



CONSULTANTS

Involving children and young people in evaluations

Equity through active participation



Our team presenting today



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ARTD supports government agencies and not-for-profits to use evaluative thinking to design and refine action for the public good.

Involving children and young people in evaluations

Equity through active participation



Balancing the risks and rights – navigating ethics



Recruiting children and young people



Approaches to data collection with children and young people

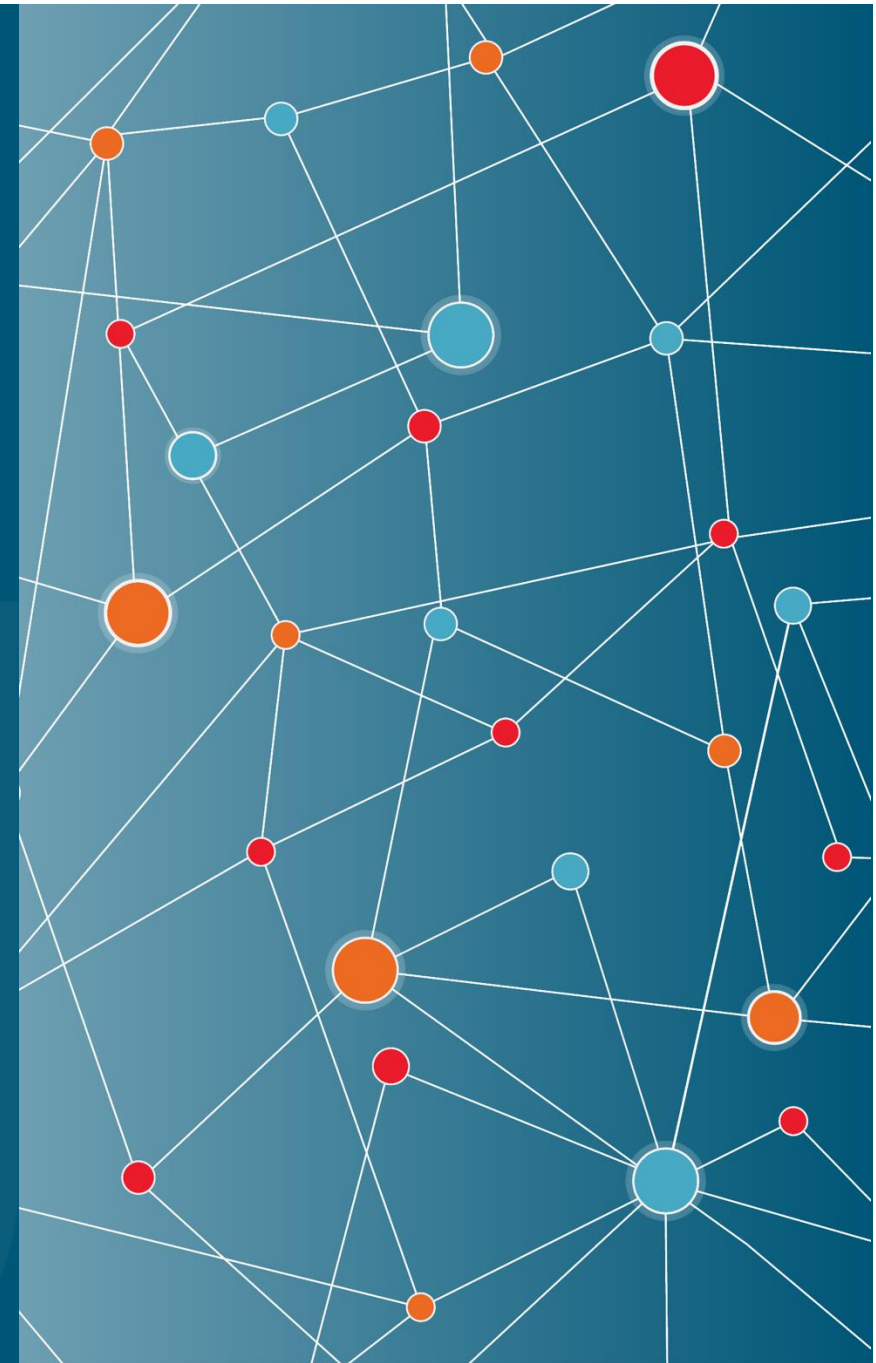


Questions



Balancing the risks and rights of engaging children and young people

There is a tension to be navigated between ensuring children and young people are not placed at unnecessary risk through evaluation, balanced against the right of children to have a say about the services they use



Ethical Considerations

Power dynamics

Involvement of
parents/carers

Conflicting values/
interests for parents/
children

Can have more
limited ability to
understand research
and consent

Additional risks of
harm

Rights of the child to participate in evaluation

- Children, like all other humans, have the right to be involved in things that impact on them, and this includes evaluation
- We recognise that children and young people are experts in their own lives – they can provide us with insights that we can't get from anyone else
- There are developmental benefits for children and young people to participate in evaluation activities once these ethical considerations have been carefully considered and navigated

Navigating ethics

- Ethics committees can be more risk averse when children or young people under 16 are involved, but it is achievable.
- Important to do all the usual things you do to achieve ethics approval:
 - Careful consideration of all relevant risks – even if they can be avoided you still need to describe this
 - Careful choice of ethics committee – if you have a choice
 - Clear description of the entire ethics protocol. Make sure you really carefully consider and describe recruitment and informed consent processes – as this is the first thing they will read
 - Be very clear about the benefit of their involvement – their right to be involved, the need for their views and perspectives to be captured
 - Some academic references to support your 'why' is generally useful

Recruiting children and young people

How we engage children and young people in evaluation.



Ongoing challenges

- Ongoing engagement with children continues to be **challenging**:
 - ongoing **approvals** to engage participants
 - **small pool of eligible participants**
 - engaging participants after a **challenging period**
 - low **confidence to participate**

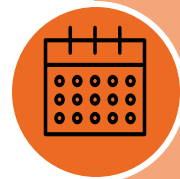


Laying the groundwork for strong engagement



Fluid and flexible timelines

- Extended engagement windows
- Flexibility over timing



Developing strong relationships with staff

- Facilitates warm handovers
- Builds understanding of participants



Engaging recruitment materials

- Easy-to-understand language
- Multiple methods of registering interest

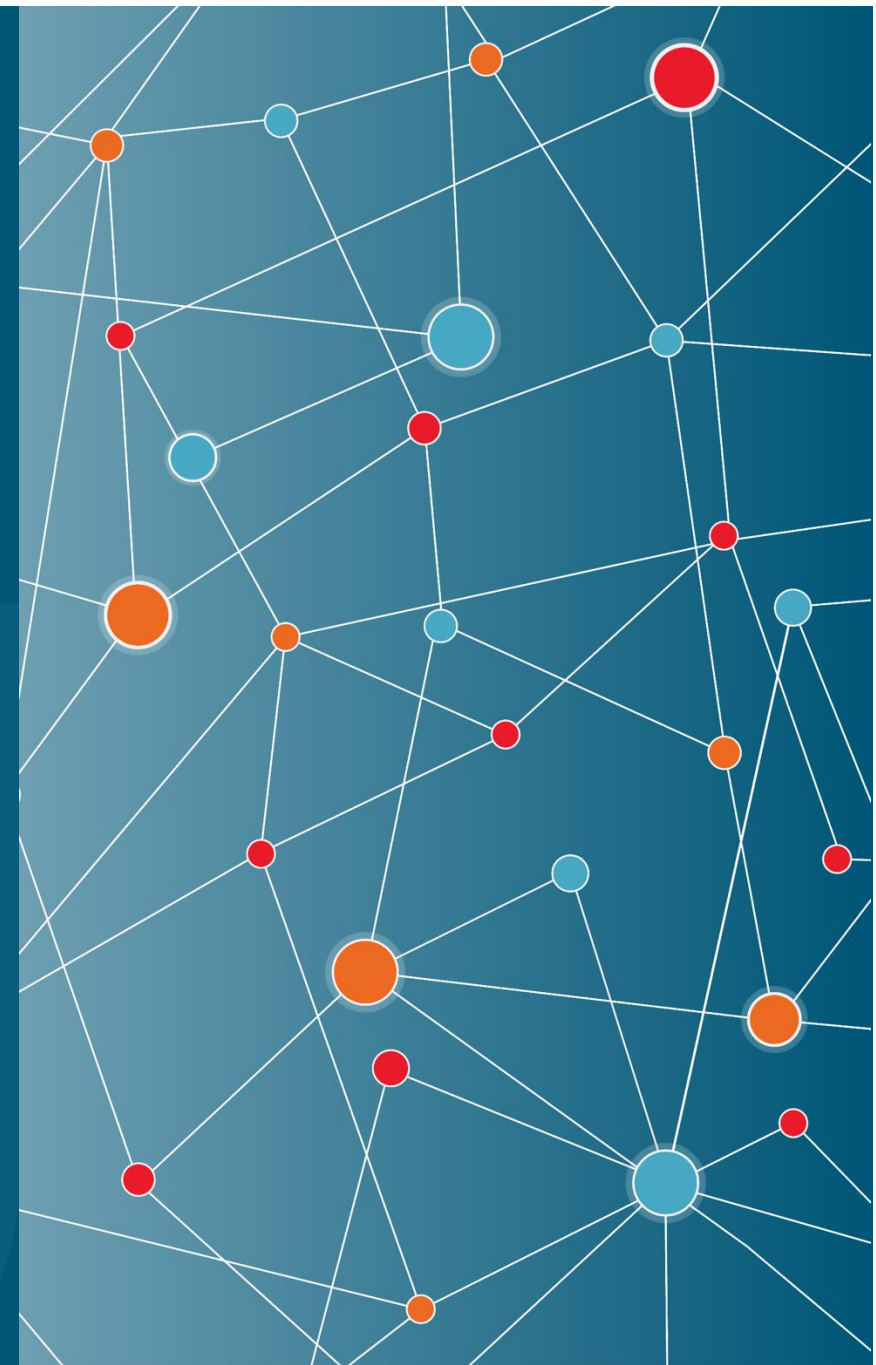
Gaining consent

Need to be aware of **possible coercion** by carers and any potential conflicting values and interests between carers and children.

We've used **various methods for explaining projects to inform decisions consent** including videos and storytelling approaches

Consent can be provided in **multiple ways**

Approaches to engaging with children and young people



Principles underpinning engagement

Person/child-centred

The child or young person's **safety, protection, welfare and wellbeing** are principal

Strengths-based

Recognise the **abilities, knowledge, capacities and resilience** of individuals

Remaining child-centred and strengths-based

Being aware of the environment

Different environments may elicit **different experiences, memories, or emotions** for children and young people

Acknowledging and minimising power imbalances

There is an unavoidable **power imbalance** between a child and an adult

Offering choice and control over participation method

Offer as much **choice and control** as possible so the experience is accessible, inclusive, meaningful and, hopefully, empowering

General considerations for engagement

Method of engagement

- **Focus groups/workshops with multiple participants are often preferred:** Children and young people spend much of their lives in groups
- **Text-based methods of engagement:** Adapted surveys; text-based surveys to improve accessibility

Addressing power imbalances and making participants feel comfortable

- Use **icebreakers:** Google '*Icebreakers for kids*' !
- Find their **passion:** Sports team; music; food
- Dress casually
- **Involve yourself:** Do the activity; sit amongst it

General notes

- **Language:** Simple phrasing of questions aimed at their age and developmental capabilities
- **Time of day:** We're all better in the mid morning
- **Non-verbal behaviour:** Being aware of eye contact; direction of body; fidgeting

Some simple interactive activities

- Drawing pictures or writing down responses to prompts
- Standing on a colour as a rating
- Choosing words on cards that represent their thoughts or feelings

In summary: Being realistic, not pessimistic

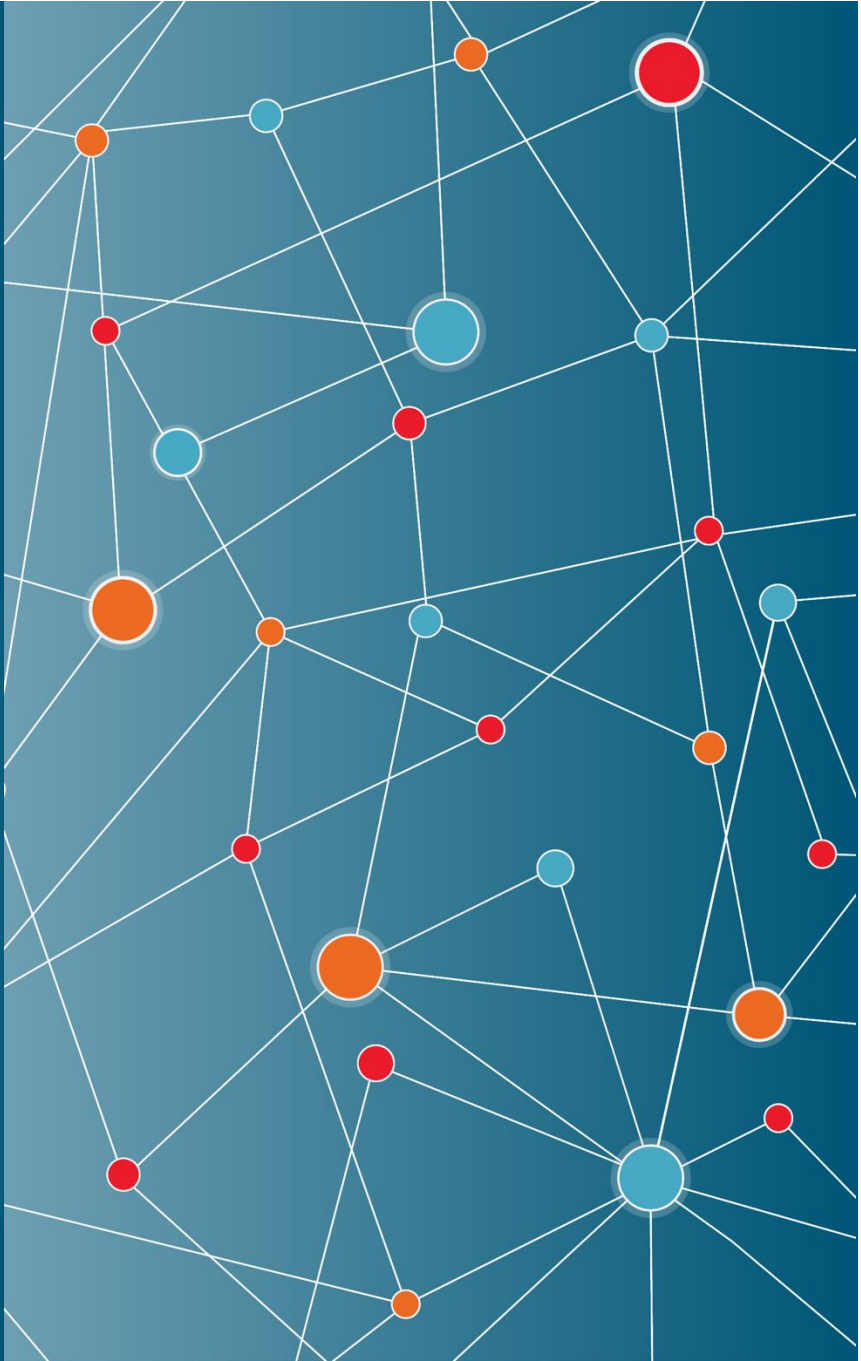
Engaging children and young people in evaluation is difficult – but not impossible – and it is critical to reflect their voice in our work

‘I’m so appreciative of it, they’ve helped me so much, a few months later here I am, I’m actually here because of the program’

‘I feel like I’ve been given a chance to live’

‘I felt I was always the one at the very bottom of stuff – I couldn’t read or write, but when I started this they taught me how to read and write. I feel now like I can achieve anything’

Questions



Connect with us

