

Hearing the Views of Children and Young People in Hospitals

Ombudsman for Children's Office
Ireland

Background and Context

- Children's Hospital Group Board
- Youth Advisory Council (YAC)
- Family Forum
- Three Hospitals – Existing Engagement Agenda
- Partnership – CHGB+OCO

Overall Aim and Objectives

Overall Aim

- Facilitate the CHGB to hear and take account of children's views in the context of work to plan the delivery of services in the new children's hospital

Objectives

- Support children attending the three children's hospitals to express their views on different elements of the services they are engaging with in these hospitals
- Enable the three children's hospitals to hear children's views as service users and to identify good practices and prospective areas for improvement
- Facilitate the CHGB to take account of children's views in the context of decision-making regarding the delivery of services in the new children's hospital
- Develop and implement a child-centred, rights-respecting mechanism for engaging with children that could be used in the new hospital in the future

Recommended Approach

Research for OCO by Kilkelly & Savage (2013)

- Identified several practice initiatives as models of good practice for promoting 'child-friendly healthcare' (respect for children's rights in healthcare settings) in Ireland

Self-Evaluation Model on Respect of Children's Rights in Hospital (SEMT)

- Developed by Task Force on 'Health Promotion for Children and Adolescents in and by Hospitals and Health Services' (HPH-CA), an initiative of International Network of Health Promoting Hospitals and Health Services (WHO)
- Designed to facilitate a cyclical process of quality improvement by and in hospitals
- Piloted in 17 hospitals in Europe and Australia in 2009
- Task Force subsequently developed self-evaluation tools for use by children; parents; management, health professionals + other staff in hospitals attended by children

SEMT Tools

Questionnaires on children's rights in hospital that facilitate engagement by:

- Children aged 6-11 years
- Young people aged 12-18 years
- Parents and carers
- Health professionals in hospitals attend by children and young people
- Management in hospitals attended by children and young people

May be complemented by **focus groups** with children, young people and/or other stakeholder groups

Merits of adapting and using SEMT

- **Tried and tested model that is agile and flexible** - ripe for adaptation
- **Child-centred** - child as service user is a key stakeholder, an active participant and a rights-holder, with a right to be heard
- **Rights-respecting and promoting** - grounds UNCRC principles and provisions in procedures, practices and culture in hospitals; facilitates children to express their views within a children's rights framework
- **Inclusive and holistic** - recognises the roles and values the perspectives of other stakeholders (parents + professionals working in hospitals attended by children)

SEMT and hearing Children's Views

- Facilitates engagement by a larger, more diverse cohort of children than panels
- Places less demands on individual children's time and can accommodate a flexible approach to engagement by children
- Enables children to express their views with a greater degree of privacy
- Gives children concrete issues to comment on, which relate directly to their rights and enables them to draw on their experiences as service users
- Facilitates children to express their views in the context of an holistic process that values and includes the perspective of other stakeholders
- Supports participation on a once-off basis, but in the context of a process-oriented cycle of service monitoring, evaluation and development

Timeline, Funding, Outputs and Outcomes

Timeline: 18 months

Funding: co-funding by CHGB and OCO

Outputs:

- Suite of tools to support engagement by children and other stakeholders
- Report documenting the findings of engagement to support decision-making re: service planning and delivery
- User-friendly summaries that provide feedback to participants
- Prospective online forum to facilitate sharing of good practice

Outcomes:

- Views of children (+ others) heard and inform decision-making by CHGB and the three hospitals
- Increased awareness of children's rights in healthcare among participants
- Culture of listening to children and respecting children's rights in healthcare advanced
- Good practices and areas for improvement identified
- Prospective model for future engagement with children in/by new children's hospital developed