

Evaluation of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation

A report to Scotland's Commissioner
for Children and Young People

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EVALUATION OF THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
The Purpose of this Report	1
About the 7 Golden Rules for Participation	1
ABOUT THE EVALUATION	4
Aims of the Evaluation	4
Methodology	4
Examples of Practice	5
IMPACT OF THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION	7
Who Uses the 7 Golden Rules for Participation?	7
Who Are the 7 Golden Rules for Participation Used With?	9
What Are the 7 Golden Rules for Participation Used For?	14
Which of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation Are Most Popular?	20
What Difference have the 7 Golden Rules for Participation Made?	21
What Factors Affect the Impact of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation?	23
In What Strategic Contexts Are the 7 Golden Rules for Participation Used?	29
Why Are the 7 Golden Rules for Participation Not Used?	32
What Feedback is there from Children and Young People?	33
CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT	35

Evaluation of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

In October 2014, Copius Consulting was appointed by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People to undertake an evaluation of the impact of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation¹. This report describes the findings of that evaluation.

ABOUT THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation were published online and in hard copy format in April 2013. The publication and promotion of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People is an initiative intended to change the way professionals think about, plan and deliver participation by children and young people, and how children and young people experience participation.



¹ <http://www.sccyp.org.uk/education/golden-rules>

The hard copy of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation includes a set of cards which describe:

- A list of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.
- Key things to consider about each Golden Rule.
- A list of things to think about for children and young people.
- A list of things to think about for adults.

The online publication also included a downloadable set of supporting activities² for workshop planning and the 7 Golden Rules for Participation in a number of accessible formats. Commissioner's office staff provided training and consultancy support in using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to a number of organisations.

A letter from the Commissioner distributed within the pack states:

"Through research commissioned from the University of Stirling and further work undertaken directly with children and young people, I have been learning about the principles and values that underpin participative practice. Participation is a dialogue with children and young people; an interactive and ongoing conversation that continues throughout the life of the child.

As a result of this work, my office has developed an exciting new resource called the 7 Golden Rules for Participation, aimed at supporting those working in schools and children's and youth service and organisations, as well as informing managers and policy makers. It has been designed to offer a clear set of principles for practice – a guide to how we can ensure we fulfil our duty to promote meaningful participation."

Packs were sent to all schools in Scotland and to a number of other organisations on the Commissioner's office database. A range of marketing activity was undertaken which led to regular requests for packs to the Commissioner's office.

² <http://www.sccyp.org.uk/ufiles/Golden-Rules-Activities.pdf>

The key objectives of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were set out as follows:

- To promote the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to key organisations, practitioners, children and young people across Scotland.
- To use the 7 Golden Rules for Participation as a tool to continue to remind adults of what participation means from the point of view of children and young people, and to encourage children and young people to think about what they need from adults to support them to participate.
- To present the 7 Golden Rules for Participation so that they can be used as an accessible learning tool for children, young people and adults, to promote positive participation of children and young people across different sectors.
- To provide suggested examples of how the 7 Golden Rules for Participation might be applied in different settings.
- To provide case studies to show how the 7 Golden Rules for Participation have been used in different settings.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

This chapter describes the purposes and methods of the evaluation.

AIMS OF THE EVALUATION

The key aim of the exercise was to undertake an evaluation and review of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation in terms of their impact and effectiveness as well as gather feedback on their possible development.

The evaluation was tasked to focus on four key questions:

- What has been the impact of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation across different settings?
- How effective have they been in raising awareness of the importance of adults listening to children and young people?
- What evidence is there about feedback from children and young people?
- What are the overall views of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation as a tool to evaluate and improve the positive participation of children and young people, and how might these inform future development?

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology was designed around engagement with the agencies and individuals who have received a 7 Golden Rules for Participation pack to establish what, if anything, they have done following receipt of the pack.

The consultants undertook the following actions:

- Review of evidence held by the Commissioner's office on the use of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.
- Publication and promotion of an online survey.
- Online search for evidence of the application of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation
- Interviews with a strategic selection of individuals leading on the use of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation in a specific setting.
- Case studies of how the 7 Golden Rules for Participation have been used and the difference this has made.

The consultants met with Commissioner's office staff that have a role in promoting and supporting the use of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to:

- Establish the scope of the actions taken to promote the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.
- Obtain 'leads' for potential examples of practice.
- Obtain further contextual information on the background to and aims of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

Organisations which received a 7 Golden Rules for Participation pack were asked to complete a feedback form on their perceptions and use of the resource. The returned forms were reviewed to establish further background information on how agencies had used the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and inform the detailed design of the research and research tools.

An online survey for agencies working with children and young people was published on 19th November 2014 and closed on 23rd December 2014. This survey was directly distributed to all schools in Scotland using the database of schools contacts published by the Scottish Government³ and to other agencies from the Commissioner's office database who agreed to participate in the survey. It was not intended that this survey would attract a high number of responses. The primary purpose of this survey was to establish leads for further examples of practice which could be investigated as part of the evaluation.

An online search, using a number of relevant terms on the Google search engine, was undertaken between 12th January 2015 and 17th January 2015 to establish further leads to examples of practice that may not otherwise be accessible to the evaluation.

EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

The consultants identified 42 examples of practice for which contact details could be obtained. These examples were identified through:

- Feedback forms received by the Commissioner's office.
- Discussion with Commissioner's office staff.
- Online survey of agencies.
- Online search for references to The 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

³ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/schoolcontactdetails>

The consultants then sought to arrange interviews with staff in the agencies leading on each of these 42 examples in order to obtain further detail on the nature and stage of their use of The 7 Golden Rules for Participation, and their perceptions of their usefulness. This was achieved in 36 cases, albeit in some cases communication took place by email only.

On the basis of telephone interviews, data gathered via email contact with staff in agencies using The 7 Golden Rules for Participation, and small number of site visits, the consultants produced a long list of examples of practice considered suitable for further study. The consultants made recommendations on which of the examples on this long list was most suitable to take forward for further research and development into a fuller case study.

Discussion with Commissioner's office staff resulted in the selection of five examples of practice for further research with a view to producing multiple perspective case studies of each. These case studies have been published separately.

IMPACT OF THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION

This chapter describes the findings of the research undertaken to inform the evaluation.

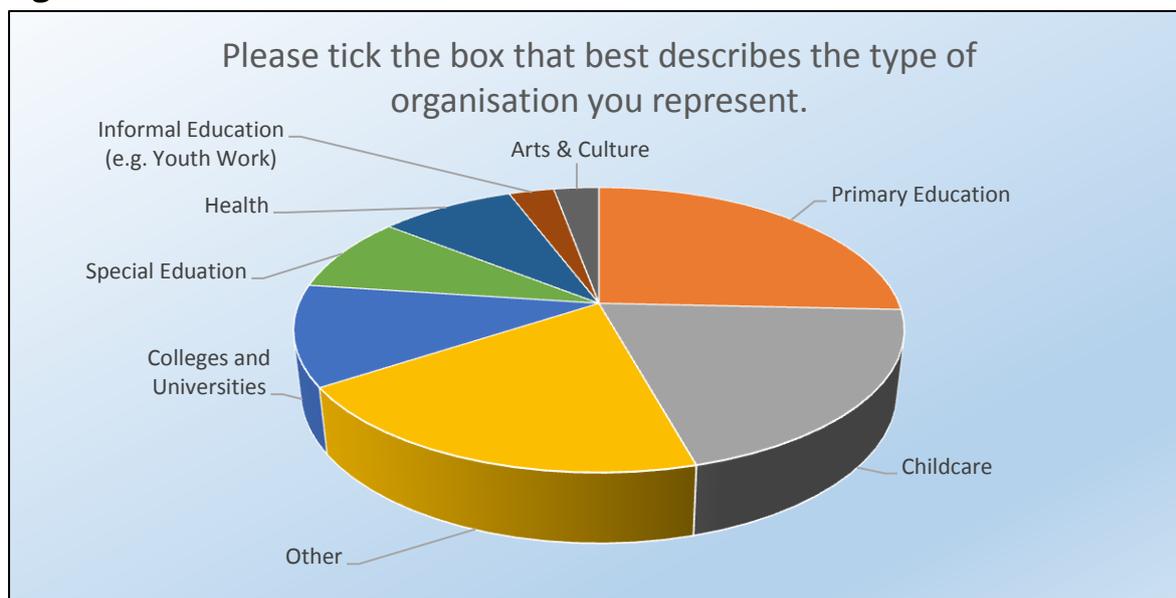
WHO USES THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION?

This section describes the features of the agencies which were found to have used The 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

The online survey attracted a total of 83 responses, 36 (43%) of respondents stated that they had used the resource in some way, and 47 (57%) stated they had not.

Respondents to the online survey of agencies were asked to select which type of organisation they represented from a multiple choice set. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of responses received from each type of organisation.

Figure 1



Education

Education is the most common category, and primary education the most common within that. This is likely to be a consequence of the distribution list for direct promotion of the survey which was heavily weighted in favour of schools, and the fact that all schools in Scotland were supplied with a copy of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation shortly after their publication.

The higher proportion of primary schools may be most simply explained by the fact that there are more than five times as many primary schools than secondary schools in Scotland⁴.

There is evidence however that the resource was perceived to be more appropriate and attractive for use with primary school age children, and less appropriate for use with young people of secondary school age and above. This may also be a factor in the level of representation from Primary Schools.

Childcare

Taking into account the fact that Commissioner's office did not promote the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to the childcare sector as comprehensively as to the education sector, and that the survey distribution list was significantly weighted towards the education sector, a relatively high proportion of childcare agencies responded to the survey and stated that they have used the resource. Although there are a greater number of childcare providers registered with the Care Inspectorate⁵ than there are primary schools in Scotland, the survey response still indicates that there has been a disproportionately high level of use of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation in the childcare sector.

The evaluation identified evidence of some Inspectors actively promoting the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to childcare organisations. This may partially explain their greater level of uptake in this sector. There is some evidence that the resource is particularly suited to the needs of staff and organisations in this sector and that there may be less competition from other resources in this sector.

Colleges and Universities

Further investigation of responses from Colleges and Universities revealed that most were teaching staff using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation as an educational resource in the training of students on education and childcare courses of study. There was one example of a PhD student using the resource in young people's information sheets and informed consent forms for a research project with the family members of prisoners.

⁴ www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/Schools/FAQs

⁵ http://www.scswis.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=8146&Itemid=756

Other Sectors

There were fewer examples of practice identified from other sectors working with children and young people, for example criminal justice, arts, health, etc. This may be a result of their relative representation on the distribution list for the original marketing activity or of the greater visibility of a greater awareness of the work of the Commissioner's office in sectors associated with other professional disciplines.

Organisations using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation who were located through the online search or through other means were not asked to select a type of organisation. A review of the total number of examples found showed that 11 of these were from agencies which specialised in working with children and young people with a requirement for additional support for learning and four were from agencies which specialised in working with young carers. This indicates that the resource may be perceived as more relevant and useful by professionals working with these groups.

WHO ARE THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION USED WITH?

This section describes the target groups for work using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation studied through the evaluation.

Adults working with other Adults

The majority of the applications of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation we found were adult professionals working with other adult professionals or volunteers. The pack was commonly used as a resource in raising other adults' awareness of the general idea of participation or more broadly in relation to raising awareness of children's rights.

They were also commonly used as a support resource in a training and development interventions. In most cases this was with a view to other adults implementing change in practice or undertaking subsequent work directly with children and young people. In many of these examples of practice studies, this step had not taken place at the time of the evaluation. This was a common theme in the evaluation, indicating that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation have not yet been available to the sector for a long enough period to have a long term impact.

In a few cases, the officer with whom consultants communicated had not followed up to see if their colleagues had done anything as a result of the intervention.

"We know that some people have used them in schools. I couldn't say for sure who or how, the only thing I know is that we have been doing a lot of children's rights work, and this is clearly part of that."

Local Authority Education Officer

There were two examples where childcare organisations planned to use the 7 Golden Rules for Participation with parents. In both cases this was intended as part of an ongoing programme designed to ensure that parents were informed about practice and activities within the provision, but it was also expected that it may help to improve parent-child relationships.

One agency reported that parents and children were already making unprompted comments about how the 7 Golden Rules for Participation had been discussed between parents and children in the home.

"The next step was once the staff had a chance think about them and for us to have ideas on how to use them was we had a meeting with parents and said this is how we plan to take forward participation for the children. We had used one of the questions to show the kind of thing that we were planning. We've had feedback from the parents that the children do mention them at home."

Out of School Care Manager

Adults Working with Children and Young People

There was a smaller number of examples of practice in which the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were used by adults in work with children and young people. This was commonly as a means of communicating how they intended to work with a specific group of children or young people.

"The way we approached it was to tell them that we are here to help you to speak on your rights... It also allowed us to say clearly to young people what you can expect from us."

Independent Arts Practitioner

In a small number of cases, the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were used to enable young people to interpret and guide adults on how they should make further use of resource..

"We were devising our own participation strategy. We'd made our own toolkit, and wanted our young people to make up their own rules for participation so we got them to look at the Golden Rules to give them ideas. This then gave us guidance on how we should work with them"

National Voluntary Organisation Inclusion Officer

It is possible to conceive of the latter stages of some of this work as children and young people using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to work with adults, albeit that the initial introduction and aims came from adults.

Children and Young People working with Each Other

The evaluation identified no firm examples of children and young people using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to work with other children and young people.

There was however an awareness of the potential of this as an approach in some of the adult professionals interviewed and an expressed will to do so when the opportunity arose.

"I think it's a really usefully resource to use. If we get another group of peer leaders in then we might bring them out."

National Voluntary Organisation Youth Engagement Officer

Children and Young People working together with Adults

There was one example where an adult professional had introduced the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to a process which involved adult professionals working alongside children and young people. In this example all of the parties were new to the resource, and hence it would not be appropriate to consider this as adults using them with children and young people or vice versa. It is more appropriately considered as adults and children and young people working together to explore their interpretation of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and their relevance to their setting.

“My role was to produce a position statement on participation – these are usually followed up with focus groups by the inspectors, including young inspectors. We went through the 7 Golden Rules for Participation, one by one with the Focus Group. There were three young inspectors and a mature inspector and 12 people round the table along with two young people, one who was looked after and one with additional support needs. It was a nice little exercise to show the review had been done with adults and young people. It helped make sure we were comprehensive. I wasn’t sure about covering everything. You’ve got all sorts of areas of children’s services represented.”

Third Sector Liaison Officer

Age Range of Children and Young People

There was some evidence that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were perceived to be more appropriate for agencies working with children of primary school age.

“My students work with pre-school children, so they are maybe not really appropriate for that age group, but some of them may go on to work with primary age children. It’s primary age children that they are aimed at, isn’t it?”

Further Education College Lecturer

“I punted it out to all my schools, but I haven’t heard of anyone using it. Some of the primary schools might have, but I wouldn’t really hear about that.”

Local Authority Youth Participation Specialist

This was in part due to the design of the resources which was seen as being simple, colourful and large print, factors which were associated with a younger age range.

“I think they are a good resource. I like the look of them. I’m primary trained, that’s so important. That the colours and design are attractive.”

Local Authority Special Education Officer

There was also evidence that this view was a result of the perceived purpose and message of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation. The 7 Golden Rules for Participation were commonly considered to be a strong resource for informing children and young people of their rights. This was a lesson that was considered to be more appropriate for younger children.

The appropriate messages for rights-based work with older children were more commonly considered to be around understanding the interpretation and implementation of children's rights at a global level, and in taking action on children's rights at a local level.

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation were not considered to be as strong a resource for this purpose as other available published resources.

"The approach tends to be thinking about UNCRC, tends to be young people in secondary schools/Scottish Youth Parliament that my team works with and they are slightly past the stage where you need to inform them of their rights. I use the democratic cookbook more, and it's about more political engagement."

Local Authority Youth Participation Specialist

Professionals working with young people of secondary school age and above were more likely to refer to experiences of using other resources to support participation, both prior to their exposure to the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and in conjunction with it..

It is possible to conclude that the lower number of examples of practice using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation identified with young people of secondary school age and above was, at least in part, a consequence of the fact that professionals working with these age groups were familiar with and comfortable using other resources.

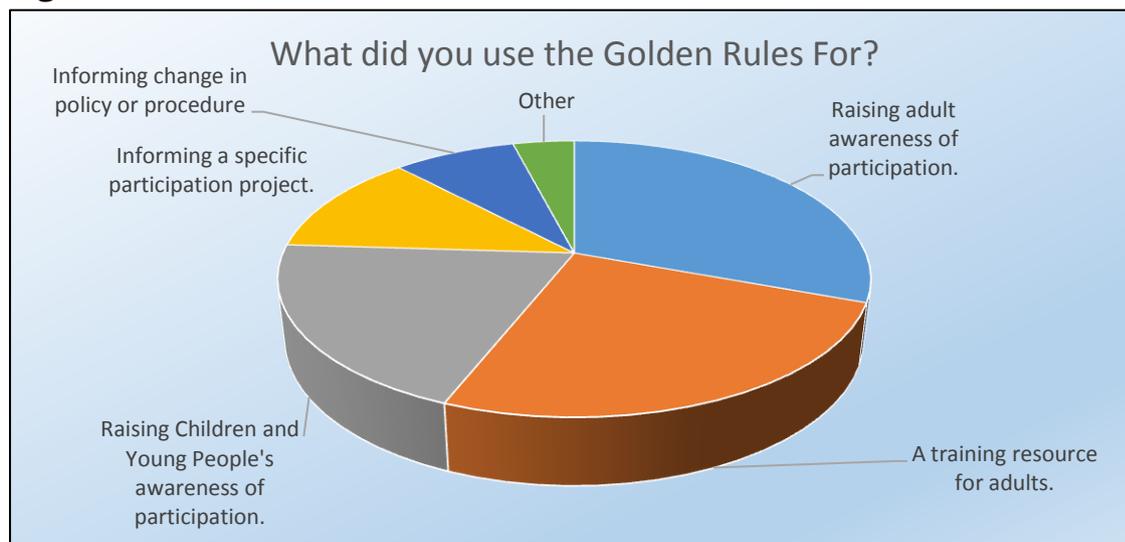
There was some evidence that professionals working with a younger age range were less likely to have been exposed to other published resources to support children's participation. Professionals working with younger children were more likely to claim that the work they were doing with the 7 Golden Rules for Participation was the first explicit work they had done on improving children's participation and that it was the only resource they had considered.

WHAT ARE THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION USED FOR?

This section describes the range of uses that evaluation found for the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

Respondents to the online survey were asked to complete a multiple choice question on how they had used The 7 Golden Rules for Participation. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the positive responses to each type of use.

Figure 2



The interviews and other investigative work undertaken following the survey found a broadly similar pattern in terms of the most common and popular uses for the 7 Golden Rules for Participation. The majority of the examples we found had, at the time of the evaluation, only used the 7 Golden Rules for Participation with other adult professionals. In some cases this was because they only intended to use them with other adult professionals; in other cases it was because they were still in the early stages of a longer-term plan to change how children's participation was delivered, and that they had started with activity focused on other adult professionals.

Other examples of practice reported a range of other purposes associated with using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation

- To communicate to children and young people how adults intend to work with them.
- To establish a consistent approach to participation across a disparate workforce.

- To inform operational decision making.
- To inform planning of a programme of activities.
- To work with young people to establish what participation means to them.
- To review the impact of participation with young people.

Changing Attitudes, Behaviour, Systems and Culture

The most common comment made by interviewees was that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation pack was useful as a set of prompts for opening up discussion. This corresponds with one of the stated aims of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and the guidance in the pack which states:

“Each Golden Rule also prompts ‘Things to think about’ for children and young people, and adults, to encourage discussion and reflection.”

There was some difference in the long-term aims described by interviewees in the examples of practice. Many had long-term plans to improve children’s participation, however others appeared to have neglected to consider any action following discussions to raise awareness of participation in adults.

This was more likely to be evident in the absence of any further action on organisational change in these examples, rather than the interviewee making an explicit statement that they had not considered follow-on activity to raising awareness discussions.

There was an understanding from some interviewees that simply raising awareness and changing staff attitudes was likely to be ineffective without broader systemic change.

“Not all schools have the right systems in place, so changing individual people’s attitudes isn’t going to be effective unless they can actually do something afterwards.”

Local Authority Education Officer

It was not possible within the scope of this evaluation to establish the extent to which the relative absence of longer term action to create change was a consequence of implicit messages in the 7 Golden Rules for Participation. This

absence could also be as a result of an incomplete understanding on the part of individual professionals of how organisational change is created and sustained.

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation as Inspiration and Instruction

There was some comment on the perceived limited potential of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to support longer-term action to create organisational and behaviour change.

“Speaking from a training perspective, what the pack misses, is an indication of how to use it. It’s a great conversation starter, but it’s not really clear what to do after that. I think, in my opinion, that’s one of the reason why it might be less used... It lacks a bit of the support round about how you do something with it really. I know that if you don’t actually give people that kind of direction, they just won’t leap over the gap themselves. I’m not saying anything bad about the workers, but it’s just the way it is with busy practitioners, they won’t then do the next thing without support.”

National Voluntary Organisation Children’s Rights Officer

This approach differs from how Commissioner’s office staff told the consultants they expected the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to be used:

“The 7 Golden Rules for Participation are not a checklist to be used mechanistically or functionally but a prompt to inspire and enthuse professionals to reflect on participation and develop practice which enthuses them. It’s interesting to see how people don’t have to ‘finish’ using them. They can be used as principles to inform day-to-day practice.”

Head of Participation and Education

This divergence of views may reflect a fundamental difference in belief about how professionals are motivated to develop or implement change within their practice. One belief is that professionals are unlikely to develop or implement change unless given clear guidance in the form of a blueprint or clear set of step-by-step instructions.

“You need to give people all of it in the same place. There’s room in that box for a few more resources. I’d say, as a framework, these might be the rods, but they don’t have the nuts and bolts and other things you need to make a framework.”

National Voluntary Organisation Children’s Rights Officer

An opposing belief is that professionals can be motivated by the introduction of inspiring resources and will take the initiative to develop and implement practice that may take the resource in positive directions that its authors could not have conceived.

“The reason we liked the 7 Golden Rules for Participation was because they were produced from the perspective of the young people, the ‘read me, see me’ stuff, and how they are completely young people-centric. Not the kind of adult-led ‘we know best’, so the 7 Golden Rules for Participation are exactly in tune with what we want. We want the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to inform the general practice of people working on our activities and for them to take the ideas and run with them.”

Youth Arts Manager

There was an understanding of the distinctions between changing the attitudes and behaviours of professionals, changing the systems and processes of organisations and changing the overall ethos and culture of organisations so that the attitudes and behaviours of all parties, including children and young people are mindful of rights and mutual respect between all parties.

“Although we have processes, they may have to be improved. The training might lead to change in attitude and behaviour...but that’s not enough... I think that there needs to be clear guidance to ensure consistency of decision making across the whole tribunal process.”

Scottish Tribunals Convenor

“And it’s about culture shift, and it’s a long journey. It’s not enough to change the views of staff, you need to change the nature of organisations.”

National Voluntary Organisation Children’s Rights Officer

“The challenge is that you are trying to get people to have the skills and confidence to do citizenship well, but the schools need to have the ethos before they can do that well.”

Local Authority Education Officer

“Now I would just say they are part of the fabric of the school. I couldn’t really quantify that other than they are part of how we work with each other. It’s not like rules or behaviour, it’s more a matter of how we are.”

Special School Headteacher

The above quotes demonstrate the stages that organisations working with the resource may be at in a journey, but all implicitly or explicitly recognise that the desirable final destination is a situation where the 7 Golden Rules for Participation simply infuse the way of being for all parties in an organisation.

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation and Mutual Respect

A number of interviewees stated that, for them, the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were more about behaving in a mode of respect to others than about systems and procedures.

“The 7 Golden Rules for Participation are useful because they engage people in discussion points in the context of rights... It’s the intergenerational dialogue that makes them work, it isn’t that they change the way professionals behave, it’s that they create a situation where there is a mutually respectful environment for dialogue between children and young people. I think if you pick them up and use them mechanistically then you won’t get the same effect.”

Higher Education Senior Lecturer

“The main way in which the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were used was to clarify how adults and children demonstrate respect for children's rights. The cards were used in interactive display for children to achieve this.”

Primary School Headteacher

The school rules that we had drawn up were done through the pupil council, but we wanted these to be more about how we worked with each other.”

Speech and Language Therapist

This corresponds harmoniously with the view expressed by Commissioner's office staff that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation are *“a deconstruction of respectful relationships with children. That's something we all should be doing.”*

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation as Standards

There were a small number of examples of the use of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation as a set of standards with which to audit organisational or partnership level policy and strategy. In these cases this activity was at the planning stage and had not yet taken place at the time of the evaluation.

“We're using them as a tick list, checking off the elements of our strategy against each of the rules. The key person who was leading on that is presently off. Our managers undertake an annual audit of participation. That won't have identified any impact from The 7 Golden Rules for Participation yet, but it might in future years.”

National Voluntary Organisation Assistant Director

“We are presently in the process of writing the framework, we’re meeting with children and young people at the end of the month, and then plan is to contact Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People to ask for their assistance in using The 7 Golden Rules for Participation in the Framework. It could be in any way, like it could be on a chapter by chapter basis, or we might include a chapter at the end where we show how the framework addresses each of the rules... we’re using them like a toolkit.”

Non-Departmental Public Body Communications Officer

WHICH OF THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION WERE MOST POPULAR?

This section discusses which rules were most commonly applied and the possible explanations for this

The evaluation did not explicitly seek to establish which, if any, of the rights described and promoted by the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were considered most popular, important or relevant. However an analysis of the qualitative data gathered suggests that number 2, ‘A chance to be involved’ and number 3, ‘Remember – it’s my choice’ were mentioned or referred to more frequently.

It is not wholly clear why this should be the case, but it may be linked to the higher number of better developed examples of practice with young people with additional support needs.

“Actually we always give them the choice about things they do. Sometimes we’ll have ‘Zoolab’ in with the animals and insects, you know, and we’ll give them the choice of whether they go and see ‘Zoolab’ or do therapy. Not just that children ever get done to, you need to have ‘why’ on your symbol board, but funnily enough a lot of our children won’t say no. They are used to being so dependent on adults. They are the opposite of many children their age, who want to challenge adults. Ours want to please adults.”

Speech and Language Therapist

A smaller number of interviewees reported that the seventh Golden Rule, 'Keep in touch' had been the one that had most clearly led to change in their practice. This was more frequently referred to in relation to managerial and planning processes. Other evaluations⁶ of resources intended to support dialogue between communities and service providers have noted the lower priority which can be placed on feeding back the results of dialogue to participants and the effectiveness of resources in raising the importance of feedback.

"We're using them like a toolkit. The keeping in touch rule - that directly impacted on our framework, because in the framework we say we'll produce an annual review feeding back to young people on how things have changed as a result of their input over the preceding 12 months. We plan to discuss the exact format for that when we meet with the children and young people at the end of the month."

Non-Departmental Public Body Communications Officer

"Last week, we used it as a review tool. We used the Golden Rules to look back over the year and ask 'how have we done?'"

National Voluntary Organisation Senior Practitioner

WHAT DIFFERENCE HAVE THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION MADE?

This section describes the available evidence of how the 7 Golden Rules for Participation have led to changes in individual attitudes and practice and to organisational policy, procedure and culture.

Changes to Practice

Many of the examples of practice examined in this evaluation were in their early stages and the impact of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation was not expected to be observable for at least another 12 months. However there were a number of examples where high level impacts were reported on professional practice, on ethos and on the opportunities for young people to influence change.

"Ideally we hoped to achieve that our pupils have a stronger voice in the school. Because of their needs, that is really

⁶ See, for example, Evaluation of the impact of the National Standards for Community Engagement, Scottish Government, June 2008.

challenging. It's been a long journey but I think we are doing well. It's made a difference to the whole school, from the Headteacher to therapists, just everyone that's part of the school community knows about them. And the young people are more able to say what they want, even simple things like for some of the tactile resources we use for partially sighted children, they are coming to the toy shop and deciding what to buy."

Special School Teacher

"There's the big book and you put stickers in it for what toys you want, and now they get those toys out. That didn't happen before. That happened because of the committee. What we did was, we had like a clipboard and we would go around asking the other children what they wanted and liked, but we used the Golden Rules and we had all suggestions for things to change."

Out of School Care Service Manager

"Once we got the Golden Rules it became clearer to us how we could improve our participation. I mean before we had rules, but they were rules for the children, they didn't really require that much of the staff. Once we had the Golden Rules we changed all that so that it was more of a relationship. I mean, we knew that before, but the Golden Rules made it all so much clearer."

Out of School Care Service Manager

"We set up a golden staff rules decided by the children and then set up a staff reward chart. The children pick the rewards the staff achieve and what they should gain points for - such as acts of kindness, listen and valuing the children, providing great activities and so on - the children love this and pick some rather strange rewards from time to time. We felt this really hit point 4 [Value Me] as the children have similar expectations on them in the setting."

Out of School Care Service Owner

Confirmation of Practice

A small number of interviewees reported that their exposure to the 7 Golden Rules for Participation had not changed a great deal about their thinking or practice, but had confirmed that their existing practice was in line with the principles expressed by the resource.. This was considered to be at least as valuable an outcome, and could help them maintain their quality of practice and to more effectively promote participation to colleagues and partners. This was reported both at the level of individual practitioner and at the level of organisational planning.

"To some extent it was a good thing to reflect and to see what we were doing, and see that it reflects The 7 Golden Rules for Participation."

National Voluntary Organisation Youth Engagement Officer

"I would like to be fairly confident that not a lot will change. I like to be optimistic, even in these pessimistic times. I like to think that our practice is already good, and that there will be no need for much change."

National Voluntary Child Care Organisation Assistant Director

One school reported that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation had been of limited impact in their situation. This was not because of any intrinsic flaw in the resource, but because the school and its staff already held a significant expertise in participation.

"I had worked on the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting School Award in my previous post and began work on it when I arrived at this school. I lead on RRSa in this school. Our school was the first Primary in this local authority to reach level 2 of the award. As a result I think we are already some way down the road with children's rights and the 7 Golden Rules for Participation may have come a bit late to have had a real impact on us. We were however very interested when we heard of them and sent away for them and the other resources from Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People."

Primary School Headteacher

WHAT FACTORS AFFECT THE IMPACT OF THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION?

This section discusses the range of factors which support and inhibit the maximisation of the difference that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation can make.

Design of the Resource

The design of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation pack was considered almost universally to be a valuable feature in using them with adult professionals. The text used was simple and clear with the aim to make the resource easily understood.

Interviews undertaken to date have indicated that the resources are considered to be attractively designed and that the card format made them easy to use as prompts to open up discussion in group work with adults.

One respondent suggested that the inclusion of information on both sides of the card introduced some level of confusion about where the reader's attention was meant to focus.

Other comments indicated that the design of the cards introduced some confusion when using them in training activity with other adult professionals.

"Participants were asking 'are we meant to be pretending we are young people when we use these?'"

Local Authority Youth Worker

Experience in Delivering Participation

The simple design of the pack was considered to be an important factor in providing reassurance for professionals with more limited experience of children's participation. They were also easy to prepare and use in practice. This was considered to be an important factor for professionals working in busy and time-pressured environments.

"They are a good starting point. Don't overwhelm you, nobody panicked when they saw them, so that made them more effective. They're an attractive package, they're not long words, and we find it easy to use because it's small, not a big thing like some of the packs you get where you have to think twice about

getting it out the box, because it's so big and there are so many bits."

Nursery School Manager

It was notable that the examples of practice which had made more extensive use of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation, and which reported the most positive perceptions of the pack and experiences of using it, were those which had more limited prior experience of delivering participation. In a number of cases, the practice reported to the evaluation was the organisation's, and the lead officer's, first experience of seeking to implement improvement in children's participation. This did not appear to negatively affect the quality or ambition of the participation work undertaken or planned, on the contrary there was some evidence that it allowed them to develop ideas in a more open and innovative fashion.

One primary school was equivocal about their view of the inferences that could be drawn from the inclusion of the word 'rules'. The Headteacher of this school felt that the idea of rules was reminiscent of school rules and schools systems that imposed adult ideas of acceptable behaviour on young people without the necessity for reciprocity.

They also felt that the term was reminiscent of the rules for Circle Time, a popular branded set of resources for behaviour management in schools. The Headteacher felt that Circle Time was an adult imposed set of rules that was in conflict with the spirit and intent of children's rights in general and The 7 Golden Rules for Participation in particular, and that the association was unhelpful.

"I do have an issue with the words 'Golden Rules,' it reminds me of other things that I think we are more focused on children fitting in with adult ways of working, we want to have rights, but in a respectful context, not about responsibility. It reminds me of Circle time/Golden time. Golden Rules, it's just so vague, so misused. We don't even have rules in this School any more. We've moved away from rules. We have a charter."

Primary School Headteacher

Use of Other Published Resources with the 7 Golden Rules for Participation

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation were designed to work alongside other published resources in the form of a set of underpinning principles. There were numerous examples of practice in which they were used alongside other published resources. In all of these cases however there was little evidence of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation being used with other resources in a coordinated and aligned way or as a 'scaffolding' for the implementation of participation work, as envisaged in the research that informed the resource's development⁷.

The evaluation found that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were either used in a way that was not distinct from other resources, or were used in a more informal way of raising awareness of children's rights for professionals or service users, while other resources were used to inform and govern the actual processes through which participation was designed and implemented.

In some ways this may in fact be a manifestation of the intention for the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to provide a set of principles to inform the development and improvement of children's participation, although this conclusion is limited by the fact that there was not always evidence of influencing change in systems or structures for participation.

New Resources Developed from the 7 Golden Rules for Participation

A number of the examples of practice studied took the pack as a starting point and developed other resources of their own design to communicate the messages of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to children and young people and to ensure that the message infused the ethos of the agency.

"We made this figure 8 representation of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to show that there was no end to how they can be used and to address the risk of them being perceived as a linear or step-by-step process. It runs the whole length of the corridor and everyone in the school sees it every day. You can use any of the Golden Rules at any time that's useful, and there's always a new way to use them in your thinking or practice."

⁷ Mannion, G. (2012) Children and Young People's Participation in Scotland: Frameworks, standards and principles for practice. Edinburgh: Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

Special School Teacher

“We made these posters from the 7 Golden Rules for Participation, at first we used the ones that came with the pack, but then we made our own too. The children get to put questions or statements up on the posters and attach them to the rule that’s relevant. Because of that, we are never finished using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation, because every child that comes in here could have a different idea.”

Out of School Care Service Manager

“We translated them into symbols⁸ – we use Boardmaker to translate them into symbols. We also got some of the [7 Golden Rules for Participation] posters printed off and put up the 7 rules and symbols.”

Speech and Language Therapist

In comparison to some other published resources, the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were considered to provide a more rounded and informed idea of children’s rights as a relationship between adults and a way of behaving. Interviewees felt that other resources were more process/project oriented or focused on the responsibilities of children to participate in adult systems without adequate consideration to the requirement for adults to review or change their own values and behaviours.

Status and Familiarity of the Commissioner’s office

The status of the Commissioner’s office as an agency which was perceived to be wholly and impartially focused on the promotion of children’s rights was, for those who were more familiar with the agency, an influencing factor in their decision to use the 7 Golden Rules for Participation. They felt that the fact that it was a resource published by Commissioner’s office was inherently an indicator of quality.

⁸ This work was undertaken before the Commissioner’s office had published their own companion symbols resource to the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.
See : <http://www.sccyp.org.uk/education/golden-rules/symbols>

It also meant that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation could be more persuasive in engaging the support of other parties who may be less inclined to support change in how children's participation was delivered.

"We always keep an eye on what the Commissioner is doing, I check the website about once a week. You know that if the Commissioner puts it out that it will be thorough and robust."

National Voluntary Organisation Children's Rights Officer

"There are a lot of resources out there, but the fact that these are Scottish, and they come from Commissioner's office means that people will pay attention."

Local Authority Education Officer

"The reason I chose the 7 Golden Rules for Participation was because it was more familiar to me, because I used the Commissioner's stuff, you know, the illustrated rights. I knew about them because I was sent a copy."

Local Authority Youth Worker

Training and Support

The fact that that pack came with other support resources in the form of a poster, pencils and the offer of training and/or support from Commissioner's office staff was key in both motivating professionals to choose to use the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and in clarifying how they may be used.

"... we'd never heard of them... we sent off for the packs from Commissioner's office and they sent us the pencils and a lot of other things. They [other children] would then get answers from the children and put all the questions and answers up on the big poster – you know the big poster with all the rights on it? That's still up on the walls in all the rooms, and, sometimes the questions and answers change, we add some new ones or take some off."

Out of School Care Service Manager

A number of organisations told us that the support from the Commissioner's office staff was key in building their confidence and enabling them to make

decisions about how to take forward change as a result of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

Conversely there were a small number of organisations who had not taken forward action because they planned to wait until they had arranged an input from the Commissioner's office staff. This may be considered prudent, however it also may also be a barrier which prevents people from taking responsibility for thinking through how to interpret and implement the 7 Golden Rules for Participation on their own autonomy.

IN WHAT STRATEGIC CONTEXTS ARE THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION USED?

This section discusses the contexts and strategic environments in which the 7 Golden Rules for Participation have been used.

Children's Rights

The Commissioner's office is clear that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation are intended to be implemented within a broader context of children's rights. The introductory letter from the Commissioner contained in the pack framed the resource in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

"The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) enshrines the human rights that all children and young people everywhere in the world have. In my view it is the responsibility of all adults to ensure children and young people enjoy the maximum realisation of their rights. A core principle of the UNCRC is a commitment to giving children and young people the opportunity to participate in the decisions that affect them, making them active agents in their own lives."

Commissioner's office staff told the consultants:

"The 7 Golden Rules for Participation should always be used in the context of children's rights. All of our training and support inputs are framed by children's rights."

There was a mixed picture in relation the extent to which children's rights explicitly framed the implementation of activity around the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

There were examples where this was clearly the case, examples where it was partially the case, and examples where there was no evident relationship between the activity and any broader commitment to or even awareness of children's rights.

"The cards were useful to make people think about things. Promoting participation was the intention of the session. It was delivered within a context of Youth Work in Schools and youth work, and how youth work can support the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child."

Local Authority Youth Worker

"The manager told us the service planned to focus more on children's rights in the service. Plans were in place to use the 7 Golden Rules for Participation pack which was produced by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People. The rules can help remind adults what children and young people want from participation. The manager and staff intended to provide activities to help children learn more about their rights as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child."

Care Inspectorate Report on Out Of School Care Service

There were also a few cases where there was an implied overlap between the 7 Golden Rules for participation and broader children's rights work.

"We've been doing this for years, as far back as 2010 – we did a school-wide look at rights elsewhere in the world. I think the UNCRC booklet is good, but it's much easier to remember the 7 Golden Rules for Participation. They are things that you should be doing anyway though, they are about having what is most important, honesty and integrity, when dealing with children. The children like the little cartoons, I think having the UNCRC in the booklet and hanging up like we have in the hall underlines the message."

Speech and Language Therapist

“The purpose of the project was to enable young people from black and minority ethnic minority communities who have disabilities or other support needs to engage with local organisations and services, to take up opportunities that were available to them and to know exercise their rights.”

National Voluntary Organisation Advice Officer

The Curriculum for Excellence and Citizenship

There were similarly mixed views from schools about the relevance of the curriculum as a framework for implementation of children’s rights work associated with the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

“What we also have is this year – working strategically – we have asked schools over the next three years to nominate a Citizenship Coordinator in each school. Their role is to think about how schools take forward global citizenship in its broadest sense and this includes pupil participation. In schools they are trying to get things done within a context of participation and pupil’s voice.”

Local Authority Education Officer

“I didn’t use the language of the curriculum with them. I would not have welcomed that sort of guidance – you’d need to be pretty silly not to make the links yourself. There’s already stuff on Education Scotland website and we’d matched the UNCRC articles to the elements, so in that respect there was no need for us to do it with the Golden Rules. Even within the curriculum it’s there. It talks about rights in Health and Wellbeing.”

Primary School Headteacher

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

One nursery school reported that the introduction of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 had been their motivation to take action to use the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and that the provisions of the Act would guide how they used them.

“With the Children’s Act, it’s so much more important to be on top of children’s rights. So we have it in our improvement plan. I had my friend come in and do some training [on the 7 Golden Rules for Participation] with all of the staff. You could see it had enthused them. On our next in-service day we are going to use them as an audit, to see where we are.”

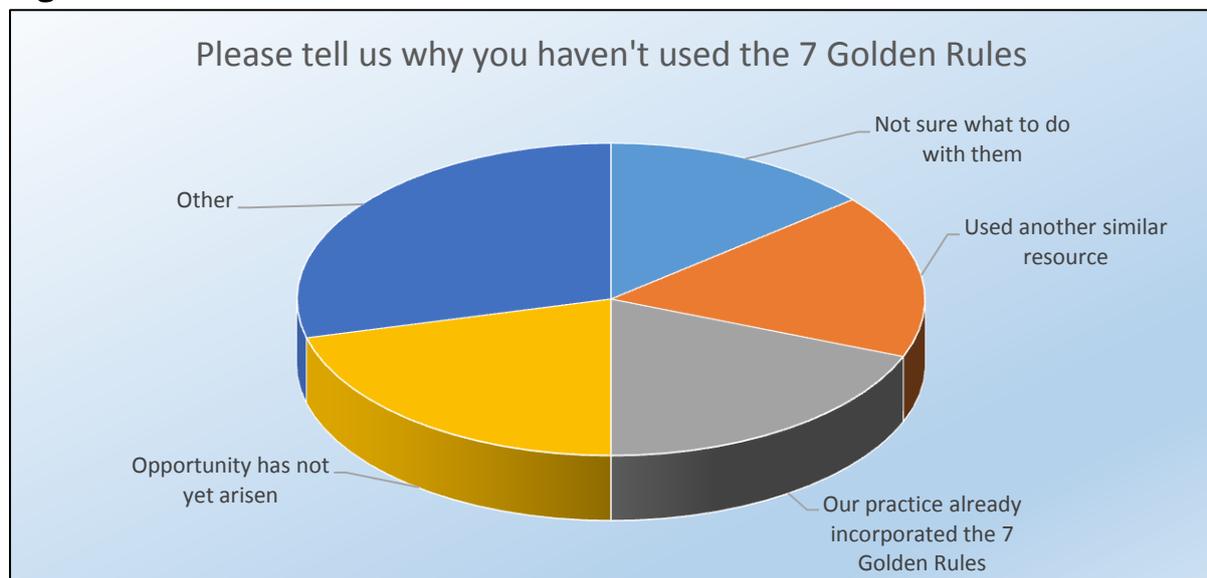
Nursery School Headteacher

WHY HAVE THE 7 GOLDEN RULES FOR PARTICIPATION NOT BEEN USED?

This section discusses the available evidence on why the 7 Golden Rules for Participation may not have been used.

The evaluation did not explicitly set out to explore the reasons why people did not use The 7 Golden Rules for Participation, however respondents to the survey who reported that they had not used the resource were asked a follow-up question on this topic. Figure 3 below presents the distribution of responses to each of the multiple choice options in the question.

Figure 3



Responses to the online survey show that the main reasons for not using the 7 Golden Rules for Participation have been that an opportunity had not arisen or that their practice already incorporated the resource.

Interviews undertaken for the evaluation and feedback received by the Commissioner's office echoed the findings above of the survey, and indicate that where there have been conscious decisions to not use the 7 Golden Rules for Participation they have rarely been a rejection of it as a resource, or of the idea of children's participation more broadly.

Qualitative comment shows that the majority of those who selected 'other' had not used the 7 Golden Rules for Participation because they were not aware of them or had only very recently heard of them. It is notable that, although the option was available, no respondents felt the resource was not applicable to their setting.

Six respondents did say that the reason they had not used them was because they were not sure what to do with them. This may be related to the idea discussed earlier in this report that greater clarity on how to implement activity around the 7 Golden Rules for Participation may be beneficial for professionals who do not immediately identify a method of applying the principles to their setting.

WHAT FEEDBACK IS THERE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

This section describes the available feedback from young people on their perceptions of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and the difference the 7 Golden Rules for Participation have made to them.

There was limited feedback available to the study from children and young people. The majority of the examples of practice identified in this study used the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to work exclusively, at the present time, with adult professionals. This naturally limits the potential for feedback from children and young people.

The relatively brief period since the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were published, and the consequently relatively undeveloped nature of the majority of examples which did work with children and young people further reduces the opportunities for feedback from children and young people.

There was however some limited feedback available from agencies who had collected it from children and young people and, where possible, the consultants

engaged directly with children and young people in the relevant examples of practice that were selected for case study.

Feedback from children and young people at an Out of School Care service studied as part of the evaluation was that they had been aware of the resource through school before encountering it at the Out of School Care Service. They reported that they had found greater opportunities in the Out Of School Care service to actually engage with the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and what they meant for them as children and young people and for the service.

The children could articulately explain why participation was important, and why the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were a valuable resource in enabling effective participation. They described how they led on processes to ensure that their voice was heard in decision-making, and understood why there were limits on the ability of the service to deliver all the changes they would ideally like. They further understood that participation did not mean that they, as children and young people, could simply present the staff with demands or problems to be solved, but that they were partners in the identification and implementation of solutions to the issues they identified. Based on this evidence the 7 Golden Rules for Participation appear to have been exceptionally effective in enabling children and young people to engage with, understand and take action on participation.

Post-session feedback from children and young people given to a national voluntary organisation working with children and young people with support needs and learning disabilities noted that they felt more confident about their rights after the session, welcomed the ability of the Commissioner's office staff to present the ideas in the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to a group of young people of mixed ability without limiting the detail and further welcomed the availability of the cards in Braille format.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

This chapter discusses the conclusions of the evaluation and the opportunities for future development to maximise the impact of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

Impact of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation across Different Settings

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation have been effectively promoted to range of relevant organisations, practitioners and children and young people across Scotland. Based on the evidence available to the evaluation they have been more effectively promoted to primary schools, childcare organisations and to schools and voluntary organisations working with children and young people with a requirement for additional support for learning. The relatively limited numbers of responses to the evaluation from outside these sectors may indicate that promotion has not yet effectively penetrated these sectors.

It was evident that there was a higher level of awareness of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation in some sectors, and a higher level of uptake in some sectors within the overall set that are likely to be aware of the resource. There is a case for the Commissioner's office reflecting on the nature of the target audience they envisaged for the 7 Golden Rules for Participation during the process of their production, and whether this has affected the content, design and marketing of the resource in a way which has made them more available and attractive to particular sectors.

There is a further case for research on the priority sectors in which improvements may be made in the participation of children and young people, for consideration of the relevance and usefulness of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation to these sectors. This may inform consideration and decisions on the sectors on which to target further marketing and support activity associated with the resource.

The evaluation found that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation had made some significant impacts on professional practice in participation across a number of sectors. There were however some gaps in the range of sectors represented in the findings of this evaluation and differences in the level of impact that the resources had achieved across the sectors. There is therefore some scope for considering further action to develop the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and maximise their impact.

There is a perception that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation are aimed at children of primary school age, and this prevents some professionals working with pre-school and older age groups from seriously considering their use. There is evidence that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation are perceived as being less suitable for other, arguably more advanced, forms of activity around participation and rights for children and young people. This may further contribute to the perception of them being unsuitable for young people of secondary school age and above who are already aware of their rights through earlier interventions.

Effectiveness of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation in Raising Awareness of the Importance of Adults Listening to Children and Young People

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation have proven to be a popular method of opening up discussion on children's participation and rights with adult professionals, and raising awareness of the Importance of adults listening to children and young people. They have also been effectively used in raising the awareness of children and young people in relation to participation.

They have proven to be an effective resource in raising awareness of the importance of adults listening to children and young people and in enthusing adult professionals who previously have had a more limited exposure to participation resources and experience of designing and delivering participation activity. The evidence suggests that they have been effective in reaching sectors which were previously untouched, in relative terms, by initiatives to promote the participation of children and young people. The evidence further suggests that where they have been effective in reaching agencies in these relatively unreached sectors, they have motivated professionals to develop innovative and challenging practice as a result.

The evidence suggests that professionals with lower levels of experience in participation are more likely to choose to use the 7 Golden Rules for Participation, and more likely to develop innovative practice as a result. This conclusion is based on relatively limited evidence and should therefore be regarded as provisional. There may be a benefit in some research to explore this further.

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation as a tool to evaluate and improve the positive participation of children and young people

There is some evidence that exposure to the 7 Golden Rules for Participation is effective in motivating adult professionals to informally evaluate their organisational practice in participation, and to consider activity to improve it. This was less common than the use of the resource to raise awareness of participation in adults, possibly because of the more complex processes associated with initiating and implementing change in organisational practice. There is evidence that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation are being used as a resource in auditing and interrogating organisational and partnership level strategy. This was not at a stage, at the time of the evaluation, to allow observations on whether they have identified opportunities for improvement. This appears to be a different type of use from that envisaged by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People at the time of the creation and production of the resource.

There may be a benefit in further investigation on the actual mechanics of this activity to establish if the 7 Golden Rules for Participation, in their present form, are a wholly suitable tool for this kind of activity.

Effectiveness of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation in Changing Practice, Policy and Culture

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation have inspired a number of agencies to produce bespoke resources to present a constant reminder to adults of what participation means from the point of view of children and young people. Action to promote these resources and this approach to developing bespoke resources may be effective in maximising the impact of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

There was little evidence that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation were used in conjunction with other resources as envisaged, i.e. as underpinning principles or 'scaffolding' for other, more practically focused resources. There is a case for reflection on the extent to which this aim was realistic, whether the 7 Golden Rules for Participation in their present format are clearly suitable for this purpose. There may be a case for production of further guidance on how this may take place.

The availability of consultancy support from Commissioner's office staff has been key in enabling many organisations to place the 7 Golden Rules for

Participation in a broader rights framework, and to identify a clear course of action to implement activity based on it.. There are mixed views on the extent to whether the 7 Golden Rules for Participation in themselves are an effective and sufficient resource to enable all professionals to implement a plan of activity aimed at improving the quality of children's participation.

The 7 Golden Rules for Participation have, in some cases, been a key resource in changing the overall ethos of agencies to have children's rights, mutual respect and participation more fully embedded in their organisational values, ethos and practice.

It was clear that, although some agencies had taken the inspiration of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and implemented an innovative programme of development as a result, there were others who had behaved more cautiously. These others may have been equally motivated, but lacked capacity, confidence or opportunity to identify and implement change as a result.

There may be a benefit in providing clearer guidance on how to implement a course of activity to improve participation. This may benefit the type of professional who has a preference for blueprint style instruction, at the expense of reducing the attractiveness of the resource to the type of professional who prefers to take inspiration from recipe style guidance. This recommendation should therefore be considered sensitively to ensure its implementation does not in fact reduce the overall impact of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation.

Feedback from Children and Young People

There is some evidence that the 7 Golden Rules for Participation have been effective in enabling children and young people to think about what they need from adults to support them to participate. This evidence is limited by the relatively low number of examples in which the 7 Golden Rules for Participation had been used in any depth with children and young people.

The evaluation identified a large number of examples of practice which were not, at present, in a position to demonstrate evidence of impact or of feedback from children and young people. Many of these examples were expected to develop their practice over the next 12 months and to be in a better position to provide useful learning after that period. There may be a benefit in engaging with these examples to offer consultancy support where appropriate, in particular where there is a clear motivation to deliver which is limited by issues

of confidence or capacity. There may also be a benefit in returning to these examples of practice in 12 months to establish further evidence of the impact and usefulness of the 7 Golden Rules for Participation and feedback from children and young people on their experience.