



Barnardos Glór na nÓg
Monitoring and Evaluation Report
Key Findings

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‘I THINK THAT MOST PEOPLE THAT ASK ME MY OPINIONS WAS MYSELF BECAUSE NOBODY EVER ASKED ME MY OPINION...’

Ethan, aged 10

Barnardos and Advocacy

Every year Barnardos works directly with children and families across Ireland who struggle with a range of issues. Services and support are provided in 42 centres around the country. In 2017, Barnardos worked directly with 15,347 children and parents throughout Ireland. The Barnardos advocacy team has consistently lobbied and influenced reform of policies, laws and services to improve outcomes for children. Seeking to change and improve laws, policies and procedures across all areas affecting children's lives. This is achieved by ensuring that the knowledge, experience and insights Barnardos has gained through working with children and families are heard at all levels of decision-making. These experiences are wide ranging and can relate to education, health, child protection, poverty and housing. Barnardos believes it is vital for the child's voice to be heard in policy making as it will assist in the development of more child-centred policies and laws. This aim, of embedding children and young people's participation into the advocacy work of Barnardos, is reflected in Irish government policy.

What is Glór Na nÓg?

Glór is the Irish word for voice and the Barnardos Glór na nÓg pilot project, funded by the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative (QCBI) Innovation Fund, was designed with the aim of fully embedding children and young people's participation into Barnardos' advocacy work. This would be achieved by developing and piloting a method of engagement and drafting an internal policy on children and young people's participation in advocacy work. The Glór na nÓg project had the following key objectives:

- Develop a method of engagement with children
- Pilot that method with up to 25 children
- Monitor and evaluate that pilot to provide the basis for embedded child advocacy policy

What is the focus of the report?

The report provides details of the monitoring and evaluation of the Barnardos Glór na nÓg project. This pilot study was intended to inform the basis of an internal policy document on child advocacy within Barnardos as well as allowing the organisation to begin a process of embedding children and young people's voices in this work.

How was the research conducted?

There were **two key objectives** for the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the pilot project:

1. Provide a method of monitoring the process of the pilot workshops and so enable all participants to have input into iterative change during the four workshops
2. Gather meaningful quantitative and qualitative data from all participants – the children, advocacy team and project workers - enabling the development of a basis for embedded child advocacy policy.

In order to achieve these objectives, the planning and drawing up of materials took place over the months of June and July 2018. The Research and Advocacy Teams approached the Limerick South Barnardos Project to participate in the pilot of Glór na nÓg with the intention of building on work already conducted there on child advocacy. Once consent was obtained, four workshops were held in July 2018 in both urban (3) and rural (1) locations within the Limerick South catchment area

Data for the evaluation was collected immediately following each of the four workshops. This enabled the child participants, the Advocacy Team and the Barnardos Project Workers to comment on any changes that needed to be made allowing both the process and the evaluation to be flexible and iterative.

Key Research Findings

The Barnardos Advocacy Team will base future outputs in relation to children's participation in advocacy work on the following findings from the three different groups of participants.

'I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT WHAT'S IN MY HEAD – I KNOW WHAT I THINK.'

Children

- Children were generally very positive about the advocacy workshops.
- The most popular games were the ice-breaker game and the money/ budget allocation games.
- Non-specific open-ended questions did not work well in the evaluation surveys.
- Most of the children felt they had learned something new.
- Many of the children felt that they had not had enough opportunity to talk.
- All five of the participants in the focus group feel disenfranchised and are not asked their opinion by adults generally.

Project Workers

- Advocacy work may be better suited to after school club with engagement of teaching staff in school to allow for discussion on leadership/budget issues. This would resolve a number of issues, especially around rehearsal, group dynamics, Project Worker knowledge of the children and trust.
- Age appropriate games and materials allow for children of all ages to participate but there may be a need to focus on more local/community issues that can link into national ones.
- Advocacy consent needs to be formalised and/or streamlined as children and their parents engage with Barnardos services.
- Advocacy work benefits from the close working relationship of the Project Workers and the Advocacy Team – both are crucial to the successful execution of children's participation in advocacy.
- The responsiveness of the Advocacy Team in being able to take on the suggestions of the children and the Project Workers from week to week was appreciated.
- The Glór na nÓg Advocacy workshop had an added layer of capacity building for children in terms of their sense of value and worth.

Advocacy Team

- A full run-through is essential to ensure the smooth running of the workshops – this needs to involve the Advocacy Team and the Project Workers as co-facilitators.
- The roles of the Advocacy Team and the Project Workers need to be agreed in advance.
- The venue needs to be a well-ventilated open space to allow for the movement of children.
- Ground rules need to be established to enable each child to have a voice.
- The child participants were able to discuss their views which were captured in a meaningful manner.
- The child participants were able to provide evaluation feedback.
- To build profile of participants, the age and gender of children needs to be recorded in future advocacy workshops.

Conclusion

The success of the four workshops indicate that the pilot Glór na nÓg project aims and objectives have been met. The Barnardos Advocacy Team developed a method of engagement with the child participants, piloted that method with over 25 children in both urban and rural locations and created a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation programme that allowed for iterative change during the process as well as providing meaningful qualitative and quantitative feedback which can be incorporated into an internal policy on children's participation in advocacy.

Specifically, in the instance of the Glór na nÓg pilot, the Advocacy Team and Project Workers have developed a method of engagement that has enabled children to understand difficult concepts such as leadership and budget allocation across all ages. Feedback from the child participant surveys and focus group discussion as well as reflective pieces by the Project Workers and the Advocacy Teams point to a number of issues that need to be considered going forward.

Recommendations

- **Consent** for child advocacy pieces should be sought as part of the overall consent when parents engage with Barnardos services.
- Future Glór na nÓg Workshops should be **co-facilitated** by a member of the Advocacy Team and a Project Worker who knows the children.
- A full workshop **schedule** should be given to the Project Workers beforehand and time set aside to discuss this in advance.
- A **checklist** should be prepared in advance to ensure that all workshops follow the same format and all materials required are to hand.
- The Glór na nÓg Workshops are better suited to an **after-school activity**, as part of the after-schools club.
- Some additional work is needed on the workshops for the **younger age group**.
- A short 'Advocacy Team Report' has been included in this evaluation for the children who participated to provide them with **feedback**.

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