



ombudsman
for children & young people

What do you say?

Exploring children's rights with children

Third & Fourth Class



What do you say?

Exploring children's rights with children

'What do you say?' is an Ombudsman for Children's Office resource.



www.oco.ie

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The new activities in these resource materials were also written by **Anne-Marie Herron, Anne-Marie Kealy** and **Owen McCarthy**.

The OCO would like to acknowledge the important contributions made by Clíodhna Ní Ghiollagáin and Kate Mitchell to the development of these materials.

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Preface

Dear Teacher,

I am delighted that you have decided to use these resource materials to learn more about some of the many issues that affect children and relate to children's rights.

My job, and statutory responsibility, is to promote the rights and welfare of children up to the age of eighteen and to ensure that in law, policy and practice their best interests are considered. People often ask me where children's rights are defined. There are two key reference points: the Constitution, which is the basic legal instrument in Ireland, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a set of internationally agreed human rights standards for children, ratified in Ireland in 1992.

In 2007, we carried out the 'Big Ballot', a project where 74,000 children voted on the key issues affecting them. 560 primary and post-primary schools, Youthreach Centres and Senior Traveller Training Centres throughout Ireland supported these children and young people to participate. It is the largest consultation with children in Ireland to date and, needless to say, could not have happened without the support and enthusiasm of teachers across the country.

Feedback on the project indicated that the principal benefits of participation for children included the opportunity to explore children's rights; to form and express opinions; and to learn about and take part in a democratic process. Teachers spoke very positively about their experience of using the resource materials and many have since requested further materials on children's rights.

The team of teachers who developed the original resource materials for primary schools agreed to work with us again on these materials. We appreciate the expertise and creativity of Owen McCarthy, Ann Marie Herron and Anne-Marie Kealy.

I know the significant role that teachers play in children's lives. Our own experience of participative work with children reminds us that, like all those working directly with children, we are learning every day.

I hope these materials will support your work and that you and the children you work with will find them not only educational but fun.

If you would like to find out more about the OCO and our work to promote the rights and welfare of children in Ireland, please visit our website - **www.oco.ie**

Many thanks,



Emily Logan, Ombudsman for Children

2010

Introduction

Welcome to 'What do you say?'. This resource consists of activities that explore issues relating to children's rights. It includes references to rights in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Constitution.

These activities were created by a group of practising teachers and have been developed to facilitate implementation of aspects of the curriculum.

The materials introduce the role and work of the Ombudsman for Children's Office and give children the opportunity to explore and discuss the following issues:

- **Having a voice and being heard**
- **Family and care**
- **Health and wealth**
- **Education**
- **Play**
- **Inclusion**

Exploration of these issues will need to be treated with sensitivity. Teachers will need to consider the particular situations and experiences of children they are working with and adapt materials as required.

Drawing on the previous activities and open to adaptation by teachers, the final activity in this resource focuses on supporting children to make their voices heard and views known by organising and/or taking part in a ballot.

Participating in these activities will support children to develop a broad understanding of the importance of having a voice in matters affecting them.

Constitution Article 40(6)(1)(i):
Citizens have the right to express their opinions freely.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Article 12:
Children have the right to have a say about things that affect them.

How to use this resource

CORE ACTIVITIES

This resource comprises a manual for teachers, which includes photocopiable activity sheets and an accompanying DVD. The materials aim to give children an opportunity to take part in enjoyable activities, which develop their understanding of rights and citizenship.

The first activity introduces the Ombudsman for Children. The remaining activities examine issues relating to children's rights in ways that develop knowledge, skills and values associated with citizenship education. These issues provide a focus for the final ballot activity, an exercise in citizenship and an introduction to participation in the democratic process. We hope the activities will be interesting and fun for children.

PARENTS

A letter for distribution to parents/guardians, from the Ombudsman for Children, accompanies this resource. To afford parents/guardians an opportunity to discuss the issues raised in the resource with their children, activity sheets have a space for a parent's/guardian's signature. Schools are also encouraged to send home the results of the ballot activity.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The activities facilitate aspects of curriculum teaching and learning, in particular in the context of SPHE (see diagram opposite). The activities support children to explore and discuss the issues and content with reference to their own experiences. The use of story is a strong feature of the resource materials for primary schools, from the fairytale stories for Infant classes through to the Case Studies for Senior classes.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Although these materials have been developed for teaching and learning in the context of children's formal education, the activities can also be used for work with children in non-formal education settings - for example, as part of a programme of activity for children attending after school clubs.

METHODOLOGIES

The teaching and learning methodologies involved in completing the activities include discussion, debate, group work and role play. They encourage children to develop empathy and to take part in co-operative learning. Teachers are encouraged to support children to work together in mixed ability groups. Home links are fostered through actions that encourage further discussion of the issues at home. Children should feel a real sense of ownership of the work they do in the context of each activity.

How 'What do you say?' relates to the Curriculum for Third and Fourth Classes

SPHE

Myself:

- Making decisions
- Safety and protection

Myself and my family:

- Exploring different types of families

Myself the wider world:

- Developing citizenship
- Exploring rights and responsibilities

SESE

Geography

- Human Environments:
People living and
working in the local area



Language

Oral:

- Discussion
- Arguing a point of view
- Improvisational drama

Writing

- Summarising stories
- Writing lists, reports, etc.

Reading:

- Reading stories / case studies and
responding orally and in writing
- Emotional and imaginative
development through language

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MISSING SOMETHING?

THE MATERIALS IN THIS PACK ARE AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD FROM OUR SITE WWW.OCO.IE

KEY TO ICONS



DVD Scene



**Writing
Drawing**



**Class Discussion
Read Aloud**



Homelink

The work of the Ombudsman for Children

ACTIVITY 1

Meet the Ombudsman for Children





The work of the Ombudsman for Children

Meet the Ombudsman for Children

OBJECTIVE:

To introduce children to the role of the Ombudsman for Children.

YOU WILL NEED:

- OCO Poster
- DVD Track 2
- Flip chart or poster paper to record comments for later use
- Activity Sheet 1 for every child and an enlarged copy for display.

Ombudsman for Children:

The word Ombudsman comes from Scandinavia. The 'Ombuds' part means defender of rights and the 'man' part refers to mankind. So an Ombudsman can be either a man or a woman. S/he is a person who protects the rights of individuals or a group in relation to the powers and actions of government and other public organisations. In the case of an Ombudsman for Children, the beneficiaries of his/her work are children.





Hi everyone,

My name is Emily Logan and I am the first Ombudsman for Children in Ireland. That means that I work for all children and young people under 18 living in Ireland. My job is to make sure that the government and other people who make decisions about children really think about what is best for children.

Before I got this job I worked as a children's nurse in Temple Street Hospital and then in a big children's hospital in England. I really enjoyed taking care of children and spending time with them. I also became interested in children's rights and wanted to try to do more to make sure children's voices are heard.

In November 2003, the job for Ombudsman for Children was advertised. I couldn't stop thinking about how much I would like to do this job. When I was interviewed by 15 young people I wanted the job even more. I just knew it was my perfect job: it would give me the chance to make a difference and allow me to work with children and young people face to face.

As Ombudsman for Children, I am given lots of power that allows me to see if children and young people are getting a fair deal and, if they are not, to ask questions of the government and people who make decisions. If a child feels they were not treated fairly by a school, a hospital or a public organisation, they can complain to my office. When we look into a complaint, we make sure that we understand both sides of the story. Then we make suggestions about what can be done to help sort out the problem. So I need the help of children and young people directly. This isn't just about listening to them, but about really hearing what things are like from their point of view.

I am very lucky to be Ombudsman for Children. I am very serious about my job. Sometimes it can be hard – many children have difficult lives, but this just makes me want to work harder. Other parts of my job aren't hard at all: I love that I have the chance to meet children and young people often. This gives me great energy, because they are so straight and they want me to do a good job.

I hope I have answered some of the questions you might have had about me.

Goodbye for now,

Emily Logan

INTRODUCTION:

1. Facilitate a brief discussion about people who work with children – teachers, nurses etc. List the types of jobs the children mention and the types of work the jobs involve.

**DEVELOPMENT:**

2. Explain that there is a person, the Ombudsman for Children, whose job is to hear and highlight children's concerns and make sure children are treated well. Find out what the children already know about the Ombudsman for Children. Ask the children:

- What kind of problems do you think an Ombudsman for Children might hear about and deal with?
- What kind of person do you think the Ombudsman for Children needs to be?

3. Ask the children to work in groups to make a list of questions they would like to ask the Ombudsman for Children. Compile a class list of questions.

4. Play DVD Track 2 or read out Emily Logan's letter to the children. Invite comments/ feedback.



5. Go through the list of questions the children compiled and check if they have been answered by the letter/ DVD track 2.

6. Distribute activity sheet 1 and encourage children to write in words or sentences about the Ombudsman for Children, and decorate. Invite individual children to fill in the larger version for display.

**HOME LINK:**

Distribute activity sheet 2. Ask the children to complete the written activity, filling in a name beside each letter to show that the Ombudsman for Children is for every child.



Send a copy of the 'Letter for Parents/ Guardians' home with each child. The letter provides information about the work of the Ombudsman for Children's Office.



Please fill in a child's name beside each letter below.
And remember: the Ombudsman for Children is for every child and young person under 18 in Ireland!!

O _____

M _____

B _____

U _____

D _____

S _____

M _____

A _____

N _____



Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

Comments: _____

Dear Parent or Guardian

I am writing to you because your child is learning about our work at the Ombudsman for Children's Office in school.

As you may know, as Ireland's first Ombudsman for Children, my job is to promote the rights and welfare of all children up to the age of 18.

In my role as Ombudsman for Children, I have a statutory obligation to raise awareness of issues relating to children's rights and welfare, including among children and young people.

In collaboration with experienced teachers, we developed a set of educational activities so that children can learn in school about what we do and explore topics that are relevant to children's lives in Ireland.

These activities originally belonged to a project called the Big Ballot, which our Office did in 2007. Hundreds of schools and almost 75,000 children and young people throughout Ireland took part in this project. Its purpose was to give children an opportunity to tell us what issues are important to them and, with that, to help our Office decide what issues to work on.

Hearing children's views, highlighting their concerns, and supporting children's participation in decisions that affect them are central to our work here at the Ombudsman for Children's Office.

We continue to learn a great deal from the opinions and ideas that children and young people share with us. We are very aware of the extent to which parents and professionals support children and young people to find out about, contact and engage with our Office. This support is something that we really value and appreciate.

If you would like to know more about the work of our Office, please visit our website www.oco.ie, email us at oco@oco.ie or phone us on 01-8656800 to request an information pack.

Many thanks,



Emily Logan

Ombudsman for Children



Having a voice and being heard

ACTIVITY 2

Being Heard





Being Heard

Research undertaken for the OCO suggests that there is a general feeling among children that they are not heard and/or that their concerns/opinions are not taken seriously. This activity focuses on the importance of children being heard and gives examples of where children can have a voice.

Constitution Article 40 (6)(1)(i):

Citizens have the right to express their opinions freely.

Article 12:

Children have the right to have a say about things that affect them.

OBJECTIVES:

To facilitate children to:

- listen carefully to others;
- understand that they have a right to have their views heard and taken seriously as well as a responsibility to listen to others;
- explore ways that some children use their voices.

YOU WILL NEED:

- 2 volunteers (before the activity, take two children aside, asking one child to take on the role of a 'good' listener and the other child to be a 'poor' listener);
- to divide the class into 3 groups;
- a copy of activity sheet 3 (case studies) for each group;
- a copy of activity sheet 4 for every child;
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster.



Being Heard

INTRODUCTION:

1. Ask the children to watch and listen carefully as they will be asked to comment afterwards.
2. Relate some event to both volunteers in turn.
 - **Child A** to look away, not attend to what you are saying and not be able to give feedback.
 - **Child B** to listen attentively and show they are listening by asking questions and then giving feedback when asked what was said.
3. Ask for comments on what happened; Who was listening? How do you know?



DEVELOPMENT:

4. Ask the children to work together in pairs to role-play 30 seconds each of active listening. Discuss what it looks like and involves - e.g. eye contact, nodding, questioning, commenting etc.
5. Discuss being listened to with the children:
 - How do you know when someone is/is not really listening?
 - When is it especially important to make sure you get your message across?
 - Can you think of a time when you weren't listened to?



FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 1:

Explain that an important part of the Ombudsman for Children's job is to hear and highlight children's concerns.

Display the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster and explain that it is a list of rights that every child has. Most countries around the world, including Ireland, have agreed to make sure they respect and protect these rights.

Read through the rights with the children and ask them which one is about children's right to be heard.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 2:

Brainstorm ways that children can have a voice in school or groups in which they are involved (scouts, sports, etc).

Distribute a copy of activity sheet 3 to each group. Ask each group to read the role card and then to give a summary to rest of class.



Discuss with the children:

- How are these children's and young people's voices heard?
- Would you like to be part of a group like that? Why/Why not?
- What do you think the Ombudsman for Children could do to help make sure that children's voices are heard?

HOME LINK:

Ask the children to complete activity sheet 4 for homework. Display their completed activity sheets in the classroom.



Being Heard

Case Studies

Ombudsman for Children's Youth Advisory Panel (YAP)

My name is Mandioneke. I am 18 years old. A few years ago I was picked with 15 other young people to help to interview people for the job of Ombudsman for Children. When Emily Logan was picked, we all knew she was right for the job. She asked us to stay on to help her to do her job. We met regularly and told her our ideas about things. We helped to make the website and we interviewed other people who work in her office. I really enjoyed being part of YAP and working with the Ombudsman for Children's Office.^a

Student Council

My name is Anna. I am in 4th class in St. Mark's School in Cork. This term I am on our School Council. Every class votes for four people to be on the Class Council. Everyone else in the class can write down things they want us to talk about at the meeting. We meet once a week. A few things we talk about is having more time for PE and how to stop rough play in the yard.

Some things we can sort out in our Class Council meetings. We also meet with the other Class Councils at a School Council meeting. We then tell the teacher in charge and he talks to the Principal and they talk about it at staff meetings. I really like being on the Council. It's good to feel part of something important.

Green Schools Committee

Our names are Chloe and Claire. We are in 5th class in Borris-in-Ossory National School, Co. Laois. Last year our school won a Green School flag. We have 4 people doing jobs in our class. Two for closing doors and windows (to save heat), and two for turning off computer screens (to save energy). We also pick up litter, even if it's not ours. We do a Spring Clean every year. We also have meetings to talk about what we have done, and decide what we have to do. We learn a lot about the environment. We worked very hard to get the Green Schools flag. It feels great to take part in something worthwhile. We are glad to be on the Committee.

Being Heard

Can you think of ways of making your voice heard at home, at school or in your clubs? Please fill in the speech bubbles below with your ideas.



At School



At Home



At Play



At Sport

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12:

Children have the right to have a say about things that affect them.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____



Activity 3

Education



Education

Through this activity, children can explore different experiences of access to education. We suggest a number of activities to engage with this theme. Choose those best suited to the children you are working with.

Constitution, Article 42:

The State recognises the right to education.

UNCRC, Article 28:

Children have the right to education.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Activity Sheet 5;
- Two A4 pages, one with the words 'I Agree' and the other with the words 'I Disagree', stuck on opposite walls of the classroom;
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster.

OBJECTIVES:

To enable the children to:

- respond to stories about different children's experiences of education;
- suggest how the children could be supported to access education fully.



Education

INTRODUCTION:

1. Review with the children the issue of having a voice. Direct the children's attention to the Rights of the Child poster and ask them to call out the rights, which they think are about education.

Statements for moving debate:

- Every child should go to school.
- It costs nothing to go to school in Ireland.
- Some people need extra help in school.
- School holidays are too short.

DEVELOPMENT:

Moving Debate

2. Ask all the children to stand in the centre of the room. After you read out a statement, each child should move towards the sign that best reflects his/her individual opinion. Ask some of the children to explain what their position is and follow up with a discussion about the importance of education. Check if any of the children have changed their initial opinion based on the different comments they've heard. Invite any children that have to move to a position that reflects their changed view.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 1:

Remind the children about the School Council they heard about in Activity 2. Divide the class into groups of three or four, appoint a recorder and ask them to list issues they would like to be brought up at a school council meeting.

Get feedback from the groups, and list the issues on the board. Talk about who might be able to do something about the issues mentioned. Explore whether the children may be able to take action on any of the issues. You may need to explain that there are certain school policies that cannot be changed e.g. around holidays.





OR

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 2:

Explain that there are some children who need extra help to make sure they get a full education. Ask children to suggest who these children might be and to give reasons for their suggestions. Record their views.

Distribute rolecards on Activity Sheet 5 and a blank A4 page to groups of children. Each group decides how that child can be supported to access education fully. They can draw the child in a circle in the centre of the page and around the page other circles containing drawings of how the child can be supported to access education fully (e.g. ramps for a child who uses a wheelchair) and by whom.

OR

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 3:

Giant Steps activity.

Give each child a role card and ask them to imagine they are that person. Ask them to stand with their backs to the classroom wall. Call out the statements below and ask the children to take:

- a giant step if the statement applies fully to them
- a baby step if it applies only a little to them
- no step if it doesn't apply at all

Statements:

- I get to school on time every morning.
- I go to school every day.
- I can get help from my parents to do my homework if I need it.
- I always understand what the teacher is saying.
- I will definitely finish secondary school.
- I can take part in all activities in the school.

Education

Role Cards



Your name is Conor. You are 9 years old and live with your family in Dublin. You know your mother really loves you. She had problems when she was going to school and didn't learn to read and write very well but she wants you to get on well at school. Your family doesn't have much money.



Your name is Hannah and you are 8 years old. You have dyslexia which means that you find it difficult to read and write. Your father owns his own business and works very late every evening. Your mother also has dyslexia. Your parents love you very much and always help and support you.



Your name is Claudia. You are 10 years old. You and your family moved to Ireland from Poland last year. You are learning English. Your parents both went to University in Poland and want you to finish secondary school and go on to college. Your parents are learning to speak English as well. You feel lucky to live in a loving family.



Your name is Davy. You are 9 years old. You live with your family in a halting site in Cork. Both your parents love you very much. Your father has a good business and you help him after school and at the weekends. He wants you to finish school after 6th class so you can work with him full time. Most of your older cousins and friends left school after primary school.



Your name is Laura. You are 8 years old and you use a wheelchair. You live with your family who love and care for you. You go to the local school with your sisters. Some days you need to stay at home from school to take special medicine. Last year you couldn't go on the school tour because they couldn't get a bus that would take your wheelchair. This year your teacher makes sure you can take part in all of the PE classes, but not every teacher did that and you were left looking on.

ACTIVITY 4

Family & Care



Family & Care

This activity enables children to explore different types of families and the supports that families may need. We suggest that you adapt the material as necessary based on your knowledge of the children you are working with.

Constitution, Article 41:

The family has a special place in society.

UNCRC, Articles 7 and 9:

Children have the right to be with their parents or those who can care for them best.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Enough copies of activity sheet 6 so that each child gets either a drawing or a description. (Depending on the make up of your own class, you may add in more descriptions or omit some of the descriptions given.)
- Enough copies of activity sheet 7 'Families' so that every group gets one story and a question sheet
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster

OBJECTIVES:

Children will:

- explore and discuss different kinds of families;
- talk about ways that families might need extra help and support at difficult times.



Family & Care

INTRODUCTION:

1. Explain that children and young people all over Ireland have told the Ombudsman for Children that the issue of family and being cared for is very important to them. Talk about different types of families. Ensure everyone understands the terms adoption, foster care, step parents, one-parent families, etc.

DEVELOPMENT:

2. Give each child either a drawing or description from activity sheet 6. Ask the children to walk around the room and find the person with the matching drawing/description without talking. Once they make a pair they sit down.

3. Ask for feedback from the pairs about the types of families they discovered. Can they add any more to the list?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Look at the poster of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ask children to pick out articles concerning families.

Divide the class into groups of 4. Give each group one of the family stories from activity sheet 7.

Ask children to list ways that each family could be supported to make sure the rights of all children in the family are respected.

Record and display the children's ideas.

HOME LINK:

Ask the children to bring in photos of their own family or to collect photos from magazines of different types of family for a class collage.



Family Match Up



Barry lives with his mum, dad and baby sister.

1

Aoife lives with her mum during the week and with her dad at the weekends.

2

David lives with his brother and his mum and granny.

3

Aine lives with her brother, sister, daddy and their step mum. They see their mum during the week and stay with her at the weekend.

4

Isabelle lives with her mum and dad. They adopted her from an orphanage in Thailand.

5

Sean and his brother have been living with their foster mum and dad for a few weeks. They will go back to live with their mother when she gets better.

6

Geraldine lives with her three brothers, two sisters, mother and father. Her grandmother lives with them since her grandfather died a year ago.

7

Jack lives with his two brothers, mother and father.

8



Families

Mary is 8 years old. She lives with her parents and brother Liam and sister Emma. Emma is 6 years old and has special needs and is in a wheelchair. She goes to a special school. Mary loves having her around and she can always make Emma smile. Mary's mother works very hard taking care of all the children and doesn't get much sleep at night because Emma wakes up a lot. The house the family live in has steps in front and the doors are fairly narrow. As Emma grows bigger the family want to make sure she is comfortable and that they can take care of her properly.

Kwame is 10 years old. He has been living with a foster family for three months. He goes to visit his mother every weekend and hopes to go back to live with her full time when she is able to care for him. His foster family has been very good to him and he gets on well with his foster brothers and sisters, but he would prefer to be living at home with his mother.

Sarah is 9 years old. She lives with her mum and two brothers and sisters who are all younger than she is. She loves all of them all of the time, but sometimes they really wreck her head fighting and making noise. Her mammy works all day long and is really tired in the evenings. Sarah saw Supernanny on the telly once and wished she could come and wave a magic wand in her house, just to get a bit of peace!

Answer these questions:

What challenges does the family have?

What would make life easier?

Where do you think they could go for support?

ACTIVITY 5

Play



Play

Through this activity, children can explore rights and responsibilities around play.

UNCRC, Article 31:

Children have the right to play and rest.

OBJECTIVES:

Children will:

- consider how people have shared responsibilities by looking at the issue of responsibility for play areas;
- construct a 3D imaginative structure of their ideal playground.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Activity sheet 8 (you can read it aloud to the children or give a copy of it to each child to read)
- Activity sheet 9
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster



Play

INTRODUCTION:

1. Brainstorm games /leisure time activities with the children and make a list of them.

DEVELOPMENT:

2. Read the story of Sarah and her playground to the children or make copies of the story for the children to read independently.

3. After you/the children have read Part 1, ask the children what they think happens next. After you/the children have read Part 2, ask them:

- Do you have a place to play near your house?
- What do you like /not like about it?/ Would you like one?
- How do you think Sarah and her friends felt when they saw the damaged playground?
- Do you think it was a good idea to have the meeting? Why?/why not?
- Why is it important to have places to play?
- Can you think of some things you would like to see in a play area for children your age?

4. Direct the children's attention to the poster on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and point out that it says that children have the right to play.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

Visual Arts

Children, in pairs or groups of 3, design, draw or construct their dream playground. Facilitate the children to draw up a list of rules for the playground. Encourage them to take into account the needs of different children, including children with disabilities, and to think about materials that minimise the scope for damage. Display the children's finished work.

or

Drama

Ask the children to choose key moments from the Community Playground story and:

- create still images of these moments, e.g. discovery of the damaged playground.
- take on or ask one of the children to take on the role of the chairperson of the meeting and ask the children their opinions.

HOME LINK:

Ask the children to complete activity sheet 9 for homework. It includes suggestions for discussion with parents.



Play A Community Playground

Part 1

Holidays at last! Sarah felt that the last week of school would never end, but now the great day had finally come –no school for eight whole weeks! She raced home and changed out of her school uniform. She was meeting up with her friends Christina and Megan in the park near the flats where she lived. *'I want you back here for your dinner at half-three'*, her mother called after her as she charged down the steps.

She couldn't believe it when she got to the playground in the park. The gates were padlocked and she could see through the railings that there had been a fire. All the wooden playthings were destroyed.

There were some mothers with younger kids standing around and the warden came and told them what happened. A group of people had been seen hanging around drinking the evening before and had lit a fire that did all the damage.

Some of the younger kids were crying while Sarah and her friends were fed up about it. Where would they meet up now to hang around together? Their mothers didn't want them on the road because it was too busy and they didn't want to stay in each other's houses all the time.

Part 2

A few weeks later Sarah and her friends were with their parents were at a meeting. Some of the adults in the area were holding a meeting with a local councillor to talk about building a new play area. Some people thought they should ask the council to build the same playground again, but put in high walls around it and lock it at night. Other people thought there should be no playground at all because it was just causing too much hassle and bringing troublemakers into the area. Sarah finally took a deep breath and put up her hand to speak. After ages one of the people at the top table saw her and asked her what she wanted to say.

'Me and my friends really liked playing and hanging around the old playground, but some of it was a bit too babyish for us. We think it would be a good idea to have different parts of it for younger and older kids.'

Sarah was shaking after speaking in front of so many people, but her mammy squeezed her arm and told her she was great. After that they decided not to rush into building anything quickly, but they would try to find out what younger and older children wanted first.

There were workshops and meetings for children and adults. It took a long time but finally the children got a new playground that couldn't be burned down. There was a skate park for rollerblading and skateboarding, a play area for toddlers and one for older children.

Sarah hopes that everyone will take good care of the new play areas since it really belongs to them all now.

Play

Word Search - Can you find the hidden words?

BOOKS	FRIENDS	PLAY	RUNNING
FOOTBALL	FUN	PLAYGROUND	SWIMMING
READING	SWINGS		

S	W	E	D	N	L	I	K	E	P	L	L	A	Y	I
G	N	G	N	W	O	I	T	H	O	L	U	R	F	R
N	I	E	U	N	D	I	S	D	A	S	K	O	O	B
I	Y	M	O	J	U	I	T	B	K	H	B	O	V	A
W	H	W	R	B	H	T	T	A	V	H	L	Z	E	N
S	F	N	G	L	C	O	N	Z	C	J	A	Z	Z	A
Z	K	A	Y	R	O	L	I	R	M	U	T	I	S	A
G	U	A	A	F	B	M	N	R	X	O	D	Q	W	T
S	N	T	L	S	D	N	E	I	R	F	G	E	I	F
B	C	I	P	G	N	I	N	N	U	R	P	F	M	V
H	O	H	D	W	E	E	M	R	S	L	U	B	M	P
B	K	T	O	A	I	N	L	Q	A	N	Y	H	I	P
G	F	K	Q	O	E	A	L	Y	I	E	N	Z	N	F
N	Q	Q	I	X	L	R	L	N	B	B	L	H	G	J
N	W	M	D	L	O	N	Z	B	P	Y	J	J	J	T



Talk at home about Sarah and her local playground.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature: _____

ACTIVITY 6

Health & Wealth



Health & Wealth

Statistics from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) indicate that 1 in 16 children in Ireland were living in consistent poverty in 2008.¹

Poverty affects every area of a child's development. This activity includes a case study to help illustrate this.

UNCRC, Articles 24 and 27:

Children have a right to the best health care possible, to safe water to drink, nutritious food, clothes, a clean and safe place to live, and to information to help them stay well.

OBJECTIVE:

Children will examine how poverty affects the lives of children in Ireland.

YOU WILL NEED:

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster

1. Being in 'consistent poverty' is defined as having an income that is below 60% of the average disposable income and being deprived of basic items such as a warm coat and home heating. For more information about child poverty, visit www.endchildpoverty.ie.



INTRODUCTION:

1. Review the issues you have covered so far. Explain that the next issue you are going to explore together can affect nearly all of these other issues. The issue is poverty.

DEVELOPMENT:

2. Read out the case study.
3. Facilitate the children to talk about how not having enough money affects different areas of John's life.
4. Using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster as a reference, facilitate the children to identify and discuss which rights are being denied to the family.
5. Support the children to think of ways in which the government could make sure that children in Ireland have enough money to be healthy, well and get the care and support they need (e.g. free health care and education).
6. Invite the children to imagine that they are members of a group called the Children's Party. This party wants to make sure that all children in Ireland have their rights respected. Ask the children to work in groups of 3 or 4 to make a list of the things they would do if they were in charge of the country.

**HOME LINK:**

Ask the children to illustrate scenes from John's life for homework. Display their work in the classroom.

Case study

John and his family live in a house in a small town. There are five others in his family. His father left home a few months ago and his mother stays at home to care for the family. The estate is at the far end of the town from the school and shops. There are no play areas so in the evenings John and his friends just sit on the walls or watch telly. There is no heating in the house. The cooker in the kitchen heats the water, so the children have to wash in cold water every morning. The food in the local shops is expensive so they don't eat fresh fruit and vegetables as often as they would all like. If there was a bus, John's mother could go to the big town and get cheaper food in the supermarket. His mother had to get a loan of money last year to pay for his First Communion suit.

John's class is going on a school tour but he's not going to tell his mother about it, because he knows there isn't enough money for it. School is a pain sometimes. Some days he gets bullied and picked on in school because he doesn't wear expensive trainers. John's older brother has to go to hospital for an operation but he will be waiting a long time. His mother said if they could afford to pay for it, he wouldn't have to wait so long.

John doesn't think that's fair and he learned in school that children have the right to free education and health care... it doesn't feel like it's free to John.

ACTIVITY 7

The Law



The Law

This activity develops children's understanding of the roles of gardaí and of the importance of using the emergency services number correctly.

OBJECTIVE:

Children will:

- find out more about the work of the gardaí in their communities;
- learn how to use the emergency services number correctly.

Note for Teachers:

Research on obstacles to children realising their rights conducted for the OCO by University College Cork in 2007 indicated that children who come into conflict with the law and become involved in the criminal justice system are among several groups of children in Ireland who face multiple obstacles as regards realising their rights. For this reason, we decided to develop an activity that would enable younger children to engage with the theme of 'children and the law' in an age-appropriate way, i.e. by looking at the work of community gardaí

YOU WILL NEED:

- To contact your local garda station to find out whether a Community Liaison Officer is available to come to talk to the children about the role of gardaí, road safety and other relevant issues.

INTRODUCTION:

- Ask the children to list people who work in our communities to help us. List these on the board.
- Play charades with the class using the list on the board.
- Explain to the children that they are going to find out more about the work of An Garda Síochána.
- Ask children to tell you what jobs they think a garda does. List these on the board.



DEVELOPMENT:*The role of the gardaí*

Facilitate the children to imagine that they have been asked to make a poster looking for people to apply for jobs as gardaí. In groups of three, the children should make a poster outlining the type of qualities a garda should have - for example, a good listener, calm, able to see both sides of a situation. Give the children time to design and decorate their posters.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 1:*The Emergency Services*

Read out the following scenario to the children:

Jake, who is 7 years old, and his mother were at home one evening. Jake's mother was standing on a chair trying to reach something on a high shelf when she fell and hit her head. Jake raced over to her, but she couldn't talk to him. She was unconscious.

Discuss: What should Jake do? What would you do?

Jake's mother had told him before about how to phone the emergency services if there was an accident or an emergency and he needed help. So Jake got the phone and dialled 999. The woman who answered was very calm and talked to him. Jake was able to give her the address for where he and his mum lived. She told him the ambulance was on its way. The woman kept talking to him and after 10 minutes the doorbell rang. Two gardaí had arrived. One of them helped Jake's mum, who was awake by now, and

the other chatted to Jake and told him how brave and clever he was for doing the right thing. The ambulance arrived and Jake's mum was brought to hospital. She was kept in overnight and came home the next day, telling everyone about her hero, Jake, who had saved the day!

Follow-up:

- Ask the children to get into pairs. Check in with them to make sure they all know their home address. Give them time to work together to practice making calls to the emergency number 999. (Let the children know that an alternative number they can dial to access the emergency services is 112.)
- Facilitate a discussion with the children about the dangers of making nuisance calls to the emergency services.
- Support the children to come up with a catchy message about the importance of using the emergency services number correctly and to design eye-catching posters or equivalents showing their message. Arrange for the children to display their posters in a prominent place in the school where other children can see them.

NOTE: In the context of this activity, make sure that you emphasise to the children that they should never reveal personal information like their address to strangers.



OR

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 2*The Community Garda*

Read out the following scenario to the children:

Hayley is in third class in a big school in Cork. The school is quite close to her house so she can walk most days and meets up with her friends on the way. Her teachers are all nice enough. She has great fun playing in the yard. All the school corridors are full of drawings, paintings and photographs and it's lovely and bright inside. The only problem is that every Monday the walls all around the school and in the school shed are covered in graffiti. Not the nice colourful stuff you sometimes see. Just rude words and names. There's sometimes broken glass in the yard as well. The caretaker tries his best to clean everything up before break-time and spends a lot of time painting over the graffiti. The principal is spending a lot of money on paint.



Discuss with the children: What do you think can be done? Do you think the local gardaí might be able to do anything to help?

Follow-up:

Ask the children to imagine that the community garda calls a meeting for all those affected by graffiti on the walls of the school. Give the children roles: the principal, teachers, parents, pupils, the school caretaker, gardaí, local councillors, etc. Facilitate the children to role play the discussion, which takes place at the meeting and to identify a solution to the problem that everyone is satisfied with.

OR

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY 3

Facilitate the children to do a collage on theme of 'Gardaí in our Community' using pictures and captions from newspapers or magazines.

or

Facilitate the children to do a project on one or more of the emergency services in Ireland and to use the internet to do their research. Relevant websites include:

An Garda Síochána:
www.garda.ie

Irish Fire Services:
www.irishfireservices.ie

Lifeboats:
www.rnli.org.uk/rnli_near_you/ireland

Mountain Rescue:
www.mountainrescue.ie

HOME LINK:

Ask the children to ask their parents/guardians to make a list of emergency contact numbers that the children can put into their mobile phones (if they have one) and that can be placed beside the home phone or an alternative appropriate place in the home.



ACTIVITY 8

The Rights Game



The Rights Game

In this activity, children have an opportunity to re-visit some of the children's rights issues covered in this resource and to develop their understanding of how children's rights and the work of the Ombudsman for Children relate to everyday life.

OBJECTIVE:

Children will:

- see links between rights named in the UNCRC and everyday life;
- develop their understanding of the Ombudsman for Children's work.

YOU WILL NEED:

The game can be played by the children in small groups, where each group is made up of a minimum of 2 pairs of children. Each group will need:

- a copy of the game board
- a full set of cards
- a dice
- playing pieces (the children could make these themselves)

GAME INSTRUCTIONS

- The cards should be mixed up and downward-facing in a pile.
- One player from each pair rolls the dice. The player/pair to roll the highest number on the dice starts the game.
- The first player rolls the dice and moves forward according to the number on the dice.

- If a player lands on a numbered square, the player's team mate picks up a card, reads it aloud and the player follows the instructions. These could be to go forwards, go backwards, or miss a turn. In the case of a question card, if the player does not know the answer, he/she has to go back one space on the board.
- Continue, with each pair taking turns to roll the dice, etc.
- The first player/pair to reach the end is the winner, but the game should continue until every player / pair has reached the end.

FOLLOW-UP

- Once each group has finished playing the game, discuss the game with all of the children:

What did you find out about children's rights?

What did you find out about the Ombudsman for Children?

Can you give examples of other situations where children's rights are respected or, alternatively, disrespected?



Activity 8: Game Cards

1.

You and your friends learn about the Ombudsman for Children. Her job is to make sure children living in Ireland are treated fairly.

Move forward 2 spaces.

2.

You decide to set up a student council in your school to get your ideas heard. Everyone thinks it's a great idea.

Move forward 2 spaces if you can suggest two issues a student council in your school could discuss and work on.

3.

Your school has no ramp or lift for people who use wheelchairs or have difficulties walking.

Move back 1 space.

4.

A new girl joined your school from another country and English is her second language. Because of cutbacks, she will not get extra support to learn English.

What right is being disrespected here?
Miss a turn if you don't know.

5.

Your school has a teacher whose job is about helping to make sure children go to school.

Move forward 2 spaces

6.

You learn about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in school. The Convention is a long list of rights that every child under 18 has.

Move forward 2 spaces.

Bonus point: What right is being respected here?
Move forward 1 more space if you know.

7.

There's a boy you know who has to take care of his mum who is sick. He has no time to play after school.

What right is he being denied here? Move on 2 spaces if you know.

8.

Your friend is a Traveller. He would like to join the local youth club, but they won't allow him. He feels it's because he's a Traveller.

Miss a turn or answer a question card.

9.

Your friend's brother has a disability. The Ombudsman for Children helped to make sure that the Local Authority responsible gave the family a house that was adapted to suit his needs.

Move forward 2 spaces.

Bonus Point: What right is being respected here? Move on 1 space if you know.

10.

Your friends live in a small village. There is no playground for miles around and no public park to play in.

Move back 3 spaces.

11.

Your older brother was hanging out with his friends on the local green and they were told to move on by gardaí, even though they hadn't done anything wrong.

Move back 2 spaces.

12.

You learned that if you are in serious trouble you can phone for help. If you dial the emergency number, you will be put in touch with people who can help you.

Move forward 2 spaces.

Bonus Point: What is the emergency number? If you know the answer, roll the dice again.

13.

Your local Garda Station has a Community Bus and the Community Garda brings a group of you on a trip.

Move forward 1 space.

14.

Your friend has learning difficulties and finds it hard to concentrate in school. The classroom helper, Tom, used to help her by sitting down beside her and helping her to get organised. Because of cutbacks, she will not be able to get this help anymore.

Move back 2 spaces.

15.

Q. What is the name of the Ombudsman for Children in Ireland?

A. Emily Logan

Move forward 3 spaces.

16.

Q. What is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

A. A list of rights that all children under 18 have.

Move forward 2 spaces.

17.

Q. How do you think a school principal could make sure that pupils' ideas are listened to in school?

Some possible answers:

student council, green schools committee, class suggestion box, etc.

Move forward 2 spaces for 1 or more doable suggestions.

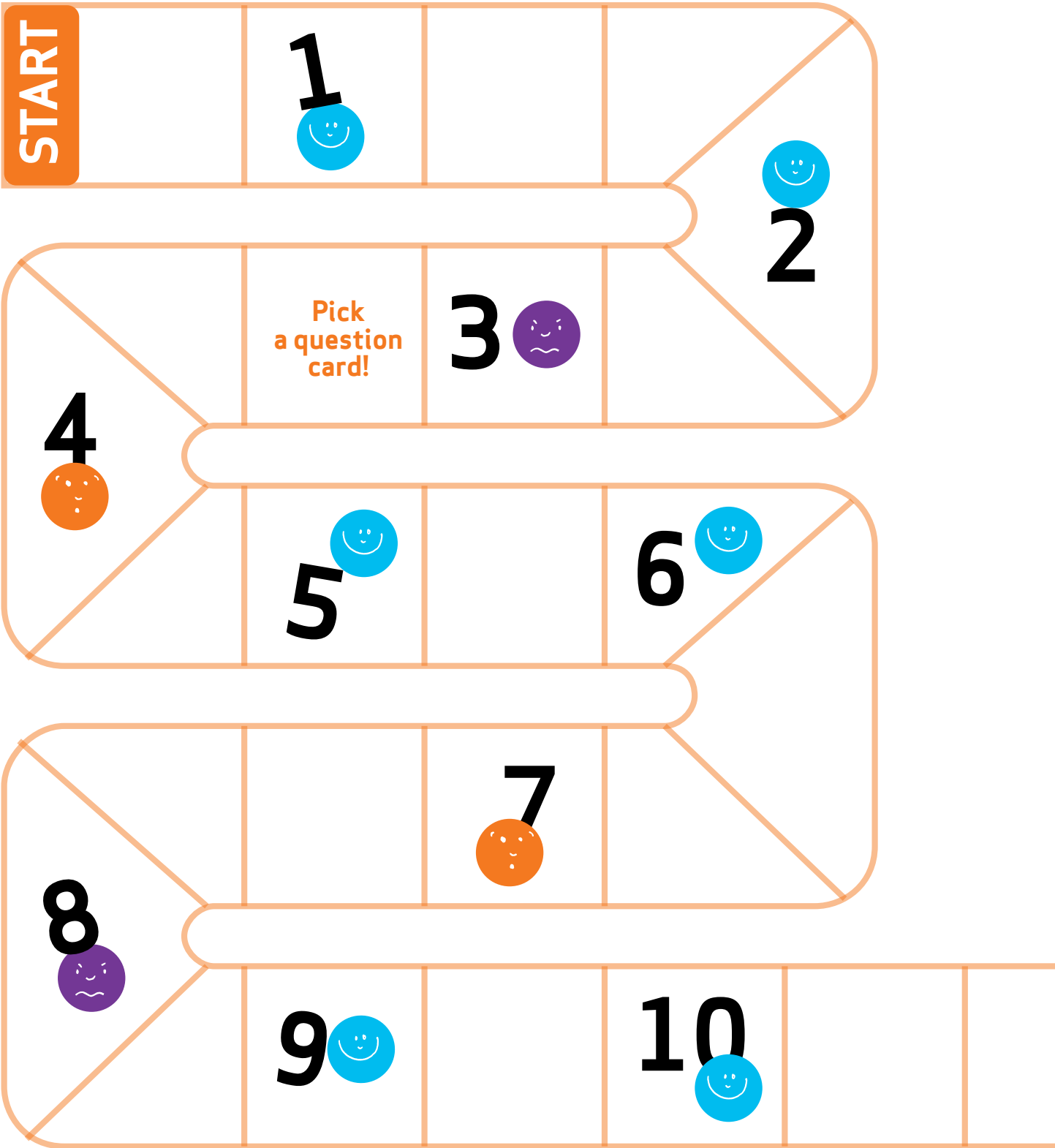
18.

Q. What number do you ring if you witness an accident?

A. 999 or 112

Move forward 2 spaces.

Activity 8: Game Board



FINISH!

Well done! You have learned
a lot about your rights and about
the Ombudsman for Children!

Pick
a question
card!

14



Pick
a question
card!



13



12

Pick
a question
card!

11





A Ballot on Children's Issues

ACTIVITY 9

*Your Voice,
Your Vote*



A Ballot on Children's Issues

Your Voice, Your Vote

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Almost 75,000 children and young people in over 560 schools and centres throughout the country took part in the Big Ballot consultation organised by the Ombudsman for Children's Office in 2007. Feedback from participating children, teachers and principals indicated that among the principal benefits of participation in the Big Ballot were opportunities for children to learn about children's rights; to form and express opinions; and to participate in a democratic process by casting votes on children's rights issues. Teachers also told us children were really engaged and enthusiastic about taking part in a ballot and the experience of casting a vote. This final activity builds on this feedback, containing as it does suggestions for holding a ballot on children's issues.

DO I HOLD A SINGLE CLASS OR A WHOLE SCHOOL BALLOT?

The ballot can of course be undertaken at class level. However, the learning from the Big Ballot suggests that interest in, excitement about and learning from the exercise can be significantly enhanced by conducting the ballot on a whole school basis. If you can take this approach, it is recommended that you and your colleagues give 6th class children responsibility for organising the whole school ballot. Whether you undertake a ballot with the children in your class or participate in a whole school ballot, giving roles and responsibilities to children around organising the ballot for the duration of the process will make the activity more fun and enhance its value as an exercise in citizenship.



WHAT ISSUES DO CHILDREN VOTE ON?

Facilitating children to take part in a ballot focused on the issues they have explored through the preceding activities in this resource will support children to reflect on the importance of making informed decisions and choices. However, the ballot activity could also be used as an opportunity for children to identify, articulate and vote on issues that are most important to them in, for example, their school or their local area.

FEED BACK TO THE OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN'S OFFICE

Here at the Ombudsman for Children's Office, we would be delighted to hear from the children about the issues they have voted on and why they think one or more of these issues is so important. They can email us at:

oco@oco.ie

or write to us, with 'Our Ballot Results' on the envelope, at:

**Ombudsman for Children's Office,
1st Floor, Millennium House,
52-56 Great Strand Street,
Dublin 1.**

Depending on how you approach this activity, there are any number of people who the children could share the results of their ballot with and/or who they could ask to take their results on board – for example, your school's principal and Board of Management; local county councillors and TDs; or local service providers and community organisations.

NOTE FOR TEACHERS ON FACILITATING THIS ACTIVITY:

However you decide to conduct this activity, you will need to adapt the steps we outline below to take account of:

- the ages and capacities of the children you are working with;
- the class you are working with;
- whether you are holding a class or whole school ballot;
- whether you are basing the ballot around the issues in this resource or other issues raised by the children themselves.

If you are teaching infant or junior class children and are focusing the ballot on the issues explored through this resource, you might remind the children of the issues by referring back to the stories. In terms of voting, you may wish to devise a more age-appropriate approach to facilitating younger children to cast their votes. For example, you could allocate a different colour to each issue and ask the children to use, for example, equivalent coloured blocks, paper or alternative materials available to you in the classroom in order to express their preference.

OBJECTIVES:**Children will:**

- develop their understanding of democratic practices;
- identify and prioritise issues that affect and are important to them;
- have the opportunity to take a positive action in relation to the issue prioritised (optional).

YOU WILL NEED:

- To develop and make copies of a ballot paper, etc. to facilitate the holding of a ballot (templates are provided to assist you with this).

ACTIVITY**1. Preparing for the ballot***All classes:*

- Facilitate the children to review the issues they have explored through the activities in this resource. Alternatively, if you are not basing the ballot on the issues in this resource, support the children to identify five issues that affect and matter to them in, for example, their school or their local community.
- In preparation for the vote, divide the children into groups, one for each issue to be voted on. Ask each group to prepare a short presentation to the class on their issue with the aim of persuading others to vote for it. Each group could also display any work they have done that is relevant to the issue and/or design and display a campaign poster about the issue.
- Advertise the ballot and the identified issues.
- Raise the children's awareness of procedures for the ballot (i.e. why it is a secret ballot, how to use a ballot paper, etc.) and, in more general terms, about what elections are for, etc.

*For the class/group
organising the ballot:*

- The class or group that is organising and overseeing the ballot process needs to be introduced to procedures and key roles such as returning officer, counters, guards for the voting booths and observers. In addition, the children can make issue cards for display beside ballot boxes; collect and display artwork/posters for each issue from classrooms; and prepare/design ballot papers.
- If you are working with the organising group:
 - help them to choose a Returning Officer;
 - distribute the jobs checklist;
 - support the children with deciding who will perform what role (the Returning Officer should have at least two assistants);
 - help the children to make and display a corresponding list of duties.

2. Holding the ballot

- The ballot Returning Officer will be responsible for overseeing the procedures.
- Hold the vote in an assembly area. If possible, older children could take responsibility for bringing the younger children to and from the voting area and helping to oversee the vote.
- Following the ballot, the Returning Officer should be facilitated to ensure that everyone is made aware of the results.

3. Options for follow-up activities

Encourage the children to bring home the results of the ballot. In addition, you could support the children:

- to identify and collaborate in taking a positive action in response to the issue, which topped the poll;

and/or

- to email or write a letter to the Ombudsman for Children's Office to inform us of the results of the ballot, their views on these results and, if applicable, any action they have taken in relation to the issue that received the most votes;

and/or

- to make display charts of class and/or school results.

Organising Your Ballot

Jobs Checklist

Name of Returning Officer:

The returning officer's job is:

.....

Names of Returning Officer's Assistants:

The assistants' job is:

.....

Names of Guards (for the voting booths or boxes):

The guards' job is:

.....

Names of Observers:

The observers' job is:

.....

Names of Vote Counters:

The vote counters' job is:

.....

Names of Vote Recorders:

The vote recorders' job is:

.....

Sample Ballot Paper

Please say which issue below you think is MOST important.
Put a tick in one box only.

☐ *Issue:* _____

☐ *Issue:* _____

☐ *Issue:* _____

☐ *Issue:* _____

☐ *Issue:* _____

Please fold and place in the ballot box.
Thank you!

Sample Returns Sheet

School name:

School address:

.....

Ballot results

Please indicate the number of votes cast for each issue:

Issue:

Issue:

Issue:

Issue:

Issue:

School stamp:

Name of Returning Officer (in capitals):

.....

Signature of Returning Officer:



