



ACCOUNTABILITY TO CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

A Framework

This document provides guidance on accountability to children & young people, including the accountability framework co-produced with children & young people from Our Voices Matter.



RESPECT FOR CHILDRENS RIGHTS !!



Why Accountability to Children & Young People?



Protection

Children & young people's rights and protection are at risk when people and organisations are not accountable to them



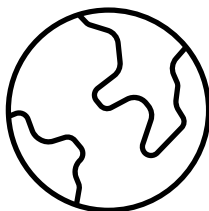
Power

Children & young people have the least power to hold powerful stakeholders who heavily impact their lives to account



A better future

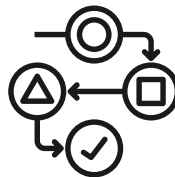
Outcomes for children & young people can be improved by ensuring services are more child-centred & aligned with the actual needs and lived experiences of children & young people



Article 12 Convention on the Rights of the Child:

All children have the right to be heard and taken seriously

Methodology



The accountability framework was developed out of a two-year UKRI and Fraxinus Trust funded Knowledge Transfer Partnership between the University of Leeds and Hope and Homes for Children (HHC) from 2025-2026. The project sought to develop an understanding of accountability to children & young people based on care-experienced children & young people's perspective.

We did this through a series of participatory workshops in Rwanda and South Africa with 50 care-experienced children & young people aged 11-18 years who are part of HHC's Our Voices Matter programme. This was accompanied by skills building and validation sessions with the young participants.

The Accountability Framework co-produced with project participants was then compared against 5 years of data on what all other OVM programmes in HHC country teams said. We found that the children & young people HHC work with have made consistent asks, and feel confident in the content of the accountability framework.



Defining Accountability to Children & Young People

For an organisation to be accountable to children & young people:



1. Children & young people have **safe and meaningful space to participate** as partners in decision-making and problem solving about issues that affect their lives



2. The **responsibilities** that organisations, and those working and for organisations, have to children & young people **are explicit, resourced and actively upheld**



3. Organisations, and those working for organisations, provide **transparent access to information** on successes, challenges and failures in responsibilities to children & young people



4. **Children & young people influence** decision-making and problem solving and are informed about the impact of their participation



5. There are **appropriate and viable responses**, protections, and redress when responsibilities to children & young people are not fulfilled

Principles of Accountability

There are 6 cross-cutting principles that apply to all dimensions of the definition of accountability to children & young people.

1

Rights-based

Children's rights and best interests come first

2

Safe

All engagement with children & young people must be trauma-informed, prioritise emotional & physical safety, and prevent further harm

3

Power-aware

Accountability is not something that is done *to* children & young people, but relies on sharing power with them

4

Inclusive

Accountability must be accessible to *all* children & young people

5

Institutionally supported

Sustained political & institutional commitment, governance arrangements and resources to enable accountability

6

Invested in

Accountability requires investment in the participation of children & young people

The Accountability to Children & Young People Framework

The Accountability framework has 5 goals and their corresponding targets and indicators to support operationalisation and implementation of the framework. The following pages will provide more detail on these elements.

This framework should be considered a *live* document, subject to additions as the children & young people you work with gain more confidence, skills and influence.



Goal 1: Children & young people are meaningful partners in decision-making & problem solving on issues that affect their lives



Goal 2: Responsibilities around accountability are explicit, owned & linked to action



Goal 3: Organisations are transparent & provide active feedback to children & young people



Goal 4: Children & young people exercise agency by influencing decision-making & problem solving



Goal 5: There are appropriate & viable responses to mistakes or failures of adults to perform responsibilities to children & young people



Goal 1: Children & young people are meaningful partners in decision-making & problem solving on issues that affect their lives

Indicators

Target 1: All children & young people participate in decisions that affect their lives

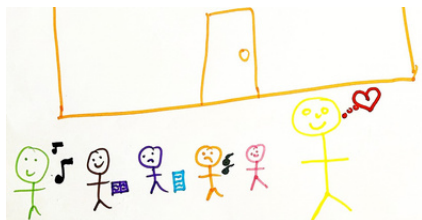
1. All children & young people are partners in problem solving designed to understand, identify and address the effects and causes of challenges children & young people face.
2. Children & young people have space to freely and openly participate in decisions that affect their lives.
3. Children & young people are at the centre of designing interventions that affect their lives.



PARTICIPATION



Goal 1



Target 2: Organisations support safe and meaningful space for children & young people's participation

Target 3: Children & young people's participation is appropriately resourced

Indicators

4. Sufficient time and space is made for children & young people's inclusive participation in decision-making.
5. Children & young people regularly have space to individually share ideas on the issues they face with trusted trauma-informed adults and to collectively share ideas with each other in face-to-face meetings.
6. Young people have opportunities for meaningful engagement in partnership with the organisation at national and international levels.
7. There is a clear benefit to children & young people for their participation that is appropriate to their preferences and individual development.
8. There is an accessible platform for children & young people to raise safeguarding concerns, needs and ideas with decision-makers about issues that affect their lives.
9. Staff are vetted for prior safeguarding and child protection concerns so no adult at risk to children & young people works for the organisation.
10. Appropriate structures and training are in place, so responsibility holders, especially leaders, are power aware and able to listen to children & young people's voices.
11. Appropriate resources are allocated to support the safe, inclusive and meaningful participation of all children & young people, without discrimination, in decision-making about issues that affect their lives.
12. Accessible and inclusive information and learning is provided to support children & young people's participation in decision-making about issues that affect their lives.



Goal 2: Responsibilities around accountability are explicit, owned & linked to action

Indicators

Target 4: Responsibilities to children & young people are clearly defined and assigned

13. People who impact decisions in children & young people's lives are clearly informed about the responsibilities they have to children & young people, especially for safeguarding and child protection.
14. Responsibilities to children & young people are clearly linked to the actions that should be taken.

Target 5: Responsibilities around accountability are clearly known

15. All children & young people involved in a programme are informed about their rights, are aware of their personal responsibilities and the responsibilities that relevant people and organisations have to them.
16. All Individuals whose work affects children & young people, receive regular training on rights and responsibilities in relation to children & young people.
17. Organisations, and especially leaders, raise awareness of accountability to children & young people both internally and with external stakeholders.





Goal 2

Indicators

Target 6: People and organisations whose work affects children & young people are committed to fulfilling their responsibilities to children & young people

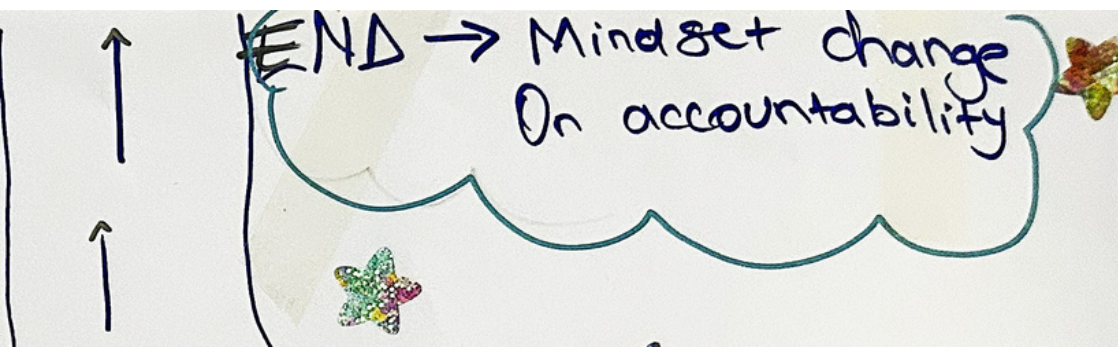
18. Individuals whose work affects children & young people, demonstrate clear commitments to fulfilling their responsibilities to children & young people.

Target 7: Organisations have capacity to implement responsibilities to children & young people

19. Sufficient resources are in place to support fulfilment of responsibilities.

20. People have the capacity to fulfil their responsibilities to children & young people.

21. Children & young people are involved in building capacity of the organisation, and children & young people benefit from providing this support.





Goal 3: Organisations are transparent & provide active feedback to children & young people

Indicators

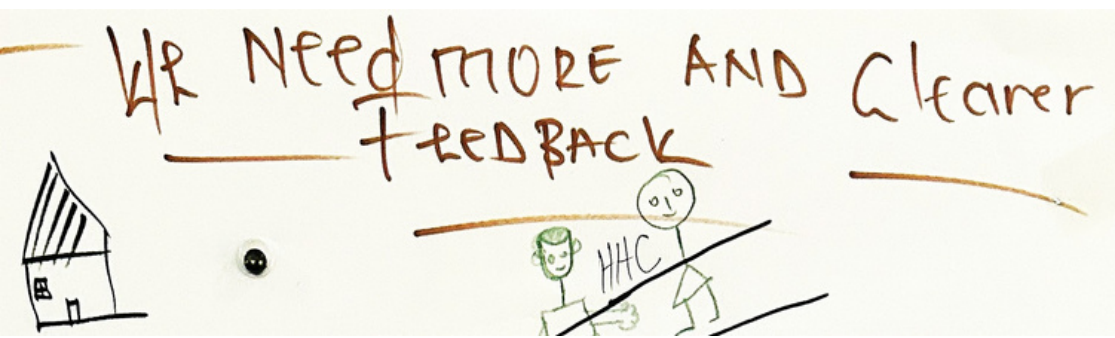
Target 8: Organisations and individuals are transparent on how they performed their responsibilities to children & young people

22. The organisation transparently communicates, including to children & young people, how staff and the organisation have or have not performed their responsibilities to children & young people.

Target 9: The impact of decisions and actions is clearly communicated to children & young people in a timely manner

23. Those holding responsibilities communicate to children & young people about why decisions were made and why certain actions were taken.

24. Responsibility holders are transparent and communicate with children & young people about the impact of decisions and actions on them.





Goal 4: Children & young people exercise agency by influencing decision-making & problem solving

Indicators

Target 10: Children & young people's active participation in decision-making and problem solving directly influences decisions made and actions taken

Target 11: Children & young people understand how their participation shapes decisions and actions

25. Organisations whose work affects children & young people can demonstrate how children & young people's meaningful participation has directly influenced decision-making and actions taken.
26. Young people involved in an organisation's youth network are leaders of and have ownership over the network, its priorities and are able to set the agenda on their participation.
27. Before actions are taken, children & young people are informed about the implementation process and how their views, concerns and preferences will translate into actions.
28. Responsibilityholders clearly communicate with children & young people about how their views, concerns and preferences have influenced decisions and actions.
29. There is a clear timeline for providing updates on progress and concerns to children & young people.



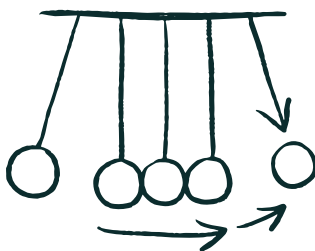


Goal 5: There are appropriate & viable responses to mistakes or failures of adults to perform responsibilities to children & young people

Indicators

Target 12: The organisation responds appropriately to mistakes or failures to realise accountability to children & young people

- 30. The organisation establishes clear and appropriate responses to mistakes or failures affecting safeguarding and the best interests of the child or young person.
- 31. People are clearly informed about the consequences on them and on children & young people of not fulfilling their responsibilities.



Target 13: There are clear child & young person-centred responses to mistakes or failures to realise accountability to children & young people

- 32. Children & young people are at the centre of re-designing interventions when responsibilities are not fulfilled or when mistakes are made.
- 33. Organisations have processes for supporting redress for children & young people.

