

A GUIDE TO CREATE ACCESSIBLE DOCUMENTS WITH AND FOR CHILDREN

A practical guide for organisations, institutions, and professionals working with children to transform complex documents into materials that are understandable, engaging, and truly inclusive.



Developed in partnership with Eurochild and the Learning for Wellbeing Foundation



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**LEARNING FOR
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1. INTRODUCTION

Why this guide exist

Children's participation is becoming increasingly central in policies, strategies, and decisions that affect their lives. More institutions, organisations, and professionals are now consulting children and involving them in the development of policies, recommendations, and public or local initiatives.

However, once these documents are published, they often remain difficult for children to access and understand. Complex language, long reports, technical vocabulary, and inaccessible formats can prevent children from fully engaging with the very policies they helped shape. Participation should not stop at consultation. Children should also be able to understand the outcomes, follow the process, and use the information in a meaningful way.

This guide was created to support organisations, institutions, and adults working with children to take this extra step: **transforming important documents into materials that are understandable, accessible, and engaging for children.**

The idea for this guide emerged during a project developed by **Eurochild** and **Learning for Wellbeing Foundation** in partnership with the European Commission to create a child-friendly version of the European Guidelines on Mental Health and Wellbeing at School. Through this experience, we worked directly with children (the **Eurochild Children's Council**) to adapt complex policy content into a format that was clearer, more visual, and easier to relate to. The process taught us valuable lessons about participation, accessibility, communication, and co-creation with children.

With this guide, we aim to **share this methodology, together with practical activities** and key steps that can help others create accessible documents both for and with children.

What this guide covers

This guide combines practical accessibility tips with a child participation and inclusion approach. Rather than presenting accessibility as a purely technical exercise, it invites readers to think about the process like following a recipe.

The recipe has three parts:

- **The Equipment** — the people and conditions needed for meaningful results.
- **The Ingredients** — the essential elements of an accessible document.
- **The Recipe** — six practical steps to guide the process from start to finish.

The aim is not to create a 'perfect' document, but to create one that more children can understand, use, and feel included in. Like any recipe, this guide is not meant to be followed rigidly. Every group, organisation, and context is different, and each 'cook' can adapt the recipe according to their needs, capacities, and constraints.

2. WHY ACCESSIBLE DOCUMENTS MATTER

Creating accessible documents for and with children is not only about simplifying language or adding visuals. It is about **ensuring that children can meaningfully access information, understand it, feel included in it,** and safely engage with the process.

Every child is different and may **experience documents in different ways.** Some children may need simpler language, more visuals, larger text, or more time to process information. Others may connect better through discussion, examples, audio, or interactive activities. **Accessibility** therefore cannot follow a single rigid formula. Instead, it **requires flexibility, listening, and adaptation to the needs of the children** involved.

Meaningful participation

Accessible documents are inseparable from meaningful participation. Children cannot genuinely participate in decisions that affect them if they cannot understand the information being shared. But participation should not stop at the consultation stage. Too often, children are asked for their inputs and then excluded from what comes next: the outcomes, the recommendation, the published documents or policies. This is where participation becomes less meaningful.

Creating accessible documents is a way of extending participation beyond its usual allocated participation spaces. It ensures that **children remain informed, involved and empowered throughout the entire process.** When children can read, understand and use the outcomes of a process they contributed to, their participation becomes genuinely influential rather than symbolic. Such documents also enable children who might not have access to those spaces of participation to still understand and feel they belong in the policies that directly concern them.

Meaningful inclusion

Meaningful inclusion means recognising and **valuing children's inner diversity**; the different ways they think, feel, learn, and engage with the world; and ensuring that this diversity is reflected in how information is shared and participation is organised. Rather than assuming a single "correct" way to communicate, meaningful inclusion creates space for varied needs and preferences by using clear language, relatable examples, visuals, and interactive approaches so that more children can understand, connect, contribute and ultimately feel included. In this way, inclusion is not just about being present, but about each child being able to engage in a way that resonates with their own capacities, experiences, and modes of expression.

Safeguarding

This process should always be approached with safeguarding in mind. When working with children, especially on sensitive topics such as mental health, violence, discrimination, migration, or family situations, it is important to **create a safe, respectful, and voluntary environment**. Children and parents or guardians should be properly informed about the activity and give consent where required. Risks linked to participation, privacy, emotional well-being, or sharing personal experiences should be assessed in advance. While every organisation may have its own safeguarding procedures, work with children should always be grounded in safety, respect, and informed participation.

Brave Spaces – going one step further.

Creating brave spaces in learning environments is **essential for helping children develop confidence, resilience, and a willingness to grow**. Unlike simply feeling safe, a brave space encourages children to take thoughtful risks, sharing ideas, asking questions, and trying new approaches without fear of judgment or failure. When educators foster trust, respect, and a culture that values effort over perfection, children begin to see mistakes as opportunities for learning rather than something to avoid.

In such environments, **every voice is welcomed and valued, empowering children to step outside their comfort zones, build self-belief, and develop the courage needed** for them to fulfil their unique potential.

Head, Heart, and Hands

The Learning for Well-being approach describes using **Mental, Emotional and Physical perspectives**. When working with children and young people, we often describe these as Head, Heart and Hand. This approach reminds us that children engage with information in different and complementary ways, and that this reflects their **inner diversity**; the varied ways they think, feel, learn, relate, and make sense of the world. Recognising this inner diversity helps create documents and participation processes that offer more than one way to understand, connect with, and use information meaningfully.

Dimension	What it means for accessible documents	
Head	Understanding and processing information.	Clear language, logical structure, definitions of key terms.
Heart	Emotions, connection, and feeling included.	Stories, relatable examples, a welcoming tone.
Hands	Practical engagement and action.	Interactive elements, visuals, activities linked to real life.

There is no such thing as a ‘perfect’ accessible document that works for every child in every context. However, by **reducing barriers and involving children** throughout the process, it is **possible to create materials that more children can understand, use, and connect with** meaningfully.



3. THE RECIPE: AN OVERVIEW

Creating an accessible document with children is a collaborative, iterative process. Think of it as cooking: good results come from having the right equipment, quality ingredients, and a clear method to follow. Below is a brief overview before each element is explored in full.

Quick overview

- **Equipment:** Children, facilitator, safeguarding person, policy expert, designer.
- **Ingredients:** Plain language, clear structure, accessible visuals, consistent layout, inclusive tone.
- **Method:** Six steps from getting to know each other through to presenting the final document.

3.1 THE EQUIPMENT: WHO IS IN THE ROOM?

Creating accessible documents should not be done alone. It requires collaboration between children and adults with different skills, roles, and perspectives. Below are the key people who make this process work.

Children	Children are competent partners and experts in their own lives. Their perspectives, language, creativity, and experiences are at the heart of this process. Their participation is not symbolic: they are co-creators of the final product.
Facilitator	The facilitator creates an inclusive and participatory space, extracts and reformulates children's perspectives, explains and regulates activities, and sets boundaries and frameworks. They support children's agency and well-being throughout the process.
Safeguarding Person	The safeguarding person ensures the safety and well-being of all participants, especially children, throughout the process. They act as a person of trust and must be identified before the work begins.
Policy Expert	When the accessible version is drawn from an actual policy or institutional document, having the policy expert in the room adds significant value. They can explain the context and importance of the document, respond to children's questions, and help keep the content accurate.
Designer (optional)	Professional design support is optional but valuable for achieving a polished, coherent result and ensure safe use of colour. Alternatively, children who are more comfortable expressing themselves through drawing, icons, or visual storytelling can take on this role.

The benefits of intergenerational partnerships

Intergenerational partnerships strengthen participation and decision-making by bringing together different perspectives, experiences, and forms of knowledge. They lead to better-informed, more creative, and more relevant outcomes because decisions are shaped by those affected as well as those with responsibility and resources.

They reduce tokenism and age-based power imbalances by creating shared ownership and shared responsibility. When children and adults work together as partners over time, participation becomes more meaningful, sustained, and influential rather than symbolic. Intergenerational partnerships also build skills, confidence, and connection across generations, fostering mutual learning, trust, and empathy.

3.2 THE INGREDIENTS: WHAT MAKES A DOCUMENT ACCESSIBLE?

Just as a recipe needs the right ingredients in the right quantities, an accessible document has key elements that must all be present to work well. Below are the core ingredients to keep in mind when creating or reviewing a child-friendly document.

Ingredient	What it means in practice	Head, Heart or Hands — and why
Plain language	Short sentences. Active voice. No jargon or unexplained acronyms. A reading level appropriate to the age group.	Head — because it supports understanding and helps children process information clearly.
Clear structure	Short sentences. Active voice. No jargon or unexplained acronyms. A reading level appropriate to the age group.	Head — because organisation and signposting make information easier to follow and remember.
Friendly tone	Warm, direct address (use 'you'). Avoid overly formal or institutional language. Acknowledge children as capable readers.	Heart — because tone shapes whether children feel welcomed, respected, and included.
Purposeful visuals	Icons, illustrations, and images that genuinely support the text, not decoration. Visuals should be consistent in style throughout.	Hands and Head — because visuals support practical engagement while also making meaning easier to grasp.
Colour and contrast	Use colour to guide attention, not overwhelm. Sufficient contrast between text and background. Avoid using colour alone to convey meaning. Use of colour the wrong way can exclude young people with conditions such as neurodiversity or colour blindness. There are many guides online to help you avoid this.	Head — because readability and visual clarity help children notice, distinguish, and understand information.
Readable layout	Generous white space. Font size of at least 12pt. Avoid dense blocks of text. Break content into digestible chunks.	Head — because layout reduces cognitive overload and helps children navigate the page more easily.
Definitions and examples	Complex terms explained in simple language. Real-life examples that children can relate to their own experience.	Head and Heart — because explanations build understanding, while relatable examples create connection.
Actions	After reading your guide, what is it that children can do? This may be by themselves or with their peer group.	Hands — because it focuses on what children can do with the information, how they can use it in practice, and how it supports action and participation.
Inclusive representation	Illustrations and examples that reflect the diversity of children's identities, backgrounds, abilities, and family situations.	Heart — because children are more likely to feel seen, respected, and that they belong in the document.

3.3 THE RECIPE: STEP BY STEP

This section presents six steps to guide the creation of accessible documents with and for children. While every group, topic, and context will be different, these steps offer a practical framework that can be adapted to your needs, constraints, and resources.

A note on format. In-person sessions are strongly encouraged wherever possible, the collaborative, creative nature of this work tends to flourish when children are in the same room. That said, online sessions can work well for certain moments in the process, such as introducing the project to the group or reviewing and finalising the outcome. This was the case in the project that inspired this guide, where an international group combined in-person and online sessions to work across distance without losing the quality of participation. Ultimately, it is the facilitator's role to assess which format and which activities are best suited to the group they are working with.

Activities referenced here can be found in the Annexes. Users can also access additional activities in the **We Are Here toolbox**, created by Eurochild and Learning for Wellbeing Foundation in 2020

● Step 1:

Get to know each other and the original document

Before starting the work on the document itself, it is important that **children, facilitators, and adults get to know each other and build a shared understanding of the project.** This is especially important when the group is not already familiar with one another. Creating a safe and comfortable environment from the beginning helps encourage participation, trust, and collaboration throughout the process.

The facilitator helps create an inclusive and participatory space and explain to children the task and different steps to achieve it, while the policy or content expert ensures that the original meaning and key messages are understood before adaptation begins. Children do not need to become experts in the policy, but they need enough context to understand what the document is about, why it matters, and who it is intended for.

This step should also help the group **reflect on who the final document is for, what type of document is being adapted, how children will use it, and which barriers might prevent children from understanding or engaging with it.**

➔ Refer to activity 1, 2, 3, 4.

It's important that we get to know each participant in a personal way, so we can understand their perspective. It's also important that the facilitator creates a welcoming space where everyone feels comfortable and is treated equally.

● Step 2:

Understand children's needs and ways of learning

Before adapting a document, it is important to **understand what children themselves need in order to learn and engage with information**. Rather than adults making assumptions, children should be invited to reflect on what helps or prevents them from understanding documents; for example, visuals, stories, summaries, discussions, colours, audio, examples from daily life, or interactive activities.

This step draws on the **Head, Heart, and Hands approach**. Children can be invited to explore which dimension they naturally relate to most, while also understanding that what works for them may not work the same way for their peers. Accessible documents should include all three dimensions to reach a wider range of children.



Refer to activity 5, 6, 7, 8.

It's important that we understand what we are required to do, know what is being discussed and fully understand the topic of the document we are going to translate.

The way I learn is by trying things out.

The way I learn is by reading out loud and visualising things.

The way I learn is by rewriting things and making them personal.

● Step 3:

Apply this to the content

Once children are familiar with the document and have reflected on accessibility needs, the group can begin working on the content itself. Children can work individually, in pairs, or in small groups to adapt sections of the document into more accessible and child-friendly language.

In our experience, each child was initially responsible for one recommendation or section, while all children also contributed to reviewing and improving other sections.

Regularly changing groups can be particularly useful, as it allows children to bring different perspectives, one group may focus on clarity, another on emotional connection, and another on practical examples.

This stage may involve simplifying language, shortening text, explaining complex concepts, using examples from children's daily lives, adding stories or scenarios, identifying key messages, and deciding what information is most important to keep.

➔ Refer to activity 7, 8, 9, 10.

It was great that we were able to own a part of the document.

It was great that we could rotate groups and see other people's perspectives on each part of the document.

● Step 4:

Apply this to the format

Accessibility is not only about the words used, but also about how information is visually presented. **Once the content has been adapted, children should also be involved in discussing the format and visual identity of the document.**

Ideally, this process involves a designer working together with children and facilitators to discuss design constraints, like colours, icons, illustrations, page layout, spacing, readability, and overall visual coherence. The facilitator plays an important role in setting the framework and explaining any existing constraints, such as the number of pages, organisational/document branding, or required templates. Within this framework, children should still have meaningful opportunities to influence the visual presentation.

If working with a professional designer is not possible and children create the illustrations themselves, a collective discussion about style and consistency is still essential. Shared guidelines can help ensure that drawings, visuals, and icons feel connected and support the content in a coherent way.

➔ Refer to activity 11.

For me, a child-friendly document has illustrations.

For me, it's about using the right colours, not too warm and not too cold.

For me, it's about having short paragraphs and interesting fonts.

● Step 5:

Test the document with other children

Before publishing the document more widely, it can be very useful to test it with another group of children who were not involved in the creation process. **This testing phase can help assess whether the content is understandable, the structure is clear, the visuals support the meaning,** and the document is engaging for children discovering it for the first time.

Rather than asking children about personal design preferences, such as favourite colours or fonts, it is more useful to focus on whether the visuals, icons, and illustrations make sense and support understanding of the content.

It's interesting to see that we all have different views and ways of thinking.

● Step 6:

Let children present the final outcome

Whenever possible, children should also have opportunities to present the final document and share their work with others. This could happen in a school, local, national, or European setting through an event, workshop, launch activity, or presentation.

Allowing children to **present the outcomes themselves strengthens their confidence, communication skills, and sense of ownership over the project.** It also creates opportunities for meaningful dialogue between children and policymakers, professionals, or other adults connected to the topic of the document.

I was grateful to the policymaker who came, listened to us and discussed things with us. I felt proud.

I really liked seeing the final result and realising that it was child-led. The final event where we presented the final outcome was one of the best events I've participated in.



REMEMBER:

participation does not end once the document is finished. Children can also play an active role in sharing, explaining, and promoting the final result.



4. ACCESSIBLE VS INACCESSIBLE: A COMPARISON

The difference between an inaccessible and an accessible document can be significant. Below are examples drawn from our work with children, illustrating what these differences look like in practice and in children's own words.

Inaccessible document	Accessible document
Dense, unbroken paragraphs with no white space	Short paragraphs with generous spacing between sections
Technical and policy language without explanation	Plain, everyday language with key terms defined
No visuals, or visuals that do not relate to the text	Relevant icons and illustrations that support the text
Small font size and low colour contrast	Readable font size (minimum 12pt) and strong contrast
A single long document with no clear sections	Clear headings, numbered sections, and summaries
Assumes the reader already knows the context	Brief introduction explaining who the document is for and why
Passive, formal, or distant tone	Warm, direct language using 'you' and 'we'
No examples from children's real experience	Real-life examples and scenarios children can relate to

5. ANNEXES: ACTIVITIES

The following activities support each step of the method. They are designed to be flexible and adaptable to different groups, ages, and contexts. Facilitators are encouraged to adjust the timing, materials, and instructions to best suit the children they are working with.

A note on flexibility

These activities are starting points, not scripts. Every group of children is unique, and the best facilitation adapts to what children bring into the room on the day. Trust the process and trust the children.



ACTIVITY 1: ONE CONSTANT GIFT

You will need

- For everyone to introduce themselves.
- For everyone to think about and reflect on their qualities.
- For the group to appreciate and understand their collective qualities.

Objectives and purpose

- No equipment needed
- (Optional) the facilitator can create 'Talent Cards' that children can use to find qualities they relate to.

How it works

- Each person takes a turn introducing themselves and one quality they bring to the group.

Steps

- **Explain what we mean by qualities:**

When we talk about a “quality” each person has, we’re usually referring to a distinct personal characteristic, something that expresses who they are, how they behave, or what strengths they bring to a situation.

A quality can be a skill (like creativity or careful thinking), a way of relating to others (like kindness or patience), or a personal trait (like curiosity or determination). These qualities shape how people contribute in group work, how they solve problems, and how they engage with learning.

Understanding each person’s unique qualities helps teams value diverse contributions and create more inclusive, collaborative environments where everyone’s strengths can be recognised and used meaningfully.

- **Explain the rules :**

Before the group starts presenting their qualities, tell them that they can't repeat any qualities that have been said by someone else. Instead, if someone else in the group hears a quality that they also think they have, then they can raise their hand, or click an emoji (if online).

- **Invite participants to share**

Invite each individual to share their name, where they are from and one quality about themselves they bring to the group. The facilitator might choose to go first to give an example.

- **Record the answers (Optional)**

As participants are saying their qualities, write them down on a flip chart in real life or on a document if online. This will eventually illustrate the strength of the group as a whole (it can also be referred back to in discussions about representing/facilitating).

- **Reflect on the potential of the group:**

At the end, invite the participants to look at the full list and consider the potential of the group, but also the unique potential of each person in the room.

ACTIVITY 2: LINES ACROSS THE ROOM

Objectives and purpose

- For everyone to learn each other's name
- For everyone to get used to moving around the room
- For the group to play with non-verbal ways of communicating

You will need

- No equipment needed

How it works

- Participants form a single file line across the room in relation to topic.

Steps

- **Define the line:**

Identify the 'Imaginary' line across the room, showing which is the starting point and finishing point.

- **Take your places:**

Invite participants to find then take a place on the line that relates to them in following the instructions:

- • **Round 1: In alphabetical order using their first name**

— Facilitator shows which end is "A" and which end is "Z"

- • **Round 2: Distance travelled to arrive at the place of the meetin**

— Facilitator shows which end is "1km" and which end is "1000km"

- Optional: If you think people will be unsure of distance, use time eg “How long did it take you to get here?”
- Optional: If you are working with a group of students who all live in the same dorm, change the question to “How far away from here were you born?”
- • **Round 3: Date of birth (not year, the line is from 1st January to 31st December)**
 - With this one we ask the participants not to speak.
- • **Etc. (facilitator can suggest alternatives)**
- **Feedback:**

When everyone is in place, invite participants to call their answer, starting at “A” or “January 1st” etc. Optional: For a little extra flair, you can ask participants to raise both their hands as they call out the answer, and then watch the Mexican Wave go down the line as answers are called.
- **If participants are in the wrong place, let them rearrange themselves.**
- **Then move on to the next round.**

ACTIVITY 3: HOPES AND FEARS

Objectives and purpose

- For participants to express what they hope to get out of the meeting
- For participants to express what their worries are for the upcoming meeting
- To collectively develop strategies to ensure that hopes come to fruition and fears are overcome

You will need

- 1 flipchart
- 2 Colours of Post-it notes
- 1 Marker pen for flipchart
- 1 pen for each participant

How it works

- Participants list their hopes and fears of the event, then the group creates strategies to make sure everything works well.

Steps

- **Give out materials:**

Give a Post-it of each Colour and a pen to all participants.

- **Explain the activity:**

Explain that everybody has different hopes and fears about the event, give example:

"I hope to make new friends"

"I fear that I will not be listened too"

- **Invite participants to write:**

Ask each participant to write one of their "Hopes" on each of the blue Post-it's and one of their "fears" on each of the yellow Post-its. This should be done privately without sharing.

- **Prepare for feedback:**

Whilst the participants are writing, the facilitator should draw a line down the flipchart paper. Then write “Hopes” on the top left and “Fears” on the top right.

- **Collect participants notes:**

When participants have finished writing the facilitator should collect all their Post-it notes. Facilitator then puts all the Post it notes onto the flipchart. For ease of feeding back, group any notes that are in some way similar.

- **Address each hope and fear:**

Addressing hopes and fears. Firstly, go through each of the fears, addressing each one in turn (similar grouped post its can be addressed together). For example, someone has written: “I fear I won’t be listened too.” Ask the group how we can make sure that this does not happen. Then go through the hopes.

- **Summarise strategies to ensure a successful event:**

Once all hopes and fears have been addressed the facilitator can summarise how we as a group need to support each other to make the event successful.

ACTIVITY 4: STARTING A NEW TASK

Objectives and purpose

- Participants recognise different ways of starting a new activity, as an expression of inner diversity (lenses)
- For participants to think about and express their needs
- To develop strategies to address different needs in starting, so everyone feels included

You will need

- 1 flipchart
- 2 Colours of Post-it notes
- 1 Marker pen for flipchart
- 1 pen for each participant

How it works

- What are the first questions that come to your mind that help start a new project or learning activity? What questions do you need to have answered to feel ready to start?

Steps

- **Understanding we all start in different places:**

Explain to participants that we all start from different places. Some people like to start with information, some like to know the history of how we go here, others like to know what the outcomes or outputs (the end or goal will be)

- **Invite participants to share:**

Ask participants to complete the following sentence:

"Before I start a new task I need"

Go around offering each of the participants a chance to share what they need.

The facilitator should write all of these on a visible whiteboard.

It is absolutely fine for a participant to repeat or agree with something that has already been said or even add their own nuance to something previously stated.

- **Summarise what has been said:**
Once everyone has shared what they need to start, summarise what everyone has said.

ACTIVITY 5 : DESCRIBING THE LEARNING FOR WELL-BEING APPROACH

Objectives and purpose

- To give a simple introduction to the Learning for Well-being Approach
- The Learning for Wellbeing approach is about understanding and developing your whole self in order that you may reach your unique potential.

You will need

- Below are descriptions of inner diversity and the 4 perspectives. You can put these on slides, write them on flipcharts or give out individual copies.

Explanation

- **What Does Inner Diversity Mean?**

Inner diversity means that inside every person, there are different ways of thinking, feeling, and responding. Just like people are different on the outside, we're also diverse on the inside.

- **What Does That Look Like?**

Inside you, there might be:

- • Different thoughts (logical, creative, curious, doubtful)
- • Different feelings (calm, excited, anxious, confident)
- • Different body responses (needing to move, needing rest)
- • Different values or motivations (wanting fairness, belonging, purpose)

You use all of these, but not always in the same way as other people.

- **Everyone Has All of These — But With Preferences**
 - Everyone can think, feel, act, and care deeply
 - But people have preferences for how they process things
 - These preferences can change depending on the situation
- **For example:**
 - One person thinks things through first
 - Another notices how they feel first
 - Someone else needs to move, talk, or do something
 - Another person reflects on what really matters to them

None of these are better or worse — they're just different ways of being human.

- **Why Inner Diversity Matters?**
 - Understand yourself better
 - Understand other people better
 - Avoid labelling yourself or others as “wrong” or “bad”
 - Find ways to learn, cope, and communicate that work for you

- **It also reminds us that:**

“People might react differently to the same situation — and that’s normal.”

- **The Key Idea**

You are not just one thing.

You are made up of many parts, and those parts work together.

Learning about your inner diversity helps you use more of who you are, when you need it.

There are four perspectives to the approach. Everyone the ability to process in all four perspectives, but people may use or notice them in different ways.

- **The Four Perspectives.**

- • **Mental (What we sometimes call the “Head”)**
How we think and learn.

Mental wellbeing is about your mind.
Thinking, learning, remembering, and solving problems.
Being curious and asking questions.
Trying again when something feels hard.

Example:

“I don’t get this yet, but I’ll keep trying.”

- • **Emotional (What we sometimes call the “Heart”)**
How we feel

Emotional wellbeing is about your feelings.
Noticing how you feel (happy, angry, worried, excited)
Knowing that all feelings are okay
Finding ways to acknowledge how
you feel.

Example:

“I’m nervous, so I’ll take a few deep breaths or talk to someone.”

- • **Physical (What we sometimes call the “Hand”)**
How our body feels and works

Physical wellbeing is about looking after your body.
Moving, playing, resting, eating, and sleeping
Noticing when your body feels tired or full of energy
Knowing your body and mind affect each other

Example:

“After playing outside, I feel more awake and ready to learn.”

- • **Spiritual (What we sometimes call belonging)**
What matters to us

Spiritual wellbeing is not about religion.
It's about meaning, values, and belonging.
Feeling connected to people, nature, or your community
Knowing what's important to you, like kindness or fairness
Feeling that you matter and that you belong

Example:

"I feel good when I help someone or stand up for what's right."

- **Everyone Is Different — and That's OK**

Everyone has all four parts of wellbeing
You can use any of them at any time
People just have preferences for how they process things

For example:

- • Some people think things through first
- • Some people notice their feelings first
- • Some people move or act things out
- • Some people think about what really matters to them
- • There is no right or wrong way — just different ways of being you.

- **All Four Parts Work Together**

These four parts are **connected**.

If one part is struggling, the others can be affected too.
Looking after **all four** helps us feel better, learn better, and live well.

Wellbeing grows and develops when we care for the whole of ourselves.

ACTIVITY 6: 3 PERSPECTIVES OF A DOCUMENT

Objectives and purpose

- For participants to understand each of us process documents differently.

You will need

- Either slides or descriptions of “Head, heart, Hand” written up.
- Flipchart
- Pens
- Original text (we used one of the recommendations from the original document)

How it works

- Describe the different perspectives to participants and then let them use them as “lenses” to explore the document

Explanation

Understanding a Document: A Guide for Young People

Imagine you’re exploring a new world every time you open a document. To truly understand it, we need to look at it in different ways – using our Head, Heart, and Hand.

- **1. The “Head” Perspective: Thinking and Analysing**

What it’s about: This is where we use our brainpower! We’re looking for the facts, the information, and the structure.

Questions to ask:

- • What is the main purpose of this document?
- • What are the key points or ideas?
- • How is the information organized (e.g., headings, bullet points, paragraphs)?

- Are there any charts, graphs, or images, and what do they tell us?
- Is the information clear, accurate, and complete?
- What is the structure, clarity, essence and fact?
- Does it paint a picture of the future?
Is it Linear?

Think of it like: Being a detective or a scientist, gathering and organising evidence.

• 2. The “Heart” Perspective: Feeling and Connecting

What it’s about: This is where we use our feelings and intuition. We’re thinking about how the document makes us feel and how it connects to us personally.

Questions to ask:

- How does this document make me feel (e.g., excited, bored, confused)?
- Does it inspire me or make me curious?
- Can I relate to the stories or examples in the document?
- Does it seem like it’s written for me?
- Are there any parts that I find particularly moving or important?
- Is there imagination, playfulness and people’s stories?
- Can I see myself involved in the content?
- Are there spaces for interaction?

Think of it like: Being an artist or a storyteller, connecting with the emotions and meaning behind the words.

• 3. The “Hand” Perspective: Doing and Acting

What it’s about: This is where we think about what we can do with the document. How can we use it, and what actions might we take after reading it?

Questions to ask:

- • What am I supposed to do after reading this?
- • Does it give me any ideas for projects or activities?
- • Are there any links or resources that I can explore further?
- • Can I share this information with others?
- • How can I use this document to make a difference?
- • How can I take action from this document?

Think of it like: Being an engineer or an inventor, finding practical uses and applications for the information

- **Putting it all together**

When you look at a document, try to spend some time with each perspective. Don't just focus on the facts (Head) or just how it makes you feel (Heart). Think about what you can do with it as well (Hand). By using all three perspectives, you'll get a much deeper and more complete understanding of the document and its message. You'll be able to:

- • Understand the information clearly.
- • Connect with the meaning on a personal level.
- • Use the document to take action and make a difference.

This approach can help you with all kinds of documents, from school assignments and online articles to brochures, reports, and even websites. Happy exploring!

Steps

- **Divide in groups:**

Divide the group into 3 groups.

- **Looking at the document through a lens:**

Each group will be given one piece of flip chart (Head, Heart, Hand)
Each group will be asked to look at one of the recommendations from the main document. They are then asked to look at the recommendation for the perspective written at the top of their sheet and then write how they would describe that recommendation from their given perspective.

- **Move the sheets:**

After 5 mins, move sheets (Head, Heart, Hand) clockwise.
As groups gets their new sheet of paper, invite them to read what has been written already by previous group, and then add their own thoughts on this new perspective

- **Move the sheets (again):**

As groups gets their new sheet of paper, invite them to read what has been written already by previous group, and then add their own thoughts on this new perspective

- **Final Move of the sheets:**

After 5 mins, move sheets clockwise. This time groups are back with their original sheets. Invite groups to walk around and see all 3.

- **Conclusion:**

Invite participants to as they walk around to share what they have learned or noticed.

ACTIVITY 7: RESPONSIBILITIES

Objectives and purpose

- To divide the document up into smaller more manageable parts
- Give lead responsibility of smaller parts to individual young people.

You will need

- 10 recommendations (printed)

How it worked

The original document was in the following sections:

- Foreword
- Introduction
- 10 recommendations

Following the well-established authoring logic of you always leave the foreword and introduction until last. (see David Bowie exercise later). We were then left the 10 recommendations. Sometimes you just get lucky, as we had 10 young people present.

We randomly assigned 1 recommendation to each young person.

Role of the owner

- To facilitate the discussion on the recommendation
- To explore ideas on the content
- To explore ideas on the structure
- To liaise with the policy expert, should there be any questions.
- To decide on one image or info graphic per recommendation.
- To later discuss that recommendation with the designer

Design brief

Young people were asked to ensure that their recommendation fitted on one page and contained only one image or info graphic. The rest was up to them.

ACTIVITY 8: ROLES

Objectives and purpose

- To provide different roles for young people to support the process .

How it works

- Allowing young people to take on different roles supports both the functioning and the pastoral support of the group, whilst supporting individual's agency.

You will need

- (Optional) Cards with the different roles explained

Method

- **Explain the idea of different roles.**
- Explain that the "Recommendation owner" shall facilitate the discussion. But in order to make the session a success other roles were needed.

- **Describe the different roles:**

Describe to group different assigned roles:

- • Recommendation owner
- • Scribe (someone to write)
- Timekeeper

- **Explain the process**

Explain these are just for 1 session and can change, if people want to different roles for each session.

- • 1. Ask the young people if they can think of any other roles that would support either the group or the process.

- • 2. Young people then volunteer to take on different roles. This way should anyone not like writing, they don't have to or if anyone enjoys drawing, they can take this on.
- **Additional roles chosen by young people were:**
 - • Well-being supporter: the role of making sure people were happy.

ACTIVITY 9: BEGINNING THE PROCESS

Objectives and purpose

- To explore different ideas around the format and structure of each of the recommendations.
- To come to a consensus about how recommendations should look going forward

You will need

- Each group was given:
 - A printed copy of the original recommendation
 - Flipchart paper
 - A selection of pens
 - One adult support worker.
- Access to any of the Professionals needed to support the process

How it works

- Each group explores a different recommendation, using “roles” for the group and “Head, heart and hand” lenses. The groups come back together to discuss and achieve a consensus going forward.

Steps

- Once recommendations had been assigned with divided the group up into 3.
- Then began the process of looking at recommendations 1, 2 and 3.
- The group was then asked to assign roles (see previous exercise) and then begin reviewing their respective recommendations.

Feedback:

After 20minutes we brought the 3 groups back together. Each group took their turn to present their recommendation. Groups were asked to describe:

- How they felt about the process?
- Any recommendations on improving the process?
- Any challenges they face?

Similarities and differences

- The group was asked to look at the 3 recommendations so far, to look at the similarities and differences, to see if there were any patterns evolving.
- The group discussed that they felt there was a need to have a similar structure to all of the recommendations. They felt that this would be more comfortable for the reader. From here 1 structure was chosen, and then that was applied to all the recommendations going forward.
- Sessions 2, 3 and 4 repeated this process of design and feedback until all 10 recommendations were considered.

ACTIVITY 10: THE DAVID BOWIE STYLE REVIEW

Objectives and purpose

- To create an introduction for the document

You will need

- Copies of the original text (blown up if you can)
- Scissors
- Plain paper
- Pens
- A Computer (to type up at the end)

How it works

- In an interview with the BBC, David Bowie described how he used the “cut-up” technique, where he would cut up newspapers and then rearrange them to create lyrics for his songs.
- Inspired by this, we gave the young people the original introduction to the document, then invited them to cut out key phrases they liked or felt that were important. We then asked if there was anything they would add.
- From here they created a jigsaw of all their pieces and then created a dialogue to weave these pieces together.
- We guess you could say they created their own “Changes”.

Steps

- **Explain the process**

Describe the process to the participants. You may wish to use the David Bowie story.

- **Give out materials and equipment**

Provide a number of photocopies of the original text. Blow them up and enlarge the text if you can.

- **Explore original text**

Invite the participants to read through the text, highlighting then cutting out what's important to them.

- **Start playing with the document**

Place all of the "Cut outs" onto one piece of paper.

- **Add young people's ideas**

Ask "Are there any other messages you would like to add?", then add them.

- **Fill in the blanks**

Read through the text on the paper, adding any words needed to make the text readable

- **Check everyone is happy**

Once complete, type the text into a new document. Then check everyone is happy with the final outcome

ACTIVITY 11: PRESENTATION TO DESIGNER

Objectives and purpose

- For young people share completed text and ideas with Designer

You will need

- Each child-friendly recommendation

How it worked?

- Young people prepare each of their recommendations on 1 piece of flipchart. The page contained the exact text and ideas for there info graphic or image.

Steps

- **1.** The designer meets with all children to discuss the constraints (colour palette, format, style, design limitations, etc.).
- **2.** The children then take individual time to reflect on how these constraints can be applied to their part or recommendation, and to develop new ideas for the designer (mind maps, illustration, icons, etc.).
- **3.** Each child presents their ideas individually and discusses with the designer what is feasible and what is not. The designer takes notes of the children's design preferences.
- **4.** The child-friendly content written by the children is then transcribed into an online document by the facilitator and shared with the designer.
- **5.** The designer develops initial design options and presents them to the children, who then choose their preferred version.
- **6.** A back-and-forth process follows until a final design is agreed by everyone. In our case, this process took several months and was carried out mainly online

Next steps

- From here the designer created a cover, the foreword and one recommendation. This was shared with the young people for their thoughts and comments. Then these comments were integrated into the completion of the document.

ACTIVITY 12: EVALUATION

Objectives and purpose

- For children to share what they likes or dislikes during the process

You will need

- Pens
- Post it (2 different colours)

How it worked?

- Everyone sits in a circle, including the facilitators.

Steps

- Each participant writes on a green post-it what they liked most about the process. On an orange post-it, they write what they liked least and what could be improved.
- The post-its are then passed to the person on their right. If the person agrees with what is written, they add a cross to the post-it. This is repeated until all post-its have circulated around the group.
- At the end, the facilitator reads out all the post-its and groups them according to those that received the most agreement (crosses). This helps to open a conversation with the children on the different aspects raised and to start a wider discussion as a group.
- Each facilitator adapts the final discussion depending on what works best for their group.

ACTIVITY 13: REVISIT HOPES AND FEARS

Objectives and purpose

- Review the event

What you will need

- Flipchart of hopes and fears from start of the event.

How it works?

- Bring out the original “Hopes” and “Fears” and see how well we did.

Steps

- Bring out the original “Hopes and Fears” flipchart
- Starting with “Fears”.
 - Ask could we have done better or how well did we do?
 - We want to avoid exposing individuals with any “Did you feel...” questions
- Optional: Ask “did anyone see any examples of kind actions?”
- Review the “hopes”

ACTIVITY 14: GRATITUDE

Objectives and purpose

- For individuals to share what they are grateful for.

How it works?

- Everyone stands in a circle and share one thing they are grateful for.

What you will need

- No equipment needed.

Steps

- Invite participants to stand in a circle
- Explain that the idea is to show gratitude, to thank to someone or something.
- Before starting ask the group to spend one minute in silence, to think about the event and what has happened. To think about the moments that have made this event work. Then to choose one moment to show gratitude for.
- After the one minute invite individuals to share their gratitude
- Go around the circle until everyone has had a go.

CONCLUSION

Creating accessible documents with and for children is not about producing something perfect. It is about **making thoughtful choices that reduce barriers, invite participation, and support meaningful inclusion**: ensuring children are not only present or consulted, but able to understand, connect with, contribute to, and use information that affects them. Every document, group, topic, and context will bring different opportunities and limitations. Time, budget, design support, translation needs, institutional requirements, safeguarding considerations, and the availability of children and adults will all shape what is possible.

This is why **flexibility matters**. The recipe offered in this guide should be adapted, not followed rigidly. Some organisations may be able to involve children at every stage; others may only be able to consult them at key moments. Some documents may allow for colourful illustrations and interactive activities; others may need to work within strict branding or policy formats. What **matters most is the intention to listen, adapt, and keep children's needs at the centre of the process**.

There is no single version of accessibility that will work for every child. Children are diverse in how they think, feel, learn, communicate, and engage. A document that works well for one child may still need changes for another. Rather than seeing this as a failure, it should be understood as part of the work. **Accessibility is an ongoing practice of noticing barriers, asking better questions, testing ideas, and improving over time**.

The most important measure of success is not whether the final document is flawless, but whether it is clearer, kinder, more useful, and more inclusive than the version that came before. **Each step towards accessibility helps children feel more informed, more respected, and more able to take part**. In that sense, even an imperfect accessible document can be a meaningful act of participation and inclusion, especially when it reflects children's different ways of thinking, feeling, learning, communicating, and belonging.

USEFUL LINKS

Organisation	Description	Link
Eurochild	European network working to promote children's rights and child participation across policy, practice and advocacy.	Eurochild website
Learning for Wellbeing Foundation	Foundation supporting holistic child development, inner diversity and wellbeing through practical approaches and resources.	Learning for Wellbeing website
Eurochild Children's Council	A child participation group that supports Eurochild's work by bringing children's perspectives into decision-making and advocacy.	Eurochild Children's Council
Learning for Wellbeing approach	Background information on the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual perspectives used in the Head, Heart and Hands approach.	Learning for Wellbeing approach
We Are Here toolbox	A child participation toolbox with activities and resources for involving children meaningfully in discussions and decision-making.	We Are Here toolbox
Eurochild & Learning for Well-being Foundation	Supporting wellbeing at school: new guidelines for policymakers and educators	Supporting wellbeing at school: new guidelines for policymakers and educators European Education Area
Eurochild	Young people's version of Supporting wellbeing at school	https://eurochild.org/resource/accessible-report-of-the-european-commission-guidelines-on-wellbeing-and-mental-health-at-school/
Center for Plain Language	Plain-language tools, guidance and examples for making information easier to understand.	https://centerforplainlanguage.org
WebAIM Contrast Checker	Free tool for checking whether text and background colours meet WCAG accessibility standards.	https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/
Center on Disability – Plain Language & Easy Read	Resources explaining plain language and Easy Read approaches for diverse audiences.	https://centerondisability.org/plain-language-and-easy-read/