YOUNG SPEAKERS
– a method for listening to children
The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden 2011
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The Ombudsman for Children is a government agency tasked with representing children in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We hold regular dialogues with children to obtain knowledge of their living conditions and their opinions on current issues. We monitor and encourage the implementation of the Convention in Sweden’s municipalities, county councils/regions and government agencies. The Ombudsman for Children provides information, advocates and proposes changes in legislation and ordinances on issues affecting children’s and young people’s rights.

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The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden
PO Box 22106, SE-104 22 Stockholm, Sweden
Street address: Norr Mälarstrand 6
Telephone +46 8 692 29 50
Fax +46 8 654 62 77
info@barnombudsmannen.se
www.barnombudsmannen.se

Graphic design: Originalform, Lotta Vestersund
Illustrations: Caroline Roberts
Why should we listen to children?

Every day authorities take decisions that have a huge impact on the lives of children and young people without them having any say in their own situation. Investigations affecting children and young people are sometimes carried out without anyone consulting a single child. This can't be allowed to happen.

Children are the experts on what it is like to be young in Sweden today, and on their own lives. We are obliged to listen to them. And there's a lot we can learn from children and young people – if we will only listen.

Your decisions as an adult and decision-maker have an impact on a child's actual life. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), this imposes clear requirements on you. You must be aware of the conditions of the child’s upbringing, and you must know what rights children have. Children must not be discriminated against, they have a right to development, and the decisions you take must be in the best interests of the child.

The CRC also absolutely requires that children be allowed to participate and have a say in decisions that affect them. This right to have a say in their own affairs applies to children of all ages, and you as a decision-maker must take into account the child’s opinions, based on age and maturity. You must also look out for the best interests of the child. The principle of the best interests of the child is, among other things, written into the Swedish Social Services Act, the Swedish Aliens Act, the Swedish Children and Parents Code and the Swedish Naming Law.

Most people who work with children are aware of this. But it is a long step from here to actually applying the rights provided by the convention.

During 2010 my colleagues and I have had the privilege of meeting over 100 children and young people and listening to how they would like to see child social welfare improved in Sweden. We have done this by means of a method we call Young Speakers. The method originated at the ChangeFactory in Norway – an organisation with long experience of listening to children in vulnerable situations.

The children and young people we have worked with say that they really felt that they had been listened to. I regard this as proof that the method works and that it helps fulfil the child’s rights in accordance with the convention on the CRC.

Now we want to pass the method on to organisations that could benefit from it.

We hope that you will appreciate our methodological support in your continuing work with children and young people!

Fredrik Malmberg
Ombudsman for
Children in Sweden
Introduction

In your hand you hold a methodological support we call Young Speakers. We have produced this in order to inspire those of you who work with children – directly or indirectly – to listen to what children and young people themselves think about various issues. We want to pass on a new working method with a tool that extends beyond interviews or individual conversations.

The fundamental thought behind Young Speakers is that children are experts on their own situation and on that basis they can share experiences and views.

Through working with Young Speakers you gain important knowledge, information, ideas and viewpoints from children and young people themselves. A valuable contribution is made to the issue or investigation you are working on. This broadens the basis for any decision, which means that your decisions are better supported and of higher quality. It also makes it easier for you to perform impact analyses of intended decisions that affect children.

The core of the method is that you seriously listen to what children and young people have to say and that you let them have their say without interrupting them with your own values and opinions. This approach helps to create a situation of security and trust for the child. It allows him or her to transmit plentiful material to you with regard to knowledge and experience of the topic in question.

We are addressing people who work with children living in a vulnerable situation. Whether you work for a municipality, a county council, a region or a state authority, it is valuable to listen to the views and experiences of children and young people. All municipalities, county councils and regions, and most authorities, work with areas where children and young people form a part of the target group and are affected by the decisions that are taken.

At authority level this can be about the planning of new housing estates and roads. It can be crime prevention and work to improve community safety or the production of instructions and advice in various areas affecting children and young people.

In county councils and regions there are several services that affect young people directly or indirectly. Public transport, which is used a great deal by children, is one area where their experiences and views can provide a helpful input. Within the field of health care there is everything from child health care to hospital and outpatient care, child psychiatry and services for children with various disabilities.

In the municipalities there are a number of activities affecting children and young people on a daily basis, such as social services, school, child care, culture and leisure. Greater use should be made of their knowledge and ideas than is the case today.

This method may also be useful for those who work with children in other contexts and who need to listen to the experiences of children and young people.
Background

The government gave the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden the task of meeting, during 2010, children and young people currently being fostered or in residential care homes (HVB). The aim of this assignment was to report on the experiences of children and young people with regard to social care for children and young people.

Our assignment included reporting on deficiencies and good points they experience and what can be developed further. The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden would also support children and young people in putting forward their experiences and viewpoints to important decision-makers and players in the field.

The assignment also included identifying and trialling a method for collecting the experiences and viewpoints of children and young people. Subsequently, the method would be made available to anyone in authorities, municipalities and county councils who might need a method for listening to children in vulnerable situations.
Development of the method

Within the framework of Nordic cooperation, the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden has come across a method for listening to children and young people developed by the ChangeFactory in Norway. The originators of the method are Eva Dønnestad and Marit Sanner – both of whom have extensive experience of working on the issue of children’s participation and rights in different life situations through Save the Children in Norway.

We were very impressed by their way of listening to children in vulnerable situations and decided to adapt the method for Swedish circumstances. This was done on the basis of the experience gained by the ChangeFactory over the last ten years they have been using the method.

The method we introduce in this booklet is based on the experience gained by the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden through having met over 100 children and young people aged 3–23 years in 13 different districts in Sweden. The method is based on systematically listening to children and young people, and letting them have their say without putting obstacles in the way by expressing own views and values. We call this approach Young Speakers.

Young Speakers is based on children talking about things they themselves have experienced. The children should be regarded as experts on their own situation and should be accorded respect. The method is best suited to meeting children in a group, as the dynamic that occurs stimulates the participants both in the work using the tools and in subsequent conversations.

We have opted to describe the basic steps in the method. Some of it may feel a little superfluous in certain activities, but our task has been to develop a method that can be used by many different players working with children and young people in vulnerable situations.

You can read more about the original method in “Håndbok for forandrere – om verdighet i møte med de som vokser opp og de som vil vokse” (Guide for changers – on dignity in meetings with those who are growing up and those who want to grow) by Eva Dønnestad and Marit Sanner, published by Forandringsfabrikken Førlag, 2006 (ISBN 82-997 405-0-9).
Steps in Young Speakers

The Young Speakers method creates conditions for children and young people to shape and talk about their experiences. People who work with children and young people gain deeper knowledge about what is important to the children they meet.

We have divided Young and Forward into six steps, which are presented under the following headings:

1. Preparations
2. Information and contact with children and young people
3. Holding an information meeting
4. Planning the first work meeting
5. First work meeting
6. Second work meeting

1. Preparations

Once you have identified a subject where it is important to listen to children’s views, you need to set up a schedule for implementing Young Speakers. There are a number of basic points to consider and make decisions on.

• On what issue or issues should you consult children?
• Which children do you want to contact? Should they be of a particular age? What is a relevant and reasonable number?
• What is the aim of your meeting with the children? It is important that you are clear about your aim when you approach the children so that they understand how they can help in the work.
• If you meet children who live in a vulnerable situation you should have a plan for ensuring support for the child if required.
• How will the results be used? The children will expect you to have thought through the entire process, and they will want to know how their thoughts, reflections, views and experiences will be presented. You should be able to explain all this on initial contact.
• Is there a need for training among the staff who will be working with Young Speakers? Make sure that everyone learns the method and further develops any skills required to be able to perform the work.
• Which tool or tools should be used for the work and how should this be documented? For example, taking notes or making video or audio recordings.
• How should feedback to children and young people work? Changes often take a long time to achieve. It is therefore important for you to state how you will feed the results back to the children. They need to be given information on when and how this will take place.

To consider

It is important to set aside time for reflection during the preparation work so that you and your colleagues are familiar with the procedure. The method requires you to believe in it and to be able to show that you are really listening to the children.
The choice of issue and selection of those taking part should be based on the fact that children are experts on their own situation and that they have knowledge that cannot be gained in any way other than through listening to what they have to say.

**What the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden did**

We were given an assignment by the government to listen to children and young people in care. We had a year to carry out the assignment. Those were our conditions.

We decided to meet around 100 children and young people who were being fostered or were living in residential care homes (HVB). In order to gain a broad picture, we chose 13 districts scattered all over Sweden.

We decided that the experiences and opinions of the children and young people should be presented to those with authority over child social care – the Minister for Children and the Elderly, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare and the Swedish parliament’s Social Affairs Committee – when we make our annual report to the government.

We also produced a special pamphlet showing the work material of the children and young people by way of feedback to all those who contributed to the work.

We trained in a method developed by the ChangeFactory in Norway.

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**2. Information and contact with children and young people**

Getting in contact with children and young people makes a lot of demands on your time. Good, clear information on what the work is for can be crucial in getting the children to take part. It is equally important to provide information for those close to the children, who may make decisions regarding their participation.

- Consider how you will get in contact with children who have experience of what you want to investigate. In certain situations this will obviously be when meetings with children are part of day-to-day work. At other times it will be necessary to map out where you can contact children with experience and knowledge of the issue.

- Once you know what channels you want to use to reach the children, you need to think through how the information is to be passed on: by letter or through telephone contact or a combination of the two. A letter has the advantage that the recipient can access the information at any time and as often as he or she wants. A telephone call is good for checking what the recipient has grasped and for answering any questions.

- Gathering children together in order to listen to their views and experiences in different areas may require a guardian’s consent. Identify all adults who need to be contacted and who may need to approve the children’s participation.
These may be guardians, trustees, school staff members or staff at an institution.

- Adapt the information to the recipients. Information for children must be age-appropriate, brief and clear. Describe the aim of the work and what the results are to be used for. In the letter you should say whether or not the children will be able to be anonymous or not.

- Make sure the children get this information letter. Make a point of explaining how the recipient is to provide feedback. State clearly whether you will get back to them or whether the child needs to actively respond.

**To consider**

There may often be interest groups you can get help from in identifying and contacting children.

When you are planning the information meeting it is a good idea to have a check list of important things that you must remember to take up with the adults responsible for the child. For example, the need for an interpreter or special assistance for children with disabilities or any other support required for the child or young person to be able to take part in the information meeting.

**What the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden did**

Early in the work we conducted a judicial inquiry to find out what is appropriate when you meet children and young people in care. In our case we needed consent from guardians and/or relevant social workers.

We selected a number of residential care homes (HVB) with varying focus, both municipal and privately-run. Initially we contacted the principals by letter and telephone. To make contact with fostered children and young people, we requested the help of a few fostering organisations.

When we contacted the principals and foster parents, we told them about the aims of our assignment and how the work would proceed. We asked them to distribute information letters to the children and young people living there, and to ask them if they were interested in coming to an initial information meeting.

**As regards the authority of guardians**

*The Swedish Children and Parents Code ch. 6, 11 §*

The guardian has the right and obligation to make decisions on issues that affect the child’s personal affairs. The guardian shall therefore, as the child grows older and develops, increasingly take the child's views and wishes into account.
3. Holding the information meeting

The aim of information meetings is for the children and young people to gain an insight into what the work is about and to make contact with the people involved. Even though letters have been sent out, there will be many who have not read it or taken the information on board. This meeting lays the foundation for good cooperation. It is also the first opportunity we all have to get to know each other.

- Start with a round of self-introductions, where, for example, everyone gives their name and reveals something they like. See description on page 18.
- Explain what the aim of the work is and why the children’s experiences are important. Say who will have access to the information, and whether or not the children will be anonymous.
- Provide practical information about work meetings 1 and 2.
- Explain how the results will be fed back to the children and other relevant parties.
- Provide an opportunity to ask questions.
- Allow those children who already know they want to take part to register their interest. Anyone who wants more time to think it over will have to get back within a certain period. It is important that the children understand that they can withdraw their cooperation at any point.
- Hand out business cards with information on how and when the children can get in touch with you and your colleagues.

To consider

In certain situations it can be advantageous to meet the children without other adults being present. This gives them the opportunity to make their own decisions as to whether or not they are interested in taking part in the work.

Keep the meeting brief. Talk a little about what the work will involve but save discussions of the subject matter for your first work meeting.

If you have a statutory duty to report to social services you should tell the children this now.

What the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden did

We promised anonymity to the children and young people and promised that we would not report to the staff at the institution or foster parents anything that came out during the course of the work.

We explained that we were obliged to report to social services if we learned that any child was being mistreated.

We were careful to point out that we were there only to listen to the children and young people, and not to give our opinions as to what was good for them.

We handed out business cards with photographs, names and telephone numbers so that the children and young people could reach us with any questions.
The information meeting was a valuable step in the process that helped make future work easier. A trusting relationship between the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden’s staff and the participating children and young people was created through them being given several opportunities to test out whether or not they could rely on us adults.

4. Planning the first work meeting

Adapt the work meeting to the composition of the group and the age of the participants. The children should work in groups. According to the method, the optimum number is six to eight people. No age grouping is given but it is not appropriate to have too large an age range.

- Obtain any necessary consent for the children’s participation from guardians or other custodians.

- Determine a time for the meeting. It is important that this fit in with the children’s school and leisure activities. Allow at least four hours for each meeting.

- Book premises in a neutral venue – it allows the children to feel free. Prepare food and drink and energy-boosting snacks that suit everyone – preferably something a bit special to brighten up the day.

- Look at the need for transport for children and any accompanying adults. Book travel tickets if your employer will reimburse the participants’ travel expenses.

- Contact the children and give them all the information they need prior to the first work meeting.

- Check that there is complete insurance cover and supplement if necessary.

To consider

These preparations can be time-consuming. You need to allow time to telephone and send letters on several occasions in order to bring the meeting about. Be open to other ways of reaching the guardians; there may be circumstances that make them unaccustomed to written information.

If an adult accompanies the child to the venue, it may be useful to have prepared them so that they know what to expect. This adult cannot be present during the meeting as this may affect the child’s ability to talk freely.

If the meeting takes place during the daytime, it is important that you check with the adults responsible for the child that he or she has received permission to be absent from school.

What the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden did

The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden held most meetings in neutral premises near to the children’s and young people's institutions. There are many advantages to using a hotel or a conference centre. For example, you don’t need to interrupt the meeting to arrange lunch and short breaks. The children and young people appreciated being in a different environment and felt themselves to be special. We offered good food, soft drinks, fruit and sweets.
The practical format should be checked with the participating children and young people. In particular, what time and venue suits them best. Some children absolutely did not want to miss school, while others did not want to meet at the weekend, as that was the only time when they were able to meet their parents if they had been taken into care.

We have excellent experiences of holding work meetings two days in a row. The greatest benefit is that the children and young people retain their focus on the issue. They can complete tasks, get immediate feedback and move on with the work. You yourself also still have in mind what happened the previous day and can easily pick up on the topics that were important to the children.

5. The first work meeting

Before the first work meeting all practical issues must be dealt with. These include the venue, time, travel and the matter of guardians’ consent. You should have decided what tool or tools you are going to use, and what the programme will look like – including whether it is necessary to leave scope for flexibility.

- Get the premises ready and set out the work material. This gets your thoughts and creativity going. This also avoids confusion when it is time to start work. Furnish the room to make it suitable for the work tasks to be performed.
- Greet the children when they arrive at the premises. Try to say a few words to everyone so they feel welcome and so you can sense if anyone has something they want to say.
- Conduct a getting-to-know-you exercise by saying your name and something you like or something you don’t like. Suggested exercises can be found on page 18.
- Repeat the aim of the work and what the results will be used for.
- Say what will happen during the day and run through the practical details.
- Introduce the issue. It should be open but clear so that the children can understand what the work involves.
- Present the tool they will be working with to shape their message. On page 16 there are descriptions of the tools used by the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden.
- Create groups of three to four children. Allow the participants to work on their own. You should be there for support without influencing their message.
- If energy or concentration flags, do an exercise that boosts energy. Suggested exercises can be found on page 18.
- Reassemble everyone when the children feel they have finished. Use the visual results as the basis for a presentation. You lead the discussion and ask each group if they would like to tell the other children their message. Allow the children to talk freely about what they have created. Ask
follow-up questions if you want to know more or do not understand. Make sure there is plenty of time for everyone to present their message. Document the children’s reports.

- Be there in the moment. Listen! Do not interrupt and make sure everyone has the chance to speak. Put aside your values and preconceived ideas. Use your entire body language to show the children that you are actively listening. The children must feel that you think their opinions are a meaningful part of your work.

- Conclude the meeting by talking about the next meeting and what will happen at that. Tell the children how they can reach you if they have any thoughts or ideas they want to talk to you about before the next meeting.

**To consider**

All people are different, which has an impact on how well the tools work. As an adult, you are there to help the children progress without controlling their message.

Some may have trouble getting going. It can make things easier if they first think about what it is they want to say. For example, a feeling of powerlessness, stress or isolation. You may need to discuss this and help them be able to express this in the form of a picture or in some other way. Avoid steering their thoughts in a particular direction and do not provide too many examples.

Consider what material is needed for the first work meeting. For example, to make a photo collage you need a portable photo printer and extra photo paper, as photos will be needed to create the collage.

Think through the arrangements for the discussion of the results of the children’s work. If the presentations are to be documented in writing, it is necessary for an adult to take responsibility for this task. The person documenting the discussion does not take part in it.

Ask the children if you may make audio or video recordings. Always explain how the material will be handled and used. The way you listen and receive the children’s explanations is crucial for their willingness to share their experiences with you.

**What the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden did**

We opted to use the same tool – collage – in our three teams at the first work meeting, so that we could compare the results.

At the first meeting there were high expectations for what might happen – both from the children and young people taking part and from our side. We had prepared the structure of the meeting carefully so that everyone would feel secure. Then, in their work on the collages, the children and young people had total freedom to express themselves on the experiences, views, thoughts and feelings they wanted to get across about social care for children and young people.

We were well aware that the way we presented the work and our own attitudes regarding the value of the experiences of the children and young people were of crucial importance for the results.
As early as the first work meeting, the Young Speakers method exceeded all expectations. The children and young people expressed their appreciation spontaneously. Through the collage work and during subsequent discussions, the children voiced a number of different opinions concerning child social care.

6. The second work meeting

The second work meeting is used to explore a particular issue further. Start with a brief repetition of what came out of the first work meeting. Explain that the aim of this meeting is to develop the discussion further. Give the children the opportunity to mention anything they forgot to bring up or had not thought of at the first meeting.

You can discuss with the children how you will continue with the work. You can also decide in advance what tools you will offer the children to work with. What you decide on, alone or together, depends on factors such as the age of the children, the time available and the nature of the issues.

• The procedure is the same as for the first work meeting. Start with an introduction exercise if it has been some time since you met one another.

• New tools may be introduced that allow the children to further develop their explanations. See toolbox pages 16-19.

• Allow the children to work on their own with the various tools. You should be there for support without influencing their message.

• If energy or concentration flags, do an exercise that boosts energy. Suggested exercises can be found on page 18.

• Reassemble everyone when the children feel they have finished. Use the visual results as the basis for a presentation. You lead the discussion and ask each group if they would like to tell the other participants their message. Allow the children to talk freely about what they have created. Ask follow-up questions if you want to know more or do not understand. Make sure there is plenty of time for everyone to present their message. Document the children’s reports.

• Be there in the moment. Listen! Do not interrupt and make sure everyone has the chance to speak. Put aside your values and preconceived ideas. Use your entire body language to show the children that you are actively listening. The children must feel that you think their opinions are a meaningful part of your work.

• Allow time to conclude the work with the children. Go through what the results of the work will be used for. Explain to the children how they will be able to access the end result.

To consider

Describe how the results are to be used, who the material will be given to, and what you want the children’s contributions to lead to. Explain how feedback to the children will take place.
Concluding shared work is important for all parties involved. You must be clear about what will happen after the last work meeting.

**What the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden did**

At the second work meeting it was natural to continue to work in greater detail on the themes that came up at the first meeting. The children and young people were allowed to choose the method of expression they wanted to work on. Various tools were used by several groups in parallel. Drama, reality box and job advert were the most common tools.

In several cases the children and young people got onto sensitive issues of a private nature – often also very emotionally charged. When this happened, we chose to thank them for sharing their experiences, and then attempted to gently steer the conversation back to a more general level.

The reason for this was that the task of the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden was to express an opinion on child social care at a structural level – not to go into the details of people’s life stories. In other types of activities it may be pertinent to look more closely at an individual’s own situation.

We concluded by explaining how the results would be used and how feedback to the participants would take place. Many were interested in getting concrete material, while others were satisfied with having been able to talk about their experiences to people who listened to them. Everyone received two cinema tickets as a thank you gesture for their time, commitment and the valuable experiences they shared.
Toolbox

Here we introduce a few tools we used to get the children and young people to speak out and express their experiences. Inspiration is taken from the ChangeFactory in Norway.*

Collage

A collage is a large sheet of paper which the children can decorate by painting, putting up photos and sticking on pictures or text cut out of magazines. The collage can be supplemented with written text. The pictures help to get across what people are thinking and feeling, and can make this process easier than if they try to use their own words.

It is important that both positive and negative aspects of an issue are explored. In the interaction with the observer, thoughts and feelings are released, giving rise to exciting discussions.

Working with collage requires a certain degree of abstract thinking, which makes it more suitable for slightly older children.

Collect together all sorts of magazines with pictures that give the children an opportunity to reflect their thoughts through. It can be extremely effective if you are able to let the children illustrate the collage with photographs they take themselves. For that you need one digital camera per group (there should be no more than 3-4 children per camera) and a printer that can print out the pictures on the spot. The children can take pictures that they think describe what they want to get across: hope, feeling shut in, loneliness, confidence in the future – or whatever it may be.

Some children have direct ideas about how they should go about the work, while others require support to understand the task. To get the thought processes going you can ask everyone to write down some thoughts on post-it notes as a starting point.

Instead of starting with pictures you can get a child to write down the most important thing he or she wants to say – within the framework of the given topic – in the middle of the paper. From that word you move on and ask the child in question to explain the word and tell more. You build on this and then have a discussion.

Make sure you do not start to steer things too much when you guide the participants.

Reality box

The reality box is made from a shoe box or some other object that has an inside and an outside. The reality box can be used to talk about differences, for example, between what you display outwardly and what you actually feel inside. It can also be used to show what someone’s life situation seems like now and how you want it to be. Alternatively, what life is like now compared with what it was like previously.

Offer the children eye-catching material in silver, gold, glitter and colours in a variety of shades to cover the inside and outside of the box. When they have finished, listen to what the children have to tell you.

Here it helps to have good intuition and to be exact about where the children are in the process. It may awaken old and new feelings in the children, which means you must be there to support them in their choice of expression. As an adult you must have the courage to hear what they have to say.

* ChangeFactory. Håndbok for forandrere – om verdighet i møte med de som vokser opp og de som vil vokse (Guide for changers – on dignity in meetings with those who are growing up and those who want to grow) Dønnestad and Sanner 2006.
Mina fantastier

Den här gången kanske världen förstor av...
Introduction exercises

**For younger children:**
Children need to move quite often. With preschool-age children it works well to play games they like, play hockey and so on.

Card games and board games are also popular. The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden put together a Memory game using pictures concerning children's rights, which became an excellent lead into talking about these rights.

**Energy-boosting exercises**

Everyone says their first name and something he or she likes. This is a quick and easy way to bring out various aspects of the participants' characters without them getting stuck in a single role. In just a few minutes we are "the one who likes cats", "the one who plays football", "the one who goes to the gym" or "the one who prefers video games" and straight away there is a topic of conversation. If you as discussion leader start off, it is important not to set the bar too high. It's best to say something simple and everyday in nature so the children will dare to say what they like.

One variant of this exercise is to say your first name and a characteristic that starts with the same letter or add a daft movement that everyone has to mimic when they say "Hi Anna!" Preferably a whole-body movement.

**For older children:**
A simple exercise is for all participants to stand in a circle and massage the shoulders of the person in front of them. After a short while everyone turns and massages someone else’s shoulders.

Another exercise is to set chairs out in a circle. There should be one fewer chairs than the number of participants. One person stands in the middle and calls out something to encourage everyone to change places. This could be, for example, "everyone who likes pizza change place!" The person who ends up without a chair stands in the middle and calls out a new statement.
**Job advert**

The job advert can be used to give the children the opportunity to formulate what they demand and would like from adults who work with children and young people. It is designed as a requirement specification for people who encounter children in various activities. It may concern the training and characteristics required to be able to do the job well. The advert could, for example, be used to describe what positive treatment can be like and who is suitable for a particular job.

Give the children a lot of freedom to think and formulate their own opinions and perceptions regarding what a job advert should say. Avoid setting up any framework that restricts the children's creativity.

**Dramatisation**

Role-play is one way to illustrate various situations. In dramatising a situation the children are able to assume different roles and act out a situation that is difficult to describe with words only. The children, on their own or with support, can work on the topic they want to illustrate, formulate the content and create the scenes.

Through role-play the children can get their experiences across, and these experiences then form the basis for discussion together with the other participants in the group. To first act out how a particular situation can go – for example, a meeting with a social worker – and then how they would like it to have gone can provide constructive proposals for solutions.

Listen to what the children want to do. Some will want to write the script, others want to direct or hold the camera. There is a role for everyone. Your responsibility is to ensure that everyone feels comfortable.

The dramatisation can also be filmed and shown on other occasions. If you want to use the film on a later occasion, you need to ask the children and their guardians for their permission.
This material is based on the experiences the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden gained through its work with the Young Speakers method. For us the meeting with the children provided a number of highlights and illustrations in real terms of what is reasonable in the requirements in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) when it comes to children being able to speak out, be listened to, and be met with respect.

We hope that our experiences may serve as a support and inspiration to anyone meeting children and young people in their work.

In the 2010 report of the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden you can read about how the children and young people who took part in Young Speakers describe their situation and their experiences of being fostered or being in a residential care home (HVB).