

Children's Right to Participation

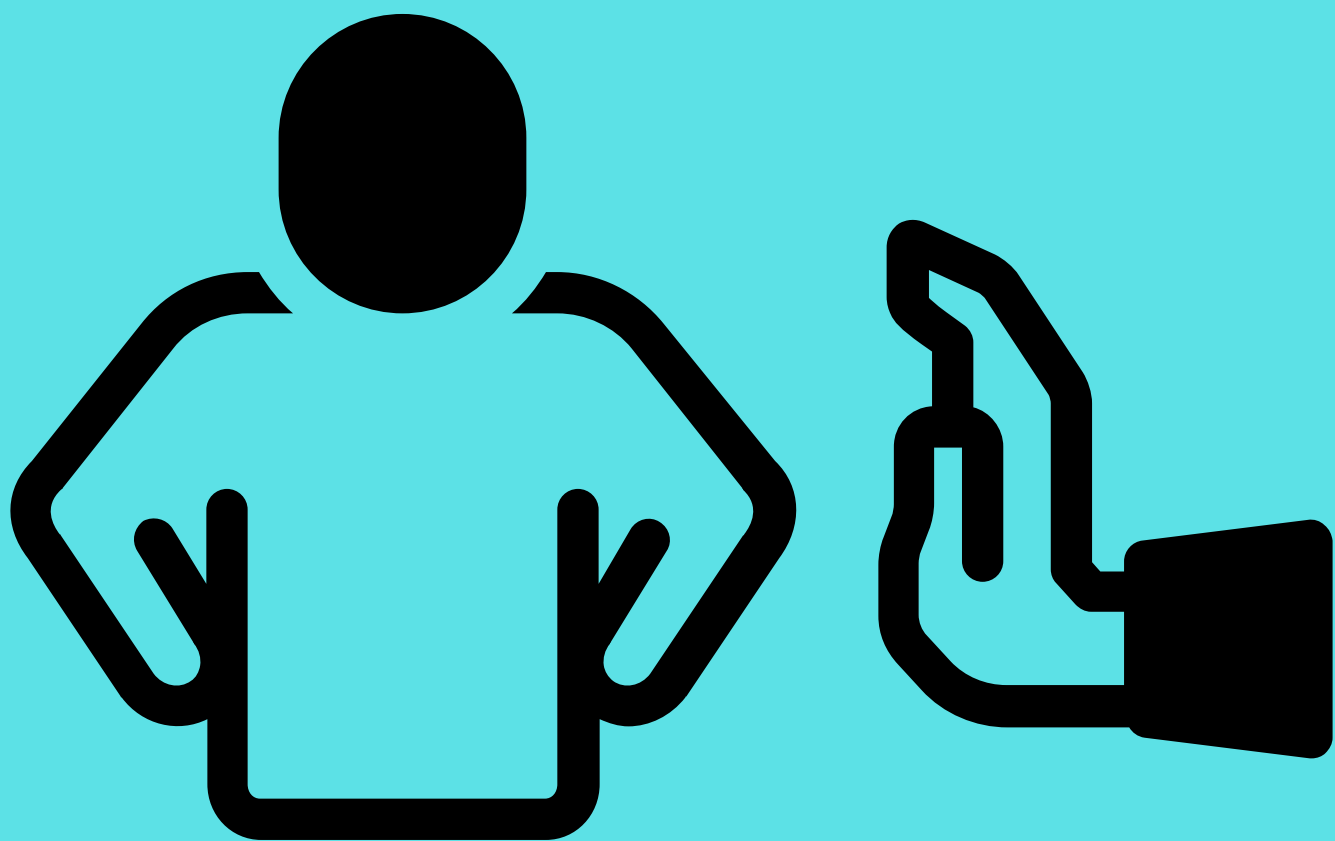
Myths,
Misunderstandings
Misrepresentations

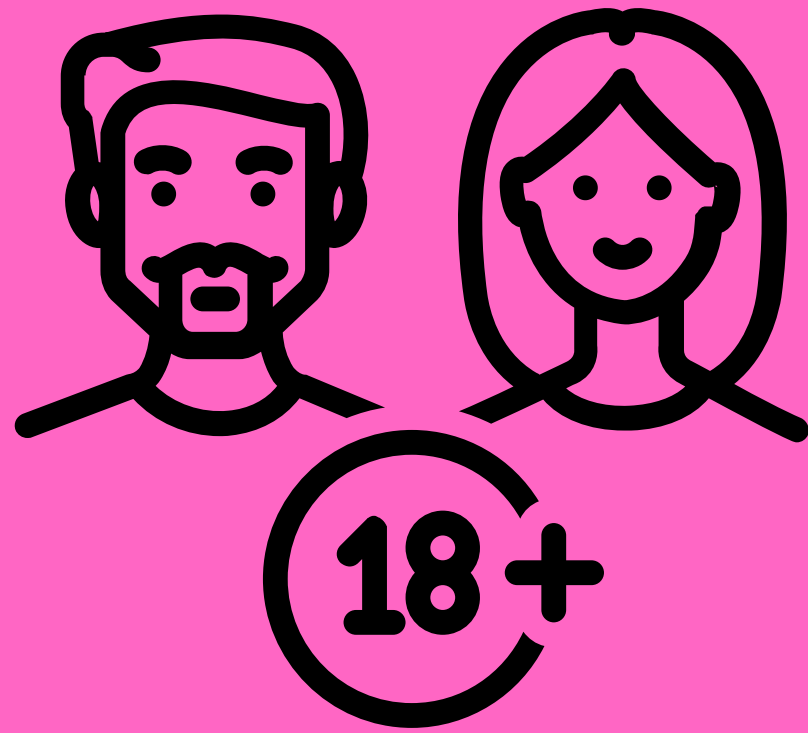
by

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Set 1: Excuses





1. Adults know best

Adults know a lot but they cannot know what children think, feel or have experienced without asking them.



2. They are too young

The right is afforded to all children capable of forming a view. Every child can express themselves on issues that matter to them, including the very youngest.



3. It will cost too much/ take too much time

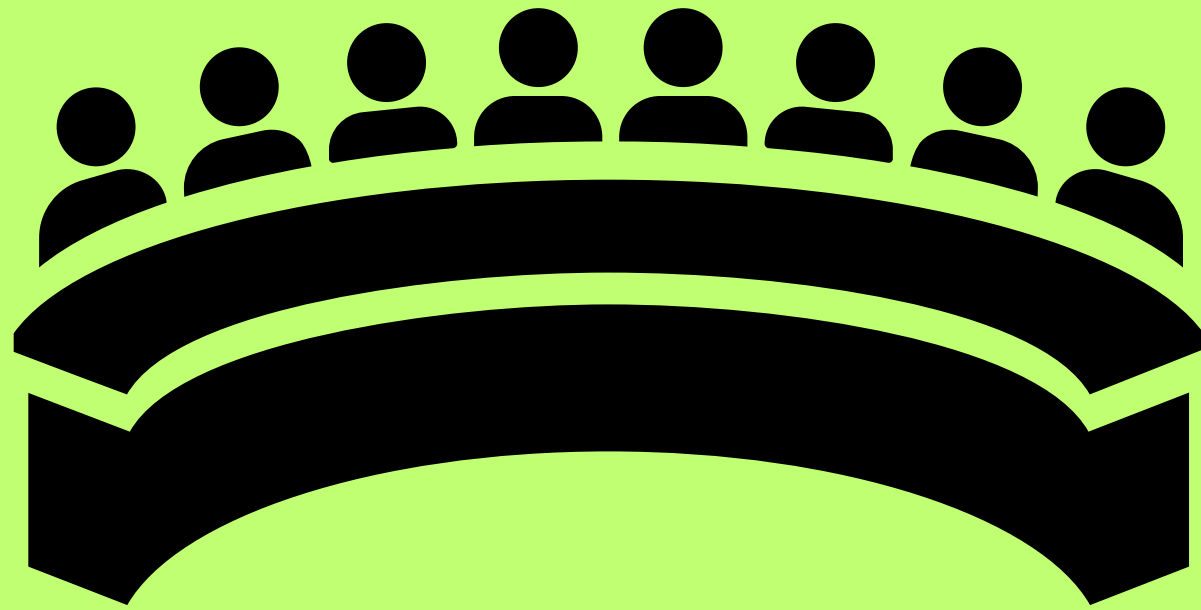
It's a right not an option. There are lots of way that adults can engage with children that cost little to nothing.

Engagement also often identifies waste and saves money and time.



4. It would be tokenistic

It is a human right so this is not a good excuse for doing nothing at all.
Participation is never perfect. Do your best with what you have, learn and improve



5. They are not representative

Few groups (including the adults who make these kinds of statements) are.

However, each individual child is entitled to be heard too. Try and make sure that the children involved cover as diverse a range of experiences as possible.

vs

6. Participation v Protection

This is a false dichotomy. You can't keep children safe if you don't hear them and they won't speak if they don't feel safe.



7. ‘It’s too sensitive’

If it affects children, they have a right to be heard, especially on ‘sensitive’ topics. The best way to find out how to do this in a way that is safe and comfortable is to ask them.



8. They wouldn't understand

Used generally but particularly for children with disabilities, especially learning disabilities. Art, 7 of the UNCPRPD requires that children enjoy the right to be heard on an equal basis with other children and should be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance.



9. They are too vulnerable

The more vulnerable the child, the more important it is that we hear them. Excluding them makes them more vulnerable. The key, as ever, is to make it safe and provide support



10. We need to 'manage their expectations'

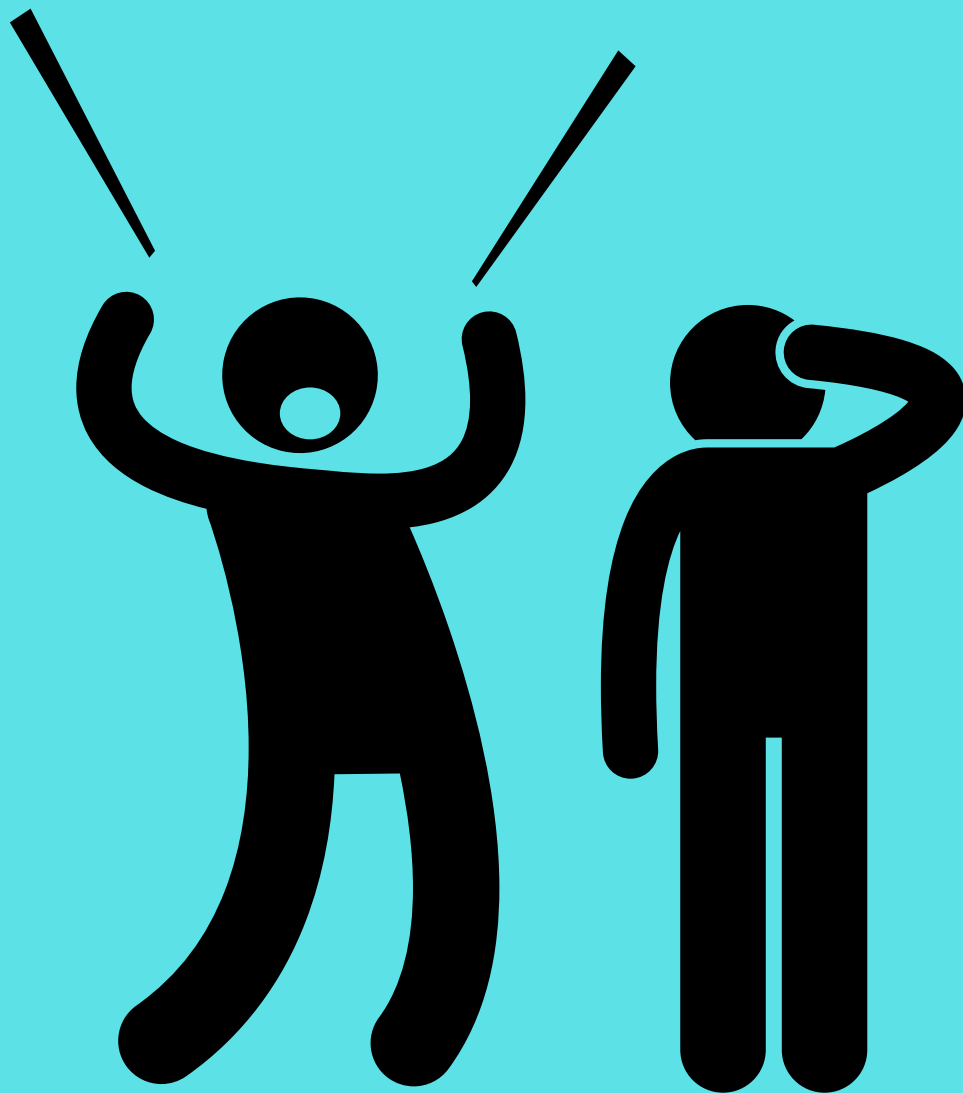
This is tied to a concern that they will ask for things that are unrealistic which happens much less often than adults expect. Let them say what they want. Part of the adults' role is to be honest and realistic and explain why some things might not be possible (yet).



What would you add?

Set 2:

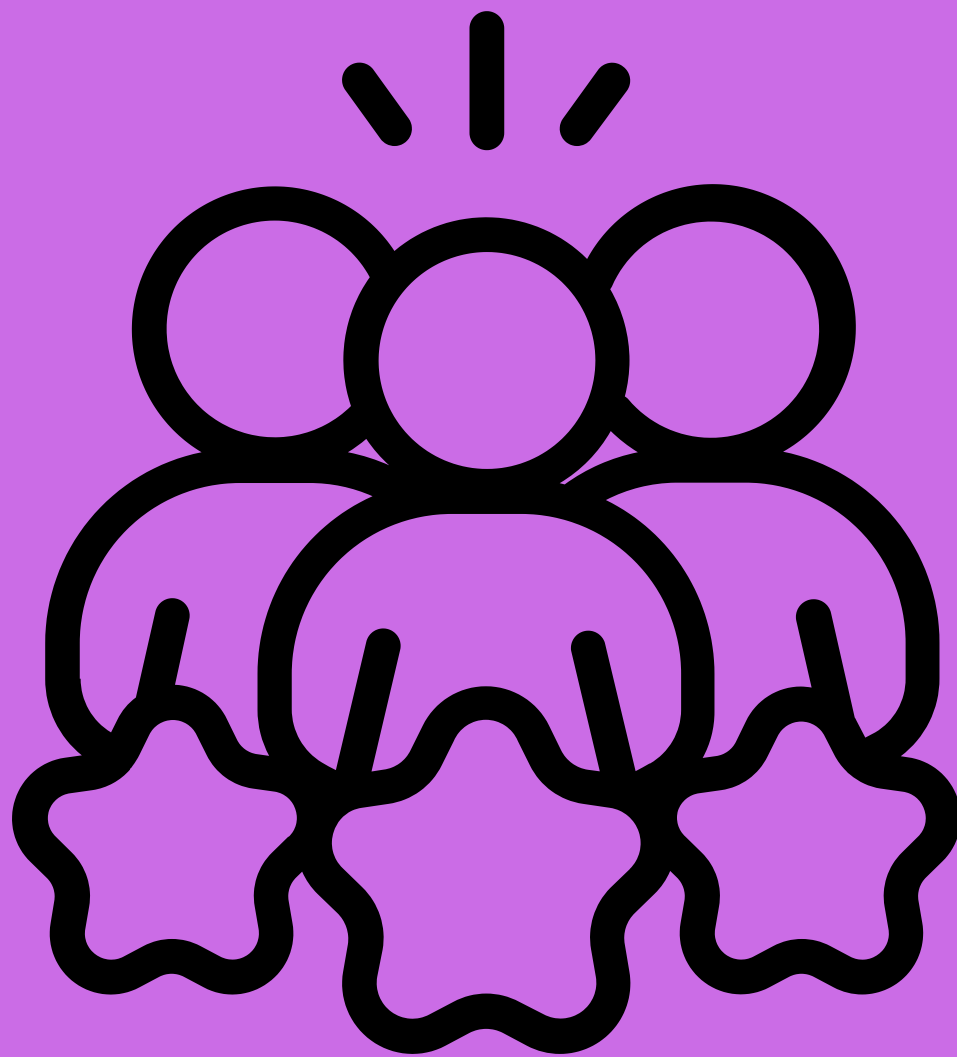
The (well-meaning) Overstatements





1. Children are the future.

True but not the main reason for listening to them. It's their right to be heard in the present - about their past, present and futures.



2. Children are **THE** experts in their own lives

Children have expertise but they are often not the only ones with expertise in the matters affecting them. They are the experts on their own feelings.



3. We need to ‘give’ them a voice

. They have a voice - adults’ role is to take it seriously. PS they shouldn’t need a megaphone to be heard. A whisper and/ or meaningful silences need to be heard too



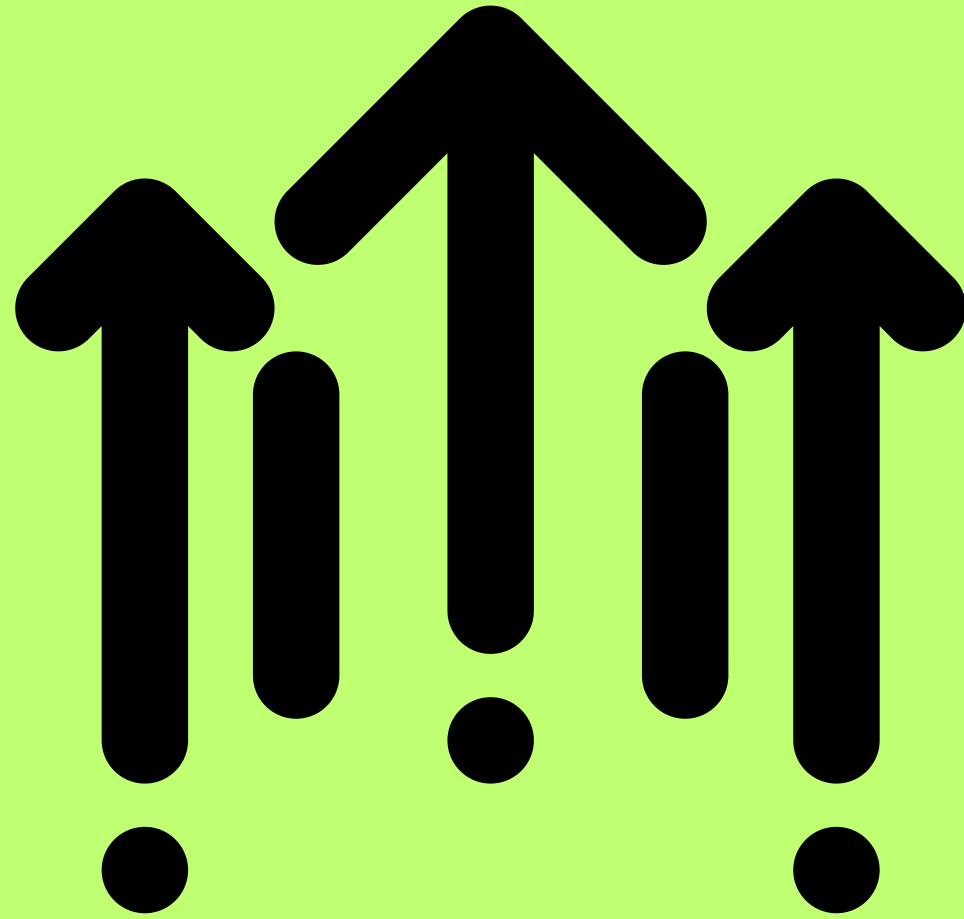
4. They ‘deserve’ to be heard

It’s not a case of deserving. Article 12 of the UNCRC gives them a right to be heard. This is an entitlement.



5. Aren't they so clever?

True. But don't say this, especially if what they said is fairly obvious. That can be patronising.



6. We need to 'amplify' their voices

This is fine provided adults are not speaking for them when they can speak for themselves. It should be about providing opportunities for them to be heard.



What would you add?