

Host a monthly children's council

Setting up a monthly children's council meeting is one way to give the children within your setting a voice.

Learning aims

- Build self-esteem and confidence
- Consultation with children
- Giving children a voice
- Being valued and making a valid contribution
- Creative and critical thinking
- Communication skills- speaking and listening
- Understanding of the need for democracy.



Activity Outline

- Floor book or large piece of paper
- Pens
- Post box
- Notice board
- Quiet meeting spaces.

Activity Outline

Introduce the concept of the children's' council. You will need approximately five to six children (any more it will become hard to make decisions).

- How children can volunteer to be part of the council and that the members will change each month so everyone can have a turn if they want to.
- Explain the council will meet once a month and that they will appoint a chair who will lead the meeting and will feed back to everyone else in circle time.
- The council will discuss key topics that are important to the children in the room, so these may change each month.
 - Ideas could be: the nursery menus, the toys in the room, activity ideas, trips or outings, role play area, outdoor areas and music.
- Once you have introduced this put a children's council notice board up with the date for the next meeting and a post box that children can post their photos or names in if they want
- Allow a couple of days for the children to post their names, and spend time with any children who missed the initial circle time to discuss this with them too so they can also opt to take part
- Pick out the first five to six children and let them know they are in the children's council this month
 - Get them to make themselves badges to show other children they are part of the council this month and tell children they can talk to the council before the meeting if they want to have their ideas heard too
- On the day and time of the meeting find somewhere quiet and calm and sit the children on the council in a circle on the floor around the floor book.
 - Ask them to pick a chair for the meeting who will be in charge.
- In the first meeting decide on the rules for the meeting and how they think you should behave, e.g. listen, talk and share
- Decide on what they would like to discuss this time; e.g. would they like to pick out a children's choice meal for the menu or decide on an activity for the outdoors?
 - You should limit items to approx. two to three or you will lose their interest.
 - The next items can also be discussed in the next meeting
- Use the floor book to log down their ideas in pictures or words and support this process
- Pick out the top suggestions and then take these back to the main group of children in circle time over the next few days to share back
- Post the "minutes" of the meeting for the parents to see
- Include your children's ideas and actions in your development plan or set up a separate one so the children at the next council can see the actions you have completed
- Allocate actions out to children too, with the support of the staff.

Ideas they may consider:

- A new place to visit and why they think it would be good?
- Resources and toys they like, and ones they don't play with and why
- Areas in the setting they like and areas they would like to change and why? What ideas do they have?
- Menus and which food they like and what they would like to see that they don't – could be a children's choice day once a month? This opens up discussions about healthy choices too?
- Songs and music they would like to sing or hear
- Favourite stories and why?



Remember your role is facilitator – you should not get involved with decisions, but you should get children to discuss why some ideas may not work. For this to be child led and for you to listen to and consult with children effectively it needs to be led by the children

Working with babies

Although a children's council is not age appropriate for babies and toddlers, you still need to listen to what they want and respond.

- Provide child height storage and child height activities will allow your mobile children to choose what they want to play with or interact with.
- Use a time sample observation to spot which areas / activities are popular and which may need a revamp.
- For non-mobile babies, take account of their body language and facial expressions to ascertain whether a baby is interested in the activity or resource.
 - Provide opportunities for the non-mobile children to choose activities by placing them within reach, but be careful not to overload or trap the children in, this may stifle them.
- Provide opportunities for the non-verbal children to choose their own food and where they wish to play. If you cannot offer free flow outdoor play then consider how you will enable children to choose if they wish to go outside, e.g. a picture of themselves on a board with a photo of indoors and a photo of outdoors so the children can freely move them to where they wish to be.