Sustrans: Designing for Children and Young People

Practice: *what is the most important thing when engaging with children and young people?*

- **Listening (without preconceptions) (8)**
    - To provide space and time to allow children to share and taking the time as adults to LISTEN
    - Making consultation understandable and accessible to young people and LISTENING to their views
    - Listening; patience;
    - Listening and not bounding their imagination and ideas
    - Listen to the kids
    - Actually speak to the kids and actively listen
    - Listen to what is said, not guide or steer towards a preconceived end goal
    - Listening – know and understand a place before developing changes

- **Clarity and accessibility of the engagement (6)**
    - Language; collecting and USING feedback
    - Using language appropriate for a child
    - Ensure it is age appropriate; listen to them; if you don't understand ask in a different way; if they don't understand what you are asking, find another way
    - Defining what's up for discussion and what's not; how kids input fits into the project timeline in terms of feedback etc.
    - Clearly defining what you are hoping to achieve from the engagement
    - Transparency and clear instructions/objectives about what is expected

- **Good child-friendly approaches (6)**
    - To be creative, enabling an opportunity
    - A variety of engagement to techniques to maximise involvement
    - Make it fun
    - Give opportunities for children to play using their imagination
    - To make sure it gets the needs and desires of the young people who we are designing for
    - To facilitate co-design with children and young people; that the correct evidence is identified

- **Taking their perspective (5)**
    - Have an open mind and embrace the fantastical!
    - Understanding the need of the children or they will not be interested
    - not being patronising
    - Get down to our level to communicate for our age
    - As a young person I WANT to participate. Why because its motivating, interesting, understandable and meaningful

- **Feeling safe and free to express (4)**
    - Opportunity to express what they think / feel
    - Safe and comfortable space;
    - The children understand they can be honest
    - building trust and rapport

- **Commitment to implementing their ideas (4)**
    - Demonstrable impact: seeing that engagement led to change/action
    - Making sure they feel involved and valued
    - Speak to the kids to gain direction
    - That we connect with them and prove its relevance; they must be informed about what will (or won't) be done with their contribution

- **Other**
    - Incentives (Haribo)

Regulation: *what evidence would best tell you a commissioned engagement was high quality?*

- **Monitoring project outcomes, progress and success (8)**
  - Recording views and design:
  - Reviewing ask for evidence, look at the art, ideas, listen to recordings, keep in the loop
  - Proof of engagement
  - Look at the design and make sure they have met the consultation brief
  - Speak to ME before doing anything
  - Check outputs from consultation; enquire about numbers and demographic of people, children and young people involved; check engagement process and time to feedback to people engaged
  - Are more people using the park? (After it's been built)

- **Direct feedback from children (6)**
  - Children feel safe and comfortable enough to share freely
  - listen to what the children say
  - Feeback from children
  - Get feedback – hands-up survey etc. to ensure that it is accurate and correct
  - Feedback what you heard from the children and actually implement ideas and say why you couldn't do some ideas
  - Ask the children – get feedback on the process
  - Did the children and young people feel listened to a treated as equals: ask them

- **Clear link between the engagement outcomes and end-design (5)**
  - Look at output of consultation process; how does it link to available options and space
  - Where in the design is the consultation evidence
  - Understand the regulations; implement your questions; relate it to the regulations; research/ relate the answer back to the regulations
  - Check the kids ideas are in the design
  - Look at the end result / design; evidence of engagement methods

- **Clear brief (4)**
  - Ensure all parties understand what the engagement is trying to achieve and that the event is planned to be inclusive
  - Clear procurement briefs with desired engagement outcomes that are effectively monitored
  - Plenty of briefing discussions to ensure your 3rd party is on the same page as you; what you want to get out of it is clearly agreed
  - Preplanning meetings prior to consultation/facilitation; allows to understand parties' experience; allows to ask questions; allows everyone understand the 'WHY'

- **Commitment to continuity of relationship (4)**
  - Consistent faces over the project journey; framing of what elements of the project are open to influence
  - Including ongoing relationships
  - Regularity, build rapport
  - You said, we did. Summary to show we were listening.

- **Commitment to implementation (4)**
  - Opportunities to make physical changes to show a sense of ownership
  - To ensure that the ideas thought of are captured in a way that they make sense and could be possible
  - Design all elements to accommodate needs
  - Kids needs included in formal project objective; so kids engaged in stage 0-1

- **A good consultant / design which demonstrates understanding of child engagement (4)**
  - Homework: check out company first;
  - Being able to relate to the children's age group
  - An ability to listen and be open-minded
  - Must be engaging, interesting, exciting and welcoming discussions

Barriers: *what is the biggest barrier to good child engagement?*

- **Failure to honour the process or implement outputs (9)**
  - Trust
  - Don't water down the kids ideas; keep the adventure
  - Making it meaningful
  - Adults get the final say – boring always wins!
  - Adults not listening or taking project forwards
  - a desire to do what it 'should', rather than what is 'wonderful'
  - Talk and no action; or too much engagement and not actually carrying the project out
  - Plenty of communication but nothing ever taking place
  - Too many consultations with no finished product. They will feel not listened to and feel it is another tick-box exercise

- **Budget / Time / Resources (8)**
  - Budgets / funding
  - Resources
  - Time
  - We get great feedback but don't have the capacity or funding to implement
  - Budget; resource; time to build trust
  - Funding not directed to kids spaces; staff resources for engagement
  - Lack of resource
  - lack of resources

- **Institutional / Systemic Constraints (6)**
  - Health and safety very strict. Institutionalised thinking. Very formal procedures.
  - Institutional concern about the use of child input (Sustrans funding may motivate)
  - Institutional adultism: bureaucratic inflexibility
  - Pre-conceived ideas and solutions
  - Fear culture; fear of change
  - The complexity: large number of teams really should be involved to get things right. Each team has their own priorities. How do you get cross-party agreement?

- **People who don't see the value (4)**
  - Idiots: anti-engagers
  - Misconception that it's not important
  - Adults
  - Persuading others that kids opinions are valid

- **Lack of requisite skills (3)**
  - The individual undertaking the engagement
  - Need a skilled person to lead on it and take responsibility for it; happening in a project team
  - Not understanding what they want; instructions are not clear;

- **Difficulty accessing participants (3)**
  - Kids having too much else to do; structuring the consultations at the right level
  - The chance to engage – especially, hard to reach young people
  - Access to young people, i.e. school participation and long-term buy-in

- **Other:**
  - Children's extreme aspirations and parental reservations

Remedies: *one idea for resolving your 'biggest barrier'?*

- **Commitment to good honest engagement and to implementation (8)**
  - Consult and listen keep promises
  - Design activities to ensure designs can adapt to children's needs and wants
  - Implementation! Build relationships, gain trust, prove that you want this to be successful for them.
  - Inclusion of children needs on design procedures; requirement of funding streams to include children
  - Make sure consultation is relevant. Don't do too many. Value the consultation and be open to change.
  - Deliver something simple to prove to us first. Not necessarily something large
  - Equality: all young people / children have the chance to speak and confidence to do so 😊
  - Share with children and young people; provide enough insight on contextual constraints to highlight some of the bounds to creative ideas

- **Capacity-building and knowledge-sharing (7)**
  - Training, research, asking for help, or use experienced organisations with a track record
  - Knowledge-sharing of good practice – show that it works and is a good idea
  - Reflective practice: review risks, barriers and scheme
  - Training focused on engaging with children
  - Better listening skills
  - Barrier: idiots – direct one-to-one discussion to develop their engagement
  - Adult build + play days: get all the many disciplines, shills, people out doing a real solution in a real place

- **Structures which can enable more effective and efficient engagement (7)**
  - Area-based engagement: communities and schools. Officers still being funded by Council
  - The engagement process being promoted through the school community. Teacher training around benefits.
  - Funded embedded youth leaders who coordinate response and provide a continuum in a community of place
  - Get school's support and buy-in to help with coordinating children and young people engagement opportunities;
  - Develop the local forum / network / structure of young people for local development
  - Liaise with schools so consultation is done in school time (to tackle kids having too many things on). Have assistance from experts to help structure consultation appropriate to their ages.
  - Time to undertake (but still want quick delivery of project)

- **Better partnership-working between stakeholders and children and young people (3)**
  - Better collaboration between council departments (roads and education etc.) and information-sharing. Make it habitual.
  - It's inevitably about personality. You can't work closely with everyone all the time. But working more and more collaboratively would mitigate the barrier of complexity.
  - Meet in the middle: compromise

- **More funding (3)**
  - More money for engagement
  - Appropriate funding and an action plan is in place to proceed with ideas produced
  - dedicated funding and requirements for children and young people

- **Other (3)**
  - Limit adult participation throughout all stages of the project
  - Arguing my case
  - Be good at writing a more threatening risk assessment