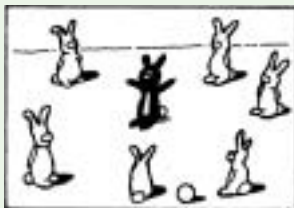
## Building teams

One of the primary elements of participation is people working co-operatively together - as part of a team.

There are a number of ways to look at teams and what happens to groups as they come together, do things and then disband. Understanding the dynamic nature of the process may help you to recognise if things are going wrong, getting stuck, or just moving between stages and phases. It can also give an insight into how much the team needs to be facilitated during each stage.

The most well-known description of team development was first created by Bruce Tuckman in 1965, with the last stage added later. He separated the process into the following stages:

### Forming



Members of the group meet and find out about each other and why they are a group. Most of the group are acting as individuals and saying or showing what their likes and dislikes are. If the team has a facilitator, s/he is probably doing quite a bit of directing at this point.

### Storming



Different ideas of what the group will do and how they should do it are shared, and group members compete for time and attention. If there are positions and roles in the group, the participants make their stand for taking them. This may be a time of conflict and confrontation in the group. It could get a bit tricky, and the facilitator may have to do a bit of mediation.

### Norming



The group adapts and adjusts so that members can compromise and work more easily together. They may create rules - either formally, or the harder to know unwritten/unspoken rules creating boundaries of behaviour and taboos ("Thou shalt not ...!").

### Performing



The group is now up and running. It will be aiming to do as much as possible and succeed in its purposes. The group might need very little facilitation at this stage. There may be disagreements, but at this stage they are handled smoothly and may even be seen as an important way of generating new ideas and behaviour.

### Adjourning/mourning



The group has completed its tasks or processes or has run out of time or resources and the time has come to become individuals once again. If this part of the process is not recognised, former members may feel left 'in mid air' and it may impact on their whole experience of being in the group. This may need some input from a facilitator. This stage is sometimes neglected but may, if done well, re-enforce the fact that participation is a good thing to do!

There are activities in this book to support groups through each of these stages: to help them to understand what stage they are going through and make their progress smooth.

## Including everyone

For participation to be truly effective, it is important that any child who wants to take part can take part. This may seem straightforward, but many children are excluded from opportunities because of barriers created by society, their families, their teachers, or even themselves. Barriers can arise as a result of society's attitude towards:



- impairments - eg physical, visual, hearing, learning difficulties
- language - speaking a different one to other people, or not understanding jargon or slang
- culture and religious beliefs - including assumptions about ideas or practices which may cause offence
- literacy - the ability to read or write
- low self-esteem - not believing that you are able to participate, or believing that what you can give isn't important
- expectations of others - other people not believing that you have anything to give
- age - being seen as too young or old to take part
- access - not being able to get to the venue which may be due to transport, timings, or physical access such as stairs
- money - not being able to afford to participate because of transport, food or trip costs
- and so on ...

## Our responsibility

It is our response to these things - or worse, lack of it - which produces barriers. Often this is caused by unfamiliarity with the person and their specific needs. It is our responsibility as professionals to find a way around these barriers, or preferably to remove them altogether through thoughtful planning. By this, we do not mean that we need to change a person's impairment, or language, or age (though we may want to improve their self-esteem!).

By taking different things into account whilst planning, and doing so thoughtfully, you can be the difference between everyone being able to join in, and some children coming up against a metaphorical 'no entry' sign.

All it takes is a little (sometimes very little) imagination. Think ahead. Change a venue. Use methods that don't involve writing, or do the writing for them. Allow your views on someone to change. Listen. Adapt. And, importantly, don't be afraid to ask questions: "What would make this activity/venue better for you?", "Did I explain that clearly enough?" and so on. If you find out the answer to these kinds of questions you are more likely to be able to include everyone.

## Adapting the activities

The activities in this book are written in a way that works for us and generally for the groups that we are involving. However, we have tried to give illustrations of times when we have changed them - either to suit the needs of the group, or because a moment of inspiration overtook us or the children we were working with. It is important that you allow yourself to do the same. If the activities are only ever run in the prescribed way, then the chances are that a) at some point, somebody will not be able to join in and b) you and/or your group will get bored. Spontaneity can open unexpected doors - you might not get the outcome that you were expecting, but what you do get may be brilliant.

**Note: Participation should be about choice - no child should be made to participate, even if their doing so means that we can tick a few boxes!**

## Communication skills

When we talk about participation, we're generally implying that it's a process that involves more than one person. Any process that involves more than one person will require some kind of communication, and wherever communication is involved there is room for confusion and misunderstanding!



If communication does go awry, it can affect group dynamics, trust, confidence, enjoyment, planning, procedure and results. If people experience conflict and blame or feel let down, they may choose to never participate in anything again.

We all know from everyday life (and by the number of us that end up needing some kind of therapy!) that communication isn't straightforward, but it is possible to reduce the likelihood of problems. Here are some tips that we've found helpful.

- **Mind your own** - When things aren't going right, it's easy to blame others rather than looking at how we are communicating ourselves, or to react in a way that makes things worse. Tone of voice, body language, verbal language and expectations of people can all impact on how successful communication is - so we need to be watchful of our own communication, as well as that of others
- **Rephrase and give examples** - If you aren't getting the responses you need (eg during a consultation) you might assume that the children don't have an opinion. Re-phrase questions, give examples of the kind of things they might come up with, and make sure that the consultation is relevant to them.
- **Change and adapt** - If a child has been labelled as having 'communication difficulties' it doesn't mean they have nothing to say. By changing the way you allow communication to happen - eg by using pictures and allowing a child to point at their preferences - you can let them not only be heard, but to be able to participate fully and confidently - maybe for the first time.

- **Be open and honest** - It's better to tactfully admit that you're not clear about what someone's saying than to make it up or ignore it. Likewise, give permission for children to ask you to explain something again/differently if they don't fully understand.
- **Embrace many methods** - Be open to all of the different kinds of communication. Allow play, songs, artwork, body language, facial expression and behaviour to speak to you. We don't expect a baby to write down what they need, but none of us would dispute that they can express themselves quite clearly sometimes!
- **Maintain awareness** - Be aware of energy levels, and of other things that may be more important to children at that time.

Communication is always going to be a struggle if people are tired, if they want to run around madly, or if something more interesting is happening elsewhere. Likewise if somebody is feeling angry or upset, although you may achieve some communication, it may not be in a way that you had anticipated (although it can still be useful).

- **Really listen** - Make sure that you are really listening to children - it can be easy to not 'hear' things that we don't like or expect, or to hear things differently to how they were meant, to fit in with what we want.
- **Use every suitable tool** - As well as posters and leaflets try email, text, websites and social networking sites.
- **Be fully briefed** - The participation process is always going to work better if any adults involved are able to communicate clearly with each other so make sure everyone's fully briefed of their roles and approaches.

## Timing and attention span

It can be hard to judge when the pace of a group session needs to be changed. For one thing, needs vary between individuals as well as groups. The decision may also be based on your own personality - what for one facilitator is a nicely 'chilled' group, may for another be a group badly in need of livening up!



It's important to recognise when children are feeling lost or bored and to respond, as these participants are more likely to disengage from the process, and disrupt it for the others. Although you don't have to change what you are doing just because one person is drifting, it's useful to recognise that it is happening and to look for some way of drawing them back in.

Here are a few things worth considering when you're planning a session:

- **Explain, or negotiate, the aims and context.** Include any expected outcomes or possibilities for further involvement in the process, and whether this may change.
- **Create a joint agreement** (use *Making it work* pages 40-41 or make your own). This will help you to agree the parameters of the session, particularly if it is a group that you don't usually work with.
- **Make it relevant.** The more relevant the aims are to participants, the more likely they are to pay attention and be involved.
- **Be aware of natural rhythms and biological needs!** Routines, usual break times, hunger and thirst, nap times, toilet needs and different learning preferences all affect concentration and mood.
- **Consider what else they might be missing to take part in the session.** If children would normally be doing something else that's important to them, they may resent the fact that they have to be doing this instead. It can be useful to acknowledge this and thank the participants, or move the session to another time.



- **Mind your language.** The language that you use should be appropriate and relevant for the age group - it should be neither patronising nor too complex or full of jargon. Either of these things can cause individuals to switch off.
- **Consider the ambience.** The room layout, the temperature, the air quality and the décor can encourage the participants or depress them. Is the room too formal? Are there interesting and relevant pictures or objects that will support the process or are there just lots of distractions?

Even bearing these things in mind, it's unlikely to have a group who all find the same things relevant, interesting or timely. The activities and games in this book provide you with a range of ways to engage all members of a group, suiting different energy needs, learning preferences and depths of interest. It is then up to you to use your 'facilitator antennae' to pick up on how long to run with an activity and when to move on to something different.

## Resolving conflicts

There are going to be differences of opinions in any participative work that you do. In the same way that we believe children should challenge things they do not like, or agree with, we also believe that some elements of conflict are creative and useful. If you are able to resolve conflicts so that all parties feel listened to and valued, your participation work will benefit.

Conflicts can flare and die down very swiftly with younger children. In many situations leaping in will not allow the children to acquire the skills that come from resolving their own conflicts.

The best way of dealing with conflict is to provide those likely to get into conflict with tools or strategies while they are calm and receptive.

Here are some activities and ideas that primary-aged children and their workers have found both helpful and enjoyable. All of these allow thought and discussion about conflict before it is in mid-flight. Also see **Stop, rewind and change** (page 136) and **Kath's bad day** (page 126).

### The anger rules

To help people have their feelings accepted and respected you can:

- listen quietly and attentively
- acknowledge their feelings and do not deny them
- get them to tell you how they experience the feeling in their body eg "My stomach is turning over" or "I'm sweating"
- avoid offering advice or pity
- suggest ways in which they can reduce anger 'cleanly' (but not if the anger is directed at you)
- use fantasy to allow the angry feelings to be released
- encourage them to use the anger as energy for change.

All feelings can be accepted, but the actions taken should not lead to hurts.

### The anger rules

It's fine to be angry but  
Do not hurt others  
Do not hurt yourself  
Do not hurt property  
Do talk about it

### You and I statements

Often when we have an issue with another person we put the blame on them by using a sentence starting with "YOU". These sentences can put that person on the defensive and therefore less likely to want to co-operate to work out a solution, particularly if they feel they are not to blame.

If you start a sentence with "I feel" the other person may feel less attacked and may listen to how you feel and develop empathy. The following activity asks participants to come up with ways to rephrase "YOU" sentences as "I feel" statements.

Look at the statements and on the next line record the feeling or feelings that you think underlies them.

- You really hurt my feelings.  
I feel ...
- You make me mad.  
I feel ...
- You never pay any attention to what I say.  
I feel ...
- You told lies about me.  
I feel ...

There are three elements to creating an "I" statement:

**the behaviour or action**  
**the effect on you/your feelings**  
**what you would like**

## Example

"That's the second time you've kept me waiting. You're a rotten time-keeper. You've let me down and you obviously don't care about me."

This might be better as:

"We agreed to meet at 8 o'clock and it's now 9 o'clock (**action**). This is the second time recently that we did not meet on time and I feel angry and frustrated (**feelings**). What I would like is that we make arrangements that we can both be certain of keeping in the future (**what you would like**)."

## Steps to mediation

Mediation is a good idea because if people find their own solution it is more likely to stick and they get better at sorting out their problems.

### The mediation rules

No name calling or blaming  
No interrupting  
They must try to solve  
the problem

## The process

- 1 Check they agree to the rules and both want to sort it out.
- 2 Tell them you will listen to both sides and help them to find their own solution.
- 3 Listen to person A's view of the problem.
- 4 Repeat back what they have said.
- 5 Listen to person B's side of the problem.
- 6 Repeat back what they have said.
- 7 Ask how A is feeling.
- 8 Ask how B is feeling.
- 9 Check they understand each other's point of view and how they feel.
- 10 Ask each person in turn what s/he needs to sort it out.
- 11 Try to get them to agree a solution.
- 12 Repeat back the solution.

You could write down the solution and suggest both people sign it.

# PART 3

## TOOLBOX OF METHODS

This bit of the book contains lots of activities that take a group through the process of participation



We have broken it into sections which share some bigger ideas like introduction activities that help groups get together





# Introduction Activities



# MAKING IT WORK

An activity that we use at the beginning of working with children. It is a co-operative way to create a set of negotiated 'ground rules'.

 Any number of people

 5-10 minutes

## How does it work?

'Making it work' should happen early on in your time with a group - usually after explaining the aims of a session. Explain to the children that you want your time working with them to go well, and you need their ideas for how to make this happen.

You can give examples of the kind of questions they might think about, eg how should they behave with each other, do they want to play games, will they want a break and so on. You could explain that they may want different things, so will have to chat together to reach a compromise.

Typical responses include things like "share", "listen" and "respect" - depending on the age group you are working with.

Collect ideas by asking the children to call out their suggestions to the front. As this is an activity that happens very early on, people may be reluctant to speak out in front of the group. If so, give them a few minutes to come up with ideas in pairs, then collect their responses.

Write all the ideas on the flipchart, and ask the group to say if they're happy with each one. You can include some of your own suggestions, but as with the others, they should be agreed by the group.





If there are rules that can't be changed to do with your setting (for example "Don't go out of the building" - when toilets are outside) then these should be explained at the beginning.

The completed 'Making it work' should then be displayed on the wall as a reminder that can be referred to and if necessary amended throughout your session.

### Why do we like it?

- It acknowledges that any group you work with is different and as such will need different things to make it work.
- Because the agreement is made as a group, it is much more likely to be understood. The group has ownership of the agreement - and so is more likely to stick to it.
- It sets the scene nicely for the group, allowing their voices to be heard early on.

### What will you need?

- Flip chart paper and a marker pen.

### Developments/adaptations

- If you are working with the group on a regular basis, you can make a more lasting version (eg by laminating it).
- Make sure to keep checking that the same rules stand though, and that the group understands they can be altered at any time. This is particularly true if you have new children joining because they also need to have ownership over the rules.

# LABELS

This is an activity for exploring identity and building self-esteem using name labels that are usually given out at the beginning of a session.



Any number from small groups to massive ones



5-15 minutes



## How does it work?

Give out pens and large sticky address labels, and ask people to choose either the name they want everyone to call them by OR any image/ name that they think represents them, how they are feeling, what they would like to be in the future, or other alternatives

Individuals can ask the group to suggest something for them. If the group is deciding, it is important to ensure that the individual is happy with the name or image chosen for them and to share some guidelines on positive names.

They then stick their labels on to their clothes (though labels seem to attach themselves to foreheads, books and other children!). The facilitator can then use the labels for some new activity.

## Why do we like it?

- Labels are easy to come by.
- Changing your name and identity seems powerful and subversive at the same time.
- Having your name written for you can be made empowering (facilitators can crouch/kneel in front of you and the child is the expert, checking the facilitator's spelling and if the name is lower case etc).
- Literacy is not necessary for creating a badge/label.
- It can be changed to a game exploring labels that people get given without their permission.

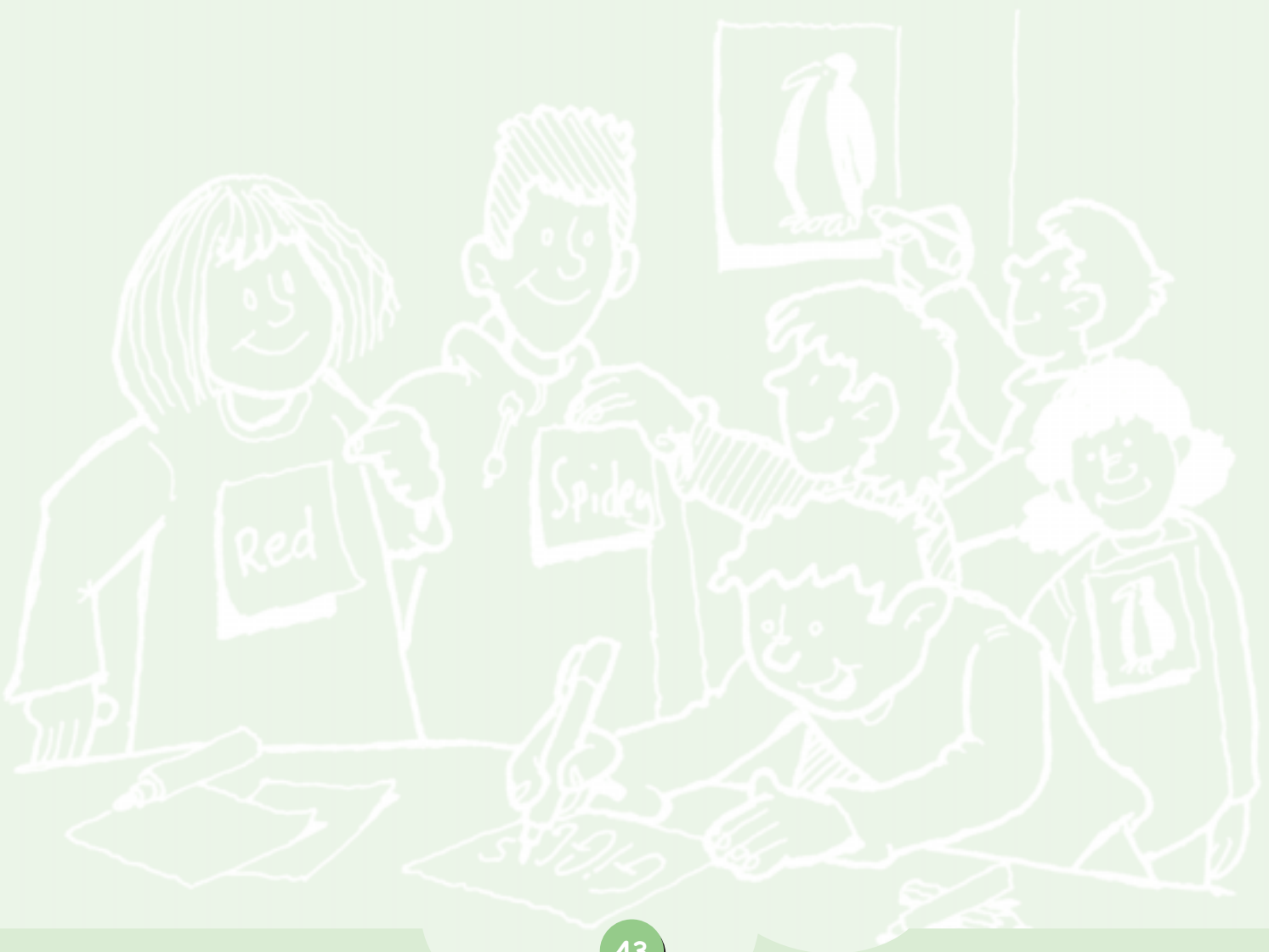
### What will you need?

- A roll of name labels and non-indelible markers. You can also add sticky dots and other stickers.

### Developments/adaptations

- Find out the literacy levels beforehand and adapt the label making accordingly.

# LABELS



# HUMAN SLEEVES

This is an activity that can help to develop trust. Children either become long, trailing sleeves for a central 'coat wearer' or they get to 'wear' their peers.

 A minimum of three people

 5-10 minutes



## How does it work?

The group divides, or is divided into threes. One person is chosen as the coat wearer in each three. The other two become long drapery sleeves (think medieval princess!) and attach their heads to the coat wearer's wrists. Their job is to float around at the command of the coat wearer (and avoid being dragged through soup or muddy puddles).

After a short time the roles are changed so eventually all three participants have a go at being the coat wearer.

## Why do we like it?

- It is a gentle introductory trust game.
- It involves co-operation and teamwork.
- It is quite low energy.
- It is also quite silly!
- If the coat wearer is small in comparison to the sleeves it looks even better/sillier.

### What will you need?

- Space without too much furniture in the way.

### Developments/adaptations

- Instead of being a coat and sleeves you could become a bridal train, a scarf or a kilt.
- Blindfold trust games where children work in pairs with a blindfolded partner and 'show' them the space.



# PICTURE BINGO

A version of bingo where players collect names and find out information from the rest of the group.

 More than 6 people

 10 minutes



## How does it work?

Everyone is given a pre-made bingo sheet divided into squares containing pictures of objects or pictures representing ideas. There can be between six and twenty categories and there is usually one central question or theme.

These themes can be relevant to the consultation you are doing, or can be about the participants' interests. Examples include things people have done (ie "Have you ever ...?" with pictures representing activities, games, school subjects), things people like (toys, clothes, food, books) or things people want or need (friendship, shelter, health).

The children work either singly or in pairs, and on a signal, everyone mills around and collects names from the group filling in the spaces on the bingo sheet.

For example, one person might approach another to ask "Do you like bananas?" If the answer is "Yes", they will add the names to the box that contains a picture of a banana.

The first person/pair to complete their sheet and call out "Bingo" wins.

## Why do we like it?

- It gets children talking to others they don't know, mixing and mingling.
- It gets them to take on a consultative role.
- It means that children interact in small groups with a subject they can have a say in easily.

## What will you need?

- Picture bingo sheets.
- Pens/pencils.

## Developments/adaptations

- You can feed back in a range of ways including "Wave your sheets if ...", "Move across the circle if ..." etc.
- You can highlight the categories and choices that are most and least common.
- You can use a range of bingo cards which have different degrees of difficulty.



# MUSICAL CLUMPS

A group-dividing activity that is a cross between musical chairs and clumps (a game featured in 'Participation - Spice it up!').

 10 or more people

 5-10 minutes



## How does it work?

The children move around to music, and when the facilitator pauses the music, they freeze to hear the instruction. The facilitator calls out a category that will divide the group into 'clumps' that share something in common, eg eye colour, birth month, favourite sport etc. The music is started again and the clumps break up until the next freeze.

## Why do we like it?

- It gathers people outside of friendship groups.
- It allows children to mix and mingle.
- It removes the competitive edge of musical statues or chairs.
- You can record how many people are in each clump if you want to use this as a consultation exercise.

## What will you need?

- Music - cd or MP3/4 player, radio or best of all a live musician.



### Links to other activities

- Once the groups are formed you can start any new group activity.

### Developments/adaptations

- Pass the picking of categories to the children.
- Use music brought in by children.
- Theme the music to the work you are doing.
- The children can get into larger and larger groups each time the music stops. The first time they stand alone, the next time in twos, and so on, until they are one large clump.



# JOURNALS

A 'place' to aspire, plan and dream.



No more than 15 people per facilitator



At least 30 minutes, more if possible



## How does it work?

Provide a wide range of magazines and newspapers. Give each child a book made from sheets of A4 card of various colours, bound together. Explain that these journals are for the children to keep.

Each page can be used for a different topic. The children should choose an area of their lives - it could be friendships, school, family, home - and then choose pictures and words from the magazines to create a collage that shows how they would like this aspect of their lives to be.

## Why do we like it?

- It solidifies hopes and aspirations and establishes a positive focus for an area of life that is important to the individual.
- You don't need good verbal or writing skills to do it.
- It allows lots of expression.

## What will you need?

- Lots of magazines and newspapers.

## Developments/adaptations

- Groups can create a collage together to plan something.
- It can be revisited as part of a review process.

# JOURNALS



# 1... 2... 3... WHERE ARE YOU?

A group hide and seek game.

 Groups of 6 or more people

 At least 10 minutes

## How does it work?

The group is divided into two teams. One team is the seekers and the other the hiders. The hiders find a place where the whole group can hide together: they are allowed to use props (eg material, blankets) to conceal or camouflage themselves. If the group is playing in a large space eg woodland, then possibly set some boundaries.

After an agreed time the seekers call "1 ... 2 ... 3 ... Where are you?". The hiders have to decide a group noise as a response, or they can shout in unison "1 ... 2 ... 3 ... We're over here." When the hiders are found the seekers swap with them and another round takes place.

## Why do we like it?

- It is a new take on a familiar game.
- It involves group co-operation and decision-making.
- It is fun and can be silly when people squeeze into a small hiding space.
- It works really well in the open, particularly a wooded environment.
- It can help to develop listening skills and help the group to familiarise themselves with a new setting.



### What will you need?

- A big area: a number of rooms or outdoor space with at least half a dozen potential hiding places.
- Props, blankets, material, old leaves and branches for camouflage.

### Developments/adaptations

- Single person hide and seek, with a group looking for one hider. This can be a bit daunting for the hider but this could be an adult.
- Divide the group into more teams with just one team being the seekers, the rest hiding.





# Trust Builders



# PAIRED MIRRORS

This activity helps participants focus on each other in pairs. It builds trust and confidence, and supports children to give up their control or to take the lead.



 Any number of people

 5-10 minutes

## How does it work?

Get everyone in pairs. Each person has to face his or her partner. Explain to the children that they are going to take it in turns moving in any way they want, and that their partner will be their mirror and will have to copy their movements.

Ask the children to choose who is going to lead first. Start them off. Get them to swap with each other and after that swap partners.

## Why do we like it?

- Great for calming down and refocusing.
- Requires concentration.
- Builds rapport between people.

## What will you need?

- Just children and space to move around!



### Links to other activities

- Works well in combination with other trust-building activities.

### Developments/adaptations

- Use sticks or any other object whose movement can be copied.
- Ask one person to lead with one hand, the other with another. Then ask pairs to get into fours and play around with who leads who... then into groups of eight and so on.
- Let them decide how the activity develops further.

# MIRRORS



# BLINDFOLD LEAD

This activity builds confidence and trust with the use of blindfolds and a bit of imagination.



As many pairs of people as there are blindfolds



10 minutes



## How does it work?

Pair up the children and explain to them that they will take it in turns to lead each other around the room with a blindfold on. Ask them to decide who will be blindfolded first. Then ask them to determine how they would like to be led. For example, some might prefer holding hands, others might prefer being held at the elbow or forearm or some just by verbal instruction.

Ask the leader to take their partner around the room carefully, avoiding obstacles or other participants. It is possible to run the activity without blindfolds if participants are prepared to close their eyes. You can give the instruction to lead at the speed that allows people to keep their eyes shut.

## Why do we like it?

- Participants are always surprised at how much they have to trust each other.
- It can be a great way of getting two children to work together.
- Children get excited about wearing blindfolds.
- It is very memorable, and useful to refer back to when discussing the importance of trust in participation as a whole.
- It develops empathy when both have experienced 'sensory deprivation'.
- When the partner is keeping their eyes shut, rather than using a blindfold, there is instant feedback if the leading goes wrong.

## What will you need?

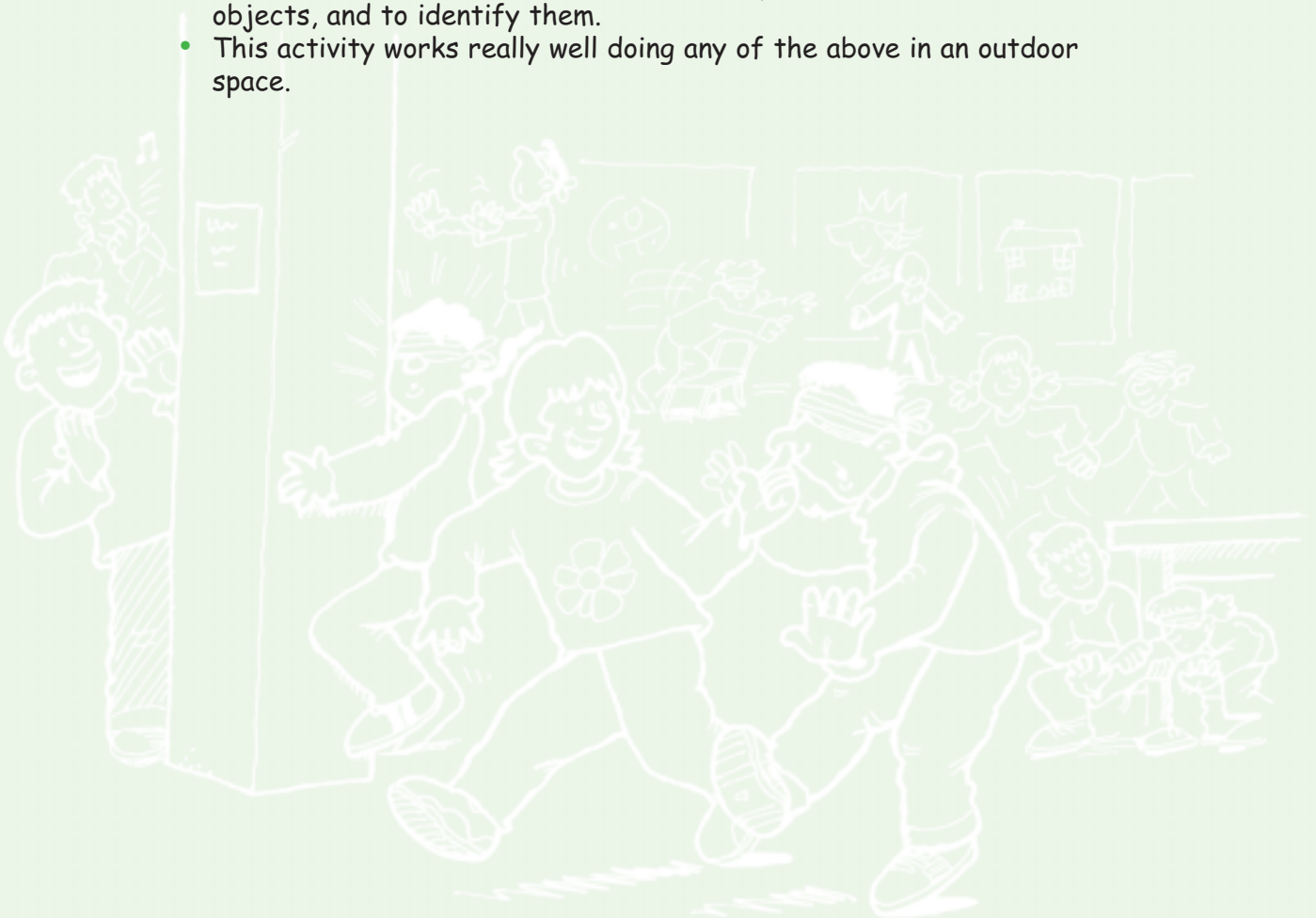
- Blindfolds.
- Suitable obstacles.

## Links to other activities

- This activity is a good way of getting children up on their feet and actively trusting each other, so it fits particularly well between more passive, seated activities.

## Developments/adaptations

- Ask the children to build an obstacle course to navigate.
- Get the children to explore alternative ways of communicating with each other, for example, by giving instructions instead of holding hands.
- Ask the leaders to take their blindfolded partner to random objects, and to identify them.
- This activity works really well doing any of the above in an outdoor space.



# MBUBE

This is a game that originates from South Africa, and involves one person (a 'lion') catching another (an 'antelope'). It is a fun game that develops listening and communication and involves everyone.

 20 people minimum

 5 minutes - or as long as the group wants



## How does it work?

The group forms a circle. If it is the first time you have played, you can introduce a couple of African words that are relevant to the game. 'Imbube' is the Zulu word for lion, but when you are calling the lion, you would call "Mbube" (pronounced Mboo-bay). An 'Impala' is a kind of African antelope.

Two people from the group are chosen, one to represent the lion, the other to represent the impala. After checking that they are both happy with it, they are blindfolded and placed away from each other within the circle. The lion must then try to catch the impala.

To do this they need to listen to the rest of the group chanting "Mbube". When the two in the middle are far apart, everyone says it slowly and quietly, but as they get closer the chant gets faster and louder. The lion and impala should use this speed and volume to help them - one to make a catch, the other to try to get away! The lion can be given a time limit of a minute or two to catch the impala - if they don't manage it, then somebody else becomes the lion. Likewise, if the impala is caught, then someone else takes their place.

## Why do we like it?

- It manages to be both focused and noisy at the same time!
- It introduces another culture and language.
- It's a good trust-building game.

## What will you need?

- Blindfolds of some kind. The lion and impala can just close their eyes, but it makes it very tempting to peek!

## Developments/adaptations

- It has the potential for the group to excitedly call out "Booby!" rather than "Mbube". For this reason it's sometimes called 'Simba' and this name is called out instead. As well as being the name of the well-known 'Lion King' lion, 'Simba' is the Swahili word for lion.
- You don't have to have a lion and an impala in the middle - any hunter/hunted partnership can be used, for example fox and chicken, or Harry and Voldemort!
- It is possible to have more than one lion or antelope at once, and get them to develop their team-working skills. It can make the game more confusing and fun.





# Emotional literacy and self-esteem

Understanding how you  
are feeling could help you  
understand how others are  
feeling



# MODELLING EMOTIONS

An activity to explore the different qualities of emotions, and to help children to build a vocabulary around them.



Not more than 15 participants per facilitator



20 minutes, plus 2 or 3 minutes per participant



## How does it work?

Provide a range of craft and modelling materials and ask the children to think of an emotion to work on, on their own or as a group. Invite them to use any of the material provided to make a physical representation of that emotion. Then 'show and tell' in a way that doesn't 'spotlight' (ask for volunteers). Key emotions to look at could include anger, fear, sadness, joy, disgust, surprise, acceptance.

## Why do we like it?

- It is a safe way to focus on an emotion and reflect on its qualities eg anger - is it slow to build or a flash of intense feeling? Does it do damage to others or is it a useful and creative energy?
- It's a great starting point for discussing how differently individuals perceive and experience emotions.

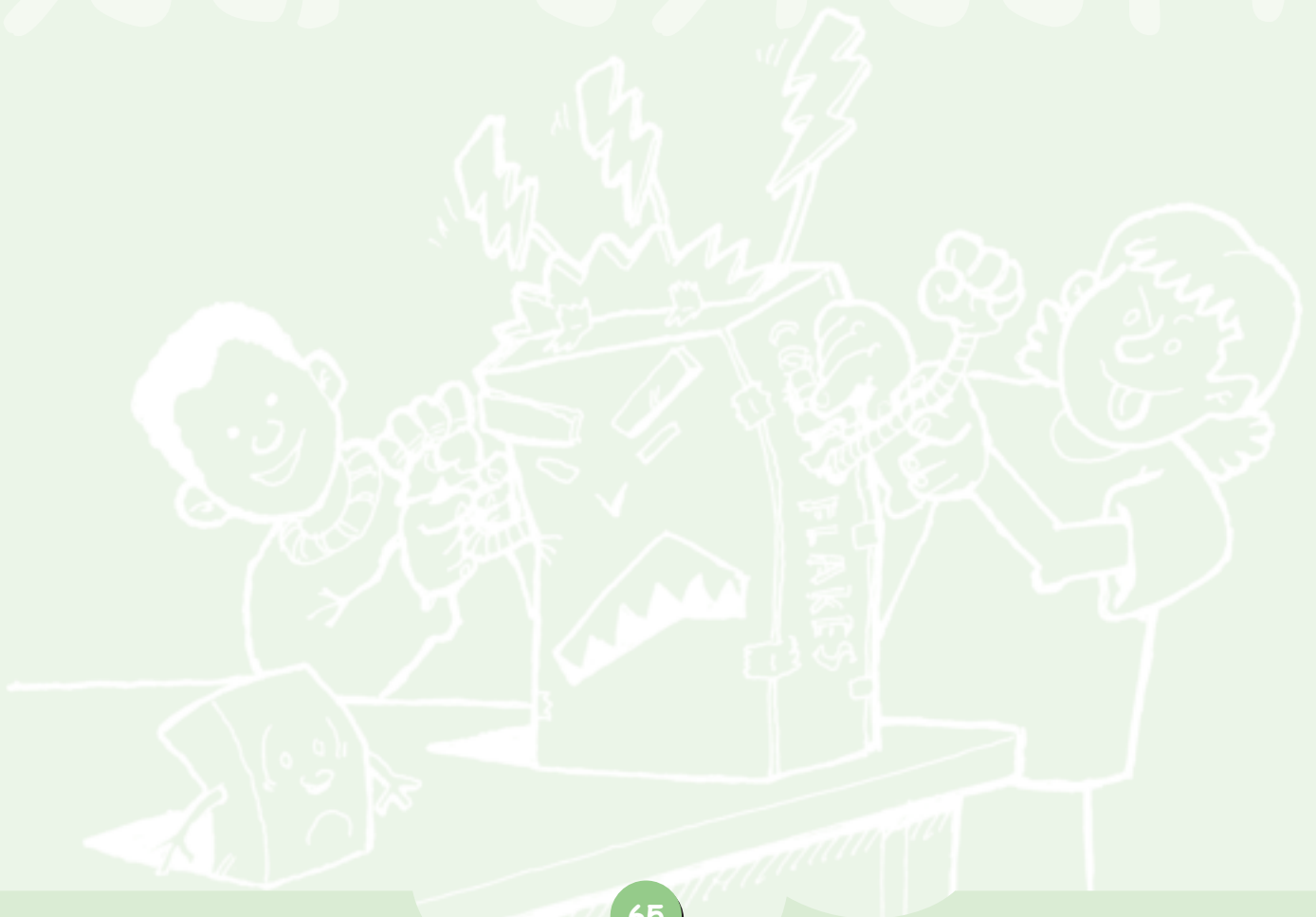


### What will you need?

- A range of craft and modelling materials.

### Developments/adaptations

- Create characters or animals that are expressing emotions.
- Find pictures that show the emotion.
- Identifying, expressing and talking about feelings are all very useful for consultation and participation.



# WOLF'S STORY

A re-telling of the Red Riding Hood story to give the wolf's side of the story.

👤 One story teller/puppeteer, or a group to act out the story

🕒 10-20 minutes

## How does it work?

Ideally the wolf tells the story using a wolf puppet or stuffed toy. The wolf explains that he was 'set up': that Red Riding Hood was rude and trespassing, that the granny persuaded the wolf to play a trick and that he never ate anyone. The story can be told or acted out but after it has been told, a period of time should be given to a discussion of the concept of two or more sides to every story.



## Why do we like it?

- It works on a number of levels, as a piece of theatre and a story-telling exercise.
- The vast majority of people know the original story.
- It is a very useful way to discuss the different sides of a story.

## What will you need?

- Script of the story.
- Puppet of a wolf.

## Developments/adaptations

- Any activity that looks at two sides of a story and highlights the importance of listening to everyone's point of view.

## Script

Once I was a wild animal, wild and free to wander around my forest without people trying to hunt me down.

Then one day I was padding through a woodland glade, one of my favourites as it happens, when I heard a horrid whistling noise.

I went over to see what it was, and saw a little girl dressed in bright red, looking a bit like a poisonous toadstool, picking wild flowers and whistling while she was committing that crime (you shouldn't pick wild flowers). I asked her what she was doing and she got all angry.

"I don't talk to strangers," she said. Cheek. I am not a stranger, it's my home. Anyway, eventually she told me in a huffy way that she was off to visit her Gran, and as she was sick (her Gran) I let her off and told her the safe way through the wood. I went the quick way and got to her Gran's ahead of her.

I told the old lady how rude her grand-daughter had been and the granny insisted we played a trick on the little girl. She took off her clothes ... and made me get dressed in them, which was a bit weird, and then she hid in the cupboard.

Then the little girl came in and started asking questions, they were personal and more and more cheeky, then she asked about my teeth and I'm a bit self-conscious about them. So I got a bit cross and the little girl got scared and ran off. The next thing I heard was a big ugly lumberjack with a chainsaw who was coming to get me ... so I ran away, and I've been on the run ever since.



# MOODY CORNERS

This activity provides an opportunity for children to explore feelings and emotions - a good precursor to finding out how they feel about all kinds of things.



 5 or more participants

 10 minutes

## How does it work?

Simple pictures of expressions are placed around each corner of the room (for example, one corner may have a picture of a happy face, another of an angry face, the next a sad face and the last a scared face). Make sure that everyone understands what the expressions mean.

The children wander around the room and when they reach a corner they pretend to be feeling that expression. This can be done either as one big group, or as smaller ones starting off in different places. It depends whether you want everybody grinning madly at the same time, or a number of emotions going on at once. It could be a good idea to finish off with everybody at the happy corner though!

## Why do we like it?

- It gives children a vocabulary for explaining how they feel about something and develops emotional intelligence.
- It can open up discussion about how all of the emotions are normal, that everybody has times when they don't feel happy about something.
- It doesn't rely on writing/reading.
- It's fun!

### What will you need?

- Pictures of facial expressions (these can be simple drawings by you or the children or photos).
- Room for the group to wander around.

### Links to other activities

- Follows on well from Happy suns - sad sheep (pages 104-105).
- Can lead on to Feelings pictures (pages 72-73).
- Works well before most activities, as it is a warm-up to finding out how people feel about things.

### Developments/adaptations

Add more emotions, making sure that everyone has an understanding of what they signify. This doesn't mean that all interpretations will be the same!

- One nursery worker told us they have pictures of different moods/emotions hanging from the ceiling. They use these to find out how the children are feeling by getting them to point at them or stand underneath them.



# OBJECTS

An activity that uses a range of objects to encourage a group to express feelings or thoughts that are often hard to verbalise or even identify.



No more than 15 participants per facilitator



10 minutes plus 2 minutes per participant



## How does it work?

Gather together a range of small objects. These might include leaves, seeds, pine cones, pebbles, toys, ornaments and gadgets: the more varied, weird and wonderful the better. There should be a mix of natural and made, familiar and unusual objects, and a range of colours and textures. The objects should be spread out on the floor or table.

Introduce the topic to the group. Invite the group to pick an object or an image that reflects how they feel about the topic. Then invite anyone who wants to share to explain why they chose that object.

This activity works well for emotions, self-esteem, any quality or issue that is hard to put into words, eg "How are you feeling?", "What does play mean to you?", "How do you feel about this school?"

## Why do we like it?

- It encourages a wider emotional vocabulary.
- Children who are sceptical at first usually find the activity useful.
- It doesn't involve writing.

## What will you need?

- Lots of objects of different sizes, colours, textures, ages, both natural and manufactured.

## Developments/adaptations

- Ask children to choose an object that represents how they feel now about an issue, and how they would like to feel about the issue. You can then start a discussion of how you get from one to the other.
- Ask children to choose an object or image for each of a range of emotions eg joy, anger, sadness.



# FEELINGS PICTURES

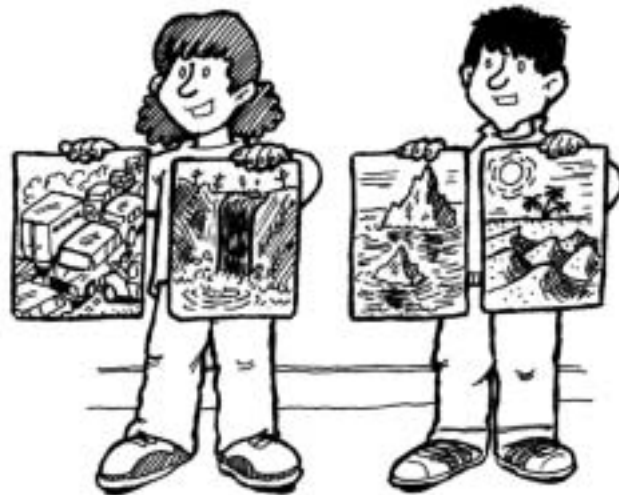
An incredibly accessible way to enable a group to talk about how they feel about things.



1-20 people approximately



At least 2 minutes per participant



## How does it work?

Before the session, gather a selection of pictures that have no text/captions. Lay the pictures out on a table, or spread them all over the floor. Ask the children to look at all the pictures, walking around them if they're on the floor. After everyone's had time to look at all of them, ask them to pick one that appeals to them (and maybe one that pushes them away!). If two children want the same ones they can share.

Everyone returns to a sitting circle with their chosen pictures. Ask who wants to go first to share the reasons why they picked that picture. Find out what it is about that picture that made them pick it up - and the feeling it gave them if they want to share it. Continue one by one, in whatever order, as children put themselves forward.

## Why do we like it?

- It's a non-threatening, easy-to-relate-to way of getting a group to talk about their thoughts and feelings on any subject.
- It gives everyone a chance to say something, if they want to.
- It's not literacy dependent.
- It's great for small groups and for making bigger groups more intimate.

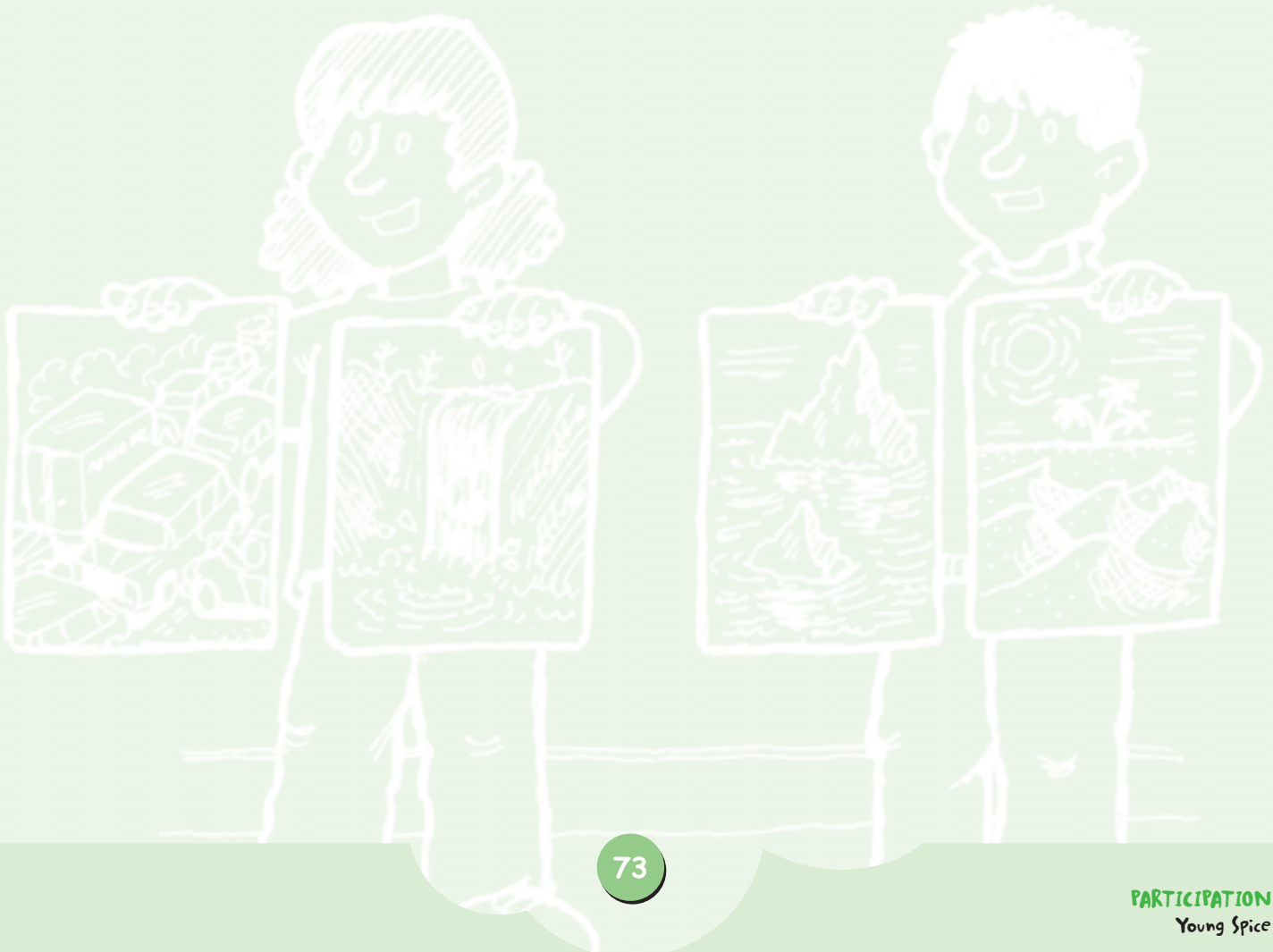


### What will you need?

- A selection of pictures. These could be of people, landscapes, abstract shapes or textures, or cartoons depicting a variety of emotional states. They could be illustrations from magazines or calendars, photos or postcards, or a ready-made set such as 'Feelings photos'. The key is to attempt to represent a spectrum of moods within whatever category and type of picture you use.
- A big enough area to spread out your pictures.
- A quiet enough space for people to be heard.

### Developments/adaptations

- Ask people to pick up pictures in response to questions, such as "How did you feel when you first started school?" and then pick another picture for "... and how do you feel about school now?" You could then discuss what the difference is between the situations, and how it came about. This can be a good starter for a discussion, or activities on change and development.
- You can use it as an icebreaker to check how people are feeling today, and an evaluation tool to see what people thought of an experience.



# A-Z OF POSITIVES

An activity that helps children to understand that words can make themselves and other people feel good about who they are. Children identify and say positive things to each other.



Any number of participants and can be done with individuals



10-15 minutes



## How does it work?

Write out the alphabet in large letters leaving a space after each letter. You might ask the children to do this themselves on a flip chart or on wallpaper. Then ask them to come up with a positive word they could use to describe each other, that starts with each letter. These should be words that they know would make them or someone else feel good. Examples might be 'fantastic', 'clever', 'wonderful' and so on.

You can run this activity in different ways, according to the age/literacy levels of the group. The most basic way, and one that doesn't rely on knowledge of the alphabet, is for the whole group to call out words for the facilitator to write down on a big piece of paper or whiteboard - these don't have to fit the alphabet.

The other way is for small groups to each take a section of the alphabet, and to come up with positive words for each letter they have been allocated. If you're doing it this way, it's good to share out the more difficult letters of the alphabet - or one group may end up with v, w, x, y and z - not an easy task!

It can be nice then to go around the group, using the words to describe each person: "Lucy, you are amazing", "David, you are brilliant" etc. Although the group will know it's part of the activity, they really do start to 'glow'. Even if you don't do this, give the group the task of remembering to use as many positive words as they can about each other or about themselves. They can do this throughout the rest of their day together and beyond.

## Why do we like it?

- Much of the time we forget to tell people the good things about themselves - we either say bad things or nothing at all. This activity is great for showing the group how effective words can be at making us feel good.
- It's hands on, gets people involved.
- It challenges them to say nice things about one another instead of putting each other down.
- It can be surprisingly difficult to do the whole alphabet.
- Developing any self-esteem and confidence will really help children to express their views.

## What will you need?

- A way of recording the words so that everyone can see them.
- Flip chart and marker pens.

## Developments/adaptations

- You don't have to stick to positive descriptions - with young children it can be nice to just let them come up with words that they like or make them feel good. An example that comes to mind was a very small, quiet boy whispering "bwyd" (the Welsh word for food).

A  
Adorable  
beautiful  
brainy  
Clever  
Ch



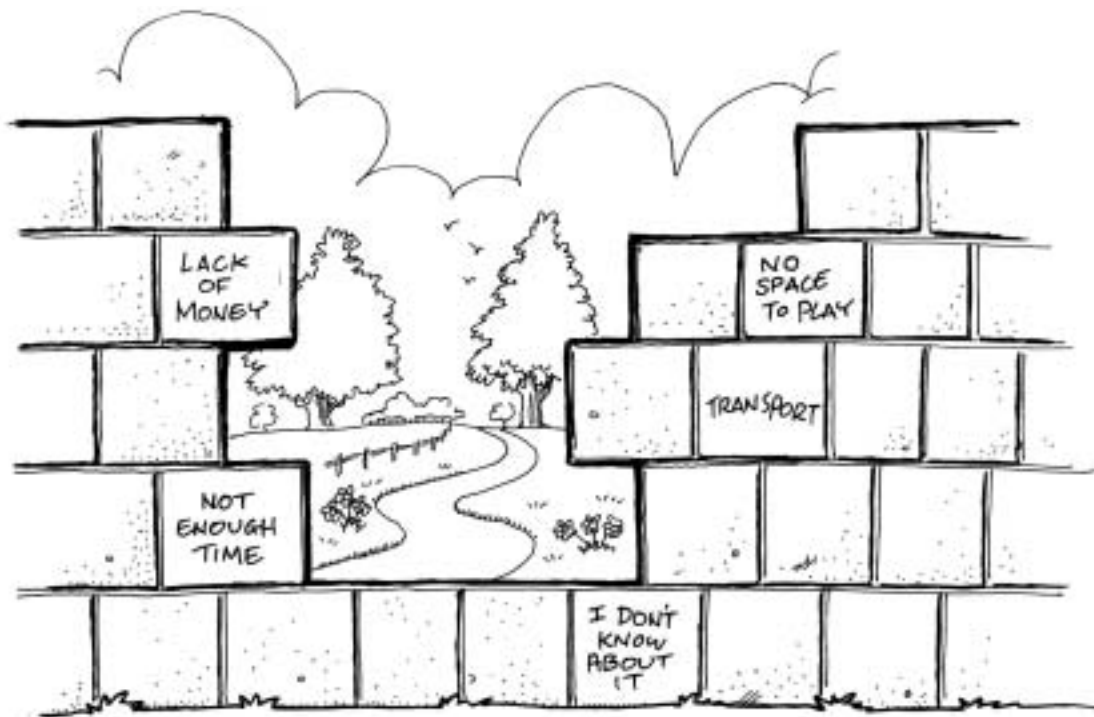
# Consulting

Once your group knows why they are together it is a good time to find out what they think and want

Lots of these activities avoid the need for reading and writing



# BRICKS IN THE WALL



This activity uses brick-sized coloured paper, and a wall that represents the obstacles to getting a plan to happen or action for change to take place.



3 or more participants working on their own or in groups



20 minutes or more

## How does it work?

The children are divided into groups of twos or threes (or allowed to work on their own), and asked to think of all the reasons that could stop something happening. They are given a number of blank bricks and a marker pen. They write a short statement summing up a reason and add that brick to the wall. Once the wall has been built the children examine the wall or someone reads the statements out.

The next part of the exercise is to break down the wall with solutions to each of the issues. The children choose blocks either randomly or because they have a good solution, and turn them over or write solutions in a different colour. You can suggest that people don't try to solve the problems they themselves have put forward for the wall.

The solved problems are displayed (but not replaced in the wall) or read out to the whole group. The wall can be either a two-dimensional mural or a three-dimensional structure built out of blocks, empty shoe boxes or other cardboard boxes. We painted a partially demolished wall with a background of blue skies, meadows and trees, hid the painting with the issues and then revealed it again once we found solutions.

### Why do we like it?

- It creates a quick visual image.
- The removal of the bricks creates a very powerful message.
- If any bricks cannot be removed, they suggest the really tricky issues.
- The problems can be set by one child and solved by another, making it a very co-operative activity.

### What will you need?

- Mural of wall or other structure.
- A4 or A5 bricks, preferably in brick colours. Three or more shades of pink, orange and red make a more interesting visual display.

### Developments/adaptations

- The facilitator can do the writing if necessary.
- You can remove the bricks by devising a bulldozer/wrecking ball and working out what you would need to make a big change quickly, rather than tackling each problem one at a time.

# MAPPING IT OUT

This activity allows children to construct maps and to highlight things that they like, don't like, that are important to them, and also that they don't see/notice.



1 person up to about 20 people

Quite a bit - let them get into it

## How does it work?

Invite the children - either in groups or individually - to create a map of their neighbourhood/route to school/play area using scrap materials, glue, paper and pens. Allow the children to work in self-defined groups, perhaps with encouragement to work with others in the same street or in the same play scheme.

While they are working on their maps, visit them and ask them to explain what they are putting in and why. Record this information to feed back at the end. In order to confirm their ideas you could add notes to their map using flags made of cocktail sticks and sticky labels. If the activity is to work as a consultation technique, the facilitator needs to understand what is meant by each element. Even bizarre or esoteric creations can produce ideas that need recording.

It is important to check their interpretation of what they are making and try to avoid letting your own interpretations leak in. Also check to see that they are including everything - not getting carried away making just one thing (an enormous water slide for example).



## Why do we like it?

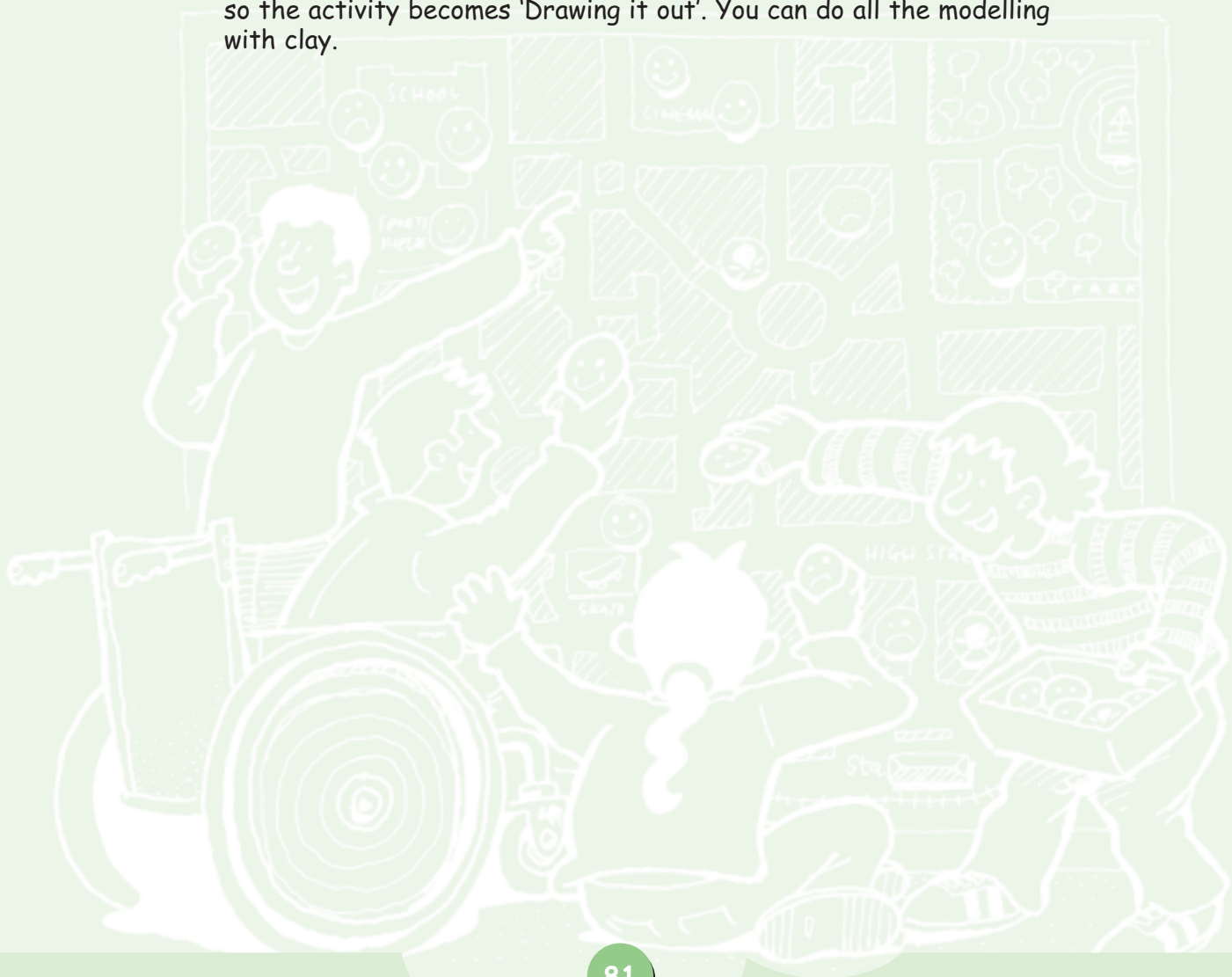
- It generates ideas.
- It is non-directive.
- It is not dependent on literacy.
- Everyone loves glue and wool, don't they?
- It can be adapted to use one-to-one
- It's playful.

## What will you need?

- Cardboard, scrap, glue, string, paint, paper, paste, pens etc.

## Developments/adaptations

- You can run this as a 'Create the best play area/school grounds/ green space' activity. Use a length of wallpaper and pens instead, so the activity becomes 'Drawing it out'. You can do all the modelling with clay.



# TIME LINE OF ACTIVITY

A group that wants to look back to review, or forward to plan, a particular activity can do so using the graphics of a time line.



Individuals or groups of up to 10



10-30 minutes

## How does it work?

Each group or individual is given a time line on a piece of paper or flip chart. The facilitator decides what time intervals to divide the lines into eg days, weeks, months or years and the children add a few major highlights.

The children add to their line with words or pictures and the results become an exhibition. One way to feed back is to get one member of each group to stay with their time line to explain it while the rest of the group tour round the other lines. If individuals create the time lines they can explain their ideas in pairs or small groups.

## Why do we like it?

- It is very visual.

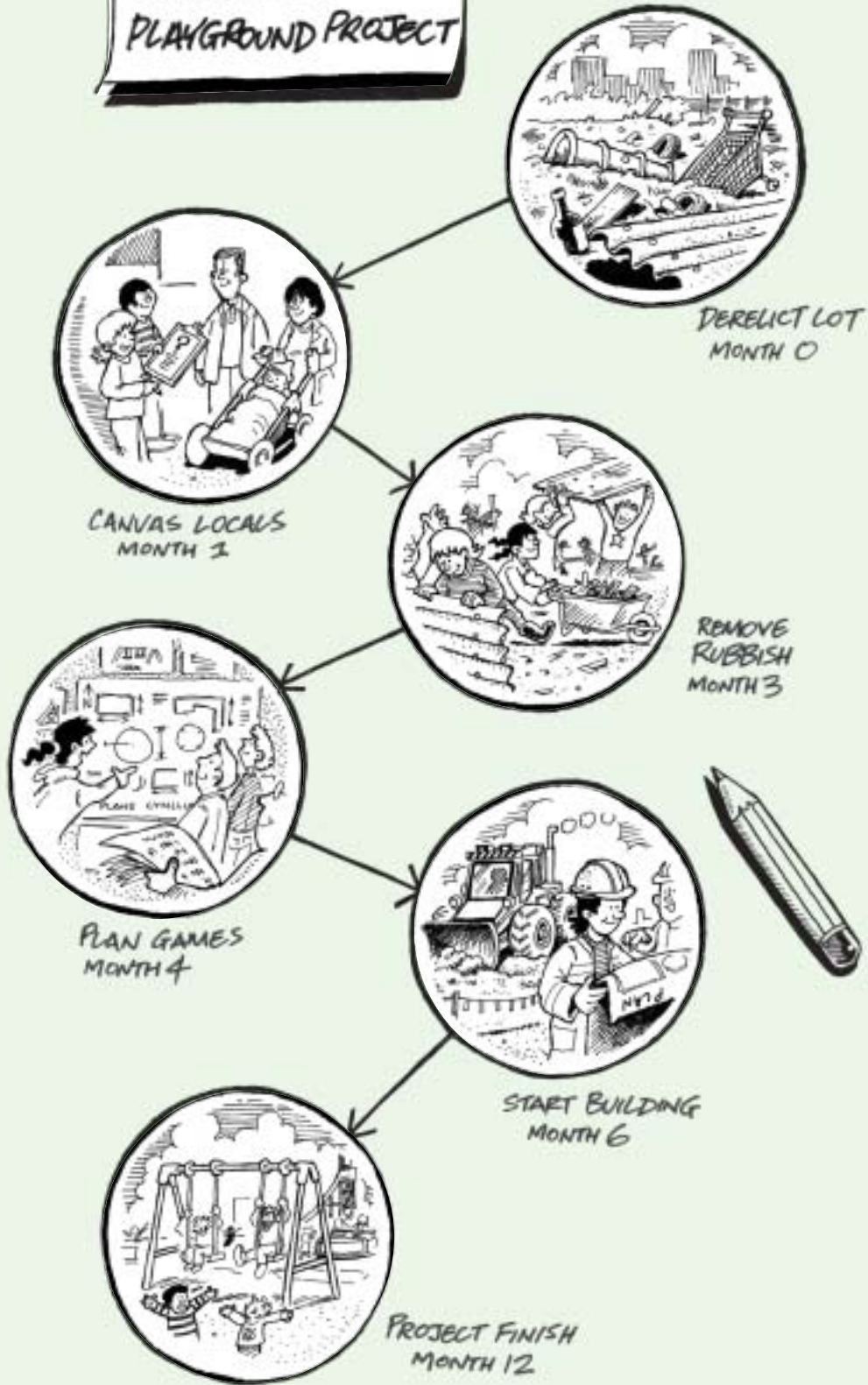
## What will you need?

- Flip chart and markers.

## Developments/adaptations

- Draw pictures of the plot of a children's fairy story or a favourite film as a time line eg Hansel and Gretel's journey through the woods to the gingerbread house.

# TIMELINE: PLAYGROUND PROJECT



# GINGERBREAD PEOPLE

A method that helps participants to plan ahead.



Any number



10-20 minutes

## How does it work?

Each child receives a blank paper gingerbread person. They then decorate one side so that it represents them, drawing their face and clothes on to it. On the other side, they write or draw things that are important to them or that they like doing. If they want to, they can share these things with each other/you.

Each child then gets another blank gingerbread person. On this one, they draw themselves as they think they would look in five/ten years' time. On the other side they add the things that they think will be important to them, and what they would like to be doing at that time.

Either individually or as a group, you can then discuss what might need to happen in order for them to get to their older selves. Examples might include 'practice football', 'pass exams', 'learn how to get catch a bus' and so on, depending on the age and aspirations of the children.

## Why do we like it?

- It creates 'mini-me's that allow the children to think about themselves now, and to visualise themselves in the future.
- The drawing process gives the children time to contemplate what they would like to add.



## What will you need?

- Paper figures in the shape of gingerbread people.
- Pens.
- For the biscuit version (see below) - a gingerbread person for each participant and icing sugar pens.

## Developments/adaptations

- Peg the paper people onto a line of string - with the originals at one end, and the future ones further along to add to the imagery.
- The activity can be used as a simple evaluation/reflection tool - after personalising their gingerbread people, the children can write/draw something that they have enjoyed and or will remember from a session.
- You could use an actual gingerbread biscuit and ask children to write on it in icing. Small sweets are also nice to decorate with.
- You can display all the gingerbread people together in a scene, such as a gingerbread house, and if the house is made of biscuits they can eat the house! Make sure you take plenty of photos first.



# GETTING THERE

This technique gives children the opportunity to identify, record and commit themselves to what they consider to be the key things that THEY can do to create change.



Any number of individuals or pairs



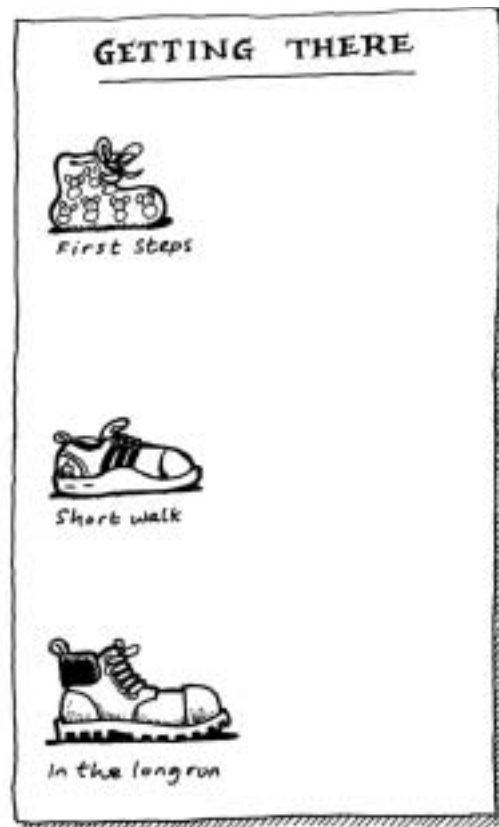
5-15 minutes

## How does it work?

This activity works best after you've consulted the children on what issues they think need resolving and supported them to identify different solutions. It gives them a chance to sign up to the process of addressing them.

Give the children a pre-prepared route planner. Run through the different distances you may need to go to do something. For example, some things are just a few steps away, some are a short walk away and others are a long run off. Ask the children to fill in their own plan with what they think is easy to get to. Emphasize that change can be a process of a series of steps or stages, and that you might need to do the simple early steps before the big changes.

Often what makes effective change is a varied approach: each stage achieving different outcomes that complement the one previous to it, like different places to get to in a series of journeys.



# GETTING THERE

## Why do we like it?

- Children get the opportunity to take control.
- It values the children's ideas.
- It records their ideas.
- It provides scope for supporting them to achieve their goals at a later stage.
- It's a simple metaphor that they can relate to.

## What will you need?

- A Getting there route planner with three different types of routes to be filled in.
- A large Getting there route planner template for demonstrating how to fill it in.
- Pens.

## Links to other activities

- A great follow-up activity for Bricks in the wall (pages 78-79) or How, how how (featured in 'Participation - Spice it up').

## Developments/adaptations

- Use art and crafts to build, paint or draw the different journeys.
- Use it as a focus for setting group goals as a small group or whole class activity.



In the long run

# THERMOMETER

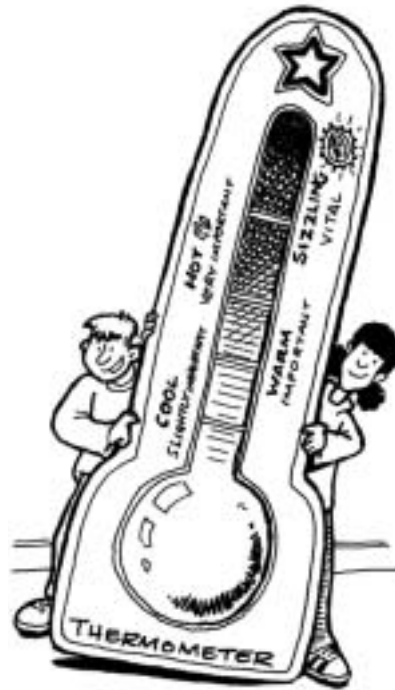
A prioritising tool that uses a giant-sized visual aid.

 The number who can gather around the thermometer comfortably

 15 minutes

## How does it work?

Create a huge illustration of a thermometer before the exercise. This should be colourful, and include images to indicate hot (meaning important or popular) and cool (meaning not so important or popular). Hot images can include the sun, fire, chillies, fire engines, bubbling cauldrons, and can be two- or three-dimensional. The cool end can include icicles, snowflakes, penguins and polar bears etc.



The topic to be discussed is split into subject areas. The ideas generated by individuals and small groups are written or drawn on sticky notes and placed on the thermometer (by the children or the leader) at the point that represents how hot the idea is. The group can reposition the sticky notes until a rough consensus is reached. If there is no agreement the issue can be placed into an area for later discussion.

## Why do we like it?

- It is visual and attractive.
- It is a metaphor which even small children are familiar with.
- Warmer, warmer, colder, colder is a game that children play regularly.
- It can be recorded relatively easily (by digital photo) or transcribed.

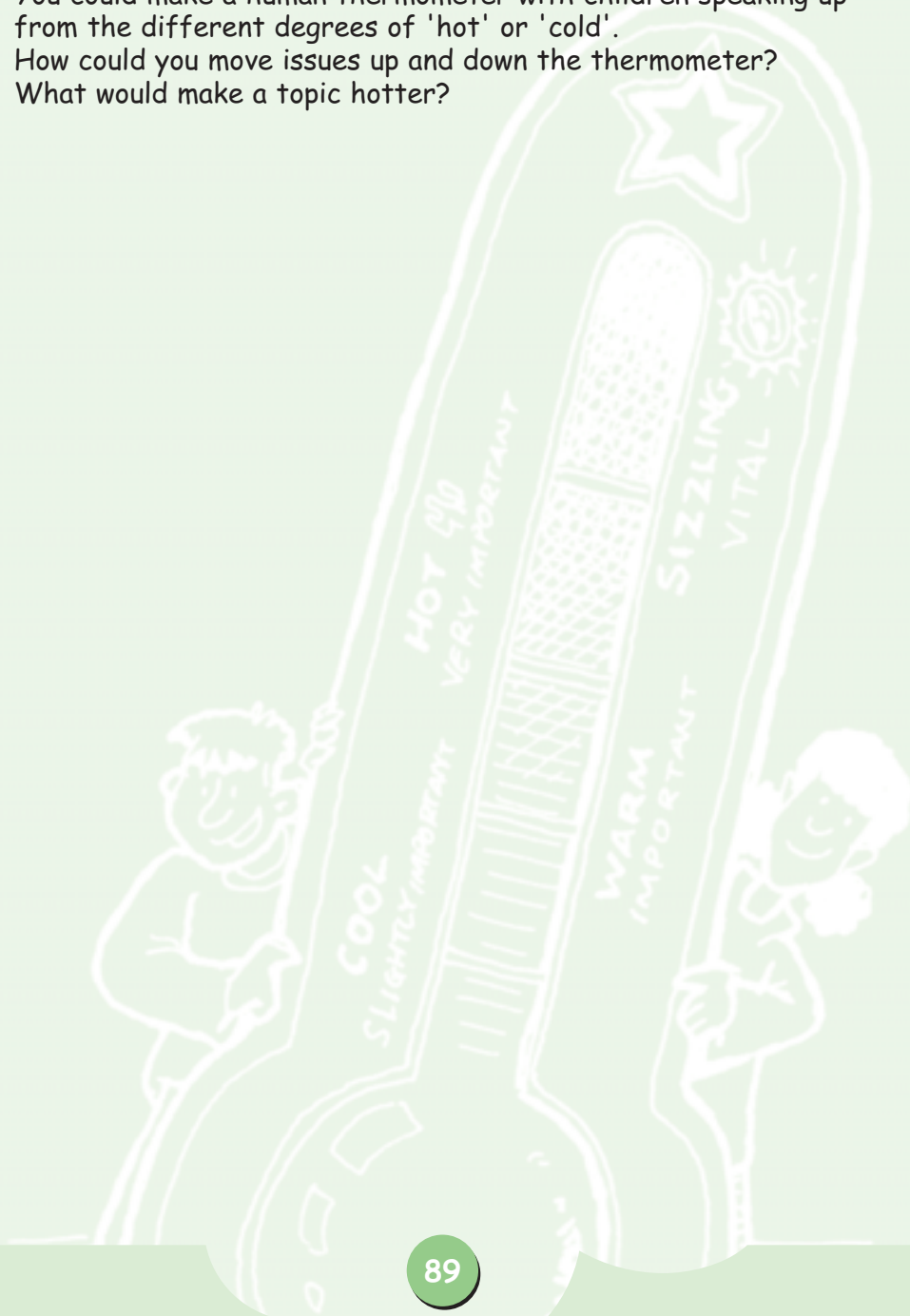


## What will you need?

- Large thermometer drawing on a roll of lining paper.
- 3-D objects for hot and cold.
- Sticky notes or paper.
- Pens/markers.

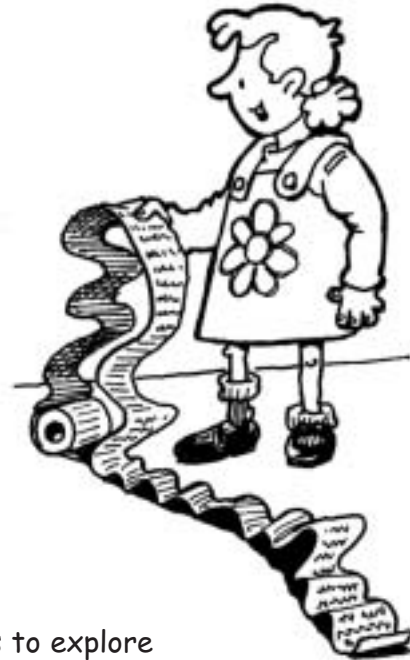
## Developments/adaptations

- Can be linked to more sophisticated ranking methods (such as Diamond ranking, featured in 'Participation - Spice it up!').
- You could make a human thermometer with children speaking up from the different degrees of 'hot' or 'cold'.
- How could you move issues up and down the thermometer? What would make a topic hotter?



# POSTERS, LISTS AND ROLE PLAYS

Gives children a choice of methods for examining issues in small groups, each suitable for different learning preferences - ie Visual, Auditory and Kinaesthetic (otherwise known as 'VAK').



 Minimum of 6 people

 15 minutes-1 hour

## How does it work?

The group has one or more themes to explore and is split into small teams to put together ideas in a range of media formats. The teams can choose the media or it can be already chosen and allocated randomly to the teams. If you want the group to work beyond their comfort zone you can ask people what they prefer, and offer them an alternative medium.

The aim is that some produce a verbal presentation or a drama or role play, others a bullet-pointed list or a poster or strip cartoon. If the teams all work on the same idea or theme, then when they present their work to the group they may see or hear material in a way that helps them to learn and understand the subject more fully. Working with under 11s you would probably avoid using the 'VAK' terms in the title, but you may wish to think up a different name if you feel that 'Posters, lists and role plays' will limit the outcome.

### Why do we like it?

- It allows children to choose their preferred learning or communication mode.
- It can be used to explore the communication modes that they do not use.
- It gives a chance for entertaining interaction between groups who take on the teaching/informing role.

### What will you need?

- A range of visual arts materials.
- Different sizes of paper.
- Pens.
- Performance materials such as costumes and props.

### Developments/adaptations

- Create a series of cards that can be picked randomly, each detailing methods which appeal to different VAK styles.



# ROBOTS AND MONSTERS

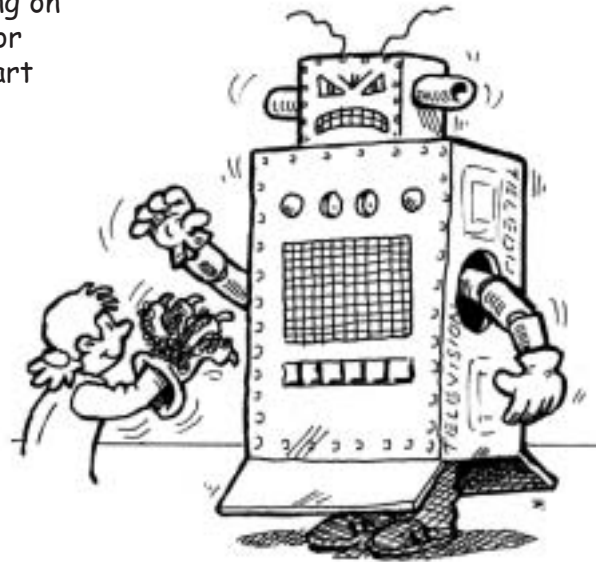
Involves building, painting or drawing on a large scale to examine the scary or difficult stuff that is sometimes part of consultations.



Any number of people



15 minutes or more  
(a 3-D robot or monster will need 30 minutes or more)



## How does it work?

Either individually or as small groups, use cardboard, scrap, tape, glue, string, withies (willow sticks/twigs), bamboo or other materials to build something that could stop you from doing the things you need or want to do. Animate your monster with movement, noise or a script. What does it do or say to get in your way?

## Why do we like it?

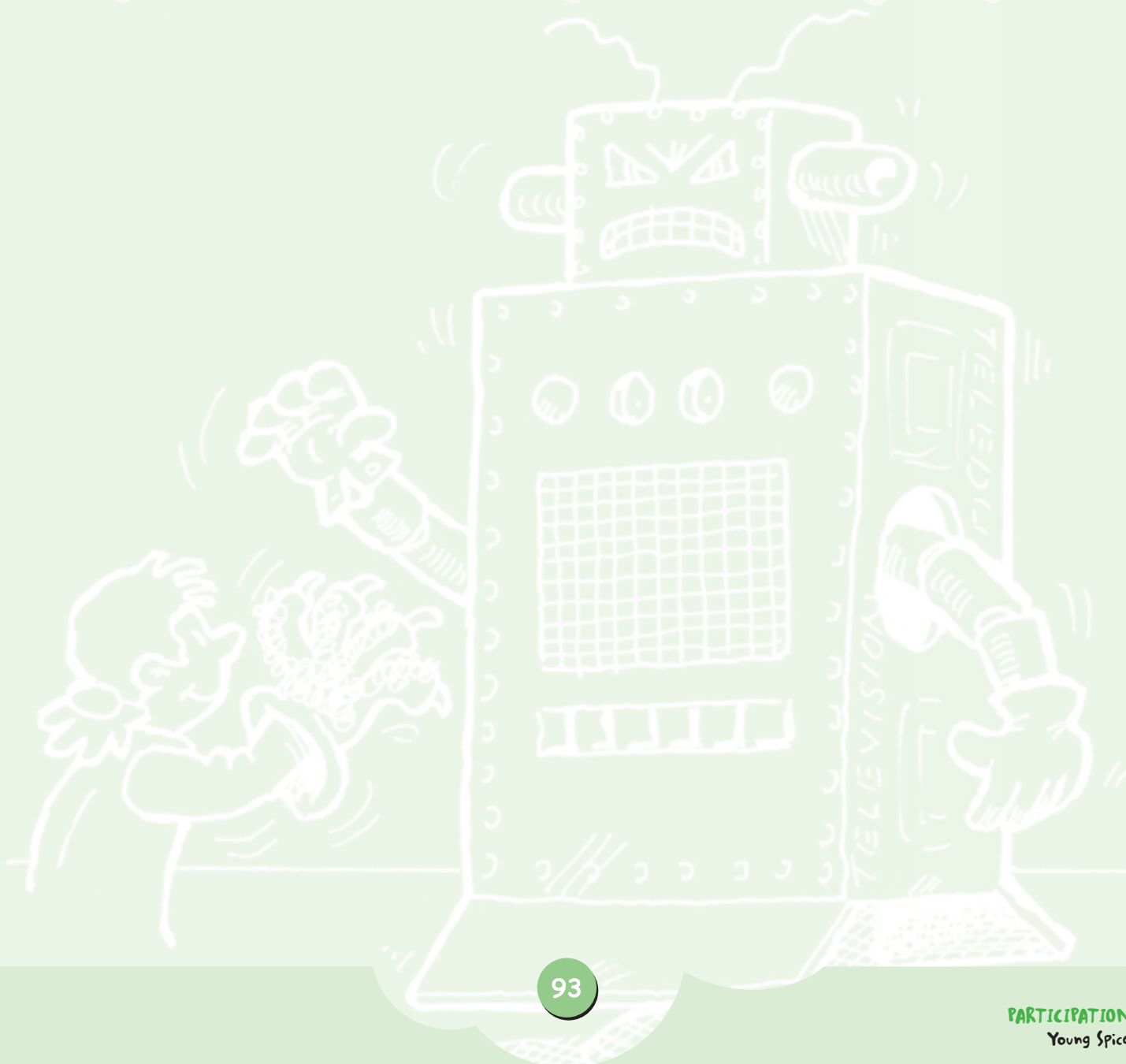
- It is a strong non-verbal activity.
- Because you are asking for large-scale monsters and robots, it is very easy to make this a team artwork.
- It can lead onto a longer-term piece of work, with the creations taking on roles.

## What will you need?

- Large pieces of scrap paper.
- Tape.
- Paints and marker pens.
- Structural materials (eg hoops, withies)
- Fabric for covering the structure
- Diagrams or pictures of scrap monsters.

## Developments/adaptations

- Instead of making robots and monsters, design other models eg machines, homes and dens, dinners, cuddly toys.
- The group may end up changing the nature of the robot or monster to make it helpful instead of a hindrance.
- All of the characteristics of the robot/monster can be written down and recorded to understand what the group feels gets in their way.



# PANTS LINE

Putting ideas or things on a line, from swanky pants to skanky or smelly pants.



More than 4 people



10-20 minutes, depending on size of group and number of items

## How does it work?

Create a real or imaginary line on the floor or on a table. One end is designated 'swanky' and the other 'smelly' (or 'skanky' if you are working in a very informal setting).

Ideas, documents or other things that need to be evaluated or audited are then discussed in small groups and placed relative to each other on the line. The whole group agrees where they are placed and the final position is recorded. Records can be kept on a flip chart.

## Why do we like it?

- It makes people laugh.
- All children understand pants!
- You can use a discussion about pants as a way of judging the difference between people's points of view.

## What will you need?

- Flip chart and markers.
- Pictures of pants or the real thing, to represent both ends of the spectrum.

## Developments/adaptations

- Make sticky labels featuring pictures of swanky pants (eg frilly ones) and smelly/skanky pants (eg old Y-fronts) and stick these on to the items.
- Use different words to name each end of the line, according to what is currently being used in the playground or park eg cool, boss, ace, top, bangin', mingin', bad, sad, poor, sick, loser, cruiser and so on.

# PANTS LINE



# BALLOON

A simple, ending activity.



Any number of people



10 minutes



## How does it work?

Spend some time reflecting and evaluating the work you have

been doing, considering questions such as: "What have we learned?", "What was difficult?", "What was most valuable?" Each child is then given a small piece of tissue paper and asked to write on it one wish for themselves and one wish for the group. These are tied on to the string of a helium balloon or a hot air balloon that the whole group then releases outside.

## Why do we like it?

- It creates a quiet moment where everyone is able to reflect on the process they have been through.
- It is a clear and strong end to a session.
- This activity is also great for group adjourning/mourning towards the end of a process.

## What will you need?

- A helium balloon with a ribbon or string.
- Pens and small pieces of tissue paper.

## Developments/adaptations

- If a balloon is not practical the pieces of paper could be burned, buried or collected in a special container by the facilitator.
- Children could be invited to share their wishes with the group.
- Rather than a wish, children could be asked to take on a specific responsibility for the group.
- It is possible to create a hot air balloon with tissue paper, thin wire, pva glue and a hairdryer (see diagram for how to create the balloon body).



## How to make a hot air balloon

You will need:

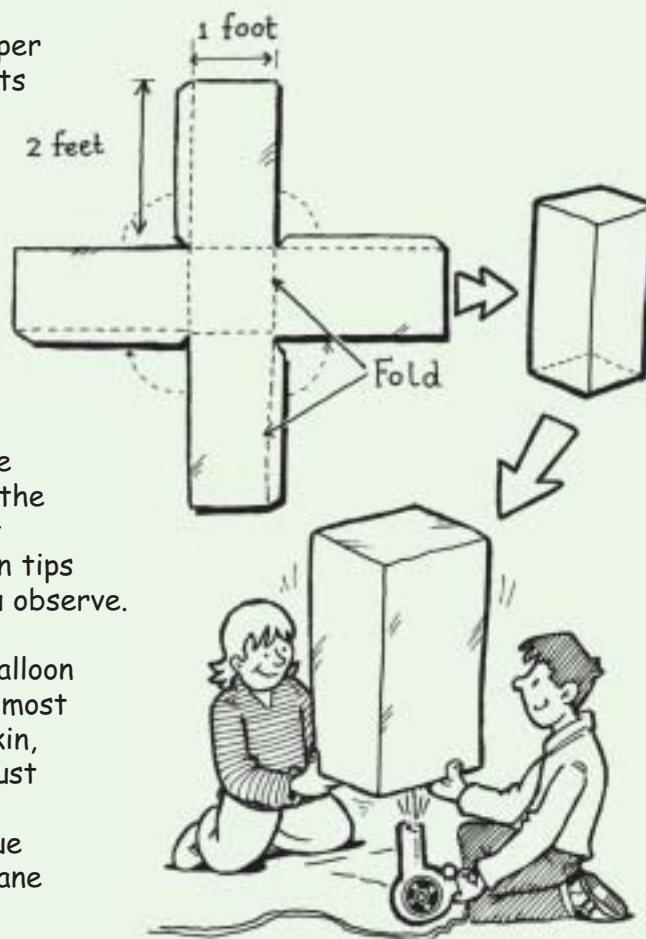
- several sheets of tissue paper
- scissors
- pva glue
- a hairdryer
- cotton thread
- a small, lightweight container such as a paper carton
- a weight such as a small pebble

### What to do

Cut out 5 sheets of tissue paper according to the measurements given in the diagram. Glue them together as shown. Glue together the long sides to make a rectangular balloon with an opening at the base.

While one or two people hold the balloon upright, use the hairdryer to fill the space inside with hot air. Let go of the balloon. What happens? What happens as soon as the balloon tips over? Try to explain what you observe.

Making a successful hot air balloon takes time and patience. The most important thing is that the skin, or 'envelope' of the balloon must be very light for its size. Try experimenting with both tissue paper and lightweight cellophane to see which works best.





# Avoiding Literacy

I don't like reading and writing much – but I like doing and saying!



# CARD SORT

A visual consultation tool that provides results that are also easy to see!



1 or more people



5 minutes or more depending on the amount of cards and age/ability of the children



## How does it work?

Before the session, decide on a question that could have a set range of responses.

For example, "What types of fruit do you eat?" Then create a set of cards featuring easily recognisable pictures (cartoon sketches or clear photos work best) with one fruit per card. The name of the fruit may also be written.

Ask the children to sort the cards into piles that either you or they can specify. Some children can sort the cards themselves, getting group agreement about which cards should go in each pile. For others - such as younger children - you can hold the cards up above a random pile saying "Does this go here?" In these cases, it might be useful to have two of each card to check the children aren't just saying yes because they think you want them to!

You can also supply pre-made 'Yes', 'No' and 'Maybe' mats, or ones to suit your purpose such as 'Every day', 'Once a week' etc.

## Why do we like it?

- It's quick, simple and effective for gaining a fairly accurate set of quantifiable results.
- It works well with closed question consultations.

### What will you need?

- Pre-made cards and category markers. If these can be laminated that will increase their value in the eyes of the children, and allow you to use them lots of times.

### Developments/adaptations

- For more fun and an even more accessible activity, use the real things or representative items for kinaesthetic learners.



# TOUCH BLUE

This is a moving around game for finding out information from the group, but can also be used as a warm-up game.

 5 - many people



10 minutes - as long as you want



## How does it work?

Tell the group that you are going to name different things, and that they have to move around the room to touch those things. Initially, keep it very simple by calling out basic things such as colours or textures - "Touch something blue" or "Touch something fluffy" for example. (You may want to protect the child in the blue fluffy jumper by saying that they can't include each other's clothes in the hunt!). Then move on to more complex instructions such as "Touch the quietest part of the room" or "Touch your favourite place to play in the room" and so on - whatever you need to find out.

## Why do we like it?

- It gets people to explore their surroundings.
- It's a very informal way of finding out what children think about their setting, toys or equipment.

## What will you need?

- Space and a range of objects around the room.

## Links to other activities

- Mapping it out (pages 80-81).

## Developments/adaptations

- The activity can be used for other kinds of discovery, eg the natural environment - "Touch something that has its skeleton on the outside", "Touch something that has been munched by an insect" etc.
- You can get the children to cut out and decorate a hand print or a star, put a small piece of tack on the back, and ask them to stick them on different parts of the room - their favourite toy, for example.
- It can be linked to the game 'Find me' - where a caller will call out "Find me (something)." eg "something you can draw with" or "your favourite book".
- This can lead on to asking "Find me a person who ..." eg "... is always kind". The found person, if they want to, can then become the caller.



# HAPPY SUNS - SAD SHEEP

A simple, direct consultation method, this works especially well with non- or low-literacy groups.



 8-20 people



10 minutes - or until just before they start to lose interest!

## How does it work?

Prepare some paper plates - two per child. One plate should have a smiley sun drawn on it, the other a sad cloud or sheep - depending on your preference and to fit the group. See the development/adaption section for Pants line, page 94 (ie taking into account current language).

Distribute the plates, one of each to every child. Explain that you are going to read through a list of scenarios, and that they are to demonstrate how they would feel in that situation by holding up the appropriate plate. For example, "You wake up early and realise it's not a school day, how do you feel?" or "It's the day after your birthday and you discover that a family member has eaten the cake you were saving for breakfast, how do you feel?"

After using a few tester questions to get the children familiar with the process, start to use the questions you want to consult them about. Record the scores for each question/situation. As with all interactive activities, remember that you will need to have a few 'control' questions along the lines of "You come home for dinner, it is Brussels sprouts and fish heads, how do you feel?". If the answer is a resounding positive, it might be time to move on.



### Why do we like it?

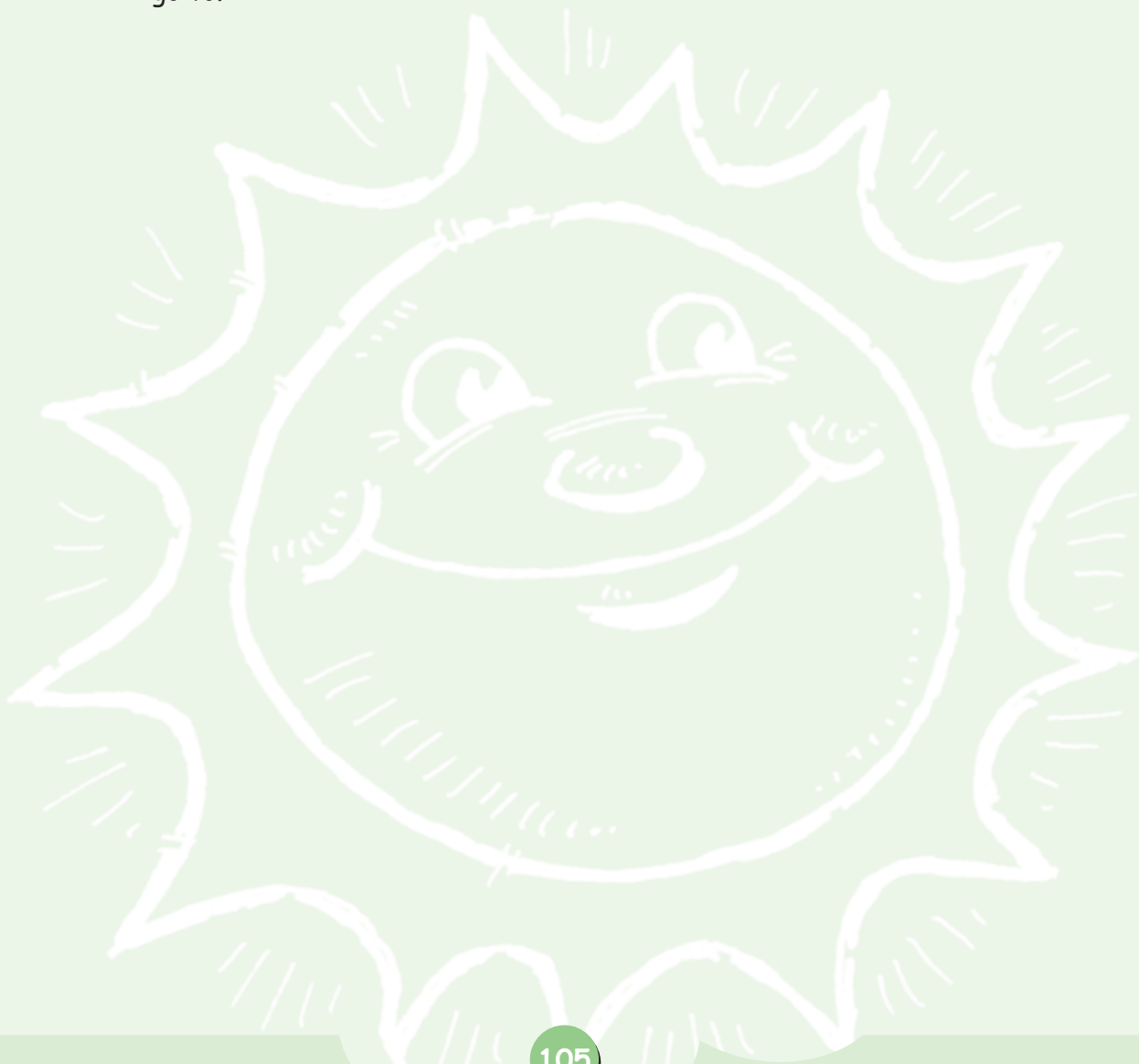
- It's a good starting activity that introduces the subject.
- It's uncomplicated.
- Everyone can contribute.
- No one needs to stand out.

### What will you need?

- Flip chart and marker pens.
- Prepared plates.

### Developments/adaptations

- Use big sun and cloud mats instead of plates, or specify areas to go to.



# LIFE-SIZED TWEENS/SPARE GROUP MEMBERS

The group creates life-sized extra group members who reflect their concerns, needs, and aspirations. These can be used in a variety of ways throughout the training.



Up to 15 participants per facilitator



20 minutes, plus 5 minutes per group of 3

## How does it work?

Split the group into threes. Give each group a sheet of wallpaper and ask them to draw around one group member. They should then work together to fill in the outline with a name, personality and background including likes, dislikes, worries, home circumstances, dreams, important relationships, attitudes and beliefs. These can be drawn and written. The individual they create should be roughly the age of the group, or if the group is varied in age it can represent an average. Group members should, as much as possible, agree on all these features.

Each of these 'spare' group members should be introduced to the larger group and then stuck on the wall. The facilitator should then explain that anyone in the group can raise an issue or ask a question on behalf of the spares at any time.

### Why do we like it?

- The group can project all sorts of their own issues on to the spares without having to own them.
- The qualities and issues the groups attribute to their spares can give you big clues as to what issues are likely to be important to them.
- Discussions about sensitive issues can be focused solely on the spare eg "What might the spares do in this situation?"
- The spares create a safe focus for asking difficult questions.
- You can give a particular focus to the creation of the spares by asking the children to think about how all the attributes they are giving them affect their self-esteem (in a positive or negative way), or how the attributes might affect the choices they make about education.
- Be aware of how you dispose of the spares at the end of the session. Do not throw them away without permission from the group. Some groups choose to keep their spares as long-term group members, some are glad to see the back of them.

### What will you need?

- Wallpaper and pens.

### Links to other activities

- The spares can be used to promote debate about a range of issues.

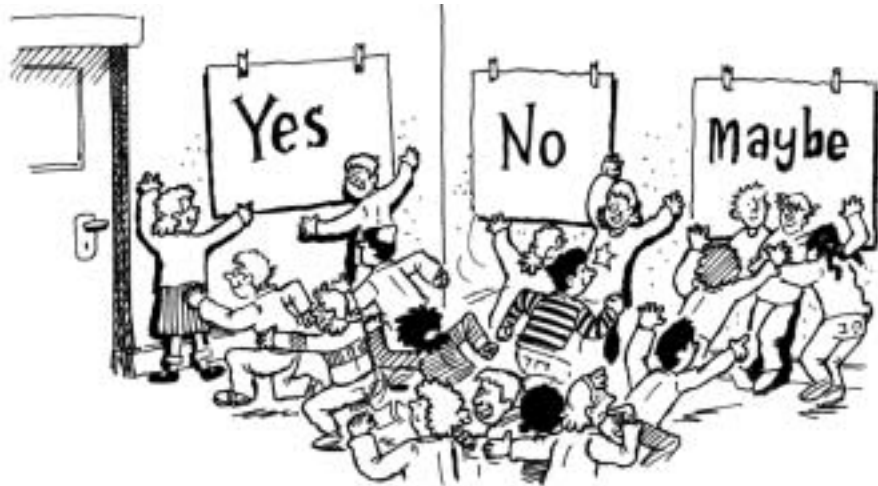
### Developments/adaptations

- Creating and using life-sized puppets.



# YES/NO/MAYBE

A very simple and speedy consultation technique that gathers both numbers and opinions. It involves moving around and can be a bit of fun.



 Any quantity of people!

 5-20 minutes

## How does it work?

Place mats around the room which have the words 'yes', 'no' and 'maybe' written on them. Ask the children any closed question. Get them to go and stand on the mat that represents their view. Quickly record how they are distributed around the room and then use a pretend (or real) microphone to gather their opinions. Write those opinions down, preferably in a place where everyone can see your notes.

## Why do we like it?

- It can be done really quickly or drawn out to gather more information.
- It involves moving around.
- It immediately shows the group how they feel about the issue.
- It gives people who want to speak out the opportunity, as well as letting those that don't want to speak still have a say.

## What will you need?

- Yes/no/maybe mats.
- A means of recording numbers and opinions (pen/paper/digital or video camera/dictaphone).
- Microphone (pretend or real).

## Links to other activities

- Works well to provide a snapshot of opinion before exploring issues in more depth.
- Works well after any sedentary activity.

## Developments/adaptations

- If you're working with a large group, you can ask smaller groups to send representatives to the mats, but you will need to allow them time to reach an agreement.
- Use graffiti walls by each mat for the children to write opinions or draw any relevant images.
- When gathering ideas with the roving microphone, check whether there are any other issues that get highlighted and could then be explored.
- If you have a large group you may wish to station one person as a scribe at each mat to make it easier to collect numbers and comments. This may also be useful if you know you have children who are uncomfortable talking in front of the whole group.



# DOT VOTING

A simple way to find out the preferences of a group.



Any number of people



5 minutes



## How does it work?

First you need something to vote on. This can be anything relevant to the group - food, books, new colour for the door and so on - but be clear about why you are asking them to vote: either for fun or as a precursor to actual change.

The children are then given sticky dots to put on a chart/list of the options. The number of dots you give them depends on how many votes you want them to have (eg 3). Pictures or explanations of what they are choosing between should be displayed on the wall or table. For example, if they are choosing a new school or club logo, pictures of the different possibilities should be within easy reach.

The children then stick their dots on their favourites. If they have more than one dot each, they can choose either to use each dot separately for voting for their top favourites, or if they feel very strongly about something, they could use more than one dot on the same thing. As long as everyone starts off with an equal number of dots, it's up to them how they use them.

## Why do we like it?

- It's more anonymous than sticking your hand up.
- It's lasting and transportable - you can take the pictures away as a memory guide, and even bring them out again at a later date to remind the children of their choices.
- It's very simple and doesn't rely on literacy.

## What will you need?

- Pictures or other representations of the things to be voted on.
- Sticky dots.
- List or chart.

## Developments/adaptations

- Use different colour dots for first and second choices as a 'proportional representation' method, or if you want to avoid multiple dots being added to one choice.
- Different colour votes can be used if it is useful to differentiate groups, eg adults and children, girls and boys, different year groups. You can talk about the colour differences or ignore them if you believe that will threaten the potential for freedom of choice.



# WIND BLOWS

A light-hearted information gathering exercise that is also good for getting people moving around and sitting in different seats.

 10 or more people

 10-15 minutes



## How does it work?

The children sit in a circle (they can be standing, but it works better if they're sitting on chairs). The facilitator explains that they are going to call out "The big wind blows anyone who ..." followed by a statement. Anyone who can answer "Yes" to the statement should move from their chair and into another. Although this generally works by swapping chairs with someone else, it can be worth having a spare chair in the circle in case only one person moves!

You can ask them to move seats in the style of leaves blowing in the wind or simply children in the wind if this is preferable. Pick easy categories first - "... anybody wearing black shoes" or "... anybody who like chips". This gives the children an idea of how it works, and makes it easy for them to make their initial moves. You can then move onto finding out useful information about the group, eg "... anybody who likes playtime", "... walks to school", "... would like to grow vegetables" etc.

You can touch on more sensitive issues by asking them to reply about others rather than themselves eg "... knows somebody who has felt lonely in school". This means that nobody is going to feel anxious about spotlighting themselves with an issue that they may find uncomfortable. It's worth pointing out beforehand that you don't need names though! As a facilitator, it's important that you don't spotlight or personalise these issues in the activity - it's OK to ask for more detail, but in a general way.



Lastly, as this activity is fun, it's possible that some children will move for the sake of moving rather than to provide you with accurate statistics. If you need to know for sure whether that's happening, have some test questions at the ready - we always find "The big wind blows anyone who likes Brussels sprouts" to be a fairly good indicator with children! If they all move, then maybe they're just enjoying the chance to float around.

### Why do we like it?

- It allows the group to give you information in a fun way, without having to talk.
- It's a great way of introducing topics that you can go into in more detail later on.

### What will you need?

- Chairs.
- Ideas for categories - particularly those relevant to any consultation you are doing.
- Paper for recording results - this may not be precise, depending on the size of the group - but even rough percentages will give you some idea of feelings, as well as introducing the ideas to the group.

### Links to other activities

- It can be used as a way of feeding back from Picture bingo (page 46).
- It works well as a way of introducing issues for further consultation activities.

### Developments/adaptations

- The group don't have to be leaves - they can move around like anything eg penguins.
- It may be that moving around doesn't work for your group - for example because of shyness or mobility issues. They can signal in other ways - such as waving or giving a little bow.
- Make sure there are no spare chairs. When people move, the facilitator can move onto a chair. The person who then doesn't have a chair can call out a category, then move onto a chair and so on.
- Point out similarities, helping the children to identify that they share things in common.

## 3-D PLANNING

A modelling activity that allows children to imagine and plan how an indoor or outdoor space could be used (for example a play space, woodland walk or reading corner). This activity is closely related to Mapping it out (pages 80-81) but allows more building and modelling by the children.



 1-30 people



20 minutes upwards,  
depending on how much  
preliminary work is done

### How does it work?

The children are given the chance to chat about the area that they are planning. It's important that they can visualise the space, so a visit or looking at photographs is important unless you're running the activity as an imagination exercise. If a space already exists, discuss how it is at the moment - size, shape, boundaries, what is good or bad about it, who it's used by and so on. Next, it can be useful to allow some creative visioning time - hand out paper and pens or ideas storm to generate some ideas for how things could be. Don't worry if ideas aren't entirely realistic!

Now comes the real planning part. You can run the exercise as one big group, but it generally works best in smaller clumps - maybe pooling ideas at the end, as a whole group. Using modelling materials, eg modelling clay, scrap and so on, the groups make a 3-D design of their ideal use of the area, bearing in mind the physical boundaries and immovable landmarks (eg trees!). It should include the space as a whole, but don't forget the small things that go within it eg a beanbag or a bench.

If there is more than one group, allow them to visit each other's models and get explanations of what's going on in them. If the ideas are going to be used for an actual development or change of a place, you may need to get consensus on the favourite elements from each of the different models.

### Why do we like it?

- It encourages great imagination, but also the skills for planning within boundaries.
- When ideas are taken forward, it provides a great sense of ownership of a space that they have helped to design.
- It means that the finished real spaces are more likely to be what children really want!

### What will you need?

- Paper and drawing materials for the planning stage.
- Photographs and measurements of the space to be developed.
- A surface for making the models on (possibly moveable, like thick card).
- Modelling materials - modelling putty or clay, card, scrap paper, twigs and leaves, paint, glue - it's up to you.

### Links to other activities

- World's worst (in 'Participation - Spice it up!').

### Developments/adaptations

- If modelling is a problem, you can do the activity as a collage - using pictures from brochures and magazines, or you can expand on the preliminary work as a drawing.
- It doesn't have to be about a big change - it can be about a small corner of a classroom or garden, for example.
- Rather than each group designing a whole space, individual groups can be given sections to work on, and the ideas amalgamated at the end.



# Puppets and participation

When I'm too shy to say  
what I think, the puppets  
can speak for me



# INTRODUCTION TO PUPPETRY



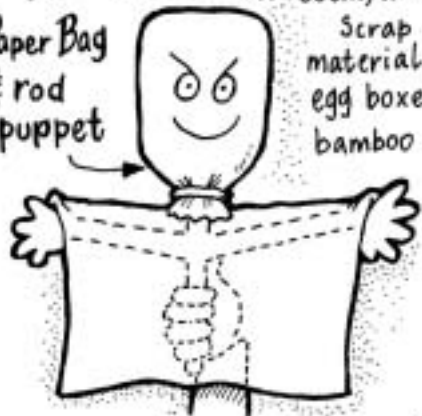
## Why puppetry?

- Puppetry is useful because it allows children to distance themselves from the characters they create. It allows children to explore both different behaviours and other identities and personalities, safely. It is possible to shift the blame for unacceptable behaviour and ideas onto the puppet, who is sometimes the invisible friend made visible.
- Puppets allow transgression - they can break the rules and use a different voice. Puppets can go beyond the boundaries of behaviour and reality - they can fly and transform, and they can pick their nose and eat the bogey!
- Puppets enable the imagination and stimulate creativity.
- Puppets empower - a shy child can wield an extrovert puppet, a boy can explore being a girl, a small child can become a giant, and a child using a wheelchair can run a marathon.
- Puppets can build confidence that transfers to other situations.
- Puppets can be a gateway to many types of play - mastery, social, socio-dramatic, fantasy, rough and tumble, role play.
- It's cheaper than you think - anything can become a puppet. You can use the gingerbread man template on a stick, or on a straw.
- You can make your own puppets. Start with a character or with an object that suggests a character. Remember that creation is a fluid process and the idea at the end can be excitingly different from the idea at the beginning - so don't write the script first!

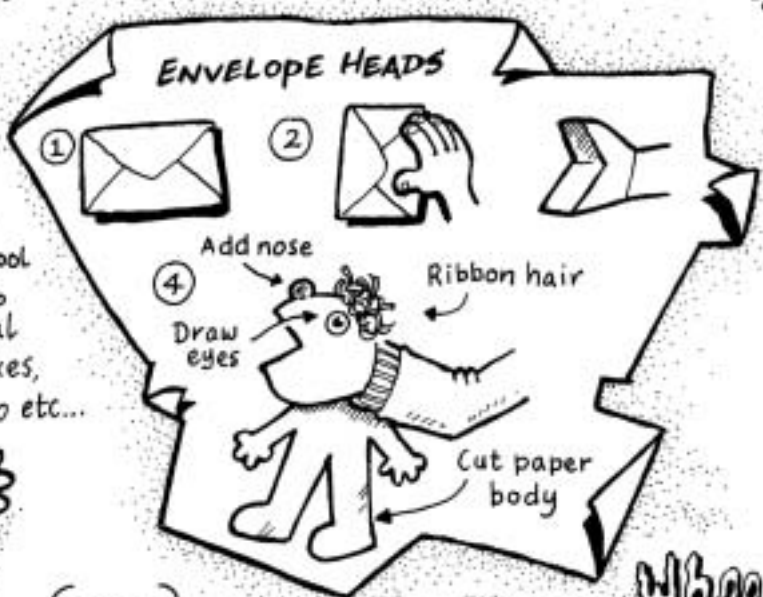
# Puppets... Some are noisy ....Some are shy.... Some are Spooky... Some are dangerous... Some are Silly wiggly giggly .....

Save ping pong balls old spectacles,

Paper Bag & rod puppet



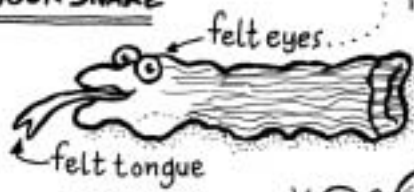
Socks, wool Scrap material egg boxes, bamboo etc...



ENVELOPE HEADS

Add nose  
Ribbon hair  
Draw eyes  
Cut paper body

SOCK SNAKE



felt eyes...

felt tongue

Blow BUBBLES for underwater themes



or wiggly toy eyes from Sewing Shop!



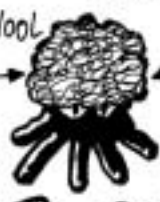
Party blower tongues!



SHEET OVER MOP AS GHOST

Baby Powder blows Smoke!

Black Wool or rolled Sock



Black glove

SPIDER GLOVE PUPPET

String & beads



WOODEN SPOON PUPPET



THREE STRING PAPER & CARD MARIONETTE

Cardboard tube handle  
wooly hair



Dried peas in a pan Sounds Like Rain.....

STAGES:- blankets & poles across windows or doors. Tables on side, big boxes with holes.

PUPPETS TO WEAR

Staple rubber bands for wrists cloth arms & legs

Card head (paper plate)



Shoe lace harness over shoulders

Box body covered in cloth

Puppetry is animating an object. Any object that can be moved can be animated (brought to life). This can be done from within, or by controlling the object from the outside. Manipulation can happen directly or at a distance using rods, wires, cables, electronics, hands, heads, and legs.

## How do I use puppets?

If you are nervous and inexperienced start with something really simple, starting to move, starting to breathe, starting to focus. A puppet needs to be able to move, to look and to respond. It is useful but not essential to have a mouth that can move. It is nice to have hands that can grasp or sign, but not essential. Eyes that can be seen help indicate where the puppet is looking, but again are not essential. Having a voice or a sound is useful.

Being different from the other puppets is important. Being interesting is more important than being beautiful. But most important is that your puppet is interested! If it's not interested, why should you ask anyone else to be?

Puppets can express and exaggerate emotions. Try playing Moody corners (page 68) with your puppets - allow yourself to explore the differences between grief, joy, disgust and anger. Puppets can also sleep, wake, ignore, obsess, irritate, assault, gorge, vomit and explode. They can fall in love and turn into space rockets and leave the atmosphere. They can be predictable or do the unexpected. Explore the potentials yourself, and be prepared to share the activities with the children. Use mirrors and others to direct your movements and responses.

## How do I get the children to use puppets?

Try and stop them!

## Things to aim for and stuff to avoid

- Keep the puppets alive by using movement with a purpose. Avoid puppet death: if a puppet stays completely still for longer than a few seconds it is seen by the audience to turn into a dead stuffed creature. If a puppet is waved around with no obvious purpose or reason that can remove the belief that it has a life of its own too.



- Keep your script as simple as possible. Avoid complex dialogue: sometimes long speeches or having too scripted a dialogue can get in the way of the puppet being interesting or believable.
- It doesn't matter if you are seen to be talking for the puppet. Avoid ventriloquism: attempting to keep your mouth from moving takes a lot of practice and skill and it may get in the way of making your puppet believable.
- Let your puppet's movements express emotions as well as words. Avoid expressing emotions for the puppet: this is a tough trick to master. When you get a puppet to show a feeling, masking the expression yourself is a useful way of ensuring your puppet is more interesting to look at than the puppeteer.
- Puppets are potentially complicated characters - that makes them more interesting. Avoid twee-ness: puppets are often used to getting a response for their cuteness ... this can really limit the potential for puppets to express difficult or less pleasant emotions.
- Don't be afraid to explore all emotions. Avoid patronising: the audience or the puppet. Puppets are seen as a tool for engaging with young children or to enable children to express themselves. The problem with that is the puppet's association with adults, masks, nightmare and shadow can be lost, and with it the possibility of exploring all of the emotions the participants may show.
- If you don't like puppets or you are scared or find puppets challenging or childish then leave them. Avoid being bored: if the puppeteer is bored then the puppets reflect that in their movement and can be very boring too.
- Try things out. Avoid getting hung up on technique: some technical details (lip synch, focus, height of puppets etc) are tricky to get right and if the puppeteer is thinking about that rather than expressing ideas and emotions through their puppet this will show.
- Your puppet is an actor, let them perform and communicate. Avoid becoming introverted with your puppet: puppets are for communication, and although talking to yourself is important it is good to support the puppeteer to perform.

Finally if you're worried about the technical element of puppetry, just put a puppet on a chair and do not touch it but get the group to focus their attention on it. As a group you can use your imagination to give it life and feelings. By not even attempting to move the puppet, the group can use it to jump-start an imaginative process.

### When do I use puppets?

- Animating found objects like spoons and traffic cones.
- Dramatising situations.
- In the activities on the following pages, such as Kath's bad day (page 126).
- For puppet-to-puppet interaction.
- For role-playing stories.

# PUPPETS GREETING

A simple way to get a group to use puppets. It allows the group to show their puppetry to an audience of one, and exchange skills and ideas.



2-30 people



20 minutes



## How does it work?

Each child has one puppet they have either chosen or made earlier. They start by looking at their puppet to find out where the eye line of the puppet is ie where the puppet is focusing when you hold its head straight. Then they can experiment by getting their puppet to move its head, tilt in different directions and finally look at another person's puppet.

Using a series of suggestions, the next few minutes is about the puppets starting to get to know one another. Without having to use words or even noises the puppets can start to relate and be interested, frightened, shy, angry etc. If the children want to move on to noises or words, suggest keeping the noises simple and the words repeated. Choose one word and use this to get your message across (the word can be an inanimate object like "spoon" or a nonsense word like "bibble").

## Why do we like it?

- It is performance of a non-threatening nature.
- It allows a person to develop the skills to bring their puppet to life.

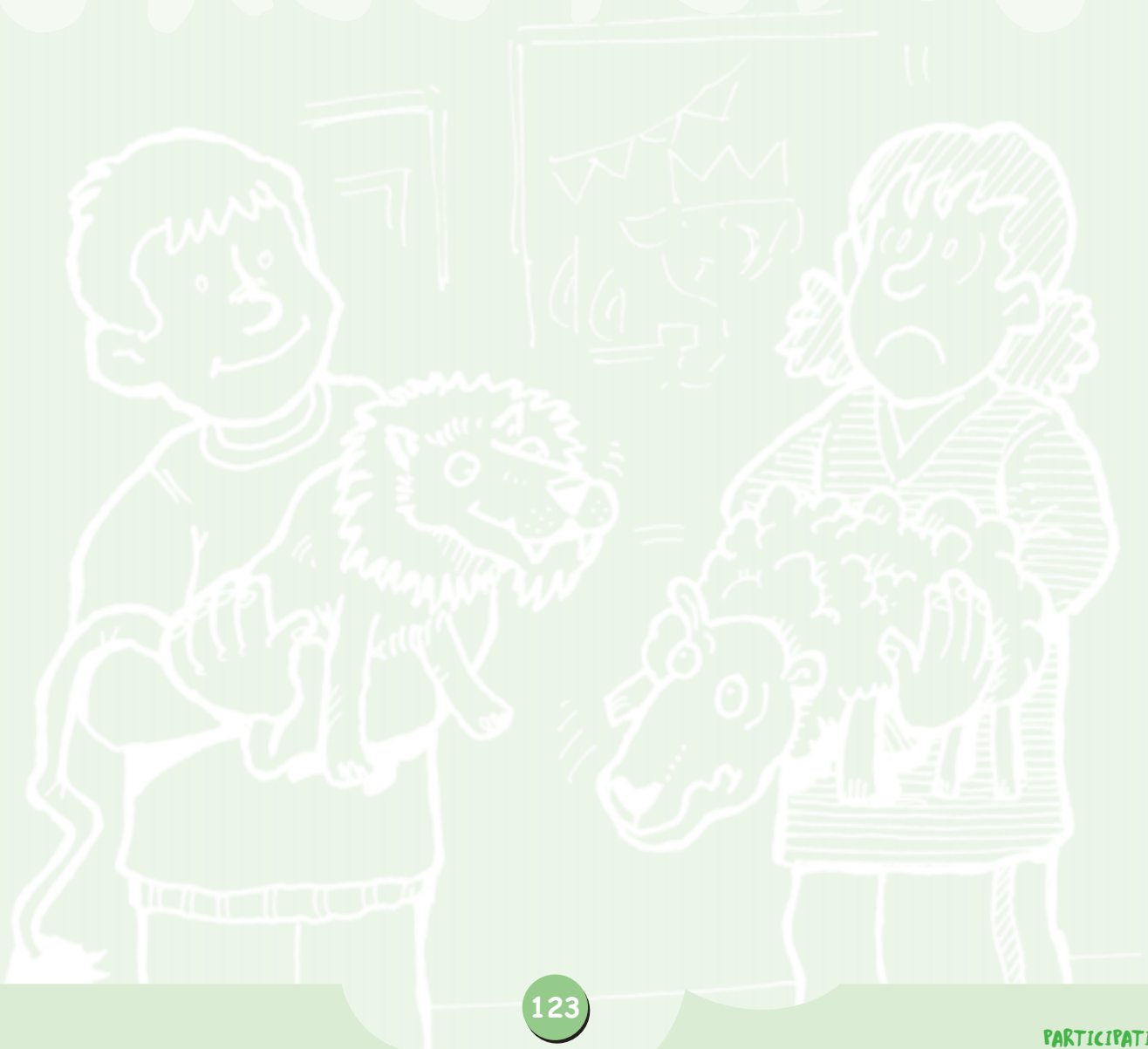
### What will you need?

- One puppet per person. We would suggest hand puppets, preferably with articulated mouths.

### Developments/adaptations

- Let the puppets develop stories.
- Allow the puppets to introduce their new puppet 'friends' to the whole group.

# PUPPETS GREETING



# HOT SEATING PUPPET

A puppet is put onto a chair and operated to answer questions about itself as a way to explore any issue or emotional state, or just to devise a puppet character.



Any number of people who can see and hear the puppet



15 minutes

## How does it work?

Place the puppet (preferably chosen by the group from a few contenders) on a central seat that is visible to the whole group. Encourage the group to come up with questions that will allow them to find out lots of interesting information about the things the puppet likes, what it does and who it is.

The puppet can be operated by one or more children, or the main facilitator, depending on the subject and the group. The facilitator can select group members to answer for the puppet, or the whole group can answer.

## Why do we like it?

- It is a non-threatening way to develop questioning skills.
- The puppet can express ideas that the children may not feel are acceptable for them to express themselves.
- The puppet can answer questions that are threatening for the group.
- The group can use the puppet to think beyond the rational, expected, usual ideas.

### What will you need?

Puppets (preferably three to choose from) which are simple to operate, and able to convey emotions as well as ideas. Visible eyes and a moveable mouth help to make the puppet more believable. We usually use hand puppets rather than marionettes or rod puppets, as the latter require more skill and dexterity.

### Developments/adaptations

- Hot seating can be done with books, signs and objects. Under some circumstances a person can be put on the hot seat if they really consent, or if they want to play a character or role.



# KATH'S BAD DAY

An activity that allows the group to project their own experiences onto a puppet or a doll.

 5-20 people

 20-30 minutes

## How does it work?

Introduce the puppet/doll to the group. Explain that Kath has just come home from playgroup/school and is very sad. She has had a miserable time of it. Ask the group if they can think of any reasons why she might be sad. Examples we've heard include "she was hungry", "she didn't get to play with the sand" and "she felt lonely in the yard". Write the answers onto a flip chart. Allow time for answers to flow - although there may be bizarre suggestions, explore them, don't censor them.

Resolve the activity by re-introducing Kath in happy mode. Explain that she has come home today full of joy, and ask for suggestions as to why this is the case. Again write up the suggestions and explore the more bizarre, because there may be nuggets of important information hidden in seemingly random ideas. Children may disclose important issues in a 'coded' way, and dismissing 'silly' ideas may have more serious consequences than intended.

## Why do we like it?

- The information comes from the group.
- There are no leading questions.
- No one is spotlighted.
- No one has to 'own' a negative experience in order to share it.
- Puppets are fun.



### What will you need?

- Flip chart and markers.
- Puppet or doll.
- A scribe.

### Developments/adaptations

- Use the activity with children and separately with staff - compare results.
- Act out the positive day with Kath.
- Use a male puppet to see if there are any differences for boys and girls.

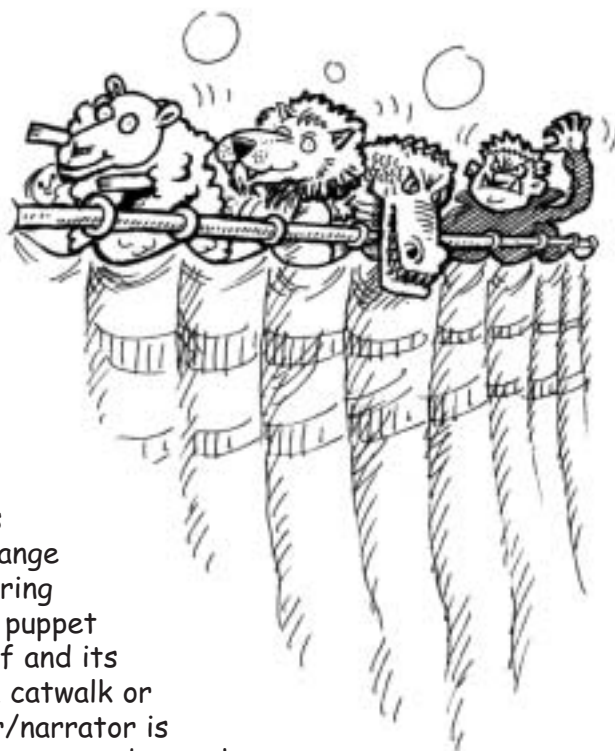


# PUPPETS PARADE

A chance to animate puppets without the pressure of a story or script.

 3 or more people

 10 minutes



## How does it work?

The children make or choose a puppet each (see Making puppets ideas page 119). They try out a range of activities and movements to bring the puppet to life and then each puppet gets a short time to parade itself and its own specific style of moving on a catwalk or in a parade. Music or a presenter/narrator is a useful addition. The puppets do not need to make a sound or say anything but some way can be used to signal the end of their moment in the spotlight.

## Why do we like it?

- It does not need a great amount of preparation.
- It allows individuals to shine.
- It can become the starting point for developing more sophisticated activities.

## What will you need?

- Puppets.
- Some form of simple marker for staging the entrance and the 'runway'.
- Music and a music player.



## Developments/adaptations

- Have a go at puppet dancing and interacting with other puppets (without fighting!).
- Experiment showing emotions and feelings with puppets eg happy, sad, excited etc.

# PUPPETS PARADE





# Drama and participation



# INTRODUCTION TO USING DRAMA



Some of the activities in this section may need people to act their ideas out. If you hated drama when you were younger ... don't panic. You don't have to be a skilled actor or drama teacher to find drama activities and games a useful way to promote participation.

Why would you want to incorporate the ideas developed in teaching drama into participation? Because drama is about creating and telling stories. Drama is about solving problems and looking at the world through the eyes of other characters. The creation of drama on the spot, often called improvisation, is about accepting other people's ideas and building on them to create new ideas. So, drama can be about developing your ability to share an idea or story, about building empathy and about working co-operatively.

The games used to bring people into drama are mostly transferable to other areas of participation, and the fun involved can make dry concepts a lot more enjoyable.



# MIME IT OUT

A way of involving the group without words. A sort of 'charades', but around a series of concepts such as emotions/family/play/environment.



 At least 6 people

 15 minutes

## How does it work?

The aim is to get the group to focus on one particular concept (where a concept is a load of ideas that have something in common) eg environment.

The group makes a list of the ideas within that concept - in this case plants, animals, water, mountains, space, air, pollution, death - or the facilitator can do so before the activity starts.

The children then write the ideas on cards, or they can be written beforehand and illustrated if reading levels are low. Individuals or pairs pick a card and then perform a mime that the other members of the group have to guess.

## Why do we like it?

- It is active and memorable.
- It can adapt to many concepts.
- It can lead to much deeper discussions.

### What will you need?

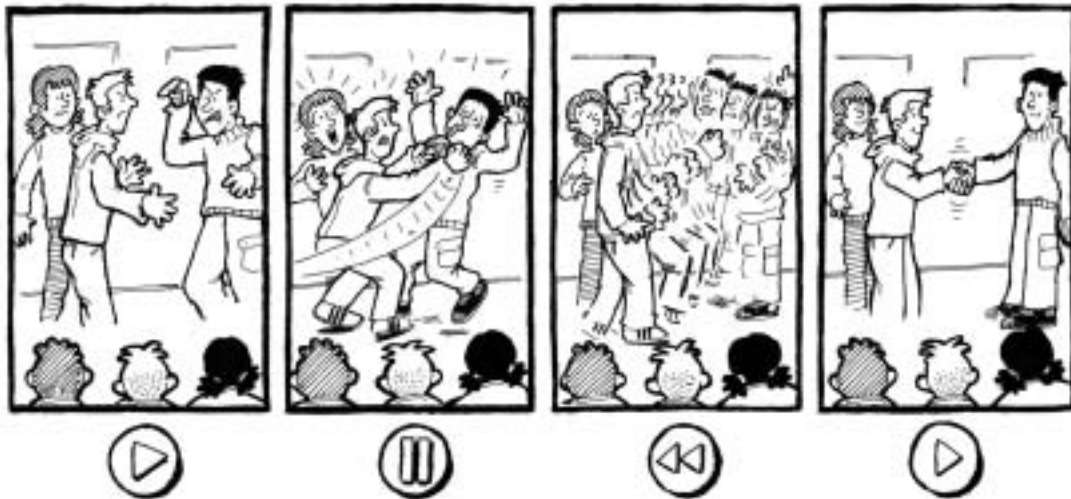
- Flip chart and marker pens to make the list.
- Cards on which to write the elements of the list.

### Developments/adaptations


- Incorporate sound effects.
- Use cartoons or story boards.



# STOP, REWIND AND CHANGE



This activity provides an opportunity to explore alternative endings to scenarios. A scene is acted out and stopped when there is an issue that needs to be resolved. The performers 'rewind' to a point where it can be altered.

 1 or more actors,  
6 or more observer-directors

 30 minutes



## How does it work?

Facilitators, actors or children, who have been supported and briefed, act out a scene. The scene reaches an unsatisfactory conclusion. At that point the scene is stopped either by the facilitator or preferably by children in the group and the children discuss where things went wrong. The group then decides where to rewind the scene to, and directs the performers what to change in their behaviour or their script. The scene is now improvised and allowed to run until any member of the group senses things are not going well. That group member can call the actors to stop and rewind again. This continues until everyone is satisfied with the result.

## Why do we like it?

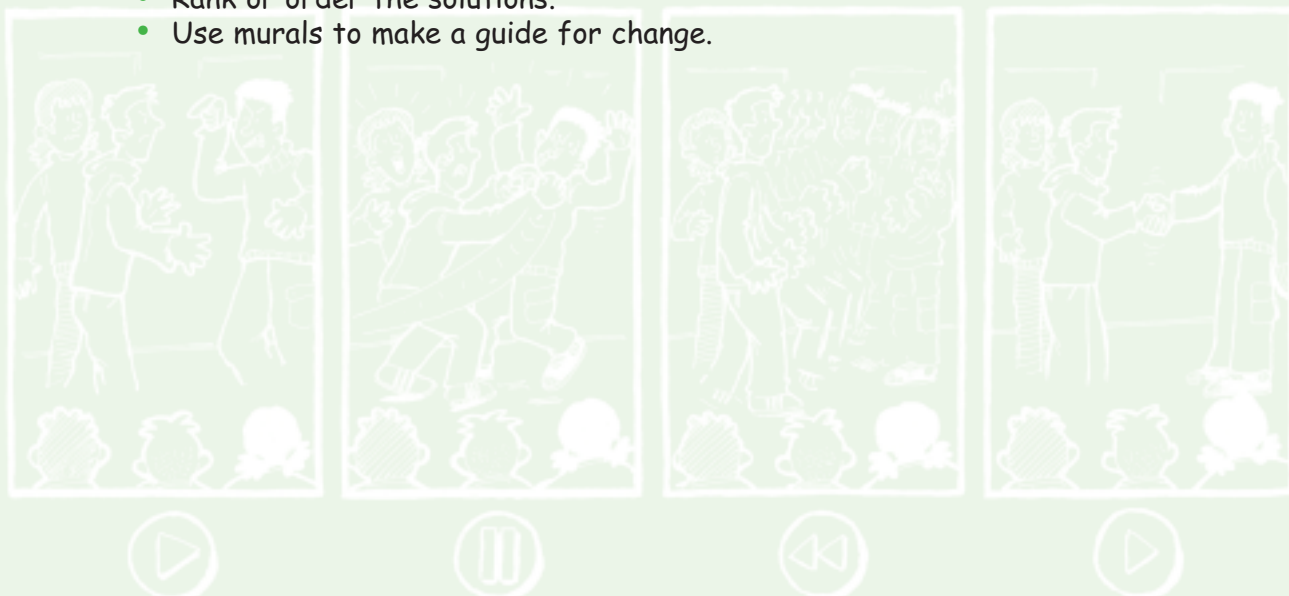
- It passes the directing to the children in a very obvious way.
- It is very different from other planning exercises.
- It allows those who like drama to take part.
- It provides a safe place to explore feelings, attitudes and values.

## What will you need?

- A space for performers and an audience around them. Flip chart and markers to record any ideas or script and possibly a video camera to record the changes in the scenario.

## Developments/adaptations

- Record the results using video.
- Rank or order the solutions.
- Use murals to make a guide for change.



# YES LET'S

A very simple improvisation game that allows the lead to pass from person to person very quickly.



Any number of people who can hear each other



10 minutes



## How does it work?

Any child can call out a suggestion for a piece of action. The only rule is that all the children must ... enthusiastically ... shout "YES LET'S!" and then join in with the suggestion, until the next suggestion is made. One major rule is that even the person making the suggestion must take part.

The game tends to be self-policing, as any really mad suggestion can be overruled by the next suggestion (and as the children try and fail, another suggestion usually comes hot on its heels).

## Why do we like it?

- It's a game for experimenting with leadership.
- It's a game for testing boundaries of acceptable behaviour.
- It generally allows a bit of moving about.
- It can be used as a starting point for an examination of control and authority (who is in charge and are requests reasonable?).

### What will you need?

- Space to move around.

### Developments/adaptations

- Can work as a group visual art activity.
- Can work throughout the day as a way of exploring a wider range of ideas and agendas.





# Music and participation



# INTRODUCTION TO USING MUSIC



Rhythm and music can be great ways to get children engaged and sharing information. Simple rhythm or chanting games can create a fruitful silence ready for someone to fill with their idea or contribution.

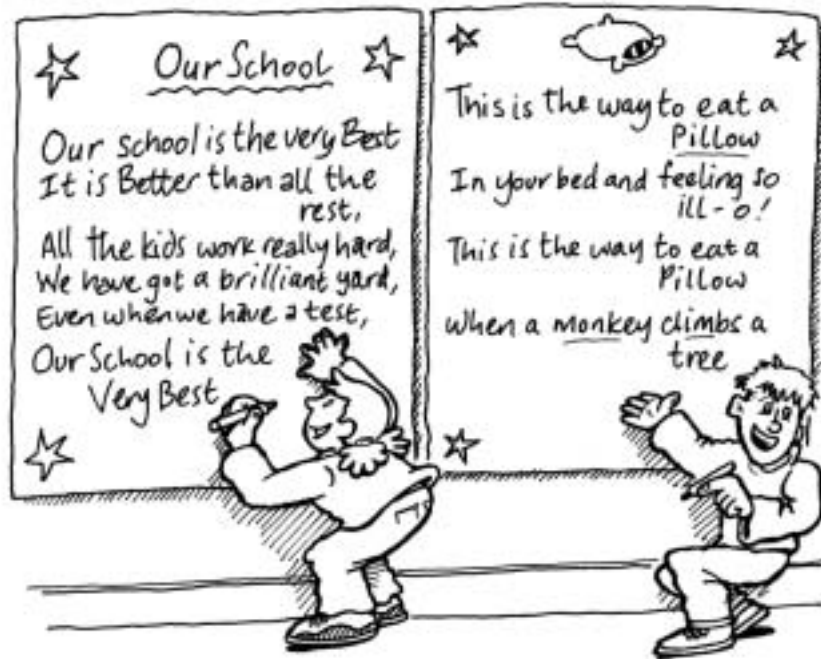
# INTRODUCTION TO USING MUSIC

The music games we use don't require any great confidence in your own musical ability, no more than you need to sing along to "Happy Birthday" or to clap and chant at a football match.

They provide an opportunity for children to express themselves in a different way that can be really energising and shift a mood. Chanting, singing, drumming and marching are traditional ways of expressing yourself after all!



# SONGMAKING



A way for the children to share their ideas and feedback musically. It is often used as an ending activity, but if the group know each other fairly well it can be used at any time.

 Small-large numbers of people

 15 minutes or more

## How does it work?

The first task is to come up with some well-known music with words that will be easy to change. Ask the children to think of songs that most of them will know. These could be nursery rhymes, advertising jingles or chart hits for example. They could also suggest styles of music such as rap, opera or an army marching beat.



Divide the children into smallish groups, and provide each one with a large piece of paper and a marker pen. Next, ask the groups to think about the subject you would like feedback on - for example, their club, a trip or a school subject. Tell them they are going to be making a song about it. Refer back to the well-known songs, and give a few minutes for each group to choose one they'd like to use. Then let the creativity begin!

It's important that you inform the children that they will be performing their finished songs, but will be given time to practise. This also allows them to arrange for individuals to take different roles depending on their confidence with performing. Point out that if they write up the words clearly enough, they can get the other groups to join in! You can also encourage them to think up a name for their 'band'.

After practice time, the groups then perform to each other, and you introduce each one. One rule applies at this point. Whenever a group finishes their song, and no matter what opinions there are on the quality of performance, they must end to the sound of rapturous applause and cheering!

If you want to save the songs you can make a video/sound recording or simply write the lyrics on paper.

### Why do we like it?

- The songs don't always stop with the activity - catchy examples can often be heard for weeks!

### What will you need?

- Large paper and pens.

### Developments/adaptations

- If there is nothing in particular that you need to find out about, you can run the activity by generating random words. Give each child a small piece of paper on which to write a random word - this can be anything, noun, verb or adjective. Fold the words and put them into a hat/box. Each group then picks three or four of these words out of the hat, and once they have chosen their tune, they incorporate them into a song.

# CLAP RAP

A very simple music game which allows anyone to join in.



Any number of people who can hear each other



10 minutes



## How does it work?

The game starts with a round of call and response to hear as many people's names as possible.

The group claps twice and the first child to volunteer says their name, eg "Jimmy Bloggs" and then the group responds after two more claps by repeating their name back. You can do this with the group standing in a circle, and sometimes it is OK to go around the group one at a time. Once you have used some names, the group can call and respond according to categories of information that you want to ask them about, so you could call out favourite foods, eg clap, clap, "chocolate biscuits" and everyone who also likes chocolate biscuits responds by repeating it back after the next claps. Children can call out a suggestion for the next category.

## Why do we like it?

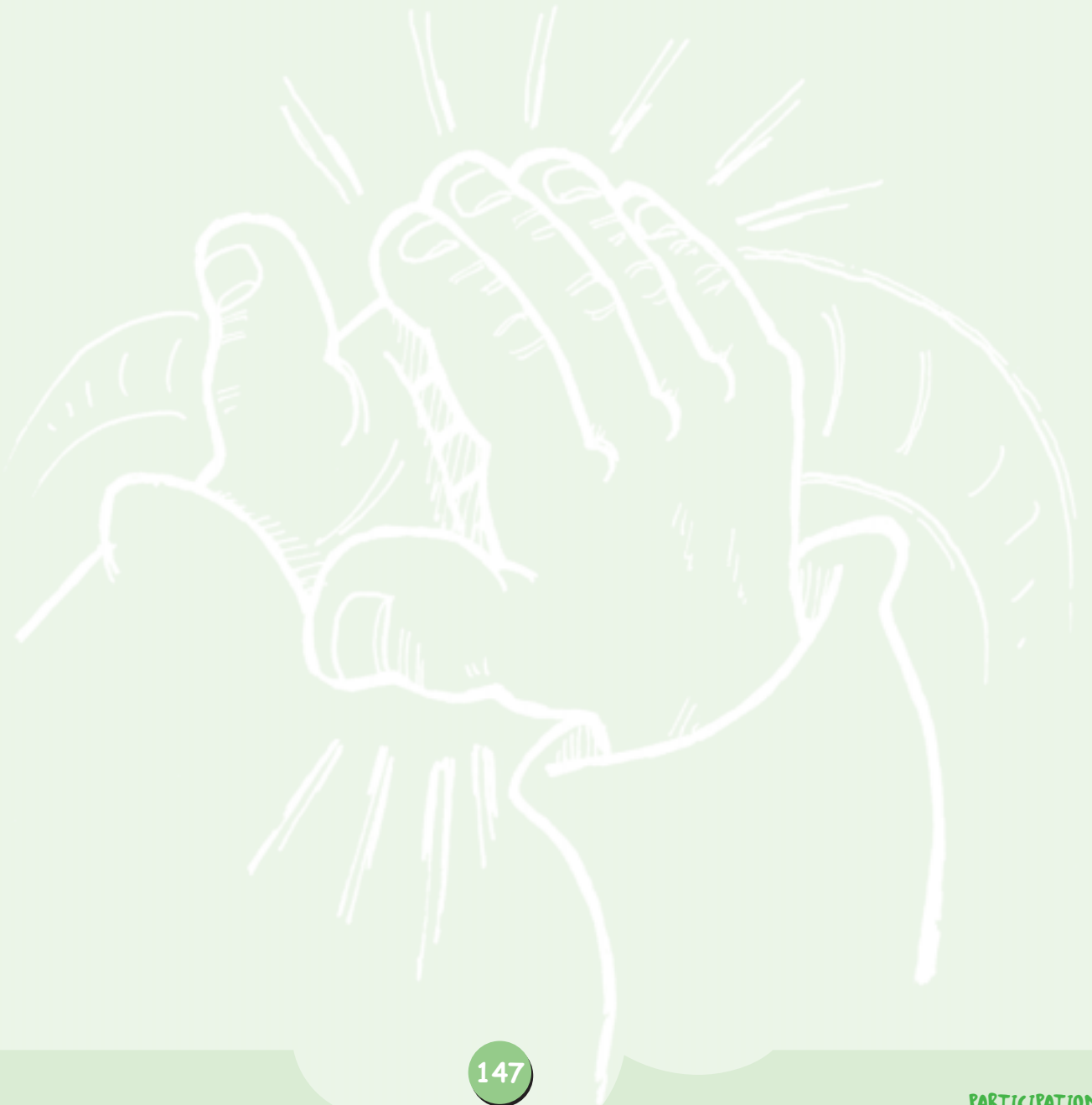
- It's a game for speaking out loud and sharing ideas.
- The group can take a lead without being forced.
- It allows the group to be noisy and to echo each other's ideas.
- Having your name called out by the whole group helps you to feel a part of that group.
- Some children respond better to music and rhythm than to anything else.

### What will you need?

- You could use a drum or other rhythmic noisemaker to keep a simple beat going.
- You can record the information digitally or on a flip chart pad.

### Developments/adaptations

- Could work as a more complex rap creator, adding rhythms and creating lines and rhymes eg "things that wind us up".
- Can be used as a way of gauging feeling about different ideas by the number of people who respond in the call and response section.



# RAINSTORM

A co-operative exercise in listening, copying, and making a great sound.

 10 people or more

 5-10 minutes



## How does it work?

The group should be in a circle, sitting on the floor, standing or on chairs. The facilitator moves around the circle making a series of noises. As s/he reaches each participant, they copy the noise s/he is making. The series of sounds is designed to simulate a rainstorm from a breeze through to a downpour with thunder and back to a few last drips and silence. The facilitator does a complete circle with one sound (eg 'breeze') before changing to the next sound (eg 'rain'). If the group is willing, they do the whole exercise with their eyes closed.

Suggestions for the noises the facilitator makes:

- rubbing hands together for the wind
- snapping/clicking fingers of one hand for first raindrops
- clicking fingers of both hands out of synch for rain getting heavier
- two fingers together on opposite palm
- gentle clapping, fingers to palm
- heavier clapping
- drumming on knees/thighs
- drumming of feet
- return of heavy clapping
- light clapping
- one finger on the palm of opposite hand
- slowed down for occasional drip
- silence, fingers to lips

### Why do we like it?

- It is a great group listening and calming exercise.
- It leaves the group feeling good, and is a great ending activity.

### What will you need?

- Nothing except the group and facilitator!

### Developments/adaptations

- Copy the noise made by the person on your left-hand side. This means the facilitator does not have to run around.

# RAINSTORM





# Parachutes and participation

Parachutes can change environment, change a mood and allow us to move around and get our voices heard at the same time



# INTRODUCTION TO USING PARACHUTE GAMES



A parachute or playchute is a useful and versatile piece of equipment for bringing a group together to share ideas, work as a unit and have a break from other less physical activities. The chute creates a spontaneous circle, and over the years, groups using this piece of equipment have developed a large number of games. As well as those that are played purely for fun, a parachute lends itself well to consultation.

After a short time, even very young children can organise and run their own games without constant adult intervention.



We have seen it transform into the sea or the surface of the moon, be flown like a kite or made into a tent, a tunnel or a cave. We have added balls, puppets, hats and other objects and seen them launched high into the air.


It has been played with and without a commonly understood language, and by all ages and ability groups. Group sizes have ranged from one to as many as we can fit around (with large chutes this can be more than 100!).

We have played in small rooms, in shallow sea, on coral beaches, on the Great Wall of China and most places in between!

# CROSSOVERS

A game to introduce the parachute and to find out information about the group.



 Any number of people (depending on the size of your chute)

 10 minutes +

## How does it work?

Lay the parachute out with the help of the children and ask them to spread themselves around the edges. Then, ask them to hold the edges with both hands and shake the parachute vigorously. To calm the 'storm', kneel on the edge and get everyone to follow. Explain that in a minute you will all stand up and lift your hands in the air together, still holding onto the chute. Ask them for a word that will launch the chute following a count to three - we sometimes use "123 Mushroom!". Once the chute is launched, ask people to cross underneath to the other side if ... "they are wearing red", "they like swimming", "they like ice cream" etc.

## Why do we like it?

- It's fun and physical and doesn't require literacy.
- It appeals to all ages.
- It's colourful and textural (works well for those with specific sensory needs).
- It is easy to gather information about your group.

### What will you need?

- A parachute or a large circular piece of lightweight material.

### Developments/adaptations


- If you have children of different ages or in wheelchairs, get the taller people to sit or kneel.

# CROSSOVERS



# MEXICAN TALKING BALL

An activity that encourages teamwork and talking.

 Any number of people (depending on the size of your chute)

 10 minutes +



## How does it work?

Ask everyone to let go of the chute and stand on the edge. Send a 'Mexican wave' around the circle by putting your hands up and down and asking people to copy you, one after another, starting with the person next to you. Ask them to hold the parachute and practice the wave again. Then place a soft football-sized ball onto the chute and gently pushing it one way, tell the children if they lift their hands once the ball has gone past them, it will surf on the Mexican wave. The ball will eventually run around the circle, although it takes some practice.

The next stage of the game turns the ball into a 'talking stick'. Children can either grab the ball as it goes past, or ask for it to be sent to them. Once they get the ball they can talk on a given subject - for example, toys they like to play with.

## Why do we like it?

- It promotes teamwork and communication.
- It's fun and exciting.
- It doesn't 'spotlight' children - they can choose if they want to offer information.

### What will you need?

- A parachute or a large circular piece of lightweight material.
- A soft ball.

### Developments/adaptations

- Use a puppet, a hat or lots of small balls on the chute.

# MEXICAN TALKING BALLS



# TALKIN' TENT



From 5 to any number of people (depending on the size of your chute)



10 minutes +

## How does it work?

With everyone standing around the chute, explain that in a minute we will do three things.

- 1) Lift the chute in the air following a signal (eg saying "123 mushroom", see *Crossovers*, page 154).
- 2) Take a step forward.
- 3) Pull the chute behind them and sit down on the edge. Meanwhile, task an adult with being the tent pole and ask them to stand in the middle once the chute is lifted so they eventually become the centre pole! Once the tent is made, use the space for discussion or consultation.

## Why do we like it?

- It creates a new space away from possible distractions.
- It's warm and cosy.



### What will you need?

- A parachute or a large circular piece of lightweight material.

### Developments/adaptations

- It is a great place for evaluation.
- It is a story and sound effects space.
- It can be a great concert hall.

# TALKIN' TENT







# Energy changers

You may want children  
more lively or quiet



# ZIP, ZAP, BOING!

A fun circle game and energiser.

 5-30 people

 5 minutes +



## How does it work?

Everyone stands (or sits) in a circle. There are three moves: introduce one at a time and practice each one before putting the game together.

The first move, zip, is a simple pass to a person standing on either side of you in the circle. You can choose whatever movements or body poses you want for each move, but keep them consistent throughout a game. For example, for zip, you could put your hands together like you were clapping but hold them together and point them at the person next to you, saying "zip" as you do it. Using the same movement, they can then zip to the next person round (and so on). Once a zip has started it will always go that direction around the group.

The second move, zap, is a reverse move. Anyone can choose to pass a zap to the person who zipped them rather than passing on the zip. If you get a zap you can then choose to continue zapping or zip back.

The third move is boing, and this is a bounce across the group. Cross your arms in front of you and say "boing" or use your hips and or belly to bounce the zip or zap across. The person who receives the boing can choose to zip or zap or even boing again.

The game is in full swing when you've introduced, and are using, all three moves and it ends when everyone wants it to!

### Why do we like it?

- After introducing each move, the game is simple, fun and fast moving!
- It can liven up a session with some movement.
- It encourages eye contact and lots of communication.

### What will you need?

- Just a circle of people!

### Links to other activities

- Other communication games.
- As a self-esteem building activity: being able to say "boing" (in other words, "No thanks") can be a powerful metaphor for not taking on other people's problems or issues.

### Developments/adaptations


- We were shown a 'posh' version of zip, zap, boing with hand gestures for "coo-eee!", "ah hellooo", and "I don't think sooo..." and a gangster version that used "you lookin' at me?", "what's with you anyway?" and "ah forged about id".

# WIBBLE-WOBBLE

A game of evolution and change - an active, chaotic, variation on 'Snakes and ladders' mixed with 'Rock, paper, scissors'.



 The more the merrier - still fun with small numbers

 Give it at least 10 but no more than 20 minutes

## How does it work?

Explain the rules for 'Rock, paper, scissors'. Once everyone understands how it works, explain that this is similar, but is also a game of change or evolution.

Each time they play and win, they progress from 'egg' to 'chicken' to 'princess' to 'Elvis' (can be King, but Elvis is funnier and a better mime) to 'Angel' - each stage with its own mime or action. After that - off you go, make them up yourself or ask for suggestions.

At the start everyone is an egg. We recommend that people mime this by sitting on their heels clutching their ankles - hence 'wobble, wobble' (after the little plastic people who don't fall down!). Players must then find and play 'Rock, paper, scissors' against other players at the same evolutionary stage as them - egg vs egg, Elvis vs Elvis. The winner progresses - the loser returns to the egg stage.

Let the game progress at its own rate, you will get the feel for when it is ready to move on. In larger groups let the angels act as helpers - introducing eggs to eggs, chickens to chickens, etc. Alternatively let them start again, or continue themselves finding more and more stages to progress to.

### Why do we like it?

- Everyone can play.
- It's not about winning or losing.
- You move about.
- It provokes laughter and merriment.
- It's impossible to maintain your dignity while playing this.

### What will you need?

- People.
- Space.

### Developments/adaptations

- You don't have to stick to the rules or the stages - come up with your own! Angels, for example, are not always seen as culturally appropriate.



# WIGGLESHAKE

The group devises its own secret sign or handshake as a team builder and energiser.



6 or more people



5 minutes



## How does it work?

Task the group with creating a special new greeting. Take suggestions for three or more moves that can then be blended seamlessly into one gesture. The children then learn the gesture and try it out on each other. They then make a solemn ... ish promise that they will use their new 'Wiggleshake' when they meet outside the group.

## Why do we like it?

- It is silly.
- It gets people smiling.
- It works well either at the start, before or after a break or finally to give the group a 'secret' group sign for meeting at a later stage.

### What will you need?

- Nothing.

### Developments/adaptations

- Create secret passwords instead of new greetings.
- Make group songs, poems and chants.

# WIGGLESHAKE



# NRG

A group energiser that uses voice and rhythm to build up energy.

 10 or more people

 3 minutes



## How does it work?

Split the group into three and get the first part of the group to be the 'N's, the second group to be 'R's, and the third to be 'G's. One person acts as a conductor to get the group to say 'NRG' as a round: loud and clear and as fast as possible, without getting the 'metters luddled'. Eventually NRG sounds like energy.

## Why do we like it?

- It's simple.
- It's loud and energetic.

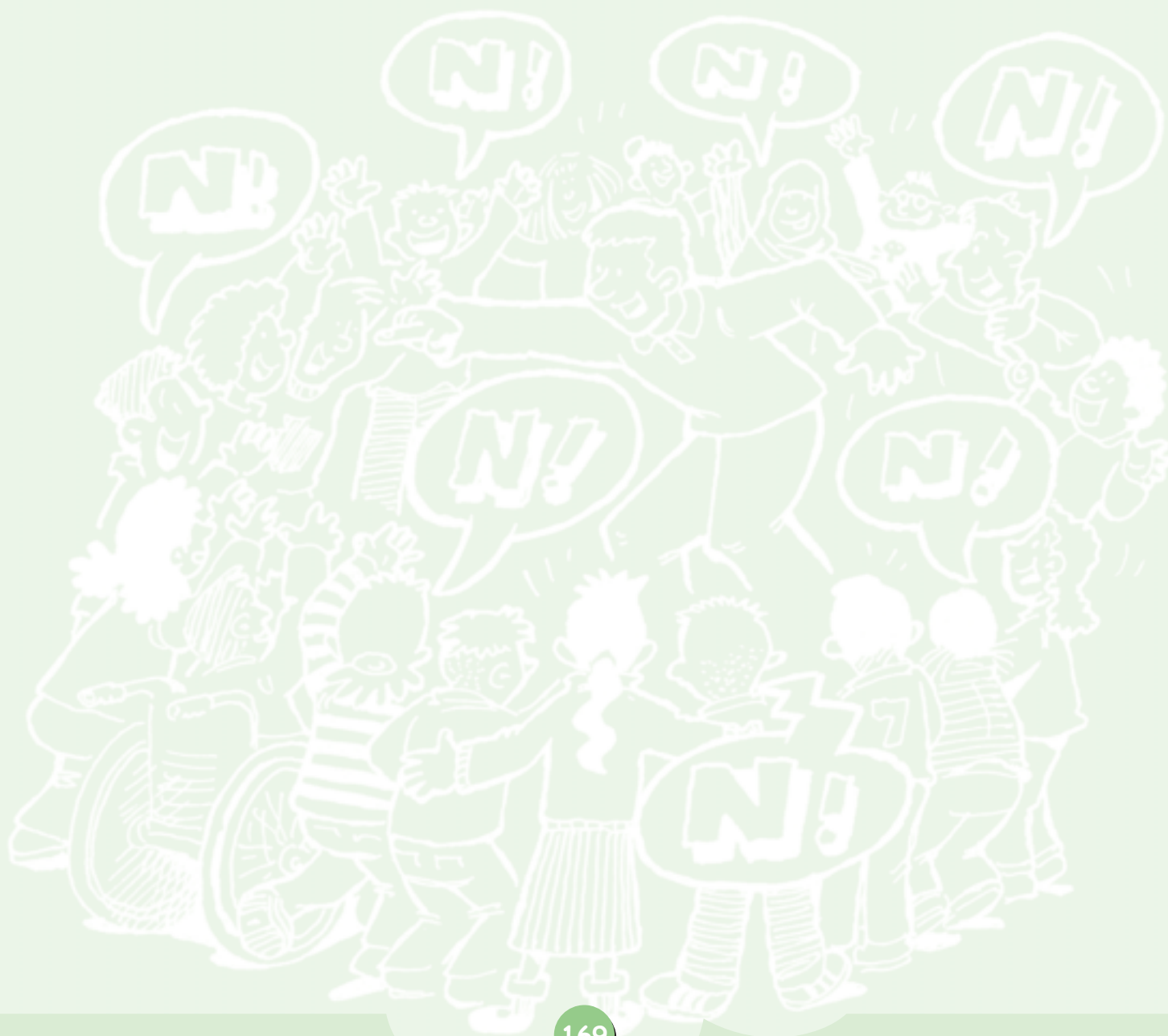


## What will you need?

- People.
- Cards with N, R and G written/printed in bold type.

## Developments/adaptations

- Work in pairs, alternating the letters.
- Hold up big cards with the letters on them, as a three-part 'Mexican wave'.



# CIRCLE FREEZE TAG

A different take on the run-around tag game 'Stuck in the mud', adding a co-operative element.

 8 or more people

 5 minutes

## How does it work?

Explain the rules of tag where one person is 'on' and the rest must try and escape that person touching or tagging them. In this game, once they are tagged the participant must freeze and cannot move until they are released.

They can be released when two or more people join hands to make a ring around them. They then lower their ring to the floor and the newly freed participant can step out and run away.



## Why do we like it?

- It's lively.
- It's fast moving.
- It involves an element of teamwork and co-operation that is greater than 'Stuck in the mud' (where people are released by one free person going through their legs or under their arms).
- It can work with people with limited mobility.

### What will you need?

- Space to run around.

### Developments/adaptations

- Lots of favourite tag games.

# CIRCLE FREEZE TAG



# ACTIVITY SHEETS

You can photocopy these  
or design your own.....





SURPRISE



ANTICIPATION



FEAR



ANGER



ACCEPTANCE



DISGUST



JOY



SADNESS

# WHAT DO I LIKE? BINGO

Food and drink




Name

Telly, Video & Computer



Name

School



Name

Outdoors




Name

Friends




Name

Sports



Name

Religion



Name

Movies & Music



Name

Pets



Name

Books



Name

Home



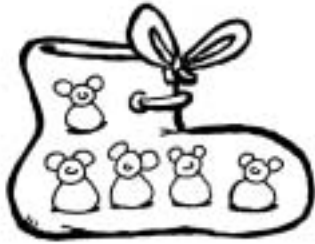
Name

Play



Name

# GETTING THERE



First Steps

.....



Short Walk

.....



In the Long Run

.....





# PART 4

## THINGS TO HELP YOU

Here are some examples  
of how you could put  
together activities





# SNACK MENUS

While we expect most people will want to use the activities in this book in their own programme designs, we thought it might be useful to have a few menus 'to go'.

Here are some typical scenarios with possible approaches. Making it work (pages 40-41) would probably be included in all sessions apart from the outreach session.

**Aim:** To involve a group of under fives in writing an anti-bullying strategy

**Content:** This session aims to open a discussion about the causes, effects and solutions of bullying and to start collecting their ideas. These will go into an anti-bullying document for the setting. Because we're working with under fives the sessions will be kept short and snappy (around 30 minutes)!

**Methods:**

**Moody corners** (page 68) - an opening activity to explore feelings.

**Kath's bad day** (page 126) - describing some of the causes and effects of Kath being bullied (and/or exhibiting bullying behaviour).

**Making puppets ideas** (page 119) - a fun session to create a character through which to explore the subject further.

**Puppets greeting** (page 122) - experimenting with the puppets and then puppet suggestions for making our setting a happy and safe one. Using the puppets to describe their ideas for reducing bullying behaviour and making the setting bully- proof.

**Aim:** To involve a group of school council children in the interview process for a new teacher

**Content:** This could be a whole day or a number of sessions to think about the process of recruitment, keeping it fair and getting the best person for the job.

**Methods:**

**Picture bingo** (page 46).

**'What do you like doing?'** - an introduction activity and a discussion point for talking about the importance of putting candidates at ease.

**Hot seating puppet** (page 124) - what does a teacher need to do (job description) and what skills do they need to do it (person specification).

**Yes/no/maybe** (pages 108-109) - practising a 'sift' (need to prepare some practice candidates).

**Stop, rewind and change** (page 136) - for practising interview questions.

**Aim:** To involve a group of children in designing and buying play equipment for a play park

**Content:** An exercise in building the skills of the team, collecting and giving information and then prioritising choices for equipment.

**Methods:**

**Blindfold lead** (pages 58-59) - an introduction to the topic, preferably run in a play area to explore alternative views of what play equipment is, how it's used and how it could be adapted for everyone.

**Card sort** (page 100) - pictures of ideas from other play areas - what equipment do we like?

**Thermometer** (page 88) - for prioritising the favourite ideas.

**3-D planning** (pages 114-115) - take the favourite ideas and create a 3D model using scrap or plasticene.

**Aim: To support an ongoing 'planning' team at the local youth club**

**Content:** Week by week, using a variety of activities to build the skills and levels of participation of the group, by supporting teamwork and self-esteem. Finally using a range of planning tools to help realise their dreams!

**Methods:**

**Labels** (page 42) - getting to know each other.

**Journals** (page 50) - creating an ongoing scrapbook of ideas for the youth club (maybe do a joint one together).

**Feelings pictures** (pages 72-74) - for children to develop an understanding of their own and each other's feelings.

**Time line of activity** (page 82) - putting ideas for the next year to a timescale.

**Getting there** (pages 86-87) - actions that each of the planning group can do to achieve their ideas.

**Aim: To run 'outreach' consultations on a community development process and recruit participants for a youth planning group**

**Content:** A number of activities to get feedback from children in a local community centre or on a street corner.

**Methods:**

**Mapping it out** (pages 80-81) - marking good and bad places for children in this area, and things to do.

**Bricks in the wall** (pages 78-79) - what stops children getting involved in local activities?

**Dot voting** (page 110) - what would children most like to see in their area?

**Aim:** To consult children (8-11 year olds) in an SEN school about a proposed government policy

**Content:** A country-wide consultation on travel behaviour which needs input from children in small focus groups in youth settings.

**Methods:**

**Wind blows** (pages 112-113) - different ways children travel to school.

**Happy suns - sad sheep** (page 104) - testing out what behaviours are acceptable - children are encouraged to offer their own ideas to be tested by the group.

**Posters, lists and role plays** (page 90) - suggestions for improving behaviour reflected in a way that's chosen by the group.

**Aim:** To consult children in a primary school about environmental improvements.

**Content:** A school wants ideas from the children to reduce its environmental impacts.

**Methods:**

**Touch blue** (pages 102-103) - locate places of environmental problems by moving around the classroom, building or yard.

**Yes let's** (page 138) - suggestions for 'green' action eg pick up litter, plant trees, recycle cans - everyone mimes out the action.

**Robots and monsters** (page 92) - monsters create the problems and robots come up with the solutions (like Wall-E!).

Don't forget to 'spice it up' as well using energisers or calming activities depending on your group's needs.

Also, don't forget where your session fits in with the bigger picture and the long-term process of participation.

# SIGNPOSTING AND RESOURCES

Here are some suggestions  
of places where you can get  
resources from...



# WHERE DO YOU GO TO STOCK UP FOR A SESSION?

There are lots of scrap and play resource stores around the UK, and there's a directory of them on this website:

[www.childrensscrapstore.co.uk](http://www.childrensscrapstore.co.uk)

## **Puppets**

We love the puppets from Folkmanis:  
[www.folkmanis.com](http://www.folkmanis.com)

Puppets by Post have a huge range of hand puppets:  
[www.puppetsbypost.com](http://www.puppetsbypost.com)

Puppets Magic will hand-make a puppet for you:  
[www.puppetsmagic.co.uk](http://www.puppetsmagic.co.uk)

**Playchutes and parachutes**  
[www.playchutes.com](http://www.playchutes.com)

**Emotions resources**  
[www.incentiveplus.co.uk](http://www.incentiveplus.co.uk)

You can buy books, emotions cards and other resources, or download free images and sets once you're registered.



# WHERE DO YOU GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?

## Try these websites:

[www.dynamix.ltd.uk](http://www.dynamix.ltd.uk)

[www.wales.gov.uk/about/departments/dcells](http://www.wales.gov.uk/about/departments/dcells)

[www.schoolcouncilswales.org.uk](http://www.schoolcouncilswales.org.uk)

[www.childcomwales.org.uk](http://www.childcomwales.org.uk)

[www.funkydragon.org](http://www.funkydragon.org)

[www.participationcymru.org.uk](http://www.participationcymru.org.uk)

[www.participationworkerswales.org.uk](http://www.participationworkerswales.org.uk)

## Read these guides/manuals:

**Participation - Spice it up!**

- available from our shop at [www.dynamix.ltd.uk](http://www.dynamix.ltd.uk)

**Blast-off guides -**

free to download from

[www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/participation](http://www.participationworkerswales.org.uk/participation)

# MORE ABOUT DYNAMIX

## What we do - serious fun

Dynamix is a workers co-operative with a co-operative working ethos. Our purpose is to create a fairer society through developing people's skills in: participation; inclusion; co-operation; play and enterprise. We achieve this through providing creative training, consultation, facilitation and publications that help people to explore serious issues in a fun way.

## Key foundations of Dynamix's work

**Participation** ... giving people a say in decisions that affect their lives, allowing them to take ownership and to get actively involved in creating change.

**Inclusion** ... a process that enables people to be valued as individuals, and gives them the opportunity to participate.

**Co-operation** ... a selection of values and principles particularly applied to education and business including self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.

**Play** ... a process freely chosen and intrinsically motivated by the child and central to learning and development.

**Enterprise** ... a creative approach to solving problems, looking at things differently and taking on new ventures.

These five key areas inform the way we work and the content we concentrate our expertise on.

### Contact us

If you prefer to learn by doing instead of reading, then Dynamix would be happy to share these activities and methods with you face-to-face, just get in touch to arrange training days or to be added to our mailing list:

Dynamix, Unit 4D Cwm Road, Hafod, Swansea SA1 2AY  
Tel: 01792 466231 or 0845 4786395 (Local rate from UK)

Email: [admin@dynamix.ltd.uk](mailto:admin@dynamix.ltd.uk)  
Web: [www.dynamix.ltd.uk](http://www.dynamix.ltd.uk)



**DYNAMIX**  
Serious  
Fun