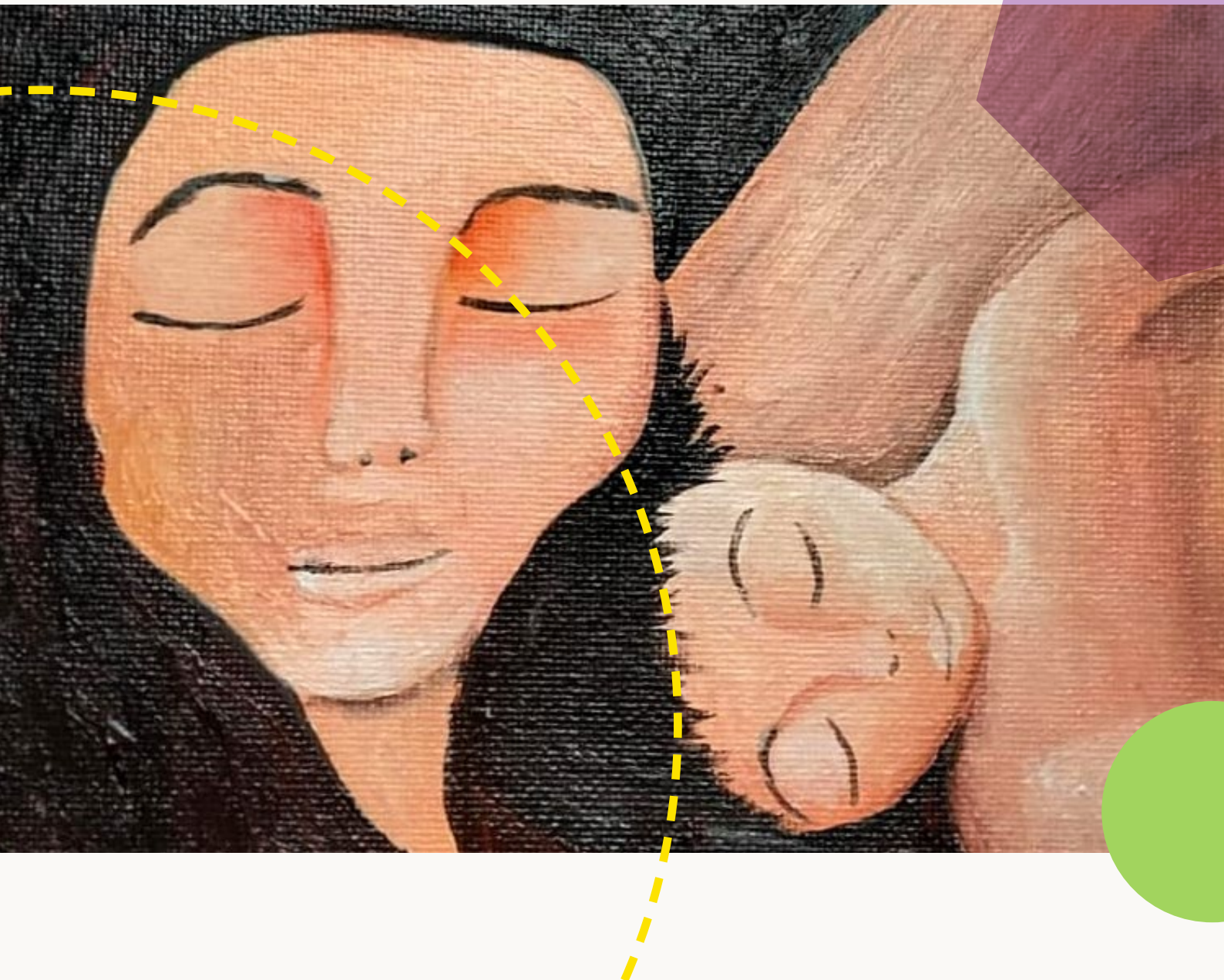


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CHILDREN IN WALES



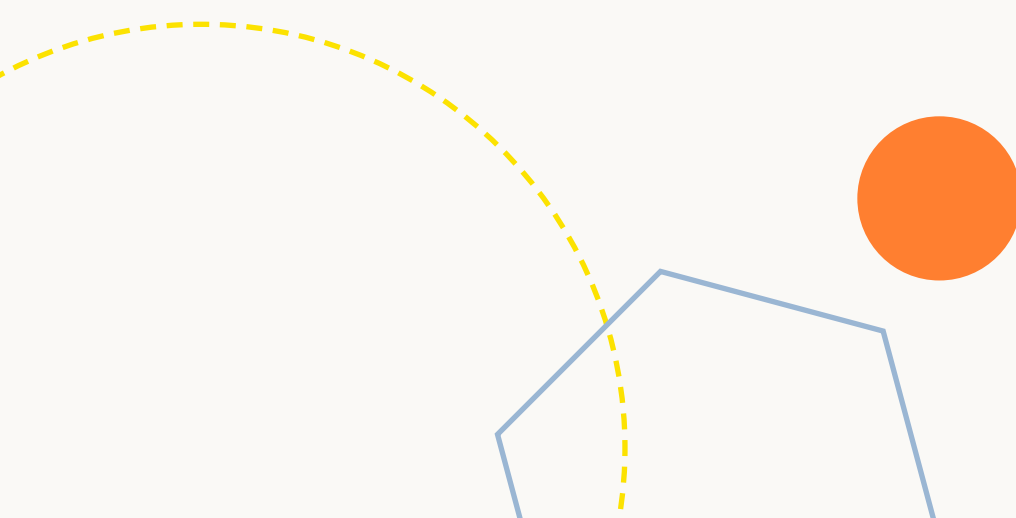
Parents Connect Wales – Consultation Toolkit

Providing support and guidance to those
looking to engage and involve parents



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Key aims of toolkit

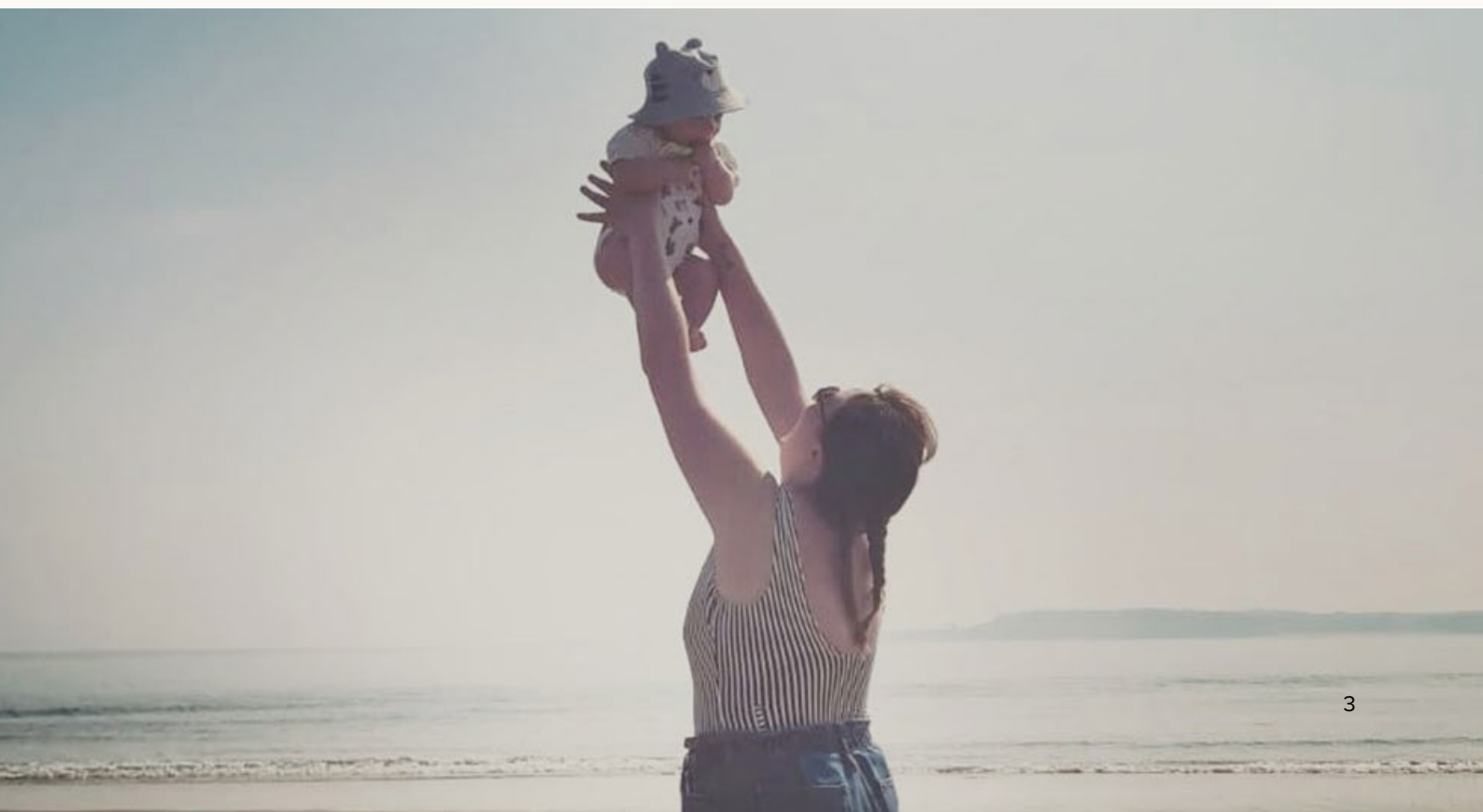
This toolkit has been published by Parents Connect Wales (Children in Wales). It has been developed in response to an identified need for support and guidance on how to consult with and collect parents views.

Its primary aim is to support organisations to run consultations on behalf of Parents Connect Wales, but can be used and adapted for any consultation work with parents and also:-

- Provide feedback forms and other ways to feed parents views back to Parents Connect Wales and into further policy development.
- Provide printable resources for working with parents.
- Provide a range of resources to help support the engagement and involvement of parents
- Give an overview of creative ways to engage with parents
- Offer guidance on how to plan, deliver focus groups with parents

Who it is aimed at

- Any organisation working with parents
- Any organisations looking to start involving and engaging with parents
- Those looking for creative methods/ways to engage parents



What is Parents Connect Wales?

Parents Connect Wales (PCW) is a project led by Children in Wales with funding secured from the Welsh Government.

This project has been established to engage parents/carers nationally and create:

‘A Wales wide platform offering a two-way approach for parent’s voices to be heard and to feed into policy development leading to meaningful participation in the form of co-production’.

The project has been working to meet the national need for a clear way to access parents’/ carers’ views on areas of policy that impact their children and young people.

When we refer to ‘parents’ we use this as an inclusive term that includes parents (both mothers and fathers), grandparents, foster parents, adoptive parents or anyone with parental responsibility.

Parents/ carers want to feel valued for their lived experiences and to be involved at the first stage of decision-making rather than being involved as a tick-box exercise. They also want to be provided with feedback on what is done with their views.

Listening to parent’s/ carer’s voices will help to create high quality services that will strengthen parents and families and ensure that the rights of children are met.

When engaging with parents/ carers, they have clearly said:

‘We want to have a voice and be heard’

“I know laws impact us, but I’m not sure how to get involved”

We have an online Hub where you can find out more information, download resources and parents can take part in consultation.

Visit our Hub at: [Children in Wales | Parents Connect Wales Hub](#)



Definitions

Engagement/engaging

The act of taking part in or doing something. Parents are given regular opportunities to express their views in a variety of ways. They can help influence some decisions.

Consultation

Refers to the act of exchanging information and opinions about something in order to reach a better understanding or make a decision. Parents may be invited to fill in surveys or attend focus groups to give their views/options/insights into an idea/proposal/issue. Parents' views will be listened to and help inform decisions.

Participation

Refers to the act of taking part in something or becoming involved in an activity or event. Participation goes beyond consultation; it actively involves parents in decision-making.

Coproduction

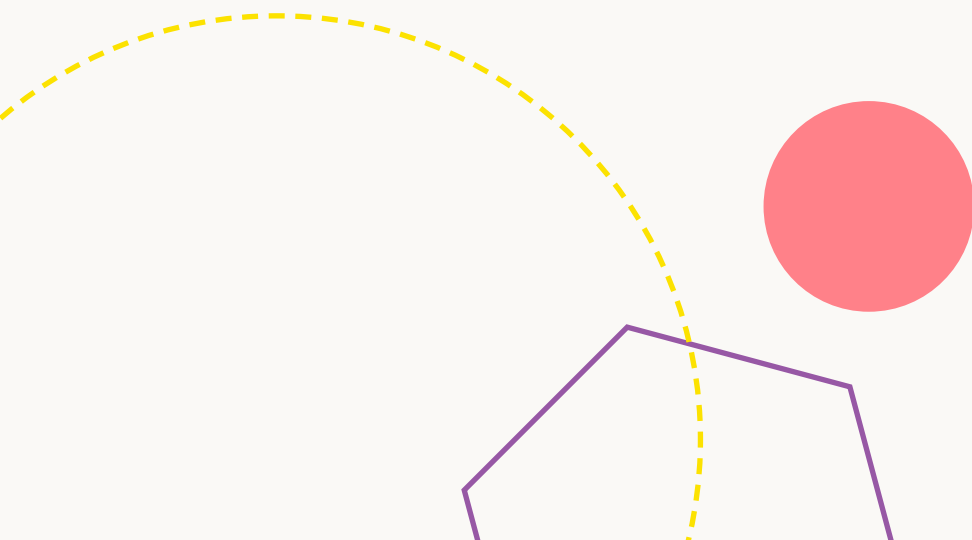
Based on 'doing with' not 'doing to'. You work with parents from design to delivery. You share all, or almost all decision-making processes.

Focus Group

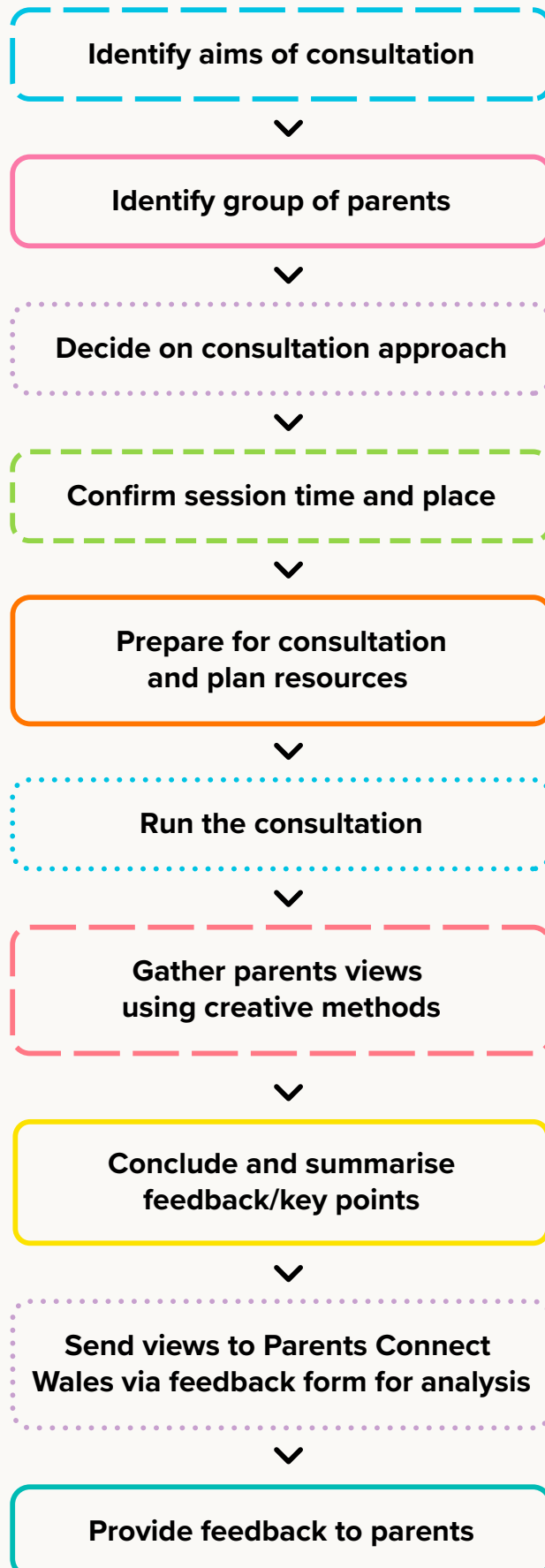
Brings a small group of people together with a particular focus on a question or subject matter. It is facilitated by someone who supports participants to provide feedback and insight, through discussion and other activities.

Icebreakers

Activities, events, or games designed to: Make others feel more comfortable and facilitate social interaction. They are usually performed at the beginning of a meeting or session.



Consultation Process Chart



Ideas for collecting parents' views



Here are some popular methods that Parents Connect Wales have used to collect parents' views and some feedback on these methods.

Surveys

A list of open and closed questions to gather views.

- Wide reach • Can be online or paper format • Low cost
- Easy to share on WhatsApp, Facebook and other social media
- Both simple and detailed questions can be asked
- Demographic information can be collected



Polls

A quick method to gather a snapshot of views on a specific topic area.

- Wide reach • Usually done online • Gives a brief insight into topic • Easy and quick to complete • Low cost
- Parents can share views anonymously and effortlessly
- Results are easy to analyse



Photo competition

Photos are submitted to gather a visual understanding or insight on a specific topic.

- Simple and easy for parents who can use their phones to take photos • Low cost
- Captures unique, in-depth insights • Accessible • Fun, creative and engaging
- Photo exhibition can be created • Photo consent must be obtained

Focus groups

Bringing together a small group of people and facilitating a group discussion to gain insights through conversation and specific questions.

- Can collect detailed thoughts and personal insights
- Face to face interaction • Accessible • Smaller reach and responses • Gives time and space to share responses
- Cost involved • Requires trained staff to run



Art workshop

Art based activities to gather a visual understanding or insight on a specific topic.

- Creative and enjoyable experience • Reflective way to share in-depth insights and experiences • Face to face interaction • Accessible
- Art exhibition can be created to give a sense of pride • Cost involved
- Requires trained staff, venue and equipment • Smaller reach/responses



Considerations

- Keep information brief and simple
- Offer printable/paper versions if required
- Offer incentives for taking part
- Provide easy read questions in key community languages (Polish, Urdu, Romanian, Bangla and Arabic)

At groups

- Provide the resources needed
- Involve children
- Offer refreshments
- Combine consultation with a wellbeing activity (coffee mornings, exercise class or craft activity)

Icebreakers

Icebreaker games are a great way to engage parents and create a positive and comfortable atmosphere during consultations or group activities work. They help break down initial barriers, foster team building and encourage participation. This ultimately promotes open communication and collaboration within the group. Icebreakers can also be adapted to introduce the topic or set the scene of the consultation.

Ideas for icebreakers at the beginning of the session:

Stand up if...

Stand up if you...have a pet

Stand up if you....have had breakfast

Stand up if...you have more than 2 children

Ask others to suggest ideas.

Animal pictures

Find and share a range of different animal photos and ask everyone to say which one they 'feel like' 'relate to'.

Human Bingo

Create bingo sheet with interesting facts or characteristics. Everyone has to mingle, trying to find someone who fits each description to get a full house.

Getting to know you

Everyone has to move around the space introducing themselves before rotating to a new person.

Common Ground

In pairs or small groups, ask parents to find three things they have in common that aren't obvious (e.g., hobbies, places they've visited, favourite childhood games). This encourages interaction and discovery of shared experiences.

Parenting Desert Island

Ask each parent to imagine they are stranded on a desert island and can only take three parenting items. What would they bring? Encourage creativity—responses can range from practical items like baby wipes to things like endless patience

Parenting Superpowers

Ask each parent to introduce themselves and share their "parenting superpower" (e.g. I can get my kids to sleep in under 10 minutes or I make the best packed lunches).

Shared Challenges

Each parent writes down one challenge they face in parenting. Mix the papers in a bowl and read them out anonymously. Discuss briefly as a group, emphasising shared struggles and understanding.

Parenting Wins

Ask each parent to share a recent parenting win, big or small (e.g., I finally got my toddler to eat vegetables or We had a screen-free day).

Parenting Challenges Word Cloud

Provide sticky notes or a whiteboard. Each parent writes one parenting challenge anonymously and sticks it up. Read them out, discuss common themes briefly, and emphasize shared experiences.

Welsh Connection

Ask each parent to share one thing they love about parenting in Wales e.g. a favourite local park, a traditional family recipe, or a Welsh nursery rhyme. Highlight unique local connections and cultural pride.

Parenting Photo Share

Ask parents to share a photo on their phone that represents their parenting life (e.g., a messy play session, a favourite family outing). Each parent explains why they chose that photo.

Parenting Survival Kit

Each parent shares one item they'd include in a "Parenting Survival Kit" (e.g. coffee, wet wipes, a sense of humour). Collect the ideas for a fun list.

Group agreement

A group agreement is a set of rules, intentions, or guidelines for behavior and interaction that are developed together and agreed upon. It helps create an open and respectful environment for productive conversation and teamwork.

The agreement should be developed with parents at the start of a session and left on display throughout.

Here is a sample of what could be included in the agreement:

- Be respectful
- Listen to everyone's opinions
- Try not to be judgmental
- Keep discussions confidential
- Be open and honest



Focus group session plan

When planning a consultation or engagement session with parents, you will need to have an outline plan.

We have provided a template session plan which you can adapt as required:

Please also refer to top tips for [Facilitating Group Discussions and Managing Time](#) and [Icebreakers](#).

This session plan is a template that can be adapted for your needs

Target audience:

- Parents/ carers in Wales of children and young people aged _____ that are
-

List of Resources needed:

- Session plan
- Feedback form

You might need:

- Paper/pens
- Post its
- Flip chart
- Art resources

Time for session:

- 60 minutes suggested but it can be modified to suit the needs of the group you are working with.

Aims of the session:

- To gain a wider insight from parents/carers into:
-

- To collect some feedback from parents on:
-

Time	Activity
10 mins	<p>Introductions</p> <p>Welcome the participant and explain the aims of the session.</p> <p>Explain what you will be discussing and the importance of gathering their thoughts and feedback.</p> <p>Talk through how you are going to gather their views</p> <p>You may want to talk through a few group agreement - click here</p> <p>Icebreakers</p> <p>This is a good way to get everyone using their voice and taking part in a relaxed way. It will also support group dynamics if it is a new group.</p> <p>For icebreaker ideas click here</p>
40 mins	<p>Consultation Activity/ies</p> <p>The main part of the session is where you will engage parents in the specific consultation/ topic. How you do this can vary, a selection of methods have been provided:</p> <p>Consultation activity ideas - click here</p> <p>Resource section - click here</p>
10mins	<p>Summary and conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarise the participant's feedback and insights gathered during the session.• Explain that their feedback will be valuable and what you are planning to do with it.• Give parents a chance to share any last thoughts on topic area or how the session went.• Thank them for their time and input.

Sample session plan for Art Workshop

Workshop: Art based workshop:- 'Reflections on being a parent/carer'

Length of workshop: 45 minutes - 60 minutes

Session description: Parents/ caregivers taking part in a creative and reflective workshop on their experience as parents/ caregivers.

Aims of the session:

- Provide a platform for self-expression and reflection through art.
- Encourage participants to discuss their parenting experiences and support needs.
- Introduce the concept of positive parenting and its relevance.
- Create a welcoming and non-judgmental environment for open sharing.

Target audience: Parents/ carers in Wales of children and young people aged 0- 18 years that are looking for support with parenting.

List of resources needed:

- Session plan
- Small canvases
- Palettes, paints brushes, brush pots, disposable table clothes, stickers

Time	Activity	Resources
5 mins	<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome participants and introduce the workshop's objectives. • Briefly explain the art medium (acrylic paints) and canvas. • Encourage a relaxed and open atmosphere where the parents can have fun. 	<p>Session Plan</p> <p>Disposable tablecloth on tables</p>
5 mins	<p>Background to PCW and this project</p> <p>Explain to them about the 'Parents Connect Wales' project and the importance of sharing their views with us</p>	
5 mins	<p>Positive Parenting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask participants to briefly define what positive parenting means to them. • Invite a few participants to share their definitions. • Provide the definition (shown at the bottom of this table) 	<p>Definition of positive parenting</p>
20-35 mins	<p>Art Activity</p> <p>Provide the participants with the art materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruct participants to choose one of the options below to create a small piece of art that represents:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A) Their parenting journey or • A) What positive parenting means to them • Emphasize to them that the focus is on expressing and enjoying themselves. 	<p>Small canvases, palettes, paints, brushes, brush pots</p>
5 mins	<p>Conclusion and Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite participants to share their art pieces and briefly explain the symbolism. • Discuss the key themes/ ideas that emerged from the art workshop • Ask parents to name their picture and write one sentence about it on a sticker. 	<p>Stickers</p>

Time	Activity	Resources
5 mins	<p>Evaluation of the session</p> <p>Please do a short evaluation of the method used by collecting responses to the following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did you enjoy this session? 2. What did you like about it? 3. What could be done to make it better? 	Feedback form
	<p>Thank yous and Goodbyes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources on parenting support for those interested in learning more ('Parenting. Give It Time' website). • Thank participants for their insights and contributions. 	www.gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time

Tips for Facilitating Group Discussions and Managing Time

1. Establish Clear Objectives

- Clearly agree the objectives with parents input at the beginning.

2. Create a Welcoming Atmosphere

- Foster an environment where parents feel comfortable expressing their opinions.
- Use positive language and encourage active listening.

3. Icebreaker for Team Bonding

- Begin with a short icebreaker to facilitate team bonding and ease participants into the discussion.

4. Clearly Define Group Tasks

- Clearly share the tasks assigned to each group during the activity.
- If required provide written instructions OR visual chart to avoid confusion.

5. Monitor Group Dynamics

- Pay attention to group dynamics and carefully intervene if any participant is dominating the discussion.
- Encourage quieter participants to share their thoughts.

6. Time Management

- Allocate specific time limits for each activity/item to stay on schedule.
- Use visual cues or timers to remind groups of time constraints.

7. Encourage Inclusive Participation

- Ensure everyone has an opportunity to contribute and use their voice.
- Direct questions to different group members to involve everyone.

8. Manage Group Share Back

- Set a specific time limit for each group's feedback.
- Facilitate a brief Q&A session after each activity to maintain engagement

9. Stay Flexible

- Be flexible in adjusting the discussion pace based on the group's needs.
- Allow for extra time if a topic generates extensive discussion.

10. Use Visual Aids Effectively

- Utilise visuals to enhance understanding.
- Visual aids can help convey information efficiently and keep parents engaged.

11. Keep the Discussion Focused

- Gently guide the discussion back to the main topics if it goes off course.

12. Encourage Constructive Feedback

- Foster an environment where parents feel comfortable providing constructive feedback.
- Encourage feedback not only on topic areas but also on the process itself.

13. Prioritise Key Points

- Summarise key points discussed to ensure clarity.
- Focus on the most relevant and impactful insights.

14. Allocate Time for Reflections

- Allow time at the end for reflections and feedback.
- Acknowledge and appreciate parents for their contributions.

Note: These are just a guide, please adapt based on the specific dynamics of the group and be prepared to adjust as needed during the session.



Safeguarding information and training

When engaging with parents they could share information that gives you cause for concern, and you need to know what to do. You have a duty of care to report any concerns that you may have.

Safeguarding checklist

- Does your organisation have a safeguarding and child protection policy? All organisations working with Children, Young People and families need one?
- Read and understand your organisational safeguarding and child protection policy.
- Download and have access to the 'Wales Safeguarding Procedures' app. Familiarise yourself with the contents.
- Be aware of the phone number for both adults and children services in your local authority.
- Understand and familiarise yourself with the process/ procedure for reporting safeguarding concerns
- Know who is your safeguarding officer
- Ensure your staff have adequate training, check what level of training your workers are at and what group of training they need to have

To find out what training is required go to Social Care Wales

[Safeguarding training | Social Care Wales](#)

Children in Wales provide training [National Safeguarding Training, Learning and Development Standards \(childreninwales.org.uk\)](#)

For more information go to [Safeguarding Wales](#)

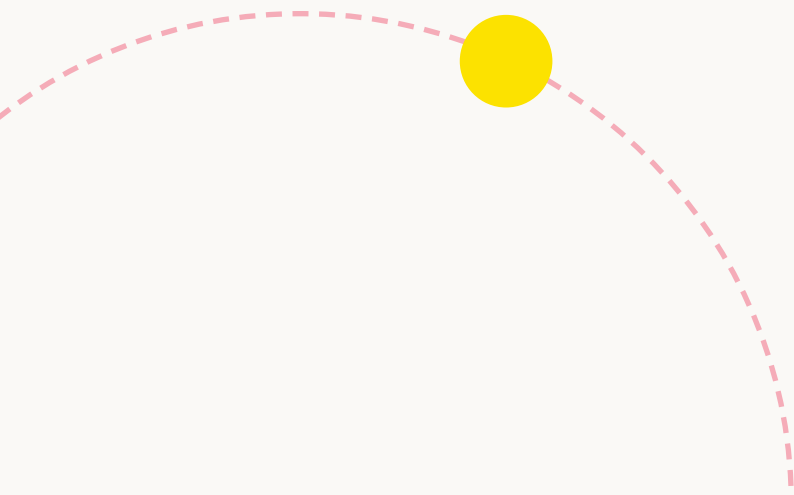


Parents Connect Wales Feedback Form



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Date of consultation:	
Number of parents participating:	
Mothers:	
Fathers:	
Other:	
Age of children:	
Area of Wales:	
Organisation facilitating the session:	
Topic/theme discussed:	



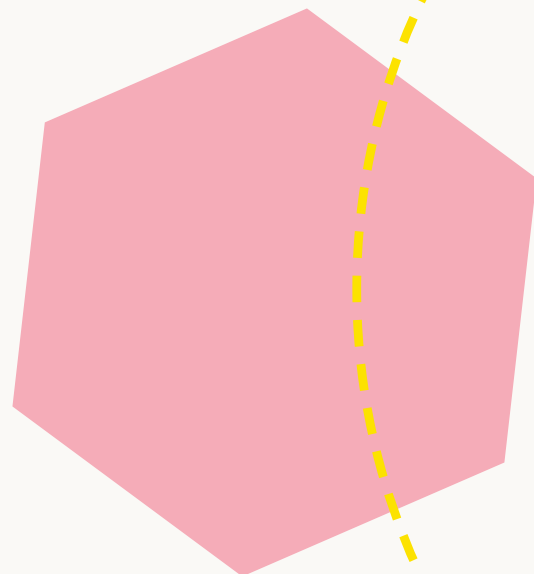
<p>Questions asked and feedback gathered:</p> <p>Attach any pictures or notes if easier</p>	
<p>Any further comments or information:</p>	

The form can be printed [here](#).

Thank you for taking the time to complete the feedback form please return to:
parentsconnect@childreninwales.org.uk



Resources



What is the UNCRC?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an internationally agreed document that recognises the importance of children’s rights and freedoms and always puts the best interests of the child first.

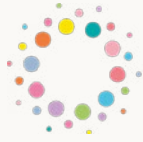
It is a list of rights that all children aged 0-18 years have, there are 54 rights in total and are called ‘Articles’.

Ultimately it is about what all children need to grow up Happy, Healthy and Safe.

The UNCRC recognises that parents/carers play a vital role in ensuring that their children’s rights are fulfilled, rights are protected first within families. Therefore it is important that parents/carers both understand children’s rights and are helped to ensure they are upheld.



This short leaflet is designed for parents to help them understand what Children's Rights are and how they can support them.



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CHILDREN IN WALES



Understanding Children's Rights

How can Parents support Children's Rights



What is the UNCRC?

Have you heard of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**?

It is a list of rights that all children aged 0-18 years have.

These rights are set out in the UNCRC, there are 54 rights in total and are called 'Articles'.

It is an internationally agreed document that recognises the importance of children's rights and freedoms and always puts the best interests of the child first.

Rights make sure we're all treated fairly and can reach our full potential. Children have **additional rights** to adults, because they **need extra protection** and are **highly dependent** on the adults around them.

Ultimately it is about what all children need to grow up Happy, Healthy and Safe.



What does it mean to parents?

We asked parents what children need to grow up Happy, Healthy and Safe and this was their response:

love safe environment
happy atmosphere warmth home
boundaries family education
to be heard food security

The responses linked to many of the Articles in the convention:

'Feeling safe' and **'security'** links to UNCRC Article 19 that says **'children should not be harmed and should be looked after and kept safe.'**

'Family, love and warmth' links to Article 18 that says **'Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children, and they should always think about what is best for each child.'**

'To be heard' links to Article 12 **'A right to say what you think should happen and to be listened to.'**

Other Rights include:

- Right to life
- Right to a name
- Right to education
- Right to relax and play



To read the full UNCRC go to [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNICEF UK](#)

What can parents do to support their child's rights?



As a parent you are the strongest supporter of your child's rights. You know your child best and what they need.

We asked parents what they thought they could do to ensure their children get their rights:

know their rights **protect**
provide loving home **advocate their voice**
support them listen healthy lifestyle
be honest about struggles **speak up**
provide a safe space **ensuring have right medical care**
e.g. doctor/dentist
encourage

The UNCRC recognises the vital role parents, carers and family members have in supporting children's:

- best interests
- defending their rights
- speaking up for them and making sure their rights are being met.

We do this every day, even when we don't know it. For example, when you go to the doctors or when you speak to Nursery or School teacher and ask for support.

The UNCRC isn't an additional ask or something to give you more to do. Nor does it mean your child can do whatever they want whenever they want!



It provides you with the language to support your child whether at school, the doctors or anywhere else.

If you need support with getting your child's rights met or want to find out more, then go to:

[Children in Wales | Home](#)

[Children's Commissioner for Wales \(childcomwales.org.uk\)](http://childcomwales.org.uk)

To read the full UNCRC go to [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNICEF UK](#)


The leaflet is also available in key community languages:

- Urdu [UNCRC_Leaflet_Urdu.pdf](https://childreninwales.org.uk/uncrc-leaflet-urdu.pdf) (childreninwales.org.uk)
- Romanian [UNCRC_Leaflet_Romanian.pdf](https://childreninwales.org.uk/uncrc-leaflet-romanian.pdf) (childreninwales.org.uk)
- Polish [UNCRC Leaflet_Screen version \(2\) \(1\).pdf](https://childreninwales.org.uk/uncrc-leaflet-screen-version-2-1.pdf) (childreninwales.org.uk)
- Bangla [UNCRC_Leaflet_Bangla.pdf](https://childreninwales.org.uk/uncrc-leaflet-bangla.pdf) (childreninwales.org.uk)
- Arabic [UNCRC_Leaflet_Arabic.pdf](https://childreninwales.org.uk/uncrc-leaflet-arabic.pdf) (childreninwales.org.uk)




Top tips for supporting parents

All these posters have been developed with parents and are downloadable. You will find the links below.




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CYSHWILT RHIFENI CYMRU
PARENTS CONNECT WALES

What are the best ways to support and engage with parents?

Parents provide some practical tips to support their involvement



Provide information

- Starter packs from schools
- Social Media – Facebook, TikTok, Instagram
- Posters
- Share information that is easy to read
- Via visits to local organisations/ groups and schools, pop up stalls and community events


Engage with parents

- Build relationships and trust
- Share lived experiences and success stories to show them what can be achieved
- Offer a range of ways to get involved - not just participation/consultation
- Provide volunteering opportunities
- Recognise and nurture the potential of parents
- Reward their time and offer incentives (vouchers, recognition awards, learning new skills)
- Recognise, value and nurture their potential
- Be creative, make it fun and involve their children
- Provide feedback, they need to know that their 'voice' has been heard

Provide support to parents

- Offering support services
- Have someone that can be a buddy/mentor
- People who have been through the process to lead and encourage others

This poster has been co-produced with parents from The Parent Network, May 2023
www.childreninwales.org.uk



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

Top tips for professionals



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CHILDREN IN WALES



Top tips for professionals

For involving parents



When involving parents, the environment needs to be:

- Non-judgemental
- Welcoming
- Supportive
- Inclusive
- Community Focused
- A safe, accepting space

“When we use our voice, don’t judge or impose ideas”

“Come to us and meet us where we are”

“Make it fun and involve our children”

This poster has been co-produced with parents from The Parent Network, May 2023
www.childreninwales.org.uk



Different ways to take part



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CHILDREN IN WALES



CYSWLLT RHIENI CYMRU
PARENTS CONNECT WALES

What are the different ways that **parents** can **take part** and **have a say**?



Online/written

- Online poll
- Online forums
- Online surveys
- Feedback reports

Activities

- Consultation events and groups
- Community events and groups
- Opportunities to voice opinions

Schools and Early Years settings

- PTA meetings
- Regular communication with the setting
- An avenue to express concerns

Local community

- Talking to local councillor
- Toddler groups
- Speaking to other parents
- Voting
- Via organisations and groups working to support parental involvement'

This poster has been co-produced with parents from The Parent Network, May 2023

www.childreninwales.org.uk



Ideas on how to engage with parents

Levels of participation
Ideas from parents on how to engage with them

Doing to: Educating and providing information
Information, education, support

Ideas for how to do this:

- Networking • Advertising
- Posters • Websites • Facebook
- Word of mouth • Text messages
- Leaflets • Local groups • Seesaw
- Coffee mornings

Doing for: Engaging, consulting
Consultation, collaboration

Ideas for how to do this:

- Talking to others • Community events
- Social Media • Meetings in schools
- Volunteering • Interactive platforms
- Meeting and engaging together
- Parent workshops • Fundraising
- Attending consultations
- Joining other groups

Doing with: Co-producing, co-designing
Collaboration, empowerment

Ideas for how to do this:

- Volunteering • Taking opportunities
- Parent and community champions
- Having a voice in government decisions
- Constituted groups • PTA
- Awards and recognition
- Voicing your opinion

This poster has been co-produced with parents from The Parent Network, May 2023
www.childreninwales.org.uk

PLANT YNG NGHYMRL
CHILDREN IN WALES

CYSHILLT RHIEINI CYMRU
PARENTS CONNECT WALES

Arweiniad gan
Llywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

https://www.childreninwales.org.uk/download_file/force/801/1373/

Parents Connect Wales would like to thank everyone that has supported the development of this toolkit.

All the photos and artwork included in this toolkit have been produced by parents across Wales that have engaged with our project.

Produced November 2024 by Parents Connect Wales (Children in Wales).

You can find out more on the Parents Connect Wales Online Hub
[Parents Connect Wales Hub](#)

For further information please visit the Children in Wales website
<https://www.childreninwales.org.uk>

