



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Final Review of the National Strategy on **Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020**

Prepared by the Department of Children,
Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
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Contents

1. Minister’s foreword	3
2. Background	4
3. Aim of the review	5
4. Strategy overview and defining participation	6
5. Progress summary	10
Progress	10
Actions for further development	11
Highlights	11
Youth Travel Card	11
Adaptation to COVID-19	11
How’s Your Head? National consultation with young people on mental health and wellbeing	12
UNCRC, UNCRPD and Universal Periodic Review	12
Reform of the family justice system	13
NPHET mask wearing consultation	13
6. Areas for further development	14
<i>Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan</i>	14
National Youth Assembly of Ireland	14
7. Case studies	16
Students’ experience of remote learning and returning to school 2020 – A Department of Education initiative	16
Development of National Standards for Children’s Residential Centres by the Health Information and Quality Authority	16
8. Implementation across Government Departments and Agencies	18
9. Conclusion	25
10. References	26

1. Minister's foreword

I am pleased to publish the Government's *Final Review of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 - 2020*.

The development of the Participation Strategy was groundbreaking both in Ireland and internationally. It was also entirely necessary. In Ireland's past, we failed to listen adequately to children and young people and we must learn from those mistakes. Children and young people's voices must be heard and taken seriously by those in positions of power.

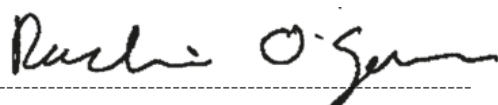
The development of child and youth participation in Ireland is rooted in the first *National Children's Strategy: Our Children - Their Lives* (Department of Health and Children, 2000), which framed these rights in national Government policy. Children and young people's participation in decision-making in Ireland is well established through the Comhairle na nÓg structures in each of the 31 local authorities. Comhairle na nÓg has gone from strength to strength, supported by my Department and at local authority level. In 2019, the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive proposed a Youth Travel Card which would provide a 50% discount on all public transport systems for all young people aged up to 23 years. With the support of my Department and that of the Department of Transport, this proposal was accepted and announced in the Budget in October 2021. The continued hard work, tenacity and passion of the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive to improve the lives of all young people is a source of great pride for both myself and my Department as a whole.

One of the key commitments in the Participation Strategy was the establishment of a national centre of excellence and coordination for child and youth participation in decision-making to support its implementation, Hub na nÓg. Another key commitment was the development of Comhairle na nÓg's Five Year Development Plan, one of the outcomes of which was the establishment of a National Participation Office. Both the National Participation Office and Hub na nÓg have helped to ensure that recent years have seen an increasing number of Government Departments and Agencies consulting with and including children and young people in policy development. We have consulted with children and young people on a variety of important issues, such as the reform of the family justice system (Department of Justice), mask wearing in primary schools (National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), Department of Health), skin cancer research (the National Cancer Control Programme, Department of Health), the Youth Homelessness Strategy (Department of Housing) and a consultation on the school transport scheme and education anti-bullying plan (Department of Education), to name but a few.

The Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021), launched in April 2021, provides a clear pathway and guidelines on how Government Departments, Agencies, and organisations can meet their obligations under the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as well as domestic policy and legislative provisions on children and young people's right to a voice. The focus of my Department now is on ensuring that this Framework is fully integrated into work processes across government and that capacity is expanded across all sectors.

While Ireland is now considered a world leader in participatory practices, we must ensure that we continue to implement real change, and that the vision of ensuring children's voices are heard in all the spaces and places where they live remains a priority.

With every opportunity that children and young people have to share their thoughts and experiences with us, they are not only protecting their rights to speak, to be heard, and to participate, but also those of their peers and of all the children and young people of the future.



Roderic O'Gorman TD
Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

2. Background

In 2015, the Government published the first [National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020](#) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015). It was a whole-of-government strategy, with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) having responsibility for policy leadership and support. The Strategy contained actions for all of Government as well as specific actions for relevant Government Departments and Agencies.

An action plan was also published in 2015 to direct implementation of the Strategy over the first three-year period. Since then, three annual implementation reports have been published.

In 2019, DCYA undertook a review of implementation and worked across government to develop an implementation plan for the remaining period of the Strategy. The Mid-Term Review and [Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020](#) reflected the infrastructure and progression of actions into the latter period of the Strategy (Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2019). The *Phase Two Action Plan* sought to outline plans for further implementation and to set goals for progressive improvement in participatory practice across Government Departments and Agencies. Phase Two of the Strategy and Action Plan reflected the context of support available to Government Departments and Agencies with Hub na nÓg fully operational and having a broad impact across sectors through its training programmes and other supports.

3. Aim of the review

The aim of this final review is to understand and document the progress made on each of the actions in the Strategy during its lifetime and to identify where further progress needs to be made. This review also outlines some examples of good practice demonstrated by Government Departments and Agencies in implementing actions under the Strategy and the *Phase Two Action Plan*.

Methodology

Each Government Department and Agency named in the Strategy was asked to provide updates for their respective Commitment Statuses using templates.

4. Strategy overview and defining participation

The *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 - 2020* is guided and influenced by the UNCRC and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Primarily aimed at children and young people aged under 18 years, the Strategy also embraces the voice of young people in the transition to adulthood.

The actions outlined in the Strategy aim to address the challenges in children and young people's lives and to enable them to participate appropriately in decision-making.

The commitments outlined in the Strategy are aligned with Government commitments in, and based on the values, principles and vision of, [Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The national policy framework for children & young people 2014 - 2020](#) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014).

The seven priority objectives of the Strategy are that children and young people will have a voice in decisions:

- In their local communities;
- In early education, schools and the wider formal and non-formal education systems;
- In decisions that affect their health and well-being, including on the health and social services delivered to them; and
- In the courts and legal system.

Additionally:

- The voice of children and young people in government decision-making and the development of policy, legislation and research will be embedded.
- Effective leadership to champion and promote participation of children and young people will be promoted.
- Education and training for professionals working with and on behalf of children and young people will be developed.

All commitments and actions in this Strategy are underpinned by the following key fundamentals:

- Recognition that children and young people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives
- Ensuring the protection and welfare of children and young people in accordance with [Children First](#) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2017)
- Establishing and improving mechanisms to ensure the participation of seldom-heard and vulnerable children and young people in decision-making
- Collection of data, monitoring and evaluation of children and young people's participation initiatives.

Defining participation

The UNCRC defines children and young people’s participation in decision-making as: “ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes” (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009). In the lived experiences of children, this relates to children and young people’s involvement in decision-making processes in everyday settings such as classrooms, childcare settings, healthcare, and out-of-school settings, as well as in national policy decisions that affect their lives.

Children and young people are recognised as rights holders, ‘citizens of today’ rather than merely as ‘beings in becoming’ (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009), and their capacity to participate in decisions that affect them evolves as they grow and mature.

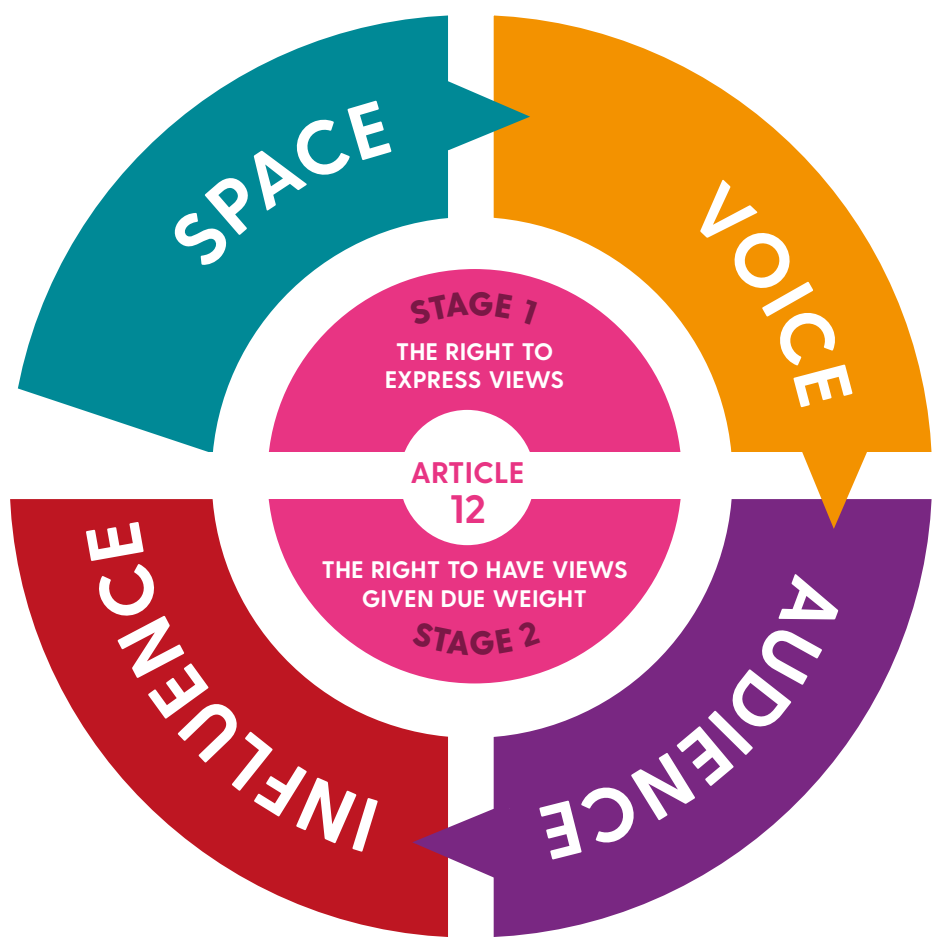
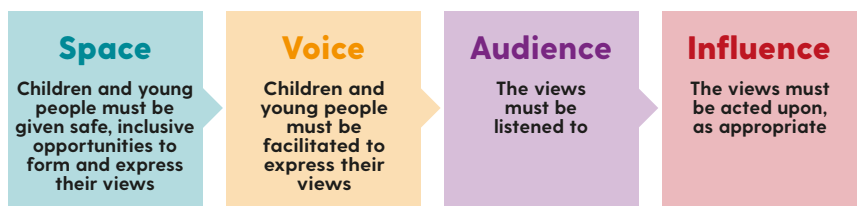
Children and young people have expertise in their own lives, and adults also have considerable expertise in the lives of children and young people. However, adults do not always know how children feel, what they think or what they like and, accordingly, they have a duty to give due weight to children and young people’s views in decision-making processes.

Lundy Model of Participation

The National Participation Strategy is underpinned by a rights-based model of participation developed by Professor Laura Lundy. In collaboration with Professor Lundy, a revised version of the model was developed for the [Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-making](#).

Lundy Model

This model provides a pathway to help conceptualise Article 12 of the UNCRC. It focuses on four distinct, albeit interrelated, elements. The four elements have a rational chronological order.



Source: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021

Everyday Spaces Checklist

This checklist is designed as a guide to help you ensure that children and young people have a voice in decision-making. It can be applied in many everyday situations including in classrooms, hospitals, childcare settings, child and youth services, youth and sports clubs, youth projects, arts and creative initiatives and other spaces.

Please do not use this checklist for developing policies, plans, services, programmes, governance, research and legislation – use the Planning Checklist.

Please make sure that the ways you involve children and young people in decision-making are age-appropriate and accessible for all, whether in person or online.



Source: Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021

5. Progress summary

The first, second and third annual reports on the implementation of the actions in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015 – 2020* were published in July 2016, November 2017 and January 2019, respectively. All three reports are available on the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) website.

The *Mid-Term Review and Phase Two Action Plan of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making, 2015-2020* was published in October 2019. This review is also available to view on the gov.ie website.

This final progress report shows a positive picture of how the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020* continues to be implemented.

The report findings show that 93% of the agreed actions have reached completion or are in progress.

All Government Departments and Agencies are actively progressing 92 of the 99 agreed actions that were set out in the *Phase Two Action Plan*.

This reflects a high level of commitment to ensuring that the voice of children and young people is appropriately listened to in the development of policies and services across government.

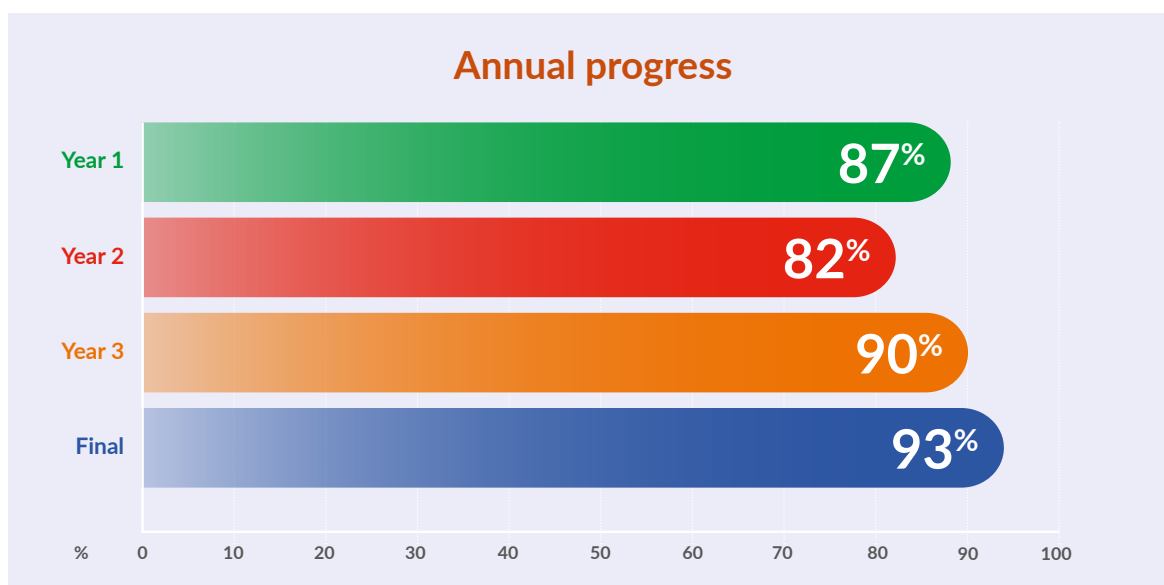


Figure 1. Annual Progress

Progress

Positive progress is reported across government on key actions to include the voice of children and young people at government policy level as well as in the delivery of services for children. Actions reported positively across Government Departments and Agencies were:

- **Action 1.1:** Government Departments and Agencies will consult with children and young people appropriately in the development of policy, legislation, research and services, with the support of DCEDIY (DCYA)
- **Action 1.2:** All Statements of Strategy published by Government Departments and Agencies will include participation of children and young people as an objective and an action.
- **Action 1.3:** Building on existing mechanisms, incremental progress will be made on funding criteria for publicly funded programmes and schemes that are relevant to children and young people, requiring consultation with children and young people.

Actions for further development

A number of actions in the Strategy will require ongoing monitoring and focus in order to ensure that all Government Departments and Agencies maintain the required standards. These actions are as follows:

- **Action 1.4:** Government Departments and Agencies and their funded bodies that provide services for children and young people will develop child- and youth-friendly feedback and complaints mechanisms.
- **Action 6.2:** Data collection, evaluation and monitoring of children and young people's participation initiatives will be conducted to ensure robust findings and outcomes that influence the development of policies and services.

Highlights

While progress can be reflected across the board in the level of requests for support from across government and public services, particular highlights deserve special mention.

Youth Travel Card

The [Comhairle na nÓg National Executive](#) comprises 31 members, with one representative drawn from each of the 31 Comhairlí na nÓg. They work together on a national topic that has been voted on by the broad Comhairle membership at Dáil na nÓg over a two-year term.

'Climate change' was the topic for Dáil na nÓg 2019, which took place in the Dáil Chamber. At the end of the deliberations, members nominated 'sustainable transport solutions' as the topic for the new Comhairle na nÓg National Executive to work on during their term of office.

The DCEDIY Participation Unit supported the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive to meet with decision-makers to achieve the aims of their selected topic. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, all activity moved online and members of the National Executive progressed their work on the selected topic via Zoom, meeting with decision-makers and topic experts, including officials from the Department of Transport Climate Action Unit, the National Transport Authority, and the Dublin City Council Climate Action Regional Office.

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive's final proposal was a Youth Travel Card which would provide a 50% discount on all public transport systems for all young people aged up to 23 years.

With the support of DCEDIY and the Department of Transport, this proposal was accepted and announced by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath, during the Budget announcement in October 2021. The card was launched in May 2022.

Adaptation to COVID-19

Participation of children and young people in national decision-making policy processes adapted to circumstances and continued online and in collaboration with professionals working directly with children and young people during COVID-19 restrictions. Consultations carried out during this time included:

How's Your Head? National consultation with young people on mental health and wellbeing

In the summer of 2020, DCEDIY, in conjunction with the Department of Health and the youth sector, collaborated with spunout.ie to undertake an online survey of young people's experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. A youth advisory group worked with DCEDIY to guide the development and analysis of the consultation. In addition, a steering group of key stakeholders representing the National Youth Council of Ireland, health services, and research experts worked with DCEDIY to oversee the consultation and to ensure that findings from the process were listened to in the appropriate areas of influence.

The consultation sought to understand how young people experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, asking them about what worked well for them and about the challenges they faced in maintaining their well-being. The consultation gave young people a chance to provide feedback on what could be useful to them in improving their mental health and well-being throughout the pandemic.

Input gathered from young people through the consultation was used to ensure that responses to the COVID-19 pandemic developed for society as a whole were relevant to the needs of young people; such input was also used to design and deliver services and messages for young people throughout the pandemic, including information campaigns on living alongside COVID-19.

Full Report: [How's Your Head: Young Voices During COVID-19. Report of a national consultation with young people on mental health and wellbeing](#)

UNCRC, UNCRPD and Universal Periodic Review

As part of the State's preparations for Ireland's next reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Human Rights Council under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, DCEDIY undertook a series of consultations with children and young people. The main objective of the consultations was to secure their views on the implementation of children's rights in Ireland. Two sets of consultations were undertaken. A total of 1,215 children aged between 4 and 13 years were recruited through 21 primary schools, and 46 young people aged 13–18 years were recruited from selected Comhairlí na nÓg (youth councils).

Both consultations were overseen by the National Participation Office and Hub na nÓg. For the consultation with primary school pupils, a working group comprising members of the management team and teaching staff from seven primary schools across Ireland was established to co-design the consultation approach and worksheets. In addition, an online youth advisory group of Comhairle na nÓg members was established.

Consultation sessions were facilitated by the class teachers with materials provided by DCEDIY, and consultations with Comhairle na nÓg members taking part in online sessions were facilitated by the National Participation Office and Hub na nÓg. Participating children and young people came from a variety of locations (urban/rural), with strong representation of seldom-heard children and young people (children living in disadvantaged areas, non-English speakers, and children with autism/learning difficulties).

Full Report: [WHAT WE THINK: Consultation with Children and Young People on Children's Rights 2021](#)

Reform of the family justice system

The Department of Justice Family Justice Oversight Group and the DCEDIY Participation Team worked together to develop a bespoke consultation process for children and young people with experience of the family court system in order to include their views and experiences in the review and reform of the family justice system.

The aim of the consultation was to secure the voice of children and young people to inform the development of a family justice strategy. The focus was on the family justice system as a whole, seeking children's and young people's experiences of the system, including courts and alternatives to going to court (e.g. mediation). The consultation explored what it was like to go through the process, what areas could be improved, and how the work of the judiciary/courts service could be improved.

Youth Friendly report: <https://assets.gov.ie/239780/4622c552-c809-493f-a66a-92cde379e490.pdf>

NPHET mask wearing consultation

In November 2021, in response to the increasing number of children contracting COVID-19, the Government introduced mask wearing for children aged 9–12 years in venues such as schools, retail environments and public transport. This decision and the need for children aged 9–12 years to continue wearing masks in these venues was reviewed by NPHET. To inform this review, the Department of Health asked the National Participation Office, in collaboration with Hub na nÓg, to consult directly with primary school children aged between 9 and 12 years in order to ascertain their experiences and views on mask wearing and thus inform NPHET's decision-making process.

The methodology was remotely piloted by five children from a range of schools. One of the first consultations to take place in three schools in different settings across Ireland, it obtained the views of children from fourth to sixth class on their experiences of wearing masks in school.

The draft report was presented to NPHET in February 2022, and mask restrictions in schools were relaxed in early March 2022.

6. Areas for further development

Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan

[The Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan](#) (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2021) was published in July 2021 and aims to enable Comhairle na nÓg to reach more children and young people and in turn enable them to influence more decision-makers. This Plan arose from a recommendation (G20.2) in the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 - 2020*:

The role and capacity of Comhairle na nÓg will be enhanced through the development and implementation of a 5-year Comhairle na nÓg Development Plan, aligned to Local Government structures and policies, and including children under the age of 12 and children and young people who are seldom heard. (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015, p. 51)

The Plan prioritises the establishment of a National Participation Office to manage Comhairle na nÓg activities; a collective voice for Comhairle na nÓg; continuous improvement; adequate funding; diverse and inclusive membership; guidance and support for members; and a communications and branding campaign to ensure recognition and awareness of Comhairle na nÓg among young people, decision-makers and all stakeholder groups. *The Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan* sets out the vision for Comhairle na nÓg to be recognised locally and nationally as the go-to structure empowering young people of all backgrounds to speak up, be heard, and influence decisions on matters that affect their lives. The Comhairle na nÓg mission, set out in the *Five Year Development Plan*, is to be the permanent rights-based structure that represents the voice of young people in Ireland and provides them with a platform to meaningfully engage with decision-makers and influence matters that affect them.

National Youth Assembly of Ireland

Following a commitment to establish youth assemblies in the Programme for Government 2020, DCEDIY established the National Youth Assembly of Ireland to act as a consultative forum on issues such as climate, rural development and other important issues, as required. The main function of the National Youth Assembly of Ireland is to provide a systematic means of capturing the voices of young people in Ireland and feeding this directly into Government policy.

National Youth Assembly of Ireland delegates are aged 12–24 years and come from across Ireland, sitting for a term of 18 months. The sitting delegates are nominated by established youth organisations and Comhairlí na nÓg (local youth councils). The sitting delegates are joined at each Assembly by a number of guest delegates who have a particular interest in the specific policy area being addressed (such as climate issues, rural development, etc.). DCEDIY convened the inaugural Youth Assembly on Climate on 2 March 2022, in collaboration with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC). The Assembly presented its recommendations to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications for inclusion in the Climate Action Plan 2022. DCEDIY and the Department of Rural and Community Development convened the Rural Youth Assembly on 14 July 2022. The Assembly presented its recommendations to the Minister for Rural and Community Development for inclusion in the Our Rural Future work programme. A National Youth Assembly on Artificial Intelligence took place on 12 October 2022, with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. DCEDIY is hosting a policy workshop for National Youth Assembly delegates to build capacity on Government Policy and on Youth Policy before the end of 2022.

Participation Framework implementation and capacity building

Hub na nÓg published the [Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making](#) in collaboration with Professor Laura Lundy. This Framework supports Government Departments, Agencies and organisations to improve their practice in listening to children and young people and giving them a voice in decision-making. The Framework focuses on children and young people's individual and collective participation in decision-making, whether that takes place in person, online or both.

The Framework aims to achieve the overarching objectives of the National Participation Strategy. This includes establishing and improving mechanisms to ensure that seldom-heard and vulnerable children and young people are listened to and are involved in decision-making; it also includes mainstreaming the participation of children and young people in the development of policy, legislation, services and research.

Meaningful and sustained participation by children and young people in decision-making requires strong organisational commitment, and the implementation of the Framework is supported by four enabling factors: organisational buy-in; training and capacity building for decision-makers; resources (financial, human, time); and monitoring and feedback.

The Framework is the strategic foundation from which Hub na nÓg will develop targeted policy and practical guidance. To date, implementation actions of the Framework include the delivery of a capacity building grant and training programme across sectors, including seldom-heard organisations (particularly involving the Travelling community and disability organisations), youth services, early years practitioners, and arts organisations. Plans to support further sectors are under way.

7. Case studies

Students' experience of remote learning and returning to school 2020 – A Department of Education initiative

Schools were closed due to COVID-19 restrictions for significant periods in 2020. During this time, students were taught remotely by their schools. Once restrictions were lifted in Autumn 2020, students returned to school, where new arrangements were in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The Department of Education wanted to learn about students' experiences during this time in order to ensure the provision of continuity of learning. Inspectors from the Department of Education Inspectorate facilitated consultations with children and young people to discover their experiences of remote learning and returning to school in 2020, in line with the Inspectorate's commitment to student voice. Separate consultations were conducted with primary and post-primary schools.

The principles of the *Participation Framework: National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making* and the Lundy Model of Participation were used to develop appropriate good practice methodologies for consulting with children and young people, which included the provision of child-friendly information in advance of the consultations. Children and young people were also informed about how their views would be shared and how these would inform decisions made by the Department of Education.

The issues raised at the consultations included that children and young people want to be involved in decision-making and asked for feedback on areas that directly affect them, both in schools and in the broader education system. For example, they requested that they be asked about how they were finding the safety routines and rules at school and what they thought about COVID-19. They highlighted the importance of directly seeking their views on these matters rather than relying on third parties to speak on their behalf. Students offered valuable insights into the teaching approaches that best supported their learning. They also shared valuable suggestions about how their learning and well-being could be supported at school in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, they highlighted the importance of collaborative and practical work.

The Inspectorate published the findings from the consultations on the Government website [Gov.ie](https://gov.ie). The findings were brought to the attention of the Minister for Education and relevant Department of Education divisions, including those responsible for the development of policy, guidance and supports for schools during school closure and reopening phases.

Development of National Standards for Children's Residential Centres by the Health Information and Quality Authority

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) wanted to get the views of children with experience of residential care to inform the development of the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres and an accompanying child-focused guide. Young people were involved from the outset in an advisory group of young people from Empowering People in Care (EPIC) that collaborated with HIQA on the development of good practice consultations and on the development of the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres. HIQA subsequently consulted with children and young people in community settings and in children's residential care settings, with the support of advocacy workers and staff.

In advance of the consultations, children were provided with child-friendly information on issues of confidentiality and on their right to leave the sessions. Creative and participatory methods were used by advocacy workers to ascertain children's views in child-friendly community spaces and in residential centres, with HIQA Standards staff participating in the process. These methods empowered children to give their views on what works well in children's residential care, what could work better, and what needs to change.

Children and young people raised a wide range of issues on living in residential care, which they wanted to see reflected in the National Standards and the accompanying guide. These ranged from the importance of being supported to stay in contact with their family, as well as with their friends and community, to having a good relationship with their key worker and staff in the centre. They spoke about it being essential that they were told

about what was going on, as they often felt they had little control or certainty about their situation. They also spoke about the need for the residential centre to be homely, to provide a sense of security, and to be a place where their privacy was respected and where they could develop and grow. It was important for young people who had left care to be able to go back to the centre to see staff, as it was a secure base for them.

Children and young people's views were incorporated into the National Standards and the accompanying guide. They advised on the aspects of the National Standards that children needed to know about and on how the guide should be designed. Both documents were sent back to the children at draft stage for review. The views of the children and young people were essential to ensuring that the National Standards and the guide focus on child-centred care and support, and they clearly set out to staff what this should look like.

8. Implementation across Government Departments and Agencies

Graphs show which actions have been achieved, are in progress, have not been achieved or are not applicable.

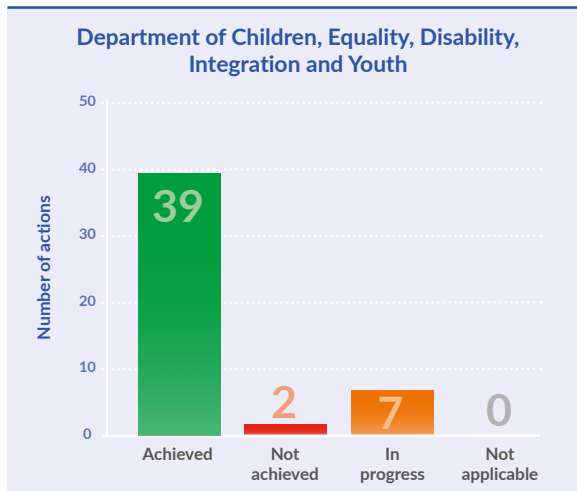


Figure 2

Note:

In 2019, members of Comhairle na nÓg voted in Dáil na nÓg on the topic of sustainable transport solutions. The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive, comprising a total of 31 members, one drawn from each Comhairle, had been working on this topic with the support of DCEDIY and the Department of Transport. The National Executive's final proposal was a Youth Travel Card which would provide a 50% discount on all public transport systems for all young people aged up to 23 years. This proposal was accepted and included in the 2021 Budget, for launch in 2022.

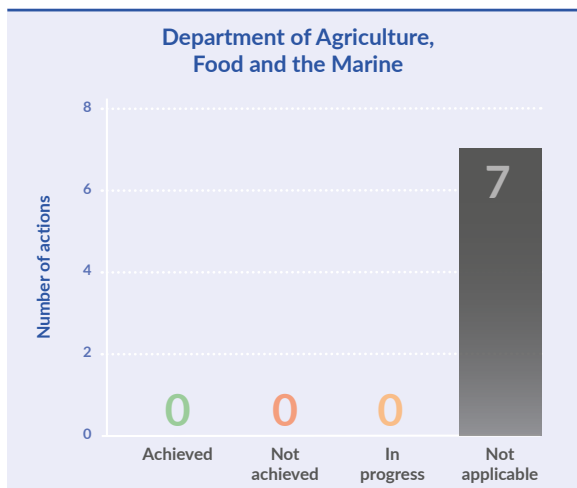


Figure 3

Note:

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine neither provides services to, nor oversees services in respect of, children or young people. Consequently, it has not been appropriate to include participation of children and young people as an objective and action in its Statement of Strategy. However, when drafting its Statements of Strategy, it issues a general invitation to anyone or any organisation that wishes to provide input.

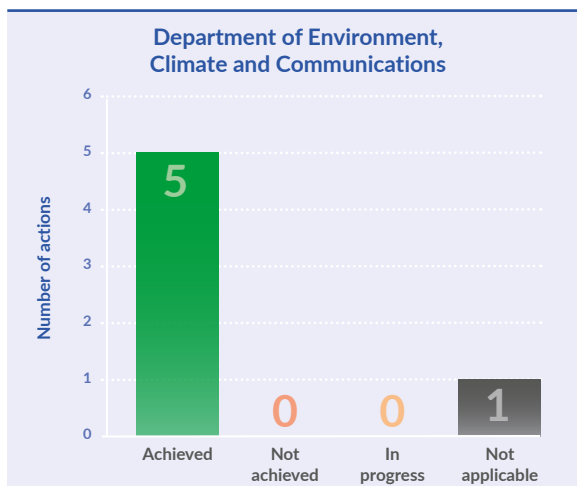


Figure 4

Highlight:

DECC engaged widely with young people through the Climate Conversations to provide input into the *Climate Action Plan 2021*. This has informed the design of the National Dialogue on Climate Action to support ongoing engagement with young people on climate action and the establishment of the Youth Assembly on Climate.

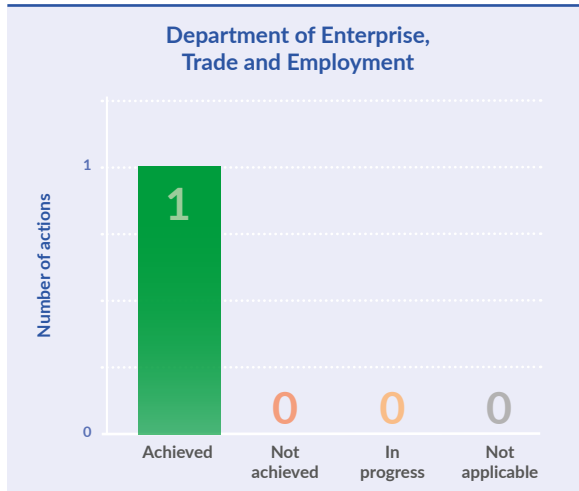


Figure 5

Note:

The objectives set out in *AI - Here for Good: A National Artificial Intelligence Strategy for Ireland* (Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, 2021) in relation to the “building of public trust in AI as a source for societal good in Ireland” include a strategic action that notes the need to open a conversation with children and young people about artificial intelligence (AI) through Comhairle na nÓg.

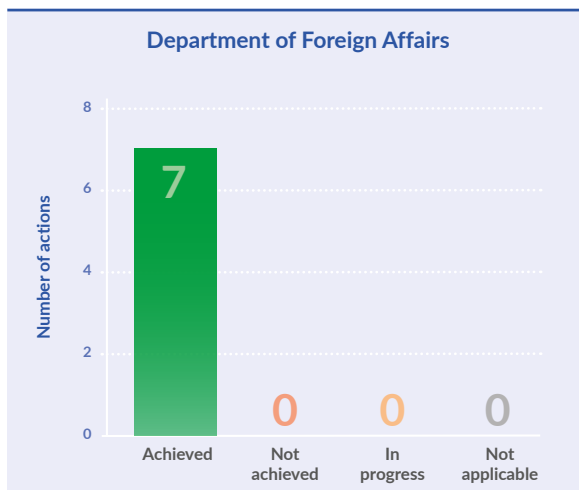


Figure 6

Highlight:

As part of its work to support the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement (and subsequent agreements), the Department of Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Fund provides financial support for organisations working to build better relations within and between traditions in Northern Ireland, between North and South on the island of Ireland, and between Ireland and Britain. The Fund supports a range of youth development and youth leadership programmes that seek to promote the capacity of young people to become active citizens and leaders in their communities.

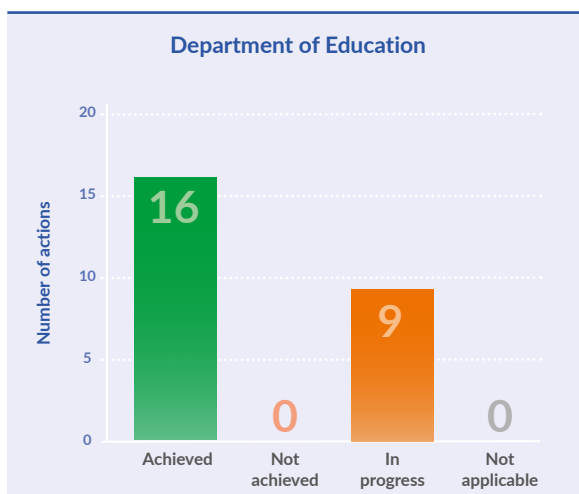


Figure 7

Note:

Local Creative Youth Partnerships (LCYPs) are a Department of Education-led initiative under Pillar 1 of the Creative Ireland Programme 2017–2022. LCYPs were established on a pilot basis in three Education and Training Boards in 2018, and three further LCYPs were established in 2021, bringing the total number to six. Since LCYPs were established, a Participation Officer has worked with LCYPs to provide training (via Hub na nÓg) to staff in each partnership in order to ensure that the voice of children and young people is reflected in the design and delivery of all programmes. This is ongoing and will continue in the development of the Creative Youth Programme 2023–2027.

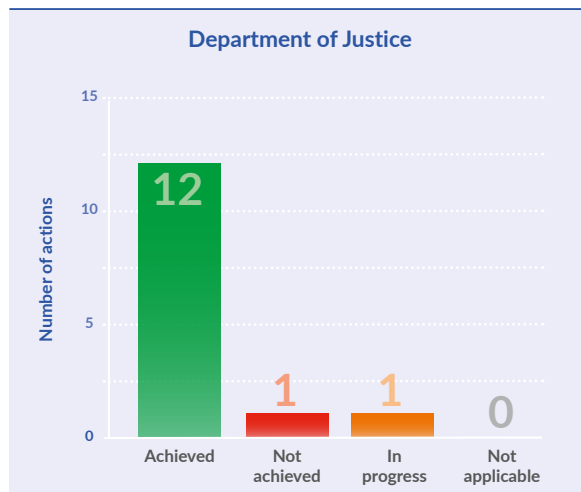


Figure 8

Highlight:

In line with its aim to capture the views of all those engaged with the family justice system, the Department of Justice launched a consultation specifically focused on children and young people in 2021. The process was devised, led and implemented by DCEDIY. The results will inform the first Family Justice Strategy.

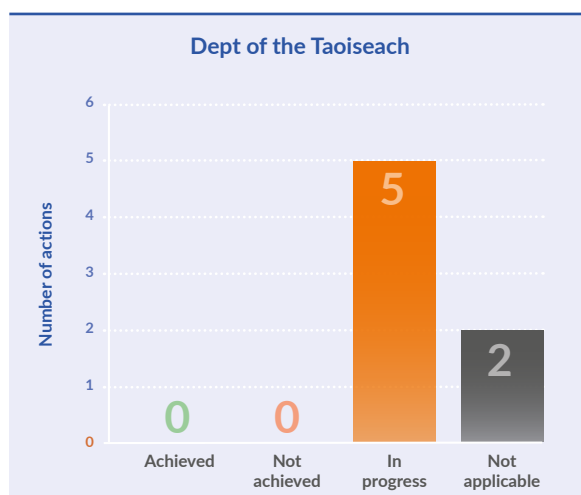


Figure 9

Note:

The Department of the Taoiseach does not have responsibility for reporting on international instruments, but considers all such measures against national commitments when required by Government business.

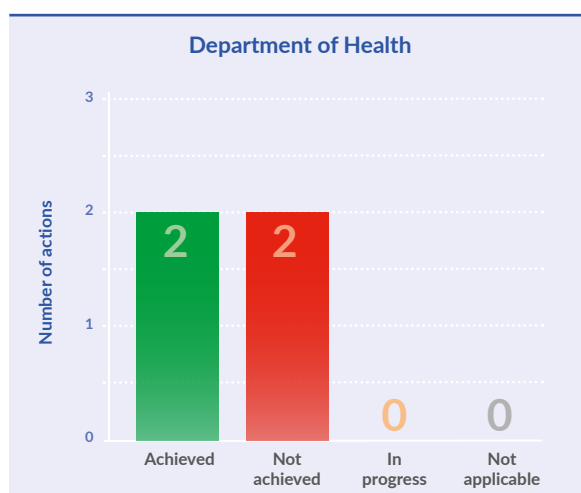


Figure 10

Highlight:

In 2020, the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) collaborated with DCEDIY on the *How's Your Head? Young Voices During COVID-19: Report of a national consultation with young people on mental health and wellbeing* (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth).



Figure 11

Highlight:

The Education Department in the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI) consistently seeks feedback from children and young people. Engaging with children and young people in a real and meaningful way has led to groundbreaking initiatives such as the Apollo Project and Your Gallery at School; relationships and collaborations with Gaisce and AsIAM; and highly tailored, award-winning general programming for children and young people. In October 2021, the NGI launched Boring Art, an exhibition curated entirely by young people. Children have created content for their peers with members of the NGI education team. The Gallery Guide Panel now includes young people, and young people also attend NGI education forums on programming, thus ensuring their involvement from the earliest possible opportunity.

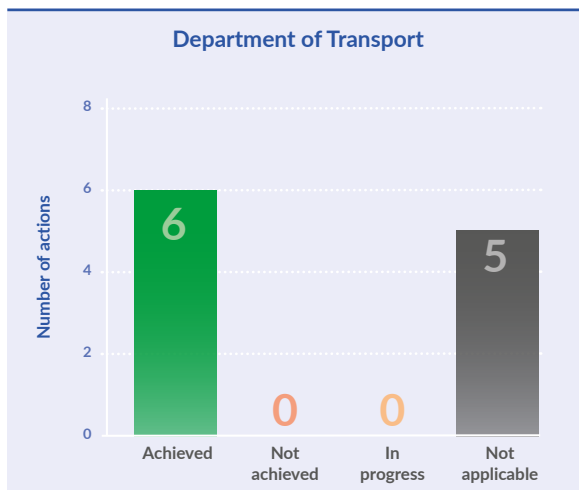


Figure 12

Highlight:

The Department of Transport is finalising a new national sustainable mobility policy which will be published shortly. The phrase ‘sustainable mobility’ includes both active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport. This new policy will support the ambitions of the Programme for Government in these areas and replace the existing sectoral policy documents which were published in 2009, including the National Cycle Policy Framework. The policy will look at how we can make sustainable mobility options and infrastructure accessible to everyone, including children and young people. Comhairle na nÓg was consulted on a number of occasions while the new sustainable mobility policy was being developed.

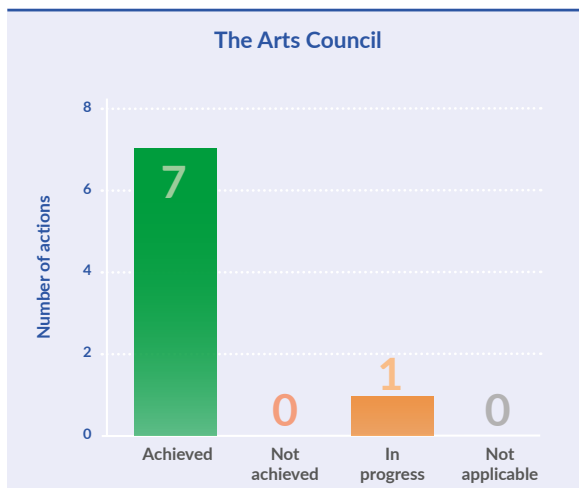


Figure 13

Highlight:

Consultation with children and young people continues to be a key funding priority of the Young Ensembles Scheme – evident in the Arts Council guidelines, evaluation criteria and report forms for that scheme. The following significant developments have built on this practice: the Arts Council included questions regarding young people’s voice in decision-making for all applicants to Strategic Funding and Arts Centre Funding in 2020, 2021 and 2022. Additionally, in 2020, the Arts Council introduced a Young People, Children and Education Project Award, a key criterion for which was involving young people in decision-making.

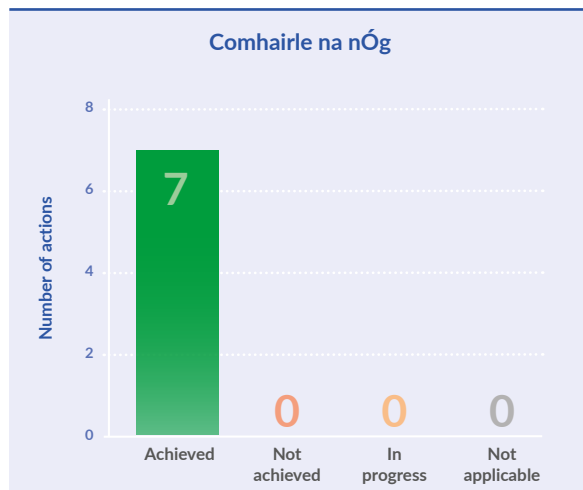


Figure 14

Highlight:

The Comhairle na nÓg National Executive fulfilled the mandate of climate-conscious transport solutions at Dáil na nÓg 2019. It conducted research, including nationwide surveys, and narrowed the issue to affordable public transport. In addition, it developed proposals and was successful in having an affordable Youth Travel Card introduced in both the Climate Action Plan and Budget 2022.

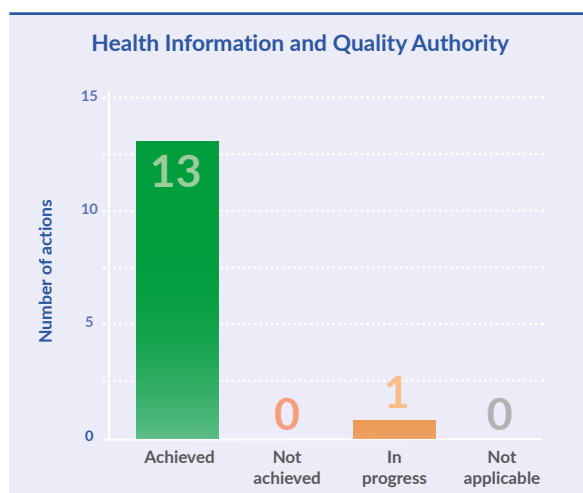


Figure 15

Highlight:

As part of the methodology of all inspections of centres and services, HIQA continues to report on compliance with National Standards and Regulations. It consults with children who use services or live in residential centres and asks them how they contribute to decisions in relation to their care and interventions. For example, the inspection reports resulting from HIQA's foster care inspection programme 2019-2020 included commentary on children's preparation for, and participation in, their child-in-care review.

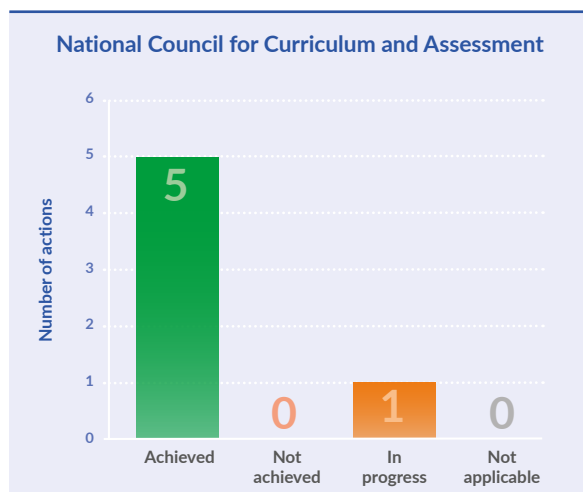


Figure 16

Highlight:

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has formalised structured arrangements for engaging in dialogue and consultation with the recognised student representative body, the Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU). These arrangements entail the establishment of a standing committee composed of a Deputy Chief Executive Officer and an Education Officer working with three representatives of the ISSU. Terms of reference have been agreed between the NCCA and the ISSU.

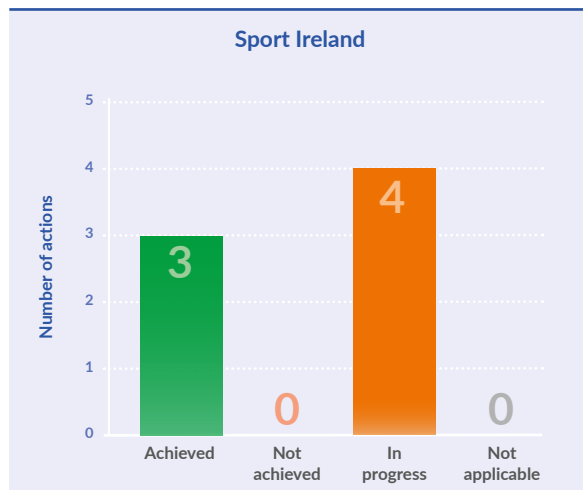


Figure 17

Highlight:

Sport Ireland’s Consulting with [Young Voices in Sport Toolkit](#) is designed to provide a tool for engaging with children and young people. Due to the design of the toolkit, COVID-19 pandemic challenges delayed the roll-out to all governing bodies. However, plans are under way to recommence this for delivery in 2022.

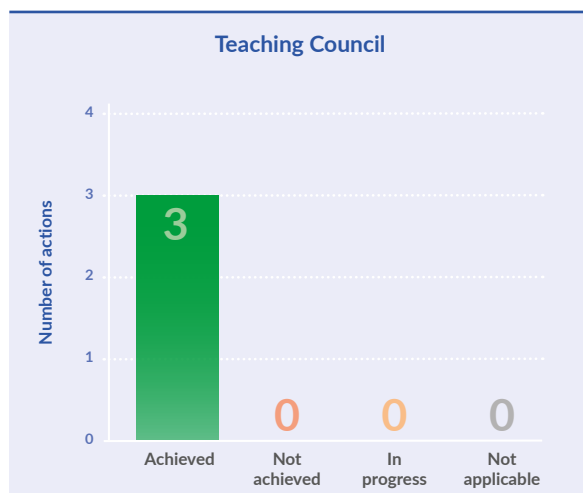


Figure 18

Highlight:

The Teaching Council recognises the value of young people’s participation in policy development. In carrying out its functions, the Council ensures that the voice of the young person/student is represented in the Council’s Learning for All webinar series, BEACONS process, and discussions on well-being and strategic planning.

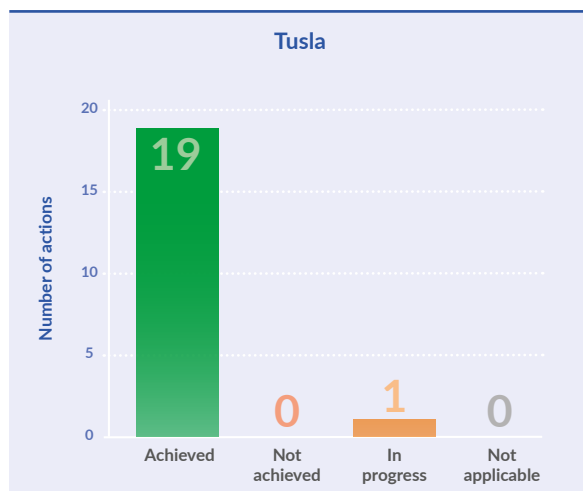


Figure 19

Highlight:

Tusla’s strategy statements include participation of children and young people both as an objective and an action.

Tusla’s *Child and Youth Participation Strategy 2019-2023* (Tusla – Child and Family Agency, 2019) clearly defines, within a set of cultural indicators, that all future Tusla policies and procedures will be participation proof. The views of young people will be explicit in all new policies, guidelines and procedures. Over 50% of Tusla staff have completed training in Child and Youth Participation. Tusla has extended this to partner agencies.

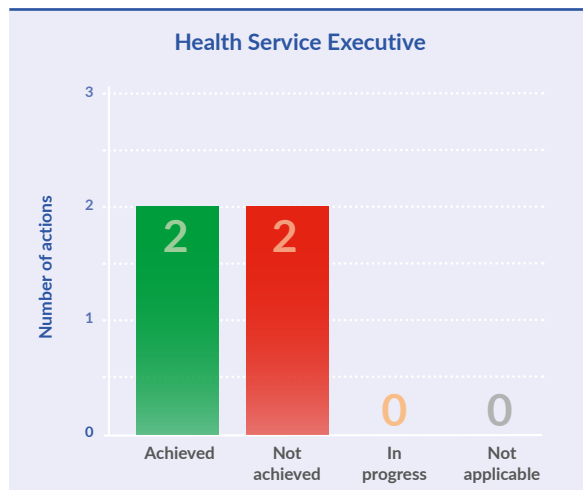


Figure 20

Highlight:

In 2021, the HSE collaborated with Hub na nÓg in DCEDIY to consult with young people aged 12–17 years, including young people who are members of the Travelling community, on skin protection behaviours.

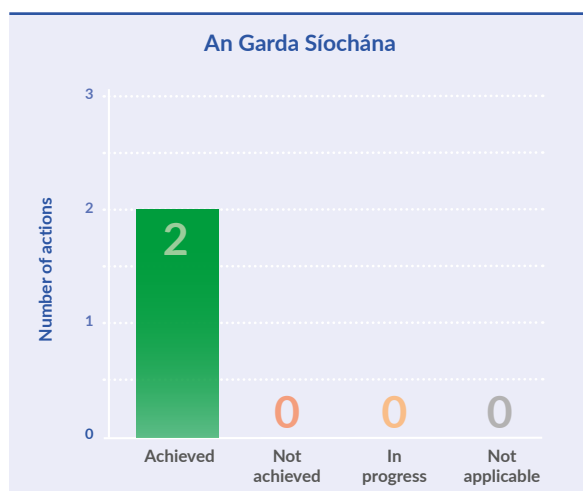


Figure 21

Highlight:

An Garda Síochána works with Webwise, a partner of the Garda Schools Programme for Internet safety, and each year it coordinates Safer Internet Day in Ireland. An Garda Síochána and Webwise have co-produced Internet safety programmes for primary and secondary schools. Webwise also supports the Professional Development Service for Teachers on Internet safety.

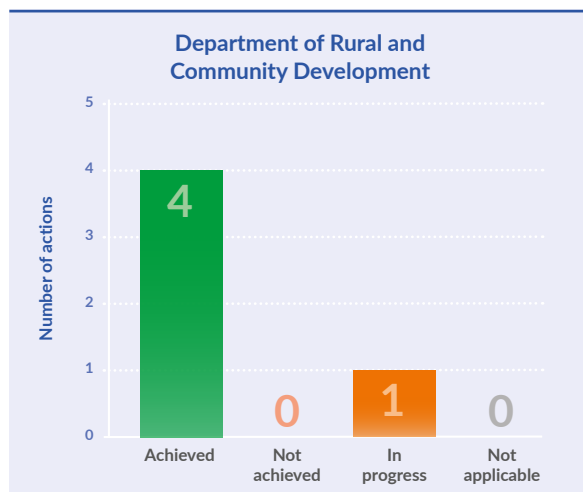


Figure 22

Highlight:

The first Rural Youth Assembly took place on 16 November 2021, jointly organised with Comhairle na nÓg and DCEDIY. A total of 35 young people (aged 12–18 years) participated and discussed issues of importance to them, including the challenges and opportunities associated with living, studying and socialising in rural Ireland. An event report was produced; it contained feedback and recommendations for consideration by Government.

9. Conclusion

The findings of this review show that Government Departments and Agencies continue to make concerted efforts to ensure that children and young people's views are taken into account in making policy, in designing services, and in legislating, where it will have an impact on their lives.

This final progress report shows a positive picture of how the *National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making 2015 – 2020* continues to be implemented.

The report findings show that 93% of the agreed actions have reached completion or are in progress.

With the establishment of the National Participation Office, the National Youth Assembly of Ireland, and the recent national success of Comhairle na nÓg's work on the Youth Travel Card, the participation landscape in Ireland is well established in terms of permanent structures. The Comhairle na nÓg Five Year Development Plan continues to be implemented in order to build on this success and to strengthen these structures by extending the reach and influence of Comhairle na nÓg and to include the voices of more children and young people in policy-making.

While there is a strong understanding of policy-makers' need to involve children and young people in decision-making, there continues to be a poor understanding of how to do this and at what stage of the process, and weaknesses remain in ensuring that children and young people receive feedback in the outcomes of decision-making.

Progress has been made, but more work remains to be done to build capacity across all sectors and at all levels, from national to local to organisational to everyday spaces, in order to reduce fear and build competence in professional working with or on behalf of children and young people to carry out this work. This will involve cross-sectoral awareness, collaboration and consistency in education provision in third level and further education settings.

Building on the strong foundation of work achieved to date, consistency in delivery across all sectors and levels will need to be the focus into the future.

The launch of the Participation Framework in 2021 and its subsequent early implementation in the form of the capacity grant and Hub na nÓg training is setting the scene for a future focus on embedding participation practice across all policy-making and everyday structures that have an impact on the lives of children and young people.

The future focus will be on ensuring that this priority is embedded in organisations, services, everyday spaces, and local and national government as standard. The Participation Framework sets out the enabling factors that need to be taken into account by Government Departments and Agencies, organisations, and professionals in supporting the participation of children and young people in decision-making so that adequate time and resources are provided as standard in normal working practices.

Hub na nÓg will continue to focus on building capacity across all sectors so as to ensure that children and young people are included in decision-making processes from the earliest stages and to ensure that this extends to the everyday spaces where children spend their everyday lives, and will also focus on continuing to document examples of best practice.

Direct support from Hub na nÓg on policy consultations will focus on removing barriers to the participation of seldom-heard children and young people.

Participation will continue to form a core principle of policy-making and its implementation across government and public services, and will continue to be a key priority of government.

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