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**Consultation
with Young People
about
Adoption Order
hearings**

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Background

Consultation undertaken by the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) with the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) in 2016

Context

- Article 12 of UNCRC
- Article 42A of Constitution
- Section 24(2) of Adoption Act 2010
- in anticipation of Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017 (Section 9(3))

Overall aim

To hear and take account of young people's views and ideas on improvements, if any, that could be made to strengthen provision for young people to be heard in the context of Adoption Order hearings affecting them

Planning

Who?

- 5 young people (out of possible 24)
- 12-18 years old
- own Adoption Order hearing within past 6 months

When and Where?

- 10am-2.30pm, 2 November 2016 (mid-term break)
- AAI offices

What?

- 4 themes: space, information, being heard, acknowledgement

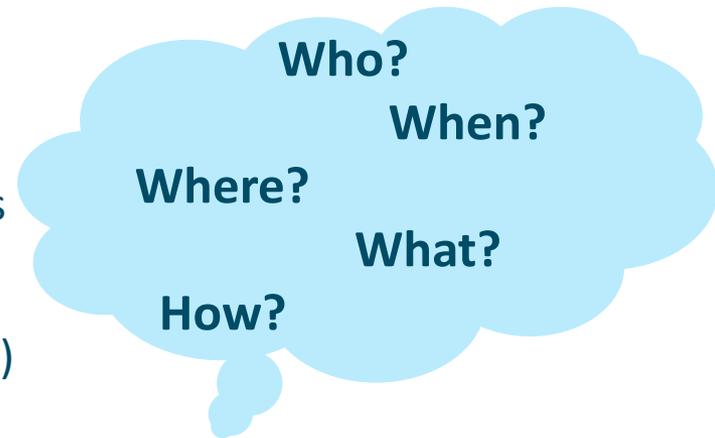
How?

- activity-based approach organised around the 4 themes
- audit, ranking, role play, discussion and brainstorm

Other considerations

including:

- ethical considerations - consent, confidentiality
- practical considerations - transport costs, refreshments, lunch
- any additional needs?



Consultation Themes

Young people's views and ideas on ...

1. Space

How might the AAI make rooms and areas used more child- and youth-friendly?

audit

2. Information

What, if any, information should the AAI give to young people before the Adoption Order hearing?

What formats should this information be in?

ranking

3. Being heard

What, if any, additional steps should the AAI take to support young people to express their views on their prospective adoption, both before and during the Adoption Order hearing?

role play & discussion

4. Acknowledgement

What, if anything, might the AAI give to children and young people to mark the occasion of their Adoption Order being granted?

brainstorm



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What young people said ...

Space

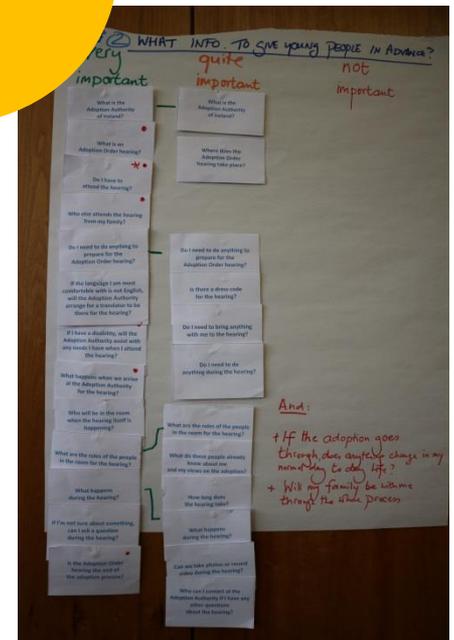
- The areas and rooms used by children, young people and families should be more child- and family-friendly
- Suggestions about lighting, colours, layout, furniture, refreshments, and activities for children, young people and adults while waiting

Information

- The AAI should give children and young people information about the Adoption Order hearing before they attend the hearing
- Put information on the AAI's website *and* send information to children and young people
- Preferred formats: FAQs (online & information leaflets) and short film

Acknowledgement

- Give children and young people a certificate and offer to take a photograph at the end of the hearing to mark the occasion



What young people said ...

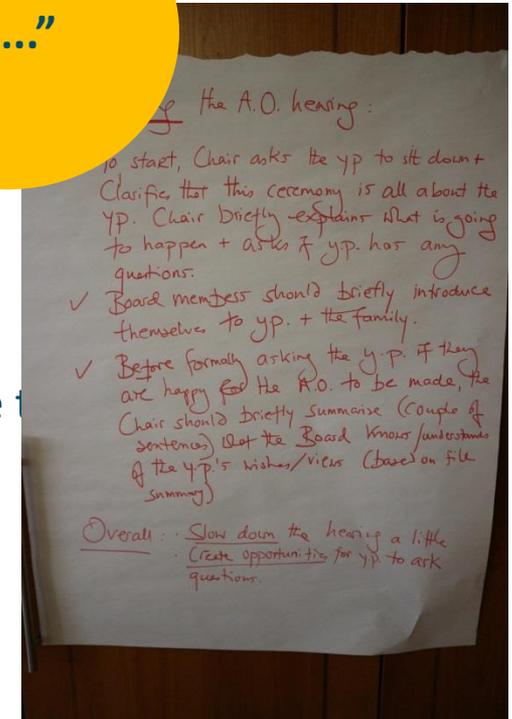
Being heard

Challenges:

- very little time during the hearing for children and young people to express their views or to ask questions
- children and young people may be anxious about expressing their views

Solutions:

- offer young people the opportunity to meet or speak with their social worker 2-3 weeks before the hearing, once notification has been issued
- check in with young people while they are waiting with their family to go into the hearing
- slow down the pace of the hearing slightly
- introductions and explanations at the beginning very important
- ask children/young people if they have any questions
- before asking a child/young person if they are happy for the Adoption Order to be made, briefly summarise what the Board already knows about their views and wishes



Feedback and Follow-up

Feedback

- Young people's views and ideas reviewed by AAI
- Detailed feedback provided to young people by AAI

Follow-up actions

- Changes to space at AAI
- Development of information for children and young people about Adoption Order hearings
- Changes to enhance the scope for children and young people to express their views before and during the Adoption Order hearing

Consultation ... part of a process



“including children should not only be a momentary act, but the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on the development of policies, programmes and measures in all relevant contexts of children’s lives.”

- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment no. 12 (2009)

thank
you



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