

Date: September 2020

Title: Participation and Engagement with Children and Young People

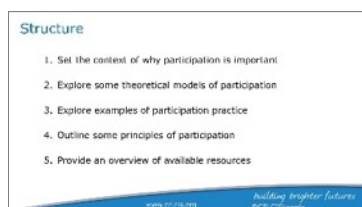
Speaker: Paul Sullivan, Sector Engagement Lead, CELCIS

You are watching a webinar about the PACE programme from the delivery team in CELCIS, at the University of Strathclyde. PACE is a Quality Improvement programme aiming to reduce drift and delay in permanence planning for looked after children. These webinars were recorded in the spring of 2020, so please be aware that key changes in legislation, guidance and practice may have occurred since this time.



Hello, and welcome along to this CELCIS webinar presentation on participation and engagement with children and young people. My name is Paul Sullivan, and I'm sector engagement at CELCIS. For anyone who isn't aware: CELCIS is Scotland's Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow.

My role as sector engagement lead is a bit of a hybrid role, it is half policy and half participation. Just to give you a little bit of background to me first; my career has been heavily involved in participation across the private sector and also the voluntary sector – working at RBS, The Prince's Trust, the Life Changes Trust, and very recently the Independent Care Review. All thinking about how we can bring lived experience and participation into change management, service design and policy. So I'll bring a bit of that experience into this and how that's influenced policy in Scotland as well.



Just to explain the structure of this webinar: it will give you a bit of an introduction into participation and why it's recognised as important; exploring some of the theoretical models in academic literature that exist around participation. We're then going to look at some practice examples, and three examples in particular, although there are many more that we

could discuss; as well as some principles of participation and how you could build your own participation activity. We're then going to get into some really practical tips and we'll finish by talking about some of resources that are available to support you in thinking about participation.

So it's important to say that you won't learn everything you need to within this webinar alone, but there are so many excellent resources out there that I'll signpost you to at the end of this presentation.



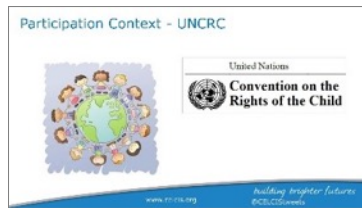
So although this is pre-recorded I wanted to build in some time for reflection as well. So I really encourage you to do that throughout this, maybe pause at certain points, grab a tea or coffee, and take stock of how some of this explanation that we're going into go into fits within the work that you do at a local level.

My contact details will be at the end of this presentation. So if there's anything CELCIS can do to follow up on this to help you with your participation, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me. I'm more than happy to help with anything that you need.



So first of all, just a point about language. In this presentation, I'm going to refer specifically to participation. There are a few reasons for that; a lot of other terms are used, and often unhelpfully, there are different variations and interpretations of these terms.

In this presentation I'm going to refer to participation, because that is what's most commonly understood when we're thinking about involving children and young people in decision making and power are being shared. So it's not in the sense of participation as taking part in a sport for example. It's participation within decision making. In other areas there are terms like 'service-user involvement', 'co-production', and even 'community development' - these type of terms are also used. But participation is generally understood within the context of children and young people and that is where you'll see the majority of the literature.



So just to cover off why participation is important and some of the context as to why, but this reason is important, particularly in Scotland. I'm sure some people are aware of [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), commonly known as the UNCRC.

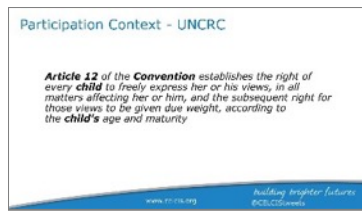
UNCRC is a legally binding international agreement and sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.

Why is that important now in Scotland and why is it important for us thinking about participation? Well, the reason it's particularly prescient now is because the Scottish Government in this year's [Programme for Government 2020-21](#) has committed to legislation that will incorporate the UNCRC into Scots Law. Many countries have incorporated the UNCRC into domestic law, such as Norway, but in many settings, the practice is not implemented and having the UNCRC grounded in Scots Law will make a significant difference in in Scotland.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect that's had on all of us, Maree Todd MSP - the Minister for Children and Young People - has recently restated the government's commitment to incorporation within this parliamentary term and to introduce a Bill later this year.

The reason it's important is - despite a strong policy background and understanding of participation in Scotland (there loads of examples of that; recent examples, including the [Care Review](#), but also thinking about other reviews of public services such as the [Christie Commission](#)) - children and young peoples' views are still not heard routinely, and given due weight in the decisions that affect their lives.

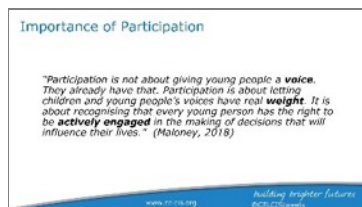
So full incorporation of the [UNCRC](#) will go some way to ensuring that their voices are heard, and that will be recognised from a legislative point of view. But it's really important in terms of cultural awareness of participation and in terms of children's rights awareness overall. There are 42 articles and the UNCRC and you'll be pleased to know I wouldn't read them all out, but what I wanted to focus on was [Article 12](#) .



I'm going to read this out just for anyone who can't see it- so Article 12 of the convention "establishes the right of every child to freely express his or her views, in all matters affecting her or him, and the subsequent right for those views to be given due weight according to the child's age and maturity". The UNCRC is written in this slightly legalistic fashion, but there are some excellent resources and guidance that explain the UNCRC in a more child friendly way, which I'll point to later.

Whilst this may sound slightly legalistic, it's important to recognise that this is about the realities of children and young people, this is about their experiences and that's why it's a really important grounding for us to think about participation in Scotland as well.

I wanted to express that aspect of children, young people having the need to participate in all decisions, all matters affecting her or him as well. So that's one reason why it's important, but we'll move on to some other reasons just now.



I wanted to reflect on a quote from a care experienced young adult that we've done a lot of work with CELCIS. First of all, I think it's a fantastic way of illustrating the importance of participation. So I'll read the quote, "Participation is not about giving young people a voice. They already have that. Participation is about letting children and young people's **voices** have real **weight**. It is about recognising that every young person has a right to be **actively engaged** in the making of decisions that will influence their lives." (Maloney, 2018)

I think that's an excellent way of putting it. The reason I've highlighted 'voice' and 'weight' and 'actively engaged' is what you hear quite a lot is children and young people being listened to, but not necessarily given the *weight* their voice deserves. Going back to what we've just looked in terms of the UNCRC, this isn't just about listening without taking actions. It's about listening, reflecting, giving that voice weight and then thinking

about what we need to do differently in order to allow them to influence these decisions.

So it's an excellent way of putting it. I think it's important for us to consider, because children, by definition, do not have the same decision making power and autonomy that is naturally given to adults – the right to vote being the most obvious example of that. So we need to actively think about how we can involve children and young people in decisions so that they can have their rights realised.



I wanted to reflect on a few principles of why participation is important. I could have filled that slide a few times over, but I wanted to just focus on a few and allow people to reflect on their own examples of why you might think participation is important as well.

The first one is that rights-based approach, and something we've discussed a bit already, but if we can ensure that we are listening to children and young people and involving them meaningfully in decisions that affect them, then we're already going some way to incorporating a rights-based approach and practice in Scotland. It's important to try and get ahead of the legislation in that respect, so that we're not playing catch up once that comes in to effect.

The next one I want to speak about is improved outcomes. That's potentially the most fundamental and important. So there's a lot of research to show that participation is beneficial for outcomes. There're benefits for participants taking part in service change, or any other type of participation, but there's also recognised improved outcomes in service design and service delivery as well. Part of that comes down to ownership and respect and having a buy-in to change. So when you have ownership of something, when you're respected in something then that gives you a much greater buy-in to that change.

If we have ownership of something, then we're bringing our experience into that sphere, we're bringing our experience into that design. That's something that in Scotland, the research has shown us that there's a huge benefit in; if we can actually do something as a partnership, if we can do something in terms of collaboration, taking in the really, really important lived experience of issues, then it's fundamental to improving outcomes as well.



Part of that comes down to an asset-based approach, which is something that I want to reflect on in the Care Review's practice. That's something we gave real weight to at the Care Review. Part of that is about valuing lived experience of an issue; so valuing care experience in that respect, for an example. But having an asset-based approach means that you're not just reflecting on care experience, you're not just seeing care experience, you're seeing the whole person.

So if you're designing participation, and you might be thinking about designing a question set that doesn't stigmatise people, making sure that you can incorporate all of the many skills and experiences that people will have in their life and not just seeing people through the lens of any one protected characteristic, such as disability for example. See the whole person and you'll lead to improved outcomes as well.

The last point on this slide, around shared learning opportunities as well. There is what's called a 'snowball effect'; as we are creating participation opportunities in one setting, that then influences the practice of other organisations, and other services, and other sectors who are involved in similar work. So this a lot of associate learning opportunities in Scotland around participation as well, and I'm going to reflect on some of those in the resources slide.



Another one is just around fun as well. We commit a lot of our lives to work and to activism, let's make sure we have fun in this as well. I think participation, certainly through my experience and the experience of others that I've worked with, is that it is hugely enjoyable and it leads to a much, much richer working environment. If you can make sure that you're responding to lived experience and the people that you're ultimately aiming to help through your work as well.



I wanted to give an opportunity for reflection here, so feel free to take a pause, grab a tea or a coffee, and think about what happens if you don't have participation. So even in your own experience, have you been involved in something where your views weren't taken into account? What was the impact of that? How did that make you feel? I think that's worth us just reflecting on when we're thinking about service design, and maybe some of the big picture work that involves participation. Maybe think about your own individual experience, first of all, and think about how it might feel if there's something important to you that is happening, but you've not been consulted on it. Maybe think of an example of that on the break.



Now we're going to move on to looking at some of the academic literature and some of the theoretical models around participation. There are three models I am going to focus on, although there are many others that are available. In particular, we're going to focus on Hart's Ladder, we're going to focus on the Lundy Model, and we're going to focus on the Double Diamond as well.

So, first of all, it's important to say that there is a lot of academic literature around participation and it's different for different settings. As we spoke about earlier, there's going to be a lot of participation research in relation to children and young people. When we think about adult services, there's a lot about participation and there's also a lot of community engagement, or service-user involvement as well. So it's important not to get bogged down in that.

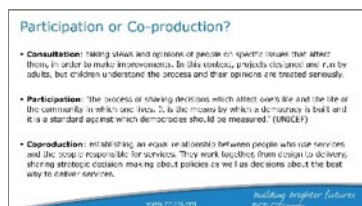




There is a lot of participation research and academic literature there, but the important principle is to not get weighed down by it all.



Try and see it as a pick and mix. Try and think about what is beneficial for your setting and your work and the people you're working alongside. Take what you think is going to be helpful for you and build your own participation approach around that.



Just to reflect on some of the really commonly understood terms that underpin some of this research.

[Hart's Ladder](#) builds on an academic called Sherry Arnstein's [Ladder of Citizen Participation](#), which was published way back in 1969 in the Journal of the American Planning Association.

It's considered one of the classic and most influential participation theories. Arnstein rests her theory on the declaration that citizen participation is citizen power, arguing that participation cannot be had without sharing and redistributing power. So it's a bit of a guide and a bit of a reference point within the literature.

Hart's is more recent, it was developed in 1992 but very much builds on Arnstein's original model. I suppose what is helpful in this context is that it provides a clear steer on what Roger Hart deems *not* to be meaningful participation. I've focused on some of the key terms that you often see here. So consultation will be taking the views and opinions of people in

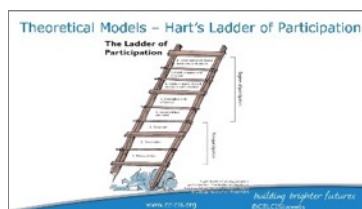
specific issues that affect them in order to make improvements. So in this context, projects designed and run by adults, but children understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously. So that is what we'd considered as consultation on the ladder.

Participation, is defined by UNICEF as "the process of sharing decisions which affect one's life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and is a standard against which democracies should be measured". That's a really, really important quote and perfectly encapsulates the importance of participation at the same time.

So coproduction, again, this is a really commonly used term and sometimes it is used erroneously. It's important to think about your own context whenever you're designing participation and think about we are on this ladder. The ladder is only a guide, and there are pros and cons to using it, but it's worth having a think and having a sense check of where you think you might be. It's not to say that you have to be at the top, it's just to recognise where you are on that ladder.

Coproduction is establishing an equal relationship between people who use services and the people responsible for services. That work together, from design to delivery, sharing strategic decision making about policies, as well as decisions about the best way to deliver services.

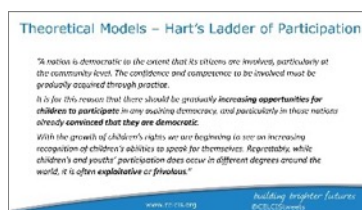
Quite a lot of the time where people fall down on coproduction, is that naturally, some projects come about from an organisational point of view. So it's been an idea or a funded project, or something like that, in an organisation. So it's not, by definition, come from the views of children and young people. So to call something coproduction when it's come from a different means, is sometimes wrong. So it's important to think about where you might be on the ladder.



This is an illustration of the ladder itself. As you can see, you go up the rungs as you move towards co production and full ownership. So when you're designing your projects, it's worth reflecting on, where you want to be and then having a sense check - once it's designed - about where you think your participation, or your project, might land. It's important not to over claim, but certainly not to over promise. We'll come back to some of the principles of participation later, but that's certainly where some people

fall down; as they're thinking, I need to be at coproduction and over promising to children and young people when, in reality, what you're doing is consultation or what you're doing is maybe participation.

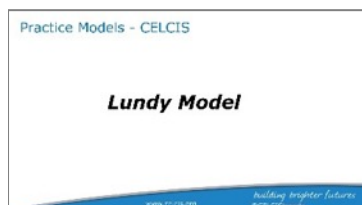
So just to reflect on some of Hart's thinking; Hart recognised in the early 90s, that there was a movement towards children's participation - a movement that we can clearly see today, still maintaining and growing. But there were risks associated with this, namely the risk of tokenism, or exploitation. So the ladder is a guide and a reference point to reducing that risk.



I think it lies in the points of democracy; so a nation being democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved, particularly at the community level. The confidence and the competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice, it is for this reason, there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy, and particularly in those nations already convinced that they are democratic.

So it reflects on the growth of children's rights and an increasing recognition of children's abilities to speak for themselves as well. Those are some really important points I think for us to reflect on. We've already discussed the [UNCRC](#) and it is worth us considering, particularly in our democracy, where we view children and young people as well. So these examples talk about no one having absolute control over anything, even given the example of the President of the United States not having control over everything, and they have to consult and engage as well.

It's also worth reflecting again on that rung structure. At the very top, at the peak, it's about sharing power - it's not completely handing over power - it's sharing power and working collaboratively as well.



So this model is known as the [Lundy Model](#) . It was developed by academic Laura Lundy. She is a professor of international children's rights

at the School of Education at the Queen's University of Belfast. It first came around in around 2007, published in the British Educational Journal, and it provides a way of conceptualising a child's right to participation, as laid down in the previously discussed Article 12 of the [UNCRC](#).



Lundy argues that Article 12 isn't enough. She goes into some detail about how we can put those rights into practice. The model is intended to focus decision makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of participation. She goes into four main areas of how we can do that: space, voice, audience and influence. I'll go into some of these in a bit more detail.

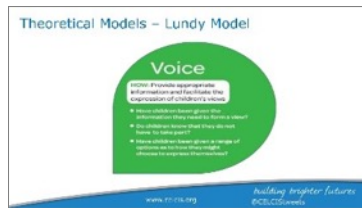
The Lundy Model of participation was prominently featured and endorsed by the [Irish Department of Children and Youth Affairs in their fairly recent national strategy on children and young people's participation and decision making](#). I'd like to flag that as worth a look, it's one of the most comprehensive and meaningful participation strategies that I've come across, and actually goes into some detail about how you can implement participation in practice. It's a really, really excellent piece of work.



Thinking about those four aspects, thinking space first of all. According to the Lundy Model creating a space for children and young people to express their views is the first step and implementing a child or young person's participation rights under Article 12 of the [UNCRC](#). So it's a practical guide, and I think there's a number of questions that you can begin to ask yourself when you're thinking about participation design in this context.

Have children's views been sought actively? What have you done to create space for young people's views to be heard? Is that space safe? Is it a welcoming space? If we think about environment, don't underestimate the importance of having an environment that is engaging, is safe, and is somewhere where children feel they can express themselves freely. Space is also about thinking what steps have you taken to ensure that all

children affected by the decision can take part, so have you thought about the right people to engage within this as well?

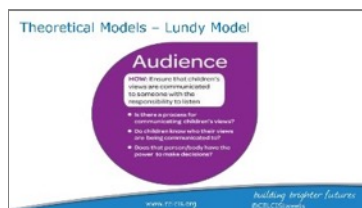


Voice; so Article 12, gives children the right to express their views freely. But what are we doing to ensure that that is incorporated meaningfully? So how are we supporting that voice to be heard?

Sometimes that's about the design of the question set, for example in thinking about practice.

- Do children have the information they need to understand the context and what they are being asked to contribute to?
- Do they have a range of options in which to contribute and there are, in the resources that I'll point to, so many ways of doing that - particularly for younger children who are very often excluded from participation activity. How have you made the environment and the space to be inclusive enough for all ages and stages to be heard?

So have you given children a range of options to contribute? Have the questions been designed, has the activity been designed in a way that's engaging and that's going to make sure that they can first of all enjoy the activity but also understand and be able to commit their voice to what you're looking to do.



So thinking about audience; one of the primary reasons for the development of the Lundy Model is to drive home that voice is not enough. Lundy sought to stress that children and young people have right of audience, they must be guaranteed an opportunity to communicate their views to an individual body with the responsibility to make decisions.

There is a checklist here to think about how we can do that. A part of that is about how the process designed for communicating children's views: do children know who their views are being communicated to? And does that person / body have the power to make decisions?



I think from a practical point of view, that's something really worth considering when you're thinking about design - and thinking about it right from outset the design - because, in my experience, what often happens is it's down to a few people, or one person often, in an organisation or a service to think about participation.

So they spend so much time engaging with children and young people, so much time in designing an activity, but they've not put in the work in the background to think about, "how do I make sure that their voice then has influence?". So if you're thinking about a participation project, you need to think about where the power points within that as well. Where is that voice going to go? What is your influence strategy behind that? And how are you going to make sure that not only can you have that influence and ensure that that voice is heard at that level, but then also provide a feedback loop to the children and young people, if they themselves cannot have direct input, which is ideally desirable.



So just building on that, a key challenge when implementing a child's right to participate is finding ways to ensure that adults go beyond simply listening to actually creating change. There is a checklist as well:

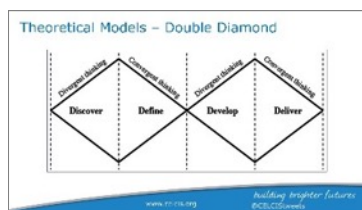
- Were the children's views considered by those with the power to affect change?
- Are there procedures in place that ensure that the children's views have been taken seriously?
- And have the children and young people been provided with feedback, explaining the reasons for decisions taken?

As I say, ideally, you want to have children, young people involved in the design of that aspect. How do they want to be communicated with? How do they want to have influence as well?

It's important to be creative and considered about how you approach that. But it's also ensuring that you never forget about that feedback loop. That you don't *just* take the views and incorporate changes and then implement that. You actually go back to the children and young people; you show them, you tell them - and you keep doing that if you can - how their voice has been heard, and exactly where their voice has had impact

as well. So that's something we were really keen to ensure this was built into the process at the [Independent Care Review](#).

Every possible recording or write up from any session that we had with a child or young person was written up verbatim, so you could go back to that specific young person and say: you told us this, for example, about throughcare; this is what the Care Review is recommending around throughcare; this how your voice has had weight. Don't get me wrong, this is a time consuming part of the process, but it's an absolutely essential and integral part of the process to build in from the start, that's not just about taking the views, it's about safeguarding that whole process of providing feedback and when required.



So the last theoretical model I wanted to cover was the [Double Diamond model](#). This is the name of a design process model developed by the British Design Council in 2005 and is also used in the [Scottish Approach to Service Design](#). Divided into four phases - discover, define, develop and deliver - it is probably the best known and most popular design process visualisation. We used it at the Independent Care Review, so we can come back to some of the practice examples of that.

But thinking about the model itself, the two diamonds represent a process of exploring an issue more widely or deeply - divergent thinking - and then taking focused action - which would be the convergent thinking. Thinking about those four stages: Discover (the first diamond) helps people understand rather than simply assume about an issue, and involves engaging with people who are affected by the actions. So in our context, thinking about people with lived experience of care, for example; Define, the insight you gather from this discovery phase helps you define what the challenges in a different way and you work collaboratively to try and get to that point; Develop (the second diamond) encourages people to give different answers to the clearly defined problem, seeking inspiration from elsewhere and co-designing with a range of different people, so it allows that process of feedback and continually going out to engage and engage and engage; and Deliver, delivery involves testing different solutions at a small scale and rejecting those that don't work, so you're trying to test influences as you're developing something as well. So it's not a linear process, as the arrows on the diagram show. It is something that's really ambitious in scale in terms of your ambition for engagement. It's also really, really innovative in the fact that you're



making and testing very early stages, that can be part of the discovery and then going back out to test them out and test them out.

I think an important principle of this is the idea that no ideas is ever finished. So you're constantly getting feedback on how services can be improved and can be redesigned. Always looking for improvements. Whilst it might seem very design focused, there are four principles that really ground it in community practice.

The first of those is putting people first. So start with an understanding of the people that use a service - their needs, their strengths, their aspirations. So a really strong emphasis on lived experience, for example, in that planning stage. Communicating visually and inclusively as well; thinking back to the Lundy Model, how are you providing you the space and the communication in order for people to engage with something. You're trying to help people gain a shared understanding of the problem and ideas. So you're doing that by making it accessible; so you're communicating visually, you communicate in a way that allows people to engage with a problem and be part of that design process.

The third principle is to collaborate and co-create. So you're working together, and alongside people as equals in this design process, it's not a top down approach.

And the last one is iterate, iterate, iterate - going back to that idea of an idea never being finished and always seeking to make improvements as you're progressing as well.

So I think it's a really fantastic model of trying to find the best solution. It is very ambitious in terms of scale, but that's not something we should be shy about. It's an interesting analogy here - there's a quote from Microsoft design that their designers should eat their own dog food. So, basically, how can we seek to reimagine a service or realising anything if we can't first go round that and the realities of people who are going to experience it.

I think it's really important grounding principle and clearly strange analogy, but something that we should be considering whenever we're thinking about public service design, and the importance of participation within that.



So next, I just wanted to give some practice examples, really just as an illustration, as a bit of a guide. Rather than there being any one way that you should be doing it in your local area.

The three examples I wanted to go through are: the first is in-house, it's in CELCIS; the second are champions' boards, which some of you may be aware of already; and the third is the Independent Care Review, which we spoke about in terms of the theoretical model and in terms of the context, when they will be going through some of the practice elements of that as well.



First of all, thinking about [CELCIS](https://www.celcis.org). For those of you who don't have an introduction to CELCIS beforehand, CELCIS as a national improvement centre based at the University of Strathclyde and what we do is support the workforce to provide the best possible care to children, young people and families.

In doing that, we work in partnership with carers, social workers, teachers, nurses, charities, police, local authorities, Scottish Government - anyone who could have an impact on a child or a family. We also work with communities of lived experience as well. So a full spectrum of experience and understanding and insight that goes into the evidence base of our work. Our work itself is based on consultancy, learning and development, we do both policy and qualifications and research as well. In order to think about how CELCIS can be most effective in supporting the workforce, that evidence base needs to include the views of people with experience of care and protection.



One of the ways that we facilitate participation is to have what we call “consultants with lived experience”, that work alongside of staff on defined projects. That's just that's one example of things we do.

Through this, we have created a number of paid opportunities within CELCIS for care experienced people to work in partnership with staff on a thematic and project specific basis. The reason we went about it in this way is because of the range and scope of our work; so at any given time, we could be working on policy, research, training, influencing. It could be on different themes - it could be on education, it could be health, continuing care, child protection. In order to make CELCIS accessible, to make our work accessible, we broke our business plan objectives down into to these areas of work so that these individuals who have wanted to take part in CELCIS’ work could actually choose the areas and themes of work that they're interested in. It is people-led in that respect. We analysed our work and worked with communities of lived experience to offer opportunities that would be tailorable and something that would be of interest and have development to them.

Whilst the way I have described that maybe slightly technical, I suppose it just goes to the evidence the strategic way that we've tried to approach this, and not just diving and providing opportunities which maybe aren't as meaningful as they could be.

The way we've done this is to try and keep it people-led, but make sure that each consultant has an opportunity to really, really influence our work, but also develop themselves as well. Each consultant is supported by a line manager and they have access to a staff mentor as well. The intention of that is to start small and to learn from that approach, develop this group of champions who are here, internally and are willing to support the consultants, with that training, with that development and that support, and make sure that these opportunities are developmental and can provide - not just some paid work - but also some experience of working in this specific field that they are interested. I think it's worth also mentioning, the asset based way that we're looking at this, and what I mean by that is, each of the consultants will be care experienced, but we, we know that experience isn't limited to care. All of us come with a

whole range of life experiences, skills, passions that inform our thinking, and make us who we are.

By developing these opportunities to work alongside staff, the full length of a project, we're not solely focusing on their care experience, and we're actually drawing on all the experiences, all the skills, and all the talents that each individual brings. That goes the same for staff as well, no one is the product of just their own experience.

This this is just one example of how we are embedding participation at CELCIS. We are have a huge focus on it and our new strategic plan, so it's something we're looking at across the board at CELCIS.

Whilst I've concentrated on this one initiative, it's just one of a number of ways that we're trying to really meaningfully embed participation not just in the output of our work also in the direction and the thinking and the planning for our work as well. If I was to relate it back to a model, it would be a hybrid of Phil Treseder's Degrees of Participation, and it also draws on the Lundy Model, which we have spoken about as well.



The next practice model I would like to speak about are [Champions Boards](#). Some of you may be aware of Champions Boards at the moment, but I'll just explain a little bit about how they operate. There are Champions Boards all across Scotland, in 21 of the local authority areas. They take different forms, but in all senses they are a partnership between care experienced young people and their corporate parents. They are set up to change policy, to change practice, and change experiences of care for other young people in those local areas. The change they help facilitate is very much a local change.

One other hallmark is that they are part of a wider network - a Champions Board Learning Network - which aims to create some national change and influence practice on a national scale.

In terms of how they work, there are a number of principles that I think are worth reflecting on because, whilst the Champions Board model is as a very unique initiative in terms of how they work and in the scale of how they work across local areas, I think some of the principles are actually very, very similar.



There are four I wanted to touch on.

The first is on valuing lived experience. So almost by definition, young people involved in Champions Boards are valued for the experience that their care has brought them. So that experience is absolutely central and absolutely critical to the conversation and is very much at the centre - or should be at the centre of – anything the champions’ board is doing.

The corporate parents that are round the table will be listening and taking heed from what the young people with care experience are saying. Just to elaborate a little bit on what we mean by “round the table”; some Champions Boards meet every week, some meet twice/ three times a week, some more irregularly than that (maybe once a quarter).

It is a partnership, it involves care experienced young people bringing together as many of their corporate parents as they can - so social work, education, even people at the fire service are excellent contributors to local champions’ boards, and they come round as equals round the table to think about how we can change things for other young people in Scotland and in their local area. It's very much a model of experience being led and being the critical aspect of looking at service design in a local area.

That sounds very serious and very weighty, but it's also worth reflecting on the participative elements of that, and that participation is very much built on fun. It's time to build relationships, and just enjoy, and get to know each other in a social way as well. Many Champions Boards spend a lot of time just having a chat, eating pizza, eating dinner, going to bowling and things like that. So even now, during COVID-19, just having a chat through things like Zoom, or Microsoft Teams, having check-ins, and breaking down those barriers between “young person” and “worker”.

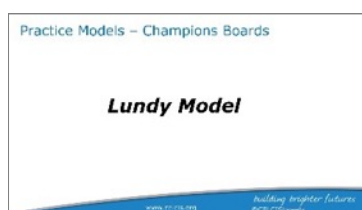
Thinking about the process and the model, it’s worth reflecting on the resources that are set up to support champions’ boards. [The Life Changes Trust](#), which is a funder that funds transformational change work associated with care experience young people, they have part funded a lot of the Champions Boards and the local authority will bring other funding to the table as well. The funding allows a dedicated staff to be created, usually a staff team, or at least a staff member, who can help to coordinate and build that participation with the young people in and also

build those relationships with the other corporate parents as well. That does take funding and there is appropriate funding in place to do that. So that dedicated coordinator, or assistant staff, is really, really important to help coordinate what is a very complex environment to navigate. If you think about areas like Highlands or Argyll and Bute, which are really vast geographies to try and cover, it's essential that you have appropriate staff and resources in order to support participation across that full geography rather than localising it in one town.

Another element that's definitely really important and I've alluded to earlier is that element of partnership.

So not only are we trying to break down the barriers between young people and "professionals", but we're also trying to make sure that those professionals see themselves as accountable to those young people. So there's an aspect of champions' boards really holding their corporate parents to account. So if they're developing corporate parenting plans, taking that to the Champions Boards, and making sure that the Champions Board has a really, really meaningful input to that and making sure that it's driven by that lived experience as well.

So as I say, there's just over 20 in Scotland at the moment. They take different forms and they have different names. Some have a really vast number of people involved, some have smaller number of people but still being able to meet huge changes in local areas. As well as making those strategic changes and changes that will last beyond the lifetime of the individual Champs Board time, they also have allowed young people themselves to really develop leadership skills and partnership skills and all these really, really important social skills as well as to grow. It's been a really terrific opportunity for many individual young people who've been part of this.



In terms of a model, it's probably similar to The Lundy Model, if we think about how they've created space and how they've also made sure that appropriate audience is there. It's also thinking about, who are the key decision makers in a local area; so you very often get the Chief Social Work Officer who's there every week supporting a champions' board because they are the ones who are responsible and accountable for that change. So a really important aspect of that audience part of the model is

making sure that the right people are around the table for the champions' board to fully develop.



So the next practice model I wanted to speak a little bit about is the [Independent Care Review](#). Naturally it's very difficult to condense everything that took place at the Care Review into a matter of minutes. I'll focus on the participation angle and how we went about reaching the 5,500 care experience infants, children, young people, adults, and members of the paid and unpaid workforce. That in itself is worth reflecting on - that huge, huge ambition that really drove everything that we did at the Care Review, the ambition to make sure that anyone who could have an impact or experienced care of any sort would have an opportunity to contribute to this review and have their voice heard.

Part of my role at the Review was to manage the participation. I had the distinct pleasure of working with a team at the Review Secretariat and also the [1000 Voices](#) team based at [Who Cares? Scotland](#) to try and reach that ambition. That ambition was not about reaching 5,500, it wasn't about trying to reach numbers - it was trying to make sure that everybody who wanted to have their views heard could do so and would be heard, and feel heard as well.

To do that, there were a number of principles that underpinned our work and I wanted to just reflect on a few of those now. I'm also very happy - and I'll put my contact details at the end of this webinar - if anyone wants to speak further about this, I'd be more than happy to pick up with anyone. The Review team is now set up as The Promise and they are incubated at the Scottish Government and I'm sure they would be happy to share learning as well.



To move on to some of those principles.

The first principle, and this should be a principle for all participation activity, is that it was fun. Participation, co-design, these should always

be an enjoyable process. Each activity that we designed as a participation hub team, was firstly designed to be an enjoyable and developmental opportunity for those taking part. That goes for a very, very young child up to another professional. So each session was tailored to the specific requirements and the specific needs of the person or group sharing their story or their views.

That ranged from the method of engagement; we'll go into some of the detail but what that meant, but it could be a conversation or it could be through art, or song, or dance or anything like that, right through to where the session took place. We would do a lot of work in community centres, youth clubs, care homes, sometimes people's own homes (if they wanted us to speak to them there) and also through Skype and telephone. So where it took place was decided by that individual. Also how the session was recorded and what they wanted to focus the conversation on as well.

Whilst we had asks of the 10 Review Work Groups to help provide them with information and insight - so we had a series of questions essentially, that we would go out as a team and ask - that was never be led solely by the team. It would often be that each individual wanted to share something different, so they would get the decision about what they wanted to share, and sometimes that wouldn't answer the questions - and that's totally fine- it was very much defined by the participants' needs.

So asset-based is the next principle, I've spoken a little about that already, but I think it's worth reflecting on across any participating activity that goes on. So we used an asset-based approach in that we sought to recognise *all* the skills, qualities, experiences that people bring, so that no-one felt limited to speak only about one experience.

So a good example of that is: we did some work within youth justice settings, so in Polmont for example, we wouldn't go into Polmont and ask just about the young people's experiences of the youth justice system, that would be giving them an unnecessary a badge, or tag. Instead, we would ask them anything they wanted to share with us. It respected all the contributions that each individual could offer, and provided a space for depth and flexibility of conversation. I think that asset-based approach is just really, really important, and it's very, very easy for us to pigeonhole people into different groups or communities, or however you want to call it. I think using that asset-based approach is essential to making sure that there's a respect and a level playing field for other people to contribute as well.

The next principle was safety. So making sure the [Care Review](#) was mindful of the circumstances that participants may be living in, so the



team could anticipate and be ready to respond to any potential impact on their wellbeing. So each session was designed in a way that didn't seek to dwell on a really traumatic experience if that person didn't want to share that. So to support that, the participation questions, for example, were designed to take in, in an asset-based way, different ideas and views, and not just dwell on experience.

I think it's important that people aren't just asked to reflect on their experience, they're also asked and given that respect, to contribute their views and ideas as well. I think that's a change in thinking that sometimes get lost. So this was really important to value and safeguard vulnerable participants who may have been disappointed by the system and above that, as well as having a safe space and consent process that allowed people to know what they were sharing and why they were sharing it and where that information was going to be stored, and how it was going to be used. We also made clear as part of that consent process that there would be free and confidential counselling support made available for all participants if they would like to speak to someone after contributing to the Review.

Another way we kept it safe was making sure that we based a lot of engagement on trusted relationships. So it might be that we didn't as a team hold relationships with a group of young people, but we would have their participation worker or a key worker that was really, really important to them, even just a friend, who'd be there to support them during that session, preparing for the session and also after the session as well.

That takes me onto the fourth principle which is relationship-based. We know that relationships matter. Positive trusting relationships are absolutely integral to people feeling safe and relaxed enough to share their views. This participation that we carried out at the Review, wherever possible, was designed to build on existing relationships that people had. Sometimes that would be with individuals at the Care Review and that allowed us to make connections and reach communities that we might not have been able to ourselves.

Very often it was due to relationships that young people or other participants had with partner organisations, that allowed people to be comfortable enough to share their views with us. In terms of keeping it relationship-based, we made an offer at each session that this wouldn't necessarily be the only opportunity to contribute. The Review went through a number of different stages and at each stage there was elements of participation, and those bits of participation built on the previous stages of participation as well. That allowed us to say to a Champions Board, for example, 'you've told us about this' we could come

out to you in a few months' time and we could speak to you about something else build on what you've told us already.

The team itself was able to build really strong relationships with a number of groups – parents groups, carer groups et cetera. It allowed us to build trust, build those spaces, and recognise what they had told us had already been used. It was that respect built in from the very start, and allowed to build those relationships. I think a willingness to build relationships is something that is really, really necessary if you're going to consider effective, meaningful and safe participation.

The fifth principle is person-centred. We encouraged those participating to take the lead in the activity. That helps create an environment where they know their voice will be heard. We designed activity and each session to allow young people to have choice and for children to have a say in how they were communicated with and what they got involved in that particular day. We might have had a really clear session plan that we wanted to implement, but we would throw that out the window very often because we recognised we were working with, say a younger group for example, who didn't want to contribute to a workshop. They might want to play, and that's what we would do - so we would get out the coloured pens, we'd get out musical equipment, lots of silly toys that we brought with us in our giant participation packs. We made sure that those spaces felt respectful to those children and young people, and they were allowed to decide what they got involved in.

That goes for the next principle as well – which is flexibility. Whilst wide varieties of engagement methods were provided, no-one was forced to participate in the Care Review. I alluded to the consent process, we went through a really rigorous consent process at the start of every session, for everybody involved to know exactly what they were getting into and also given the choice not to take part - and that's totally appropriate.

We said the activity could be paused, postponed or withdrawn by people participating at any point. That in itself allowed us to move flexibly and say maybe today isn't the time you want to speak to us but here's our contact details, and we can come out to you whenever it suits you. That time would be very flexible itself. We worked a lot of weekends and lot of evenings, and that's because it worked for individual groups we worked with. That wasn't just about young people, it also may be about parents who wanted to speak to us after work for example. Personally, I had a lot of conversations over the phone, a number of times with parents - over the several weeks and months – and they wanted to speak to me or someone from the team to share their experiences, a really individual experience they'd had as a parent or as a carer or as young person as well.

That last principle is about being clear. That's important for any participation, that they know what their getting into. Every person contributing to the Review was made aware - through that consent process - what was being asked of them and why, and that informed consent process was critical to that.

Another really important aspect of that principle was confidentiality and anonymity. They were key components of that consent process and we were very clear that their personal details were not going to be collected and shared. Anything they told us would be completely anonymous and would never come back to them.

I have no doubt the success of Care Review, and the reason the Promise will be a success, is due to that participation that was embedded. That was recognised by the First Minister's announcements in communicating about the promise that she herself and the government will make to care experienced young people, and that was absolutely driven by the voices of care experienced people and anyone who would have an impact on a child.

That has set a new standard in Scotland, and it's absolutely due to that ambition and the energy and the skill the participation team – and everybody else at the Review - brought to that. Reflecting on the skill of the team; this was a team built up of participation professionals, many from a youth work or a research background or a social work background, who could meaningfully engage with children and young people, create those safe spaces but also do the analysis and taking that that information and making sure that voices were heard equally and given due weight.

In terms of a theoretical model, we're probably speaking again about the Lundy Model. At the outset, I spoke about the Double Diamond Model and how the different stages of the Review related and how participation could be built on across each of those stages as well.

I wanted to reflect on that ambition, that process and all those principles that allowed us to reach over 5,500 people. That's something that's never been done in Scotland before and something that has really set a new standard, for participation not just in the care sector but much more broadly as well. We didn't ever chase numbers, I think that's really important to reflect on; I think that would be tokenistic in itself to do so.

As I mentioned, in terms of those principles, we would have multiple conversations with the same person, for example, because that's what they wanted to do. They wanted to share experiences with us over several weeks and months. That's counted as one person; that sometimes would be a one to one engagement taking up several hours of the team's time. That's time best spent, because it's absolutely terrific to get the absolute depth and wealth of experience each individual is going to bring. So of the most meaningful conversations that I, and others at the Care Review, was

one to one over a number of weeks and months. When we talk about 5,500 that in itself is terrific but there's a lot depth that goes into that as well.

We also had a really targeted participation strategy to reach groups that are often seldom heard or not heard as often as they should be. That included children and young people with disabilities, unaccompanied children and young, people with experience of homelessness as well. We had one of the members of the Secretariat team specifically focussed on establishing relationships and organising engagements with young people with experience of secure care or the youth justice system. Rosie Moore was able to develop some really meaningful relationships with some young people in those settings who knew that she was there to support their participation and have them involved.

Again, just thinking of the principles and what that looked like on the ground; that allowed us to capture ideas and views that weren't just the individual story, it allowed us to think about what people wanted to see change in the care system. So it was really, really aspirational in that respect. People were enabled to think differently, and we had activities that allowed people to design what their ideal care system or what makes them happy. It went beyond thinking about care. We didn't over-facilitate. We would come in and let that space breathe, and make sure that young people themselves had that choice and had the ability to do what they want with that session.

That targeted engagement was, in my opinion, a really essential part of the process. It allowed us to hear different stories and different experiences, and new ideas that were absolutely essential to developing the final Promise reports and the changes that are going to come as a result.

It allowed us to work with new partners and develop new relationships that then themselves influence the Care Review and could have themselves heard in this process. That work and having that targeted engagement strategy, and making sure from the outset that we would have a really clear approach of targeting these groups and building relationships with these key partners working with these communities allowed us to use those key relationships they had to have those communities inform the Care Review in a really meaningful way.



So hopefully those reflections on those three practice models has been helpful. Now I just want to focus on some things you might want to focus on in designing your own participation activity.

Some of this we've covered already, but these generic principles are worth reflecting on for your own practice.

The first is: know what the offer is. I think that's really important in designing your activity, but also in thinking about how you position that with whoever it is you're going to be speaking to. I don't just mean that in terms of pitching that activity to them, I'm also thinking about making sure that once you've carried out that participation work that you will be able to translate that and be able to have the change that you are designing. Whether it's a policy goal that you are looking for, know what it is that looking to engage with and influence. Or maybe it's an internal strategic piece that you are looking at, know what it is that you have in scope to try and change and be clear about what that offer is and what people are going to be asked to be involved in, so they have that choice and so that they can make an informed decision.

Be honest about it. Some pitfalls I've witnessed in my time, is that quite often participants or young people, or whoever it is, are promised the world ('come in and shape our whole service design') when actually they are actually only being asked about one specific element of it. Make sure that you are clear and honest about what is in that scope.

But that said, be ambitious. Make sure you're not just looking to tinker around the edges and if you're going to carry out participation meaningfully you should be looking at the big picture – how can we transform our services through the voice of whoever it is you're going to be engaging with.

Fourth point is just a really practical one, sort out the background stuff first. So that might preparing the space; space itself is really important, and going back to that Lundy Model, not just physical space but how people are going to interact with the content you are developing. Also practical aspects, whether it's train travel or tickets you need to book, or the food (are there any allergies?), are people getting paid for this

worked? If so how is thing going to work; if you work for an organisation, have you spoken to your finance colleagues about how that's going to work (are they given expenses? are they given vouchers?) and that they are paid appropriately. If you don't sort out background stuff first, it very often makes things more difficult once you get things up and running.

Prepare for the hard times. Participation is difficult, it's not always easy; sometimes you can be on the crest on a wave and think that things are good, but we're working with people here and people have individual experiences and individual needs. All of us can have hard times and that can have an influence on a group dynamic, or just on individual participation as well. Things can get difficult and be prepared for that, you will come out of that. Make sure that you have some supports around you to support with that.



Number 6 is be a defender. I think it's really important that you yourself are a champion for participation. If you are thinking about participation and you're thinking change, so if you're going to involve people in something you need to defend their views and be someone who is a champion for those views. Be a defender of participation and lived experience at all times.

You need to sustain engagement. I spoke about the [Care Review](#), how we went back out, and back out, and back out. Participation at its worst is transactional and tokenistic, people are asked for their views and that's it. They're never told what happens with their views. Did it create change? Did it influence anything? I think it's really important, to do this ethically you need to think about sustaining the engagement. If it is a one off workshop, for example, that you're going out at the end of the process and saying: thank you very much for your time, this is what you said, this is how your voice has had weight, this is how your voice has had influence. But ideally, if you can, make it even more sustainable than that and making sure it's a collaboration and a true partnership.

Be creative. You might have a really linear task of getting information, but think of all the different creative methods you can do to take in that information. I spoke about the Care Review and champions' boards about how they do that, it's really important not to just think of participation as a conversation, as voice. Think about younger children, example, very capable of expressing their views but they might not have the voice to



that. Or children and young people with significant disabilities might not have the voice to express themselves, but they can express themselves just like anyone else. You need to think of other creative methods that work for everybody, and can work for each individual, in order to really build those environments where people will feel they are able to contribute in fair way.

Don't do it alone – I think that's a really important one to stress. If you are the only person who thinks about participation in your organisation, it's a real risk. It means you are fighting a battle to get the support that you'll need to facilitate a group but also to think about the end process, so the change you are looking to create as well.

Even just on a practical basis, if you are facilitating a workshop of 10 people it's very difficult for you to facilitate the workshop, to take the notes, but also to think about what else is going on in that session. How are people feeling? What is the body language like? Again, absolutely essential that you get some supports in order to make it safe and make it fair for participants as well.

The last one – this might seem blindingly obvious – is to listen. Think about active listening, think about what's being said in a group, what's not being said, that body language, think about what people respond to what you're saying – very important. But also thinking about the end product, think about your questions – how can I make sure that I'm putting aside my original perceptions and really opening myself up to what that session and what that voice, whatever is being submitted, is saying and teasing that out?

Not having an initial reaction to it, questioning it, being curious in order to draw out those views and making sure you are giving the respect and the weight to the voice that is being expressed.



Lastly, just to focus on some resources that are available to you when you are thinking about designing all these lovely participation approaches and activities. There are a lot of resources available. There are some great organisations in Scotland's children's sector that can support you with that.

CELCIS would be help to help as well. My contact details are there:

[p.sullivan@strath.ac.uk](mailto:p.sullivan@strath.ac.uk)

One I would point to is Scottish Government [website on participation](#). That was a piece of work that myself and a few other colleagues in the children's sector were involved in. It's to try and consolidate, first of all, some really good practice that's going on across Scotland in participation. There's some really good practice examples there for you to see.

There's also a real wealth of literature there as well - some academic literature and practice models - that to me is probably the best hub for all that knowledge at the moment. There are other opportunities, but that's a really good one stop shop where you can find a lot of information.

CELCIS and a number of other partners also facilitate what we call The [Participation Network](#). That is group of practitioners and people with lived experience who get together at least three times a year to discuss participation and practice, types of issues such as engaging underrepresented groups, keeping participation safe - anything really that can inform in the participation sphere and make sure the workforce who are supporting that, and also communities who are taking part in that can do so safely and effectively and achieve the change that people are wanting to get to. I have a number of other resources that you'd be welcome to contact me for.



The Participation Network is available to anyone that wants to join, the hyperlink is at the end of the document, or you can drop me an email directly, if you want to take part in that. They're really good fun events, but on the same token we're also looking at really practical supports of we can support people in their participation practice as well.

So I think that covers the session for today. Please do get in touch if there's anything you want us to support you with. Hopefully that's given you some food for thought at least about designing your own activity and hopefully it's shown you some of the impact that can be had through participation. It really is something that's been a huge part of my own career and something that's been hugely enjoyable, and everyone else that I speak to who carries out this work or is involved in this work absolutely loves it. So not only is there a huge impact in terms of the outcomes you are looking to achieve, it's also just a really enjoyable process in itself and something that you learn a lot from. I'd definitely encourage people to do it, but as I say, please do get in touch if there's anything we can do to support you in your journey.

I hope that's been helpful. Thank you for your time and for taking part in this webinar.

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## **Linked resources**

CELCIS Knowledge Bank:

<https://www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/>

Independent Care Review and The Promise:

<https://www.carereview.scot/>

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

Scottish Government Programme for Scotland 2020-2021:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/protecting-scotland-renewing-scotland-governments-programme-scotland-2020-2021/>

Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/commission-future-delivery-public-services/>

Hart's Ladder of Participation:

[https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens\\_participation.pdf](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf)

Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation:

<https://www.citizenshandbook.org/arnsteinsladder.html>

Lundy Model of Participation:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/lundy\\_model\\_of\\_participation.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/lundy_model_of_participation.pdf)

National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020:

<https://assets.gov.ie/24462/48a6f98a921446ad85829585389e57de.pdf>

Design Council Double Diamond:

<https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/news-opinion/what-framework-innovation-design-councils-evolved-double-diamond>

Scottish Approach to Service Design:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/the-scottish-approach-to-service-design/>

The Life Changes Trust:

<https://www.lifechangestrust.org.uk/>

The Life Changes Trust – Champions Boards:

<https://www.lifechangestrust.org.uk/champions-boards-evidence-and-learning>

Who Cares? Scotland:

<https://www.whocaresscotland.org/>

Who Cares? Scotland 1,000 Voices:

<https://www.whocaresscotland.org/get-involved/1000-voices/#:~:text=Scotland%20to%20undertake%20the%201000,use%20with%20her%20Review%20Team.>

Scottish Government – Decision-making: children and young people's participation:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/decision-making-children-and-young-peoples-participation/>

Participation Network:

<https://www.celcis.org/knowledge-bank/search-bank/participation-network-resources/>

Participedia:

<https://participedia.net/>