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” Listen – Act – Change

Council of Europe Handbook on Children's Participation

For professionals
working *with* and *for* children



Overview

- Aims and purpose of the Handbook
- The need it is responding to
- An overview of the contents and structure of the Handbook
- How the Handbook can be used by those working with children – *teachers, social workers, nurses, judges, play workers, immigration officers* – to support and facilitate children's participation

Aims and Purpose

- Raise awareness and understanding of meaningful children's participation in decision-making amongst those who work with children
- Provide practical advice and guidance on doing it!
- Encourages a shift of emphasis in practice:
 - Towards dialogue: Listen – Act – Change
 - Improving access for all children including amongst others: young children, children with disabilities, Roma and migrant children

Why a handbook?

- Important to look at the day to day experiences of children
- Assessment reports frequently highlight an implementation gap.
- How children's experiences are influenced by the knowledge and capacity of adults around them to respect and promote their right to be heard.
- The imperative for training professionals working with and for children.
- Barriers:
 - Education and training systems for many professionals are fragmented;
 - Curricula are already overcrowded
 - Too little incentive to make the changes
- Shifting the paradigm.

Features of meaningful participation



“Having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and where necessary the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision-making on matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity”

— Council of Europe definition of (children’s) participation

Contents

Sections

1. Theory and Practice
2. Developing Participatory Organisations and Environments
3. Participation of Individual Children
4. Collective Participation
5. Resources
6. + Annexes

- Advice
- Standards
- Examples from practice
- Practice Notes
- Useful Checklists
- Hints and Tips



1 Understanding children's participation theory and practice

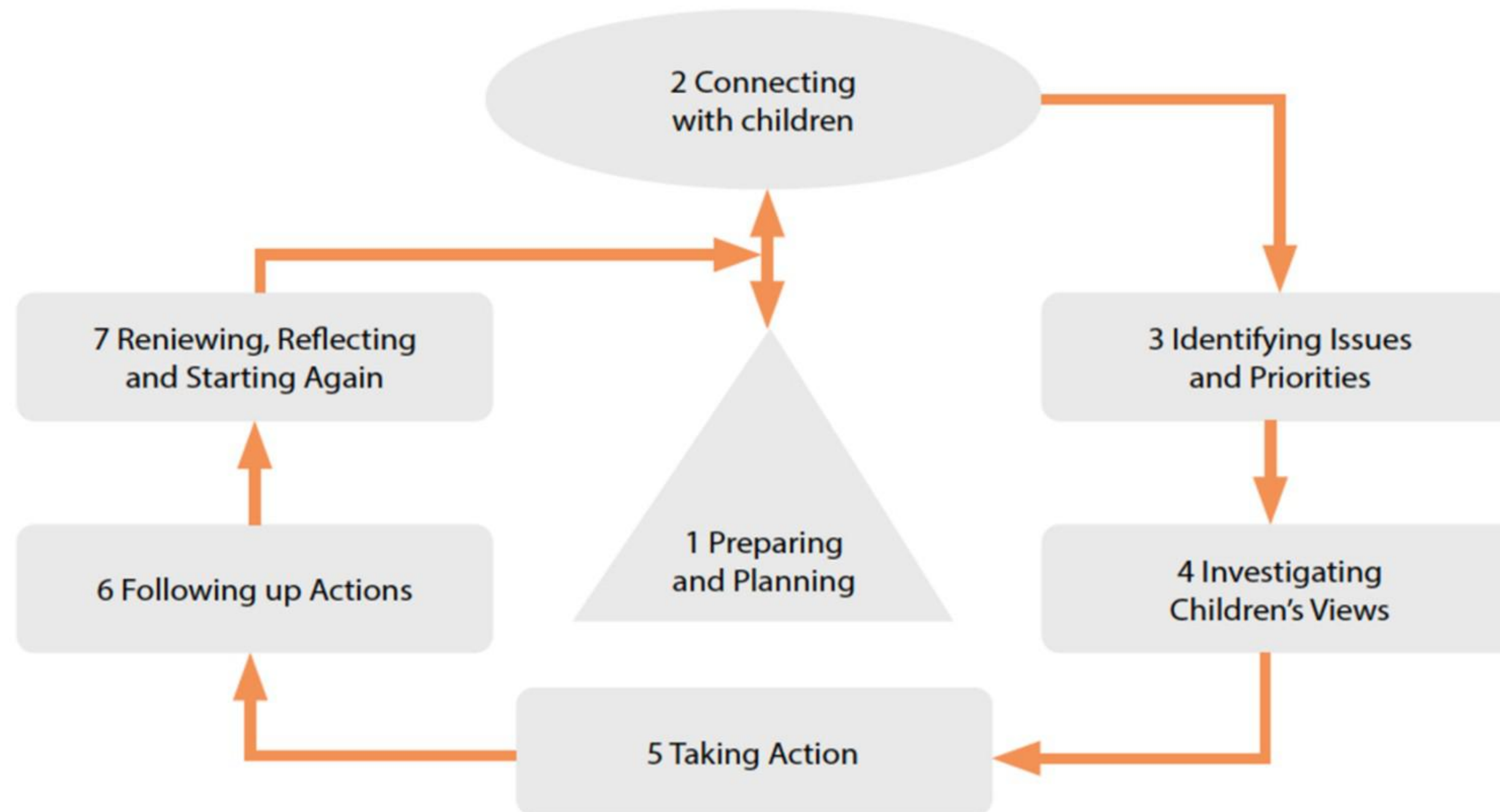
- Children's right to have their views taken into account in matters that affect them
- Why is child participation so important?
- The process of children's participation – what's involved?
- Influence in the children's participation process
- Doing it well – safe, ethical, inclusive and impactful participation
- Enabling environments

2 Developing participatory organizations and environments

A series of steps that professionals can take to co-create with children, an environment where meaningful, ethical and effective participation can thrive (with examples)

1. Ensuring ownership at the highest level
2. Undertaking an assessment of current play
3. Developing organisational policy and procedures
4. Building staff capacity
5. Establishing safe and accessible complaints mechanisms
6. Monitoring and reviewing implementation

3_&4 Individual and collective participation



5 Resources

- Legal standards
- Underpinning theory
- Guidance on children's participation in different settings or with different groups
- Activities (Collective Participation)
- Advocacy and child activism
- Participatory institutions
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Training
- Other

How to use the Handbook?

1. Understanding Section 1 makes it easier to apply the practical advice that comes in the remainder of the handbook.
2. Sections 2-4, take the reader through the key points with illustrative examples, checklists, practice notes and hints and tips.
3. Section 5, additional resources.

Individual Participation

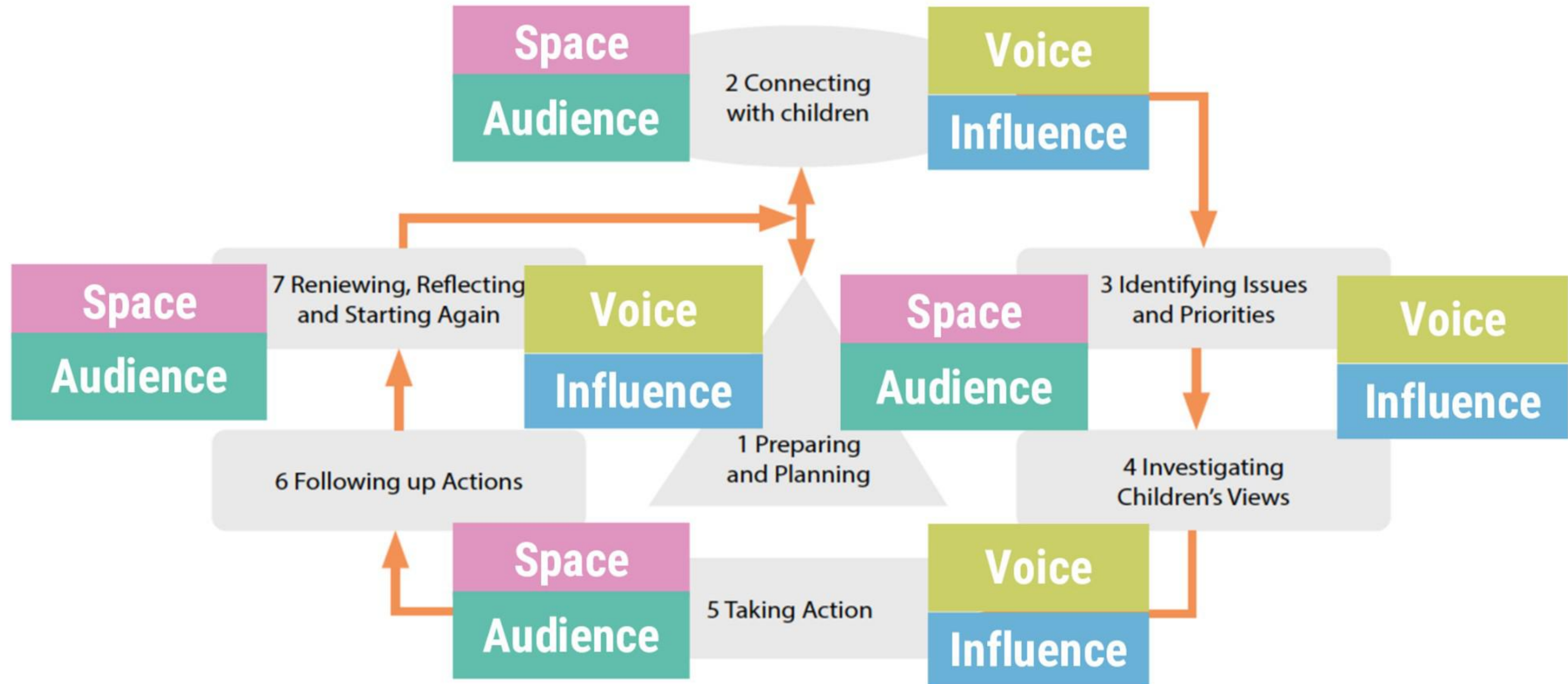
Professor Cath Larkins
University of Central Lancashire (UK)



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Putting theory into practice of individual participation

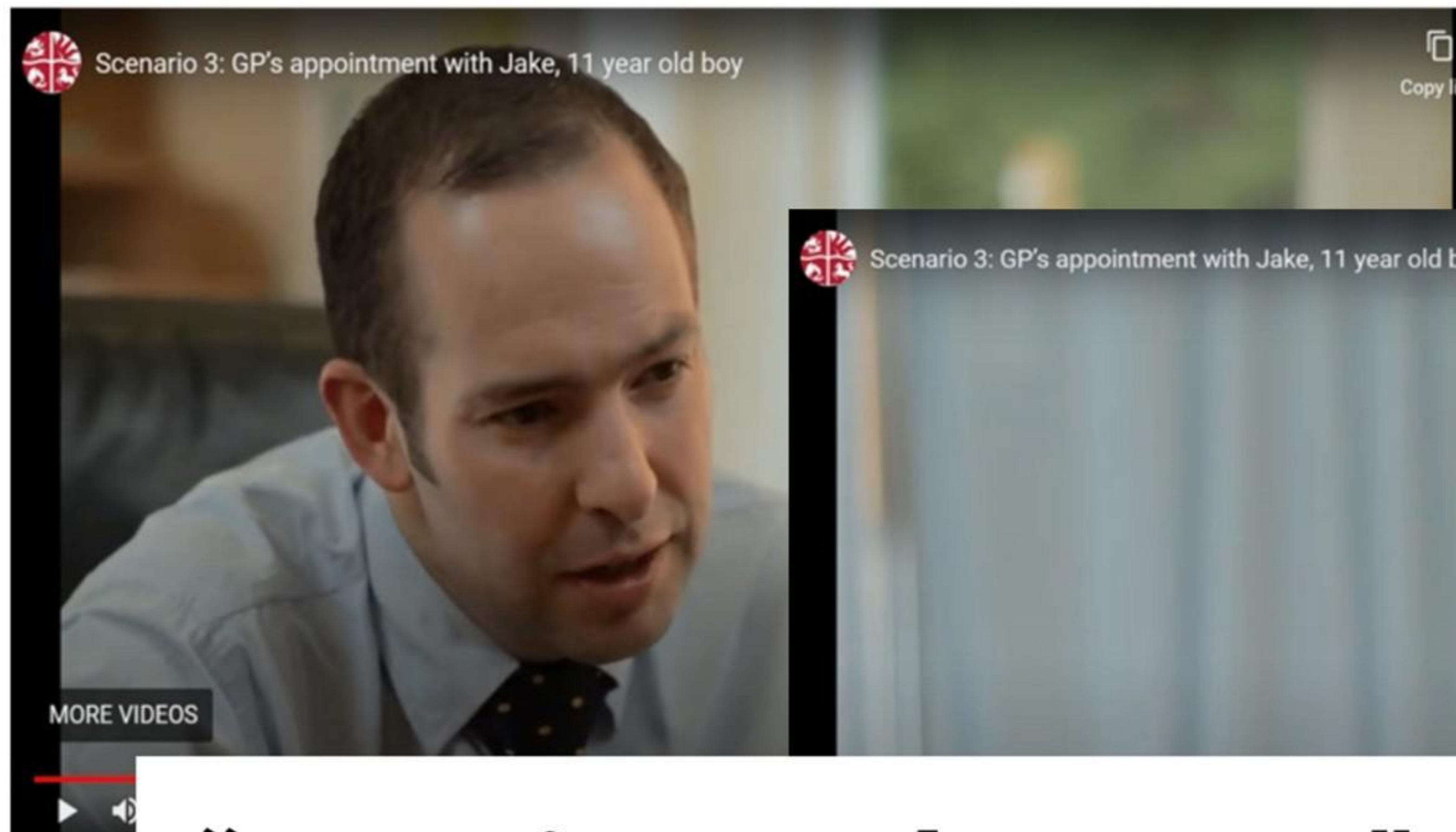
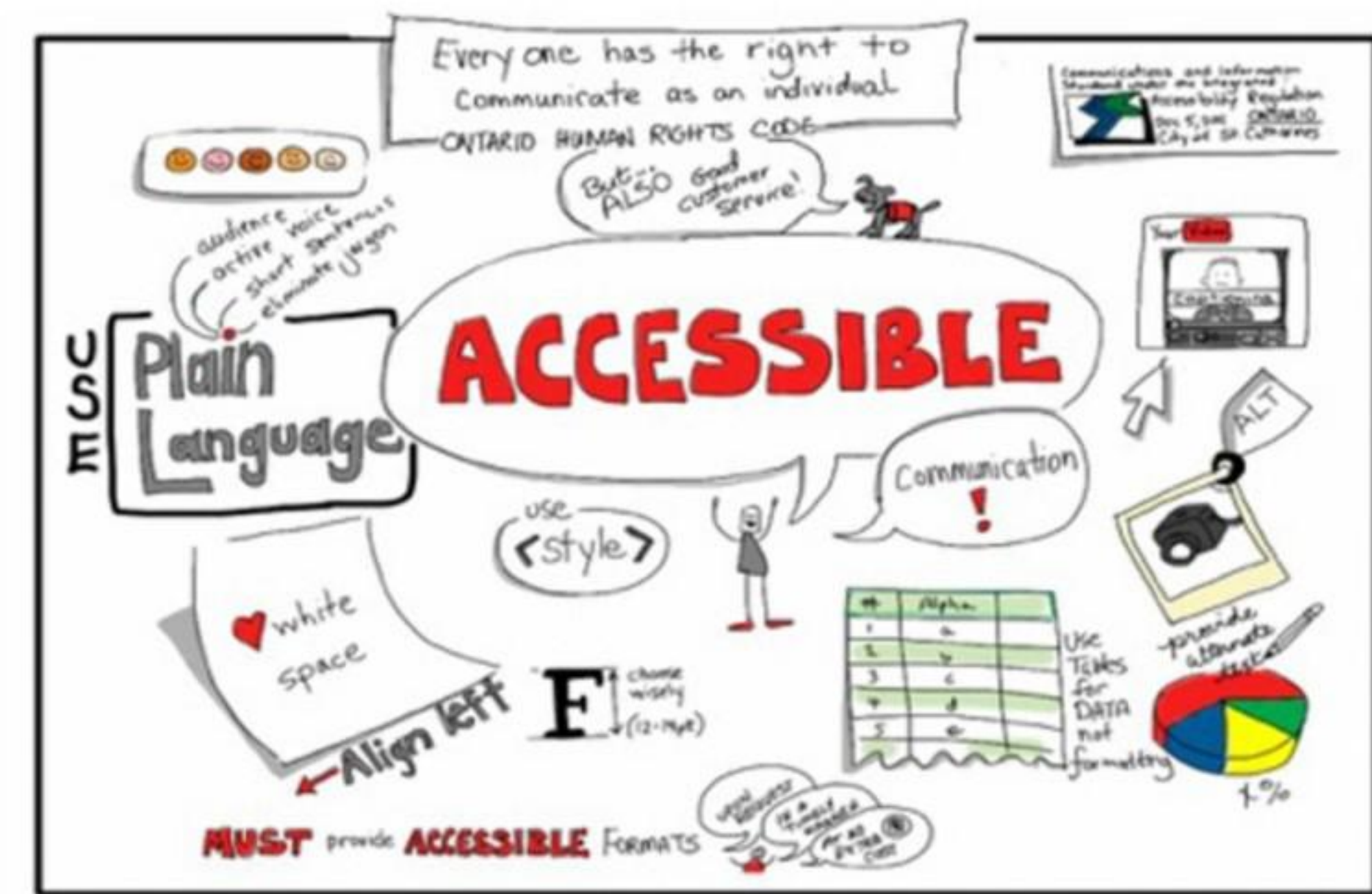


Where it takes place?





Prepare and Plan

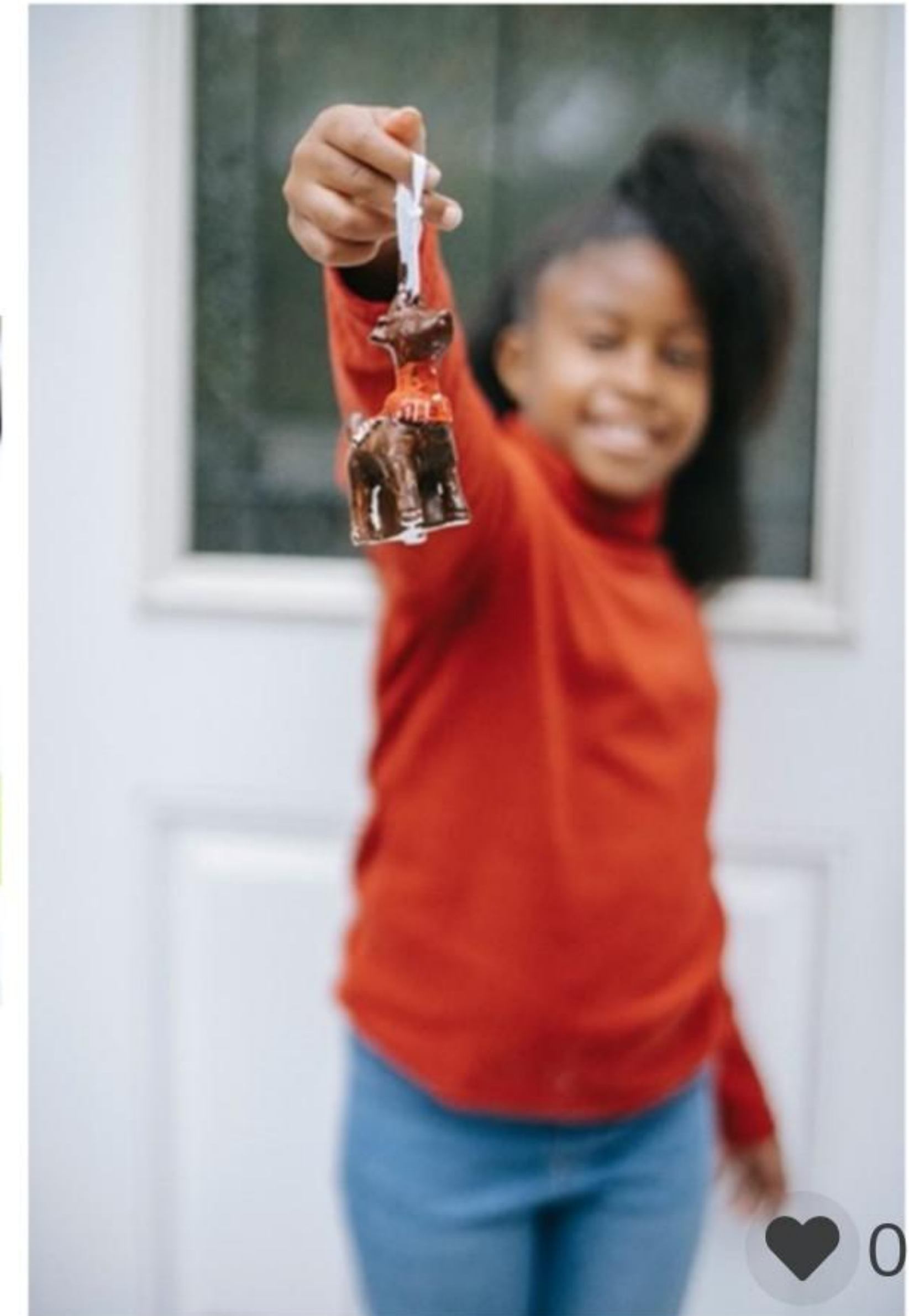


Connect



“Meeting as humans”

Identify issues



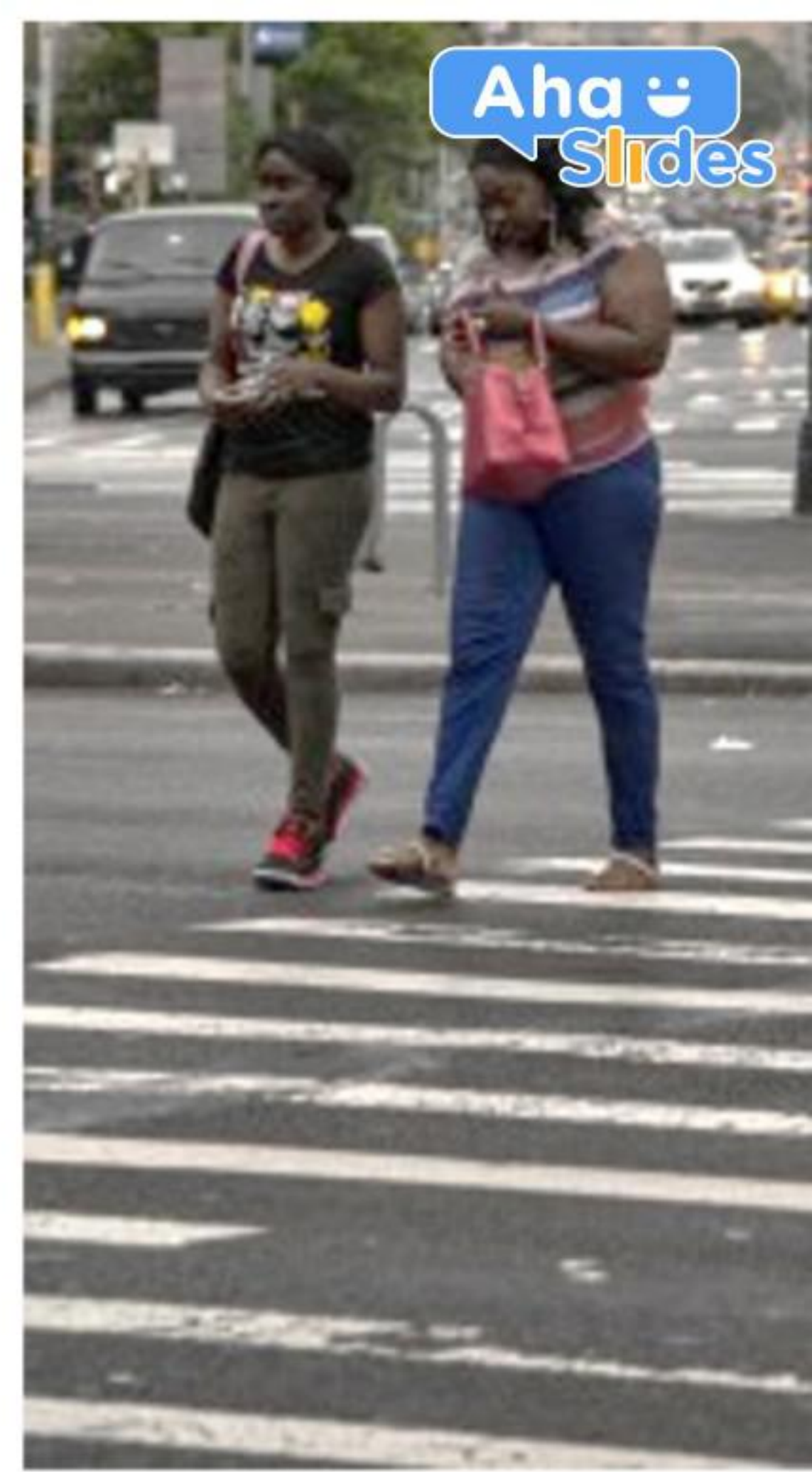
Following Children's Agendas



Investigating

Space Time

Independent Support



What are you doing to reach out to individual children in the context of the pandemic?

What are the challenges?

How are (your) organisations overcoming these?

Practice Note: Evolving Capacity

UN General Comment 12 states:

States Parties should presume that a child has the capacity to form her or his own views and recognize that she or he has the right to express them; it is not up to the child to first prove her or his capacity.

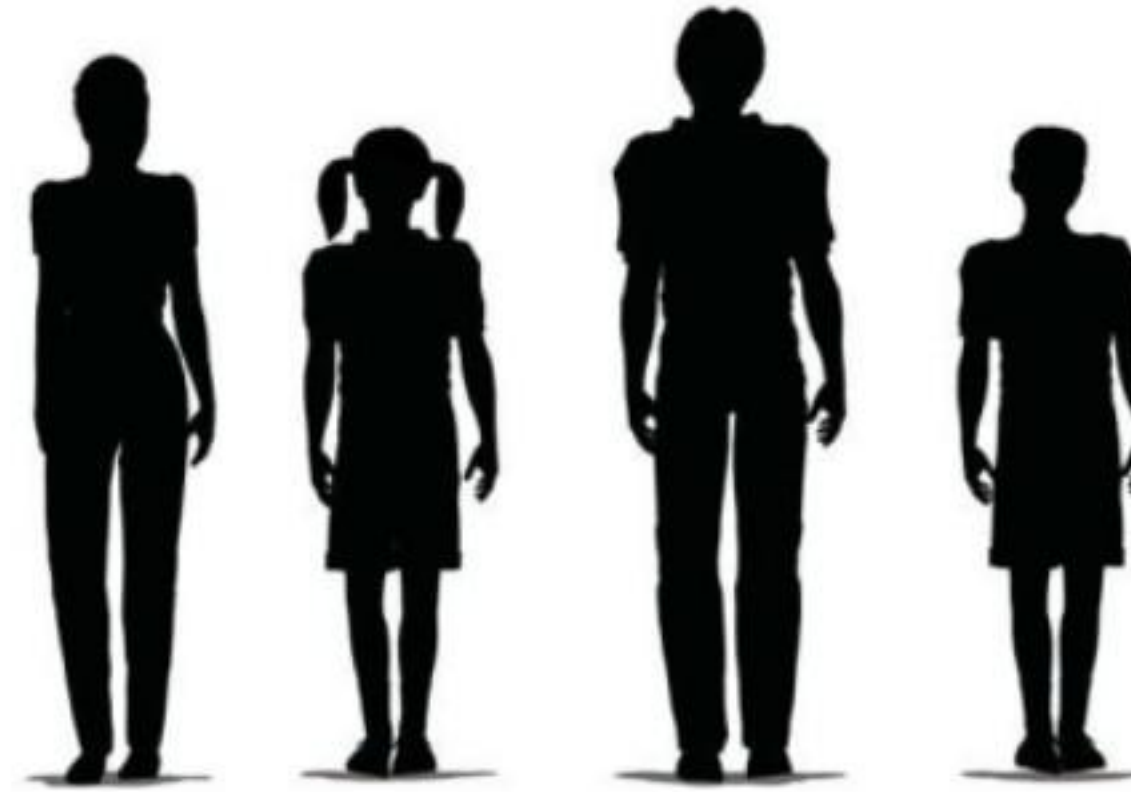
There can be no assessment of a child's best interest without an understanding of their views.

- Children can form and express views from the earliest age - don't see age as a barrier
- Children can make or contribute to complex decisions - don't confine the range of issues you involve them in.
- Recognise diverse capacities - don't overestimates or underestimates

Taking Action



Following-up Actions



Feedback Follow Through Extend



Review

Collective Participation

Dr. Anne Crowley

International child participation
consultant

GUESTS

**Marie Gibbons
& Caroline Duignan**

Roscommon Children & Young People's
Services Committee (Ireland)



What does it look like?



Where it takes place?



All children, wherever they are.

What are the 2 biggest barriers you face in engaging groups of children in decision-making?



Handbook: Collective Participation

Making
preparations

Building
Relationships

Providing
Information

Investigating
children's
views

Review and
Reflection

Audience
&
Influence

Taking action

Follow up



EXAMPLE

Consultations with young children in RosCommon, Ireland

Marie Gibbons & Caroline Duignan

Roscommon CYPSC and TUSLA Child and Family Agency