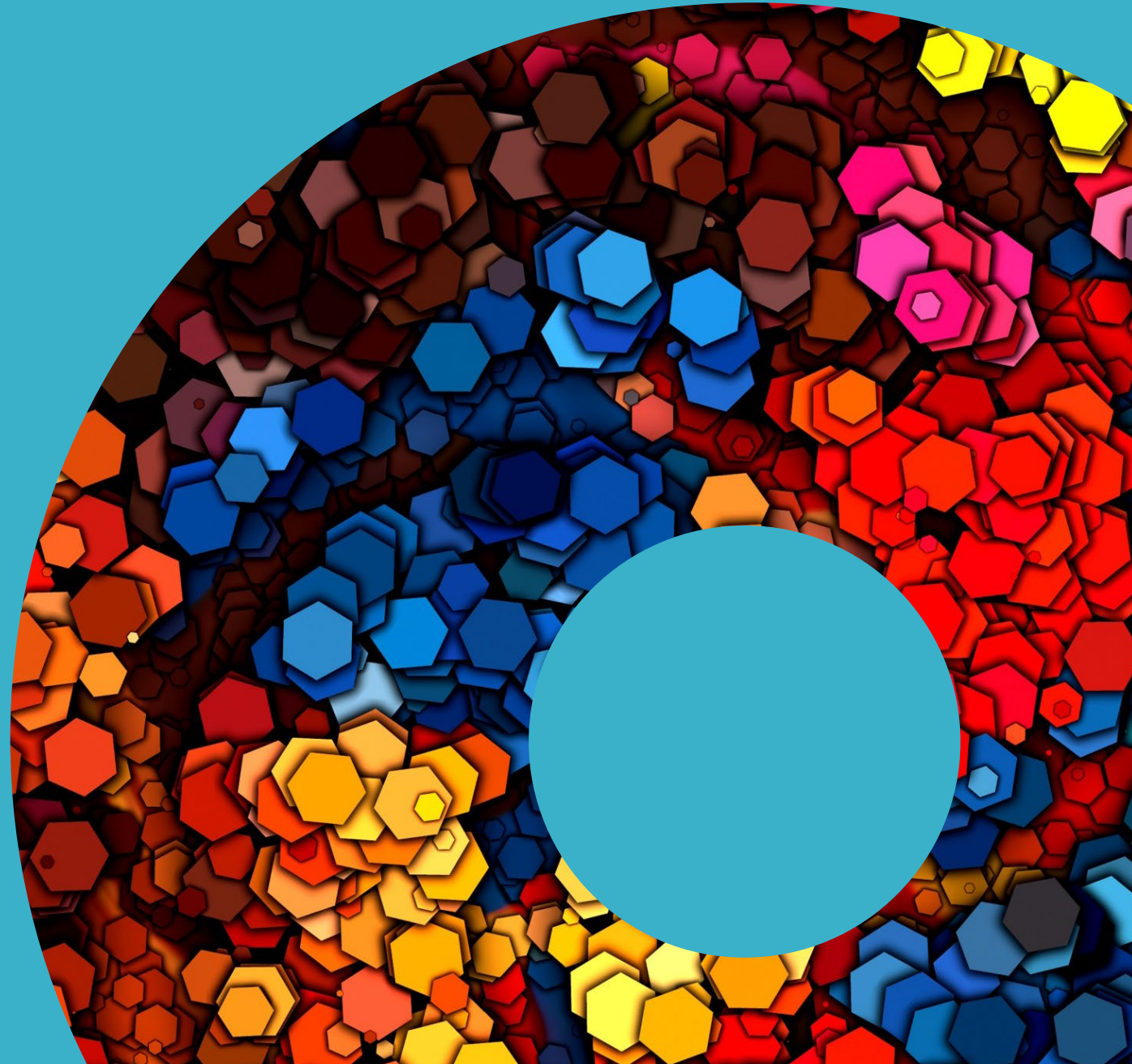# Towards Research with Children: Assessing Participatory Methods in England and Wales

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AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Context
3. Methods
4. Findings
5. Summary
6. Q+A

Introduction

- Who are we?
- Evaluation work with children and young people

Context

- Full evaluation were conducted with Organisations A and B in England and Wales

- Both organisations work with underrepresented children who have a wealth of adverse experiences such as family issues, living in poor neighbourhoods, low school attainment, education cessation, and behavioural problems.

Involved Organisations

Organisation A

- Educational disadvantage and health inequalities for children (8 to 18 years old)
- Improve children's self-confidence, and physical and mental well-being by encouraging ambition.
- Emphasis on community engagement through engagement in physical activity and community outreach
- Works with different external stakeholders such as the police, youth organisations and schools

Organisation B

- Children at risk of dropping out of mainstream education, entering the category of 'Not in Education, Employment and Training' (NEET).
- Support delivered through a three-year bespoke programme or a short series of interactive sessions
- Works closely with schools to identify children that require additional support, with emphasis on developing practical skills for employment
- Partners with external organisations to provide employability sessions

Evaluation Methods

- Interviews with children were conducted

- Quantitative data collection

- Photostories approach was used with both organisations.

Photovoice

- It gives a voice to people who often have little or no opportunity to express their views within their own communities or to influence decisions that may affect their lives through photography.

- Participants have control to tell their stories and perspectives in their own way (Empowerment) using photos.

- It promotes knowledge and critical dialogue about community issues and their impact on individuals through group discussion of images, and reaches and informs policy makers to bring about change (Wang, 1999: 185).

- PV does not require literacy/writing skills .

What is Photostories?

- Inspired by Photovoice, Photostories is a participatory research methodology which involves the taking of photos as an aid to help participants tell their 'story' and offer insights of their lived world which are often difficult to communicate and for researchers to interpret (Wang *et al.,* 2004).

- Photostories method was used as part of the evaluation of two separate outreach programmes. An evolution of the traditional Photovoice methodology was required due the time the evaluations were conducted, with COVID-19 restrictions limiting the research teams opportunities to engage with participants in-person, an important aspect of the method (Abma and Schrijver, 2019).

- The development of the Photostories method maintained the essential components of Photovoice, for example the taking of photos and using captions, however, wider consideration had to be given to ethical and safeguarding procedures, such as informed consent, accessibility, and participant agency. Tools were developed to aid in this.

What is Photostories?

- A booklet was developed which offered guidance to the participants on how to complete the research assignment and a YouTube video produced to help explain the Photostories research process.

- Acted as a guidebook which explained what they needed to do, the equipment needed, and what would be done with their pictures.

- The language used was made to be accessible for young people and was developed with safeguarding officers and stakeholders within the separate outreach projects.

- The booklet included sections on the aims of the research tool, an outline of the exercises the participants would need to do, and consent forms for parents. It also explained what the participants could do should they wish to leave the project.
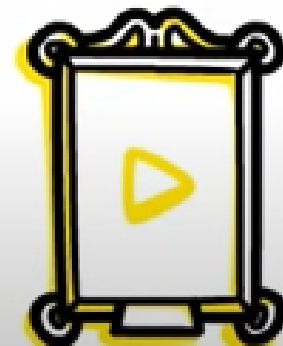
Photo Stories
A handy guide
Prepared by the

1:05 / 1:06

Participation

- The selection of participants was led by the organisations taking part in the evaluation.

- The decision to allow the organisations to lead recruitment of children and young people was made due to their understanding of the local context.

- The impact of COVID-19 meant that there were limitations: Organisation A was able to involve two groups of children from two sites, whereas Organisation B had one group of children from one site.

- In total, 18 children took part in the focused upon Photostories evaluation, and the team received 25 photos.

Preliminary Findings

Safeguarding practices- question of voice and agency

- The issue of voice mostly focuses on the need to go beyond offering child-friendly spaces and explore how one can enable children to claim ownership of the research process and become co-researchers (Lundy, McEvoy, & Byrne, 2011).

- While the organisations actively encouraged children to participate in Photostories for the evaluation, they did not fully inform children of the expectations of the research. We, as the research team, spent time with children to explain their involvement at the beginning of research, however throughout the process the organisations were the mediators between us and children due to safeguarding reasons.

Preliminary Findings

Participation on whose terms and who benefits?

- Power dynamics: involving children as co-researchers addresses the complexities of power dynamics while enabling them with opportunities and child-friendly, safe spaces to develop a strong agency and empowerment.

- Relationship between researchers, children and the organization.

- Relationship between parents and children needs exploring.

- Complication when opportunities to create exhibitions exist, such as ownership and understanding of the audience relationship.

Preliminary Findings

The roles researchers: reflexivity and positionality

- The research team took part in running *Photostories* with children had to remember that their presence during the implementation of the tool had an impact on the process and outcomes.

Summary

- Thinking about who benefits from participatory research

- How much agency and voice do children have participating in research?

- Power dynamics among third sector, research and participants.

Thank you for listening

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