



CENTRE FOR
CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS



Mapping Children's Involvement in Decision-Making Toolkit

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 Please do not print the whole document – only print what you need.

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Introduction

Children's right to participate in decision-making is increasingly well established and there are many guides and toolkits which provide advice on how to carry out meaningful child participation. However, we rarely begin by asking children to identify the decisions that they think affect them and where they would like to have more or less say. This is in spite of the fact that this is critical first step for meaningful and voluntary participation. This toolkit aims to fill this gap in the practice literature by providing adult facilitators with a set of tools, developed with children and young people, that can be used and adapted to find out which issues children think affect them most in all aspects of their lives; the extent to which they are involved in those decisions; and what they would like to change in terms of their own level of involvement.

The tools were developed to support a report on the concept of 'evolving capacities' which is core to an understanding of Article 5 of the UNCRC. In 2005, Gerison Lansdown wrote [a landmark paper](#) on the topic for UNICEF Innocenti. Twenty years later, this report is being updated to take account of the many developments in children's lives as well as understanding of their capacities. The revised paper will, for the first time, be informed by children's views and experiences of which decisions that affect them and the extent to which they think they are /should be involved. The tools in this guide were created to support that study. In line with the child-rights based approach to research developed by the Centre for Children's Rights at Queen's, we worked with a child and youth advisory group - the CAYAB from the Child and Youth Friendly Governance Project - to develop the methods.

The decision-making wheels, presented below, were used in consultations with 154 children in 17 countries. A list of participating organisations is in Appendix 1. This toolkit has been informed by the learning and reflections from this process and we are deeply grateful to the organisations and children who took part.

Resources

You will need:

- Ideally 2 facilitators (1 to introduce activities, 1 to take notes & record children's responses);
- printed or digital copies of the decision wheel exemplar (Tool 1B) (1 per group) and blank templates (1 per child) (Tool 1C);
- Informed and ongoing consent from all participants (and their parents/guardians if necessary) (please follow your standard procedures).

If you are meeting your group in-person, you might also want to have:

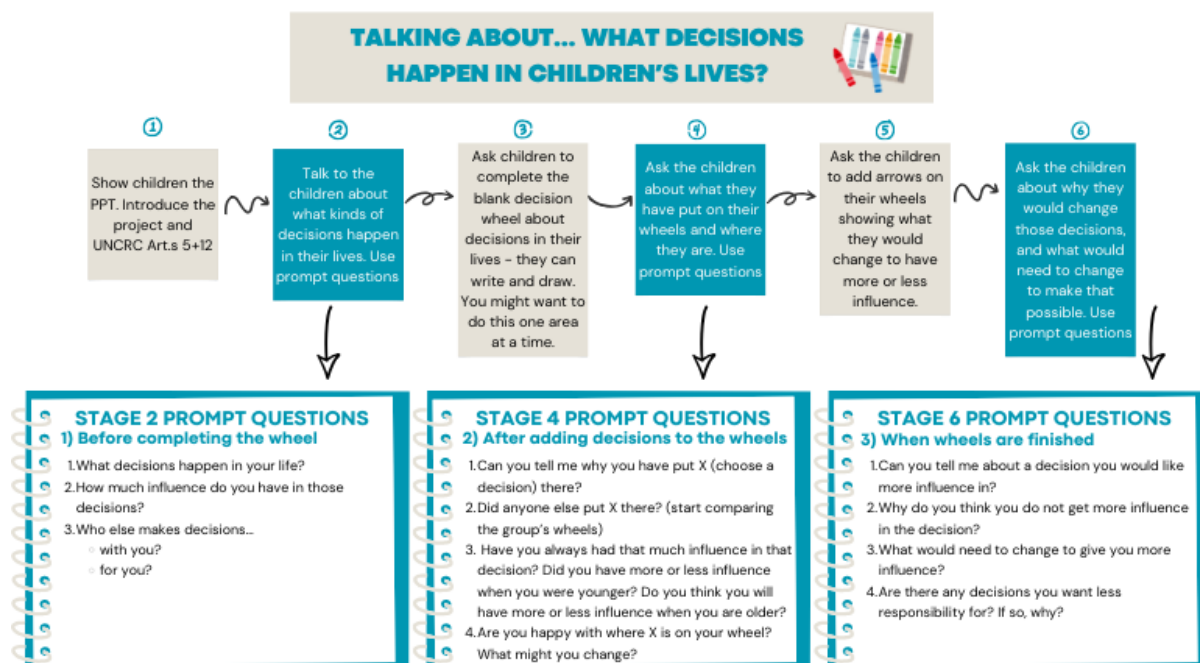
- some paper, pencils and coloured pencils;
- printed copies of the decisions wheel instructions ppt (Tool 1D) and/or a projector/computer monitor to display it digitally

How to use the mapping tools

The following is our suggested instructions, but please adapt as you see fit.

When we created the original decision-making tools, we also sent the facilitators an example of what a completed wheel might look like (Tool 1A). Please **do not show the full example to the children**, as it might influence their own wheels. Instead, we have a blank wheel (Tool 1B) for the children.

There is also a powerpoint presentation (Tool 1D) that you can use to explain to the children how to complete their own wheel (blank version in Tool 1C).



You may choose to have breaks between stages or carry on if the group are engaged and happy to continue. Take your lead from the group, you are best placed to know how they are working together.

When we created the decision wheels, the CYP-RAG helped to design a decision wheel with types of decisions they thought would likely affect many children, but these might not be the same for the children you work with (Tools 1A-1C). Please feel free to adapt the tools to your context. We have provided some examples (Tools 2A-2D) based on how children and young people responded during the study, such as on education or while working online or using creative approaches. Again, these should not be exhaustive examples, and you should prioritise what works in your groups.

Tools

Original Decision Wheels (1A, 1B & 1C)

Tool 1A: Original Decision-Wheel Exemplar Facilitator's Version

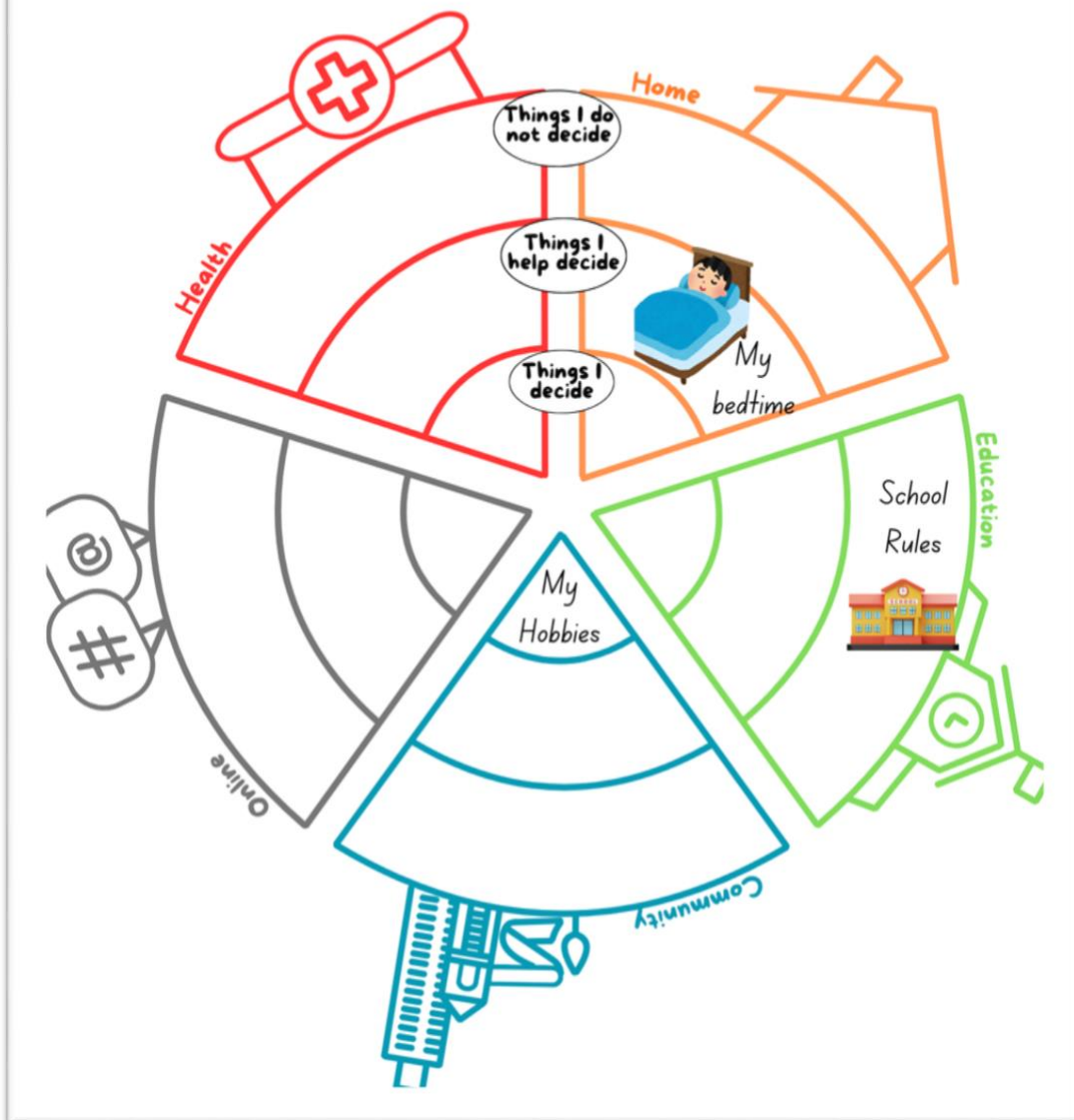
We have included a full version of a completed wheel, for you to see what this might look like when finished. Please do not show this to the children to avoid influencing what they add to their decision wheels.



Tool 1B: Original Decision-Wheel Exemplar Children's Version

Please use this one to show to the children as a prompt to show how different decisions fit into each area, and the level of control. You can print as many as you think you need, or this is included in the PPT: "Decision-Wheel Instructions For Children."

Focus Group Example Decision Wheel

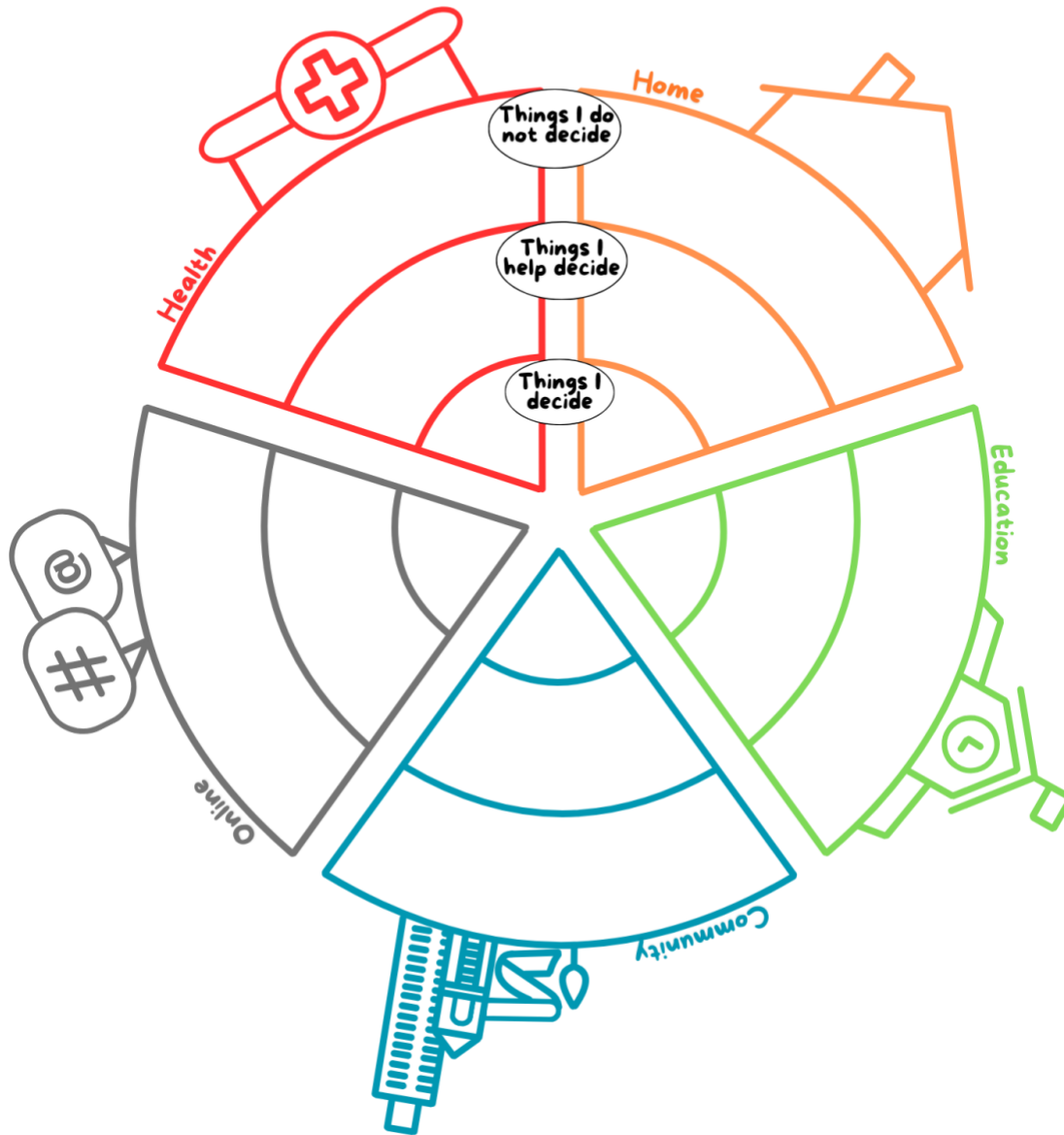


Tool 1C: Original Decision-Wheel Template Hand Out

You can print one for each child. If you do not have access to a printer, you could get the children to draw it on a piece of paper.


My Decision Wheel








Write and draw about decisions in your life



Tool 1D: Original Instructional PPT

This PPT was co-designed with the CAYAB to help support facilitators and children/young people through the stages of using the decision wheel. You can present the slides to the children and young people or print them if these are helpful. The slides follow the stages of the decision wheel activity.

1	 <div style="background-color: #00A0C0; color: white; padding: 20px; text-align: center;"> <h3>Evolving Capacities Focus Groups</h3> </div> 	2	<div style="background-color: #76B82A; color: white; padding: 5px;">What is this research about?</div> <p>This research is about how children are involved in decision-making. We want to know how you feel about the decisions in your life, and if they change as you grow up. We also want to understand if you feel the amount of involvement is 'right' for you.</p>
3	<div style="background-color: #00A0C0; color: white; padding: 5px;">Which rights is this research about?</div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; gap: 10px;"> <div>  <p>5. Family guidance as children develop Governments should let families and communities guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights in the best way. The more children grow, the less guidance they will need.</p> </div> <div>  <p>12. Respect for children's views Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.</p> </div> </div> <p style="font-size: small; text-align: center;">UNICEF (2016) The United Nations Convention On The Rights Of The Child - The Children's Version</p>	4	<div style="background-color: #FFD700; color: white; padding: 5px;">What does the research involve?</div>  <p>We want you to tell us about decisions in your life through drawing, writing and talking</p>
5	 <div style="background-color: #00A0C0; color: white; padding: 20px; text-align: center;"> <h3>Decision Wheel Task</h3> <p>Focus Groups: Task 3 Evolving Capacities Research</p> </div> 	6	 <div style="background-color: black; color: white; padding: 10px;"> <p>What are decisions? A decision is when someone has to pick what to do.</p> </div>
7	<div style="background-color: #00A0C0; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin-bottom: 20px;"></div>  <p>Together, talk about some of the decisions that are made in your life</p>	8	<div style="background-color: #FF8C00; color: white; padding: 5px;">What decisions are made about your...</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center; margin-top: 20px;">   </div>

9	<p>What decisions are made about your...</p>  <p>education</p>	10	<p>What decisions are made about your...</p>  <p>health</p>
11	<p>What decisions are made about your...</p>  <p>community</p>	12	<p>What decisions are made about what you do online...</p>  <p>online</p>
13	<p>How involved are you in decisions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Do adults make decisions for you? •Do you help adults make decisions? •Do you make decisions on your own? 	14	<p>Please tell us about some of the decisions in your life? In a moment, write or draw on your wheel</p> 
15	<p>Before you make your wheel, think about which part of the wheel you are going to put decisions in</p>  <p>education home online community health</p>	16	<p>Where will you put them on the wheel? Do you decide? Yes or no? Do you help decide? Yes or no?</p> 

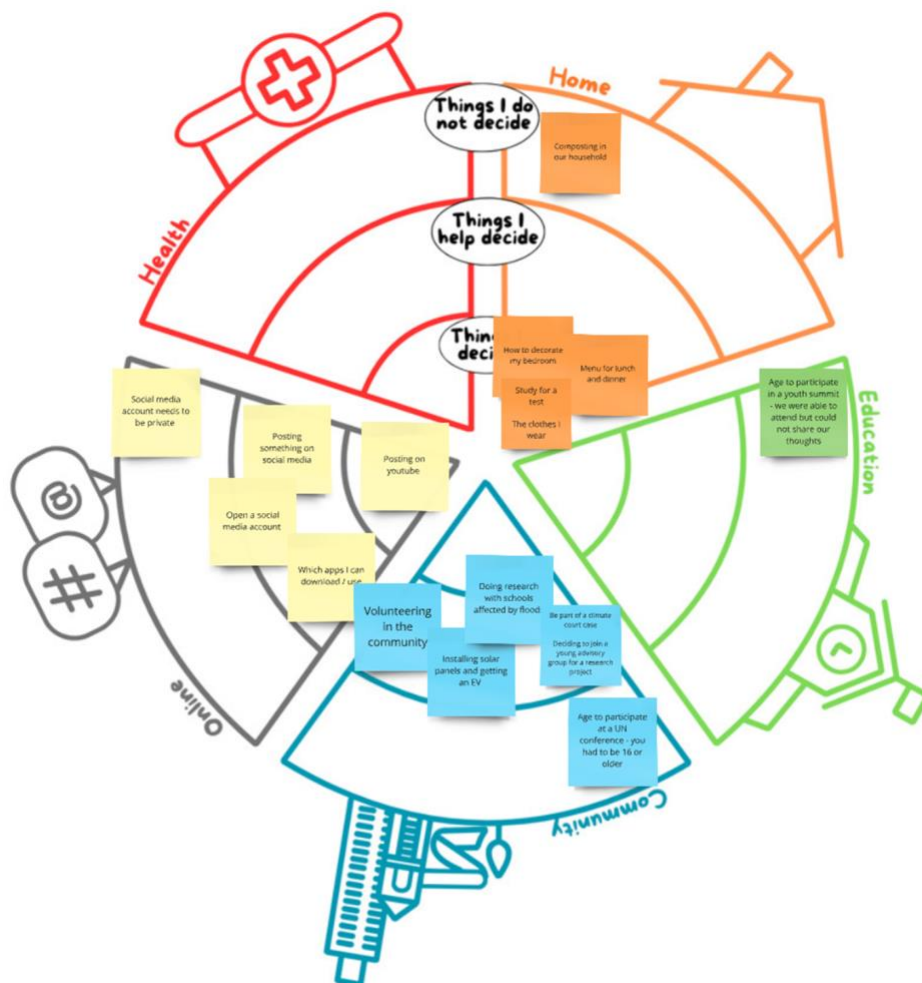
Alternative Examples (2A, 2B, 2C & 2D)

These examples have been created based on the data we received from children who participated in the Evolving Capacities study in Spring of 2025.

Tool 2A: Working with groups online

Some groups of children met remotely. For example, the Young Advisory Team who are part of the Youth Climate Justice Project at University College Cork, completed the tools online. The adult facilitator shared their screen and added 'digital' sticky notes to a virtual version of the wheel as ideas were suggested by children in their group.

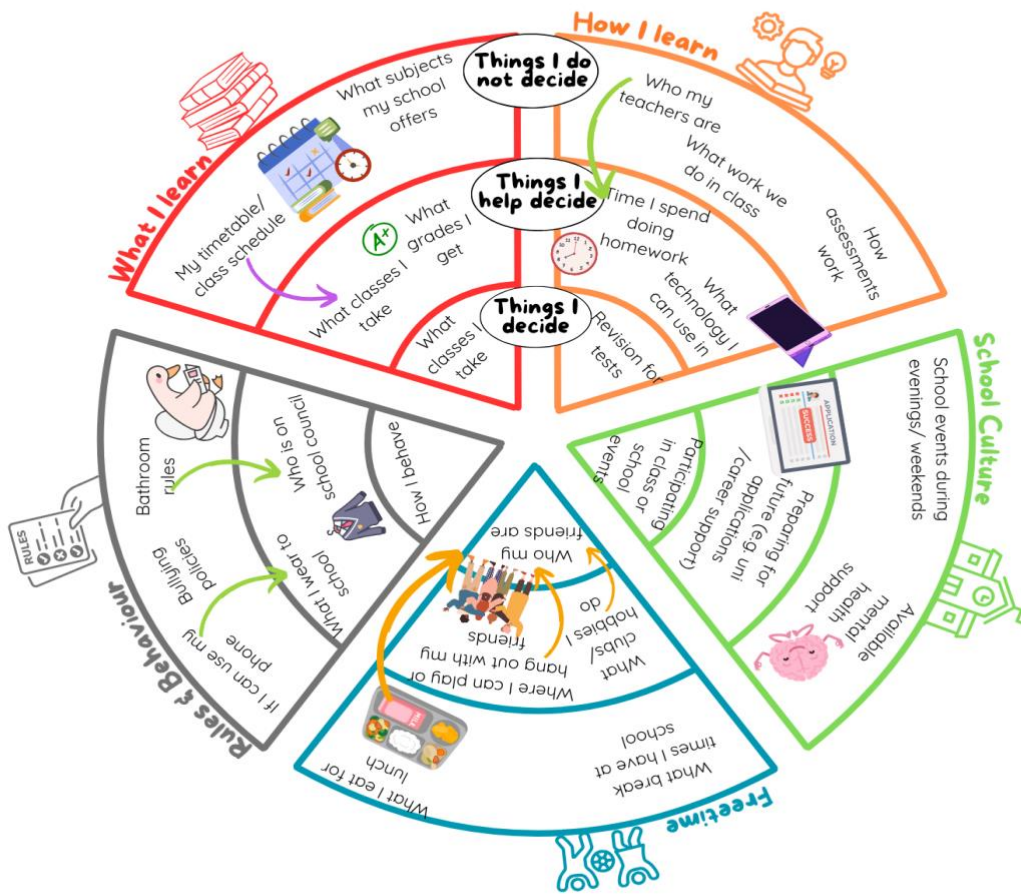
Alternatively, you could upload the wheel online to platforms like Canva, Mural or Miro, which allows the children to add their own sticky notes to a shared version of the wheel. If the children would rather do an individual wheel, they could also use text boxes on a document.



Tool 2B: Working on specific themes (e.g. education)

This is an example of one thematic wheel created using examples given by participants in the original Evolving Capacities study. We imagined this wheel to be used in schools, but it can easily be adapted for other uses. A blank version of the wheel without any theme can be found below in Tool 2C.

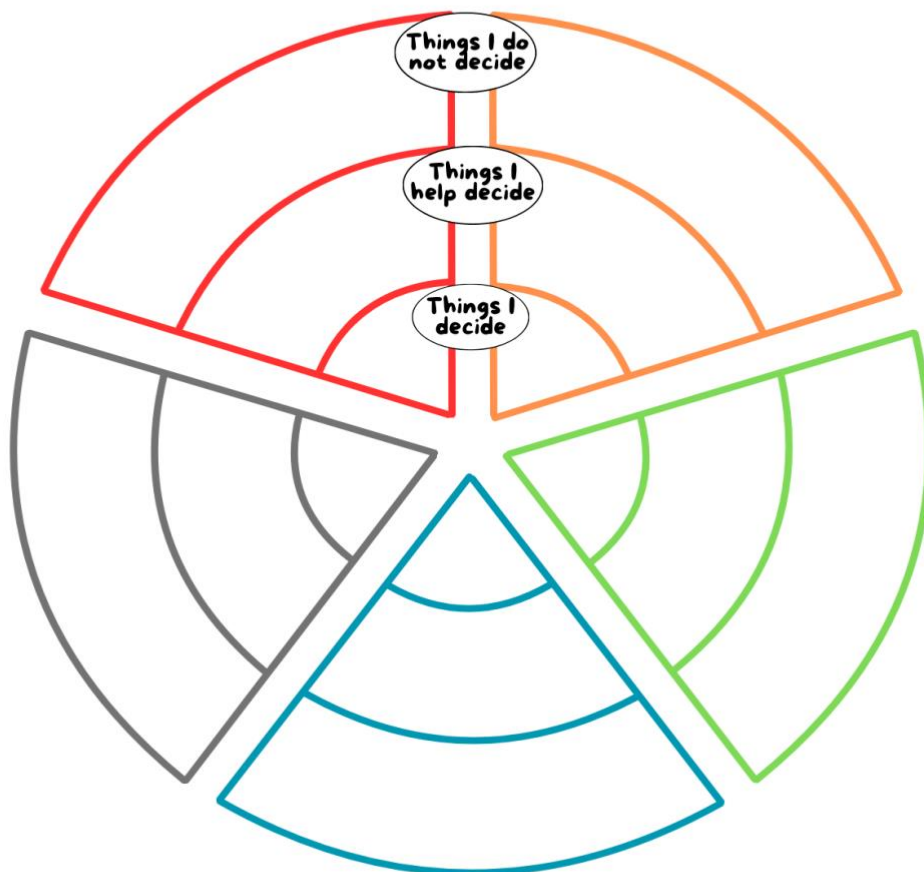
Education Decision Wheel



Tool 2C: Blank Wheel – no theme

This version is blank to allow you to create your own theming, add your own headings or talk with the children in your group about what themes are important to them.

My Decision Wheel



Tool 2D: Creative Approaches

Following the research for the Evolving Capacities study, the group of children and young people working with Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland repeated the activity and adapted their individual decision wheels to create a group wheel. They taped a giant wheel onto the floor and used sticky notes and beanbags to mark decisions. They completed a single collective wheel together, adding individual comments and deciding as a group where they should be moved to.

