

Chapter 12

The Inclusion of Children in Public Enquiries on Violence, Health and Welfare: The Example of Sweden

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Abstract

Swedish society has systematically worked to improve children's health and well-being since the early twentieth century and is considered a leading figure globally in battling violence against children. Awareness of violence against children and its detrimental effects on development and health is generally high in Sweden. Violence is also broadly recognised as a violation of human rights. A ban on corporal punishment was enacted in 1948 in social childcare institutions, in 1958 in schools, and in 1979 at home. The more recent landmark was the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, established as law on 1 January 2020. In line with convention's Article 12, stating that a child has the right to express their views in all matters affecting them, more attention to child participation has been paid since 2020. This chapter provides several recent examples of strategic measures that have been used to enhance child participation in governmental assignments and enquiries and state-funded research. We discuss the examples considering the United Nations convention and child participation methods and pinpoint opportunities and obstacles to further develop and consolidate child participation as a norm in publicly funded societal activities.

Keywords: Child participation; strategic measures; public enquiry; research funding; governmental guidelines; violence

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Introduction

Sweden generally has a high awareness of violence against children and its detrimental effects on development, health, academic performance and social relationships. Despite this, in the most recent national survey, 40% of school-age children reported that an adult had abused them in or outside the home (Jernbro et al., 2023). Similar results have been obtained in other recent studies, showing that one in four children has experienced sexual harassment and abuse during their lifetime (Svedin et al., 2021). The prevalence of violence against children seems high, considering the decades of work with child protection. It is, however, generally assumed only to be the tip of the iceberg, mainly because national prevalence studies on children younger than school age, disabled children and other vulnerable groups (e.g. refugees) are lacking.

Discourses on notions of children, their position and agency in society, violence against children and what is considered harmful to children have changed over time in Sweden. From the end of the nineteenth century, significant ideological, political, economic, social and cultural efforts have taken place while developing the Swedish welfare state. Violence is also broadly recognised as a violation of human rights, and society has, over time, invested substantial financial resources to ensure children's right to protection and support regarding exposure to violence (Littmarck, 2017; Sandin, 2018). During the 1990s, childhood sociological research also contributed with new perspectives on children and childhood. Accordingly, children are seen as competent actors in relation to the world around them (James & Prout, 2003). This perspective has been particularly important in the research field of men's violence against women, where the child's experience of violence has become an important part of understanding violence in the family (Edleson, 1999).

In Sweden, the ban on corporal punishment was enacted in 1948 in social childcare institutions, in 1958 in schools and in 1979 at home (Sandin, 2014). New legislation to criminalise witnessed violence in close relationships went into effect on 1 July 2021. In addition, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989) was enacted as law on 1 January 2020. The incorporation of the CRC into Swedish legislation gathered the human rights concerning children in one act, making it clear that the CRC's articles must be interpreted alongside one another. It has highlighted that other laws, such as the provisions of the Children and Parents Code, the Aliens Act, the Education Act, the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments and the Social Services Act in Sweden, must be interpreted based on the CRC.

Child participatory approaches in Sweden are often motivated by the CRC; thus, legislation can be considered one way to bring child participation into the mainstream (Fig. 12.1). Another strategic driver to strengthen child participation is clear governmental instructions to public-sector authorities. With these steering documents, child participation in the public sector can become mainstream. This

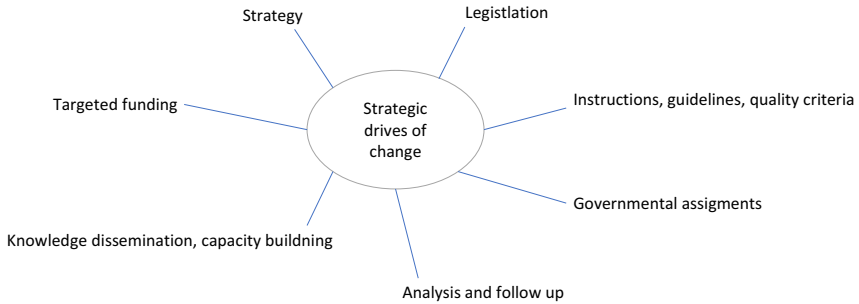


Fig. 12.1. Strategic Drivers to Foster Child Participation in Society.

can be augmented with guidelines and established quality criteria that make child participation a standard in public governance. One straightforward way to foster the child participatory approach is to include it explicitly in governmental assignments and general state enquiries. Several examples are given later in this chapter. Analytic work and follow-up of the child participatory approach in the public sector, including initiatives to combat violence and its negative consequences, are also ways to drive change in public governance, norms and values. This can be done via academic research or by giving specific governmental assignments. Data from these studies can subsequently be used to motivate further actions needed to mainstream child participation.

Information about the CRC and knowledge of child participatory approaches among professionals and those responsible for child services is a fundamental driver of change. Capacity building can be done by different means, such as providing theoretical training and practical tools to support professionals. In many cases, a pilot project is an excellent way to test how to increase competence. Knowledge about a child's rights and participatory approaches can be included in all relevant university education curricula at different cycles. Sufficient resource allocation and targeted funding can support capacity-building activities to foster change, especially during the early steps of mainstreaming.

Finally, national strategies are one instrument to mainstream child participation and implement children's rights-based approaches. Incorporating these issues in strategic and action plans enables work in different sectors and settings simultaneously for a more extended period. An action plan can include these strategic drivers, and follow-up of national strategies can consist of a separate analysis of the extent of child participatory approaches in public governance.

This chapter provides several examples of child participation in Swedish public agencies working on children's rights, violence against children, health and welfare. We discuss the examples considering the CRC and pinpoint opportunities to further develop and consolidate child inclusion as a norm in publicly funded societal activities. Also, we discuss observed obstacles and pitfalls.

Fostering Child Participation Among Public-Sector Authorities: Work Done by the Ombudsman for Children and Barnafriid as Examples

In Sweden, several government agencies work to combat violence against children by applying child participatory approaches. The Ombudsman for Children has the responsibility of promoting and advancing children's rights and interests in Sweden based on the CRC ([Barnombudsmannen, 2021a](#)). The Ombudsman for Children submits an annual report to the government, including recommendations for improvements, advocating for children and raising public awareness of children's rights. Children and young people are involved via interviews, focus groups, polls and meetings, and their voices are presented in different reports. The latest annual report, among others, recommended implementing systematic participation work in schools and municipalities ([Barnombudsmannen, 2022](#)). Input from children to this report was collected by interviewing 250 children and young people between the ages of 6 and 15 on possibilities to participate and influence decisions in schools. Also, a roundtable discussion was conducted with other relevant actors, including major national authorities and children's rights organisations. The Ombudsman for Children has also paved the way for child participation by involving children in several separate governmental assignments, as explained later.

The National Competence Centre Barnafriid was established in 2015 and is located at Linköping University, Sweden ([Regeringskansliet, 2015](#)). In collaboration with other relevant actors, the national centre is expected to identify needs for knowledge, collect and analyse existing expertise and research on violence against children and produce training and information materials. Furthermore, it should initiate or carry out joint interprofessional training and courses as much as possible in web-based form, create links between research and practice, facilitate increased coordination and promote networks for the exchange of knowledge between relevant principals, researchers, practitioners and organisations in civil society, both nationally and internationally. Finally, Barnafriid is expected to identify essential development areas and report these annually to the government. The instruction states that children's views and experiences must be made visible and considered in work appropriately, to the extent they are relevant. Differences in vulnerability between girls and boys should be noted.

Barnafriid has disseminated knowledge of the CRC and child participation, among others, via the digital Basprogram Barnafriid, which is a national reference education programme on violence against children ([Barnafriid, 2020](#)). The education is used in several first-cycle university programmes, especially those with a mandatory quality target on men's violence against women and violence in close relationships, including violence against children ([Münger et al., 2021](#)). Professionals also use the training individually and as a group in many workplaces covering different societal sectors.

As part of writing an annual report to the government on urgent matters in the violence against children field, [Barnafriid \(2022\)](#) involved children in the work.

Voices of young people were collected through a workshop with 14 high school students between the ages of 15 and 18. The participants had mixed nationalities, and the workshop was held in English to be inclusive. The workshop was conducted for a full day with two representatives from Barnafrið, who led the workshop and supported the students throughout the work. The child participatory workshop was organised using the Barnafrið child participation model, explained in detail in Chapter 7.

The young people discussed in various groups how violence appears in society today and the sort of violence to which children and young people have a higher risk of being exposed. Their thoughts about the risk of being exposed to violence as a young person developed into preventive measures, such as how to detect violence and what support from society may be needed following experiences of violence. The collected material was analysed with qualitative content analysis (Lundman & Hällgren Graneheim, 2008). The young people who participated in this workshop highlighted the need to draw attention to violence in, for example, school environments, domestic settings and online and to be aware of how differences in cultural background might increase the risk of exposure to violence. The group of adolescents also mentioned that it is significant to take notice of young people's feelings of not being listened to and taken seriously and that violence, in general, is not talked about in society to a sufficient extent. Therefore, more efforts are needed to prevent and detect violence to provide the proper support and help from a youth perspective. Personnel working in different leisure activities for children must dare to ask about violence. The adolescents emphasised a need for more well-developed systems to perceive children's exposure to violence. The following recommendations were made:

- Experts should ensure continuity of learning about children's exposure to violence for educators and social service officers when it comes to the negative consequences for children, normalisation processes and warning signs.
- Educational efforts should also be directed to children and young people to clarify what violence is and where to seek help exposed to violence.
- Parental education about violence and legislation (such as children's rights) is needed for parents with other cultural backgrounds.
- Continuous health check-ups should occur at school, where the topic of abuse should also be raised.
- Easily accessible support groups should be available for children and adolescents.
- Shorter queues and waiting lists should be ensured for victims of abuse seeking help from hospitals and psychiatrists.

The results were documented in a report that was included in the annual report to the government. Additionally, a video on children's voices was produced and presented to professionals attending a biannual national meeting on violence against children (Barnafríðskonferensen) that Barnafrið organises. The workshop

participants were actively involved in creating both the report and video. They also received feedback on these products after launching them.

Examples of Child Participation in Recent Public State Enquiries and Governmental Assignments Concerning Violence Against Children

Since 1 January 2020, when the CRC became a Swedish law, the government has initiated approximately 30 public state enquiries and governmental assignments relevant to violence against children. The projects span from protecting children from various types of violence (Government of Sweden, 2021d, 2021e) to proposing new legislation (Government of Sweden, 2020d), as well as national strategies to combat violence against children (Government of Sweden, 2021b) and improve equal health and health-care services for children (Government of Sweden, 2019).

About half of the initiatives clearly state the importance of paying attention to children's rights and perspectives. In most initiatives, instructions are given regarding what aspects should receive attention. These typically include gender equality, disability and minority perspectives apart from children's rights. Examples of formulations include:

The child rights and youth perspective shall be taken into account.
(Government of Sweden, 2019)

In carrying out the assignment, NN shall pay particular attention to the rights arising from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
(Government of Sweden, 2021g)

A starting point in the work will be the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which became Swedish law on 1 January 2020.
(Government of Sweden, 2020d)

The assignment will be from a child's rights, disability, and gender equality perspective.
(Government of Sweden, 2021g)

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), will be the starting

points for the mission. In the assignment, the special vulnerability of certain groups shall be considered, and the assignment shall therefore be carried out with an LGBTIQI perspective and a disability perspective.

(Government of Sweden, 2021c)

When carrying out the assignment, (name of the governmental agency) shall consider the vulnerability and needs of persons with disabilities and LGBTIQI persons. The representation of children and the rights of the child by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) shall be considered, and the recommendations on Sweden's compliance with the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) issued by the Council of Europe in 2019.

(Government of Sweden, 2021f)

Other statements more explicitly indicate that child participation is expected, and sometimes they provide motivation. According to [Shier's \(2001\)](#) model, the level of child participation can vary from children being listened to (Level 1) or supported in expressing their views (Level 2) to be included in shared decision-making and child-led activities (Level 5). The following examples include lower and higher levels of child engagement:

The assignment will be carried out from a child's rights, disability, and gender equality perspective. Children, parents, and guardians should be seen as important resources and allowed to participate in the development work.

(Government of Sweden, 2020f)

The agency will also seek the views of civil society organizations and other actors who have contact with children and young people and have knowledge about young people, sex and relationships, as well as violence in young people's relationships.

(Government of Sweden, 2020a)

... taken to children's opinions and experiences.

(Government of Sweden, 2020e)

The investigator shall also conduct a dialogue with children and young people to the extent deemed important.

(Government of Sweden, 2022b)

That the investigator, as far as possible, conducts dialogue and listens to children's opinions and takes part in their experiences is particularly important, given the assignment. Children with different conditions and experiences must be heard. Children's views and experiences must be considered in work.

(Government of Sweden, 2022a)

The investigator shall gather views from the relevant authorities, civil society organizations, and other relevant actors such as children and young people. The investigator shall start from the perspective of abused children, listen to children and young people, and consider their views and opinions in developing a strategy proposal. Children and young people have the right to participate and have their say in matters that concern them, and their opinions should be given importance. Children and young people possess expertise about the various bodies of society and the support that society offers, which is important for the investigator to take with them in the strategy design.

(Government of Sweden, 2021a)

Most of these recent assignments and public state enquiries are ongoing; thus, we still need to determine the extent of child participatory approaches taken. However, a couple of projects have already been finalised. For example, a public state inquiry (Government of Sweden, 2021a) with an assignment to propose initiatives that will contribute to more equal care – including preventive and health-promoting efforts for children and young people and care for those with health-related needs such as mental illness due to exposure to violence – was instructed that ‘the child rights and youth perspective shall be taken into account in the investigation, and the consequences for children and young people shall be particularly highlighted’ (Government of Sweden, 2019). The enquiry's final report was published in 2021 (Government of Sweden, 2021a).

In this enquiry, several child participation methods were used in collaboration with one Swedish children's rights organisation and four high schools. The methods included a web survey for children aged 8–18 years, child participatory workshops, involvement of expert groups in schools and input from other pupils in these schools. Children discussed the topic of health and health services. In addition, another nongovernmental organisation was involved in the process. This organisation, *Tilia* (n.d.), has developed a method called *ungas röster* (young people's voices). In the framework of this method, decision-makers interact with young experts and facilitate their participation. The method is adaptable to different assignments, often with a basis in a preliminary investigation to create space for a more significant number of young people to have their say on an overall level, with subsequent in-depth interviews or questionnaires about young people's experiences. The work is then taken forward in workshops, in smaller groups with in-depth work and often on recurring occasions. The aim is for young

people to be included from idea to finished decision or proposal. Using this method, young people had the possibility to raise their views, thoughts and experiences regarding health and the provision of health-care services. Also, in a public state inquiry, a web survey and qualitative interviews have been used to collect children's input to the work ([Government of Sweden, 2021b](#)).

Additionally, two governmental assignments to the Ombudsman of Children have employed a child participatory approach. In an assignment to gather knowledge about children's and young people's vulnerability to racism ([Government of Sweden, 2020b](#)), 73 children and young people aged 12–18 were interviewed to obtain their views ([Barnombudsmannen, 2021c](#)). Most children were aware of the rights of children to be treated equally while describing situations where they have been discriminated against because of their background, skin colour, gender, disability or simply because they are children. The discriminatory acts included different types of physical and mental violations and took place in different societal arenas. Several mentioned that racism is sometimes expressed in a joking way, which makes it more difficult to understand what is happening in the moment. The interviewees said they found it difficult to know how to act, set boundaries or speak up.

In another assignment to map knowledge about the impact of pornography on children ([Government of Sweden, 2020a](#)), the ombudsman met with 42 children and young people aged 15–26 to talk about their views on the topic ([Barnombudsmannen, 2021b](#)). Thirty-one participants were aged 15–18 years, eight were aged 19 or 20, and three were aged 21–26. Children and young people were recruited from different parts of Sweden and interviewed both in groups and individually to obtain information about children's and young people's thoughts and perspectives on the impact of pornography. The topics were focused on reasons to consume pornography and how society and decision-makers should act to best promote and protect children's rights when considering exposure to and consumption of pornography. The input from the children is represented as a separate section in the published report ([Barnombudsmannen, 2021b](#)). They emphasised the role of school sexual education in counteracting the negative effects of pornography.

Finally, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention was assigned to study measures against dating violence with instruction to explore children's and young people's views and experiences ([Government of Sweden, 2020e](#)). As part of this assignment, professionals from relevant agencies, civil society organisations and other actors in the field and young people subjected to dating violence were interviewed. Also, an idea workshop with young people was organised. Seventeen adolescents and young people aged 17–25 years were interviewed ([Brå, 2021](#)). The recruitment was designed to reach out to young people from different groups, both girls and boys; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people; people with disabilities; those newly arrived in Sweden; and young people who experienced honour-related violence. Recruitment occurred through a film ad and a poster disseminated via nongovernmental organisations and social media, among others. Upon contact with the project group, young people received more information about the study, ethical guidelines and consent. Semistructured

in-depth interviews were conducted over the phone, followed by subsequent thematic analysis.

The idea workshop with young people was carried out by the youth organisation Youth 2030 Movement, which also recruited the participants. There was no requirement for experiences of being subjected to dating violence to participate. The idea workshop offered a method to empower and affirm young people, then collect their thoughts and opinions and share them with those in power, authorities and decision-makers. The idea workshop was conducted digitally with five participants aged 21–24. People of different genders and those who experienced same-sex and opposite-sex relationships were included. The participants of the idea workshop discussed and reflected on issues concerning knowledge and information about violence in young people's relationships and limits on legal and illegal behaviours. The workshop resulted in a problem analysis tree with causes, problems and consequences, as well as a solution list of what different societal actors and adults should do to counteract this type of violence.

We also found a few finalised assignments that were instructed to include child participatory activities but had not done so.

Requirement for Child Participation in Public Research Funding

Yet another recent example of how child participation can be fostered is a research call on children's and young people's mental health that the Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte) announced in spring 2022 (Forte, 2022a). The government's research and innovation bill 2020 (Government of Sweden, 2020c) commissioned Forte to establish a 10-year national research programme in the mental health field (Forte, 2022b). The spring 2022 call is the first one in the programme and the first with an explicit requirement for a participatory research approach. The call states:

The funded research must be based on a child and youth perspective and a gender equality perspective. The research should consider Sweden's human rights commitments, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the implementation of Agenda 2030, and Sweden's public health policy goals. The call is intended to contribute to increased knowledge about children's and young people's mental health, and applications within this call should focus on one or more of the areas described below.

In line with this, research being funded in this call must be planned and conducted in collaboration with relevant target groups such as users and clients, professionals or interest organisations when appropriate. It also states that participation should be promoted in different parts of the research process, such as the design of the study, data collection, analysis, dissemination of results and implementation. Increased quality and relevance of the research project are used to highlight the need for a participatory approach. To meet the requirements,

applicants are asked to demonstrate that the research question is a priority for the target groups, the outcomes are essential for users and practitioners and clients and users will be involved in the research process. In addition, the research budget should include reasonable costs for participatory activities. One representative from children's rights organisations is included in the grant application evaluation group.

We still need more information about how child participation is considered in these applications. This and the obtained results will be reviewed during and after the research programme.

Child Patient Participation in Health Care and Clinical Research

Since 2015 in Swedish health care, clinics can apply for status as a university health-care unit if they fulfil the minimum criteria set by the National Board of Health and Welfare. The university health-care unit's core activities shall, in addition to health care, be clinical research and education, knowledge application and dissemination of knowledge for the development of health care (ALF-styrgrupp, 2015). In line with this, units with status as a university hospital clinic should conduct research and education; follow international developments in medical research, education and health care; contribute to evidence-based health care, for example, by evaluating and establishing new methods; and disseminate information and collaborate with societal actors such as patient organisations. A well-functioning health-care system is crucial in caring for children exposed to violence. Children should be allowed to participate in developing services related to the consequences of violence.

Two assessment criteria for patient participation are used (Socialstyrelsen, 2018) to evaluate the current status. One states that the university health-care unit 'uses data from measurements of patients' experiences and can report that this has contributed to the development of the clinical work', which refers to patients' experiences of their illness and health after treatment or other intervention (e.g. symptoms, functional ability, health-related quality of life) and variables related to treatment, trust, participation, waiting times, contacts and coordination. The other criterion states that the unit 'collaborates with patients and related or patient and related organizations in the evaluation and development work'. Both child and adult participation are considered.

All units with university health-care status were evaluated in 2018 (Socialstyrelsen, 2018), and a new evaluation is ongoing. Because the assessment results are coupled with the amount of research funding allocated to different hospital districts, interest in performing well has been noticeable. This has also incited efforts to improve participatory approaches at the unit, hospital and district levels. For example, the Östergötland region in southeast Sweden has established a board of patients, carers and relatives to encourage involvement of patients, including child patients at different ages, in the research and development taking place in the hospital units (Östergötland, 2021). For example, researchers applying for intern research funding are now required to explain how

patients, relatives and patient organisations will be involved in the planned research project. Results from the ongoing assessment will be published in 2023.

Discussion

In summary, we have provided several examples of how legislation, governmental instructions, assignments, targeted funding, quality criteria and external evaluations assessing these criteria can bring child participation into the mainstream in the public sector. In this work, national strategies can provide a good framework.

In the Swedish examples, the ambition of child participation is set relatively low, corresponding to Levels 1 to 3 in Shier's (2001) model. Generally, the documentation in the published final reports is not very detailed, making it hard to assess how much children de facto are involved in decision-making processes (Levels 4 and 5). This is, however, entirely in line with the results obtained in two recent scoping articles on child participation (Grace et al., 2019; Larsson et al., 2018). Coming assignments should focus more on defining the expected extent of child participation in the future. Also, a closer follow-up of adherence to the instructions would further foster the implementation of the child participatory approach in governmental assignments and public state enquiries.

Several methods are described for child participation (see Chapters 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). The Swedish examples used focus group interviews, in-depth individual interviews, web surveys and workshops and followed the methods identified in the scoping reviews (Grace et al., 2019; Larsson et al., 2018). Child panels were also involved in some cases (e.g. Government of Sweden, 2021a). The competence in child participatory approaches in governmental organisations seems to be limited based on using children's rights organisations to recruit child participants and provide methods for child participation (Government of Sweden, 2020e). In most cases, the methodology was generally insufficiently reported and mainly limited to content analysis and descriptive statistics. Also, the generalisability of the data has been seldom discussed. Considering these shortcomings, closer collaboration with governmental organisations and researchers would benefit the projects by ensuring their quality. This is critical because the data obtained in the governmental assignments do not undergo any independent peer-review process but are widely used to motivate different political and other decisions.

Only the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention discussed ethical principles and consent in its report (Government of Sweden, 2020e). Swedish law requires ethical permission for research, including development activities that use research methods and collect sensitive information such as age, gender, health, committed crimes, etc. There is a grey zone regarding whether ethical permission should be applied for all or only some types of child participatory approaches. Adherence to ethical guidelines could ensure fair recruitment, collection of informed consent to participate and publish, data management security and other principles that ethical approvals typically consider.

We also noticed that some governmental assignments had been instructed to involve children but failed to do so. The reasons for this remain to be elucidated

because they are not explained in the published reports. Following up on the situation and learning more about these cases is essential. The reasons may involve limited time and resources, lack of experience in child participatory approaches or as revealed by other studies, little acknowledgment of the benefits of including children, their guardians and other stakeholders (Hill, 2006). User-friendly methods for child participatory workshops and process-supporting materials are essential to mainstreaming child participation. Also, training should be provided to professionals and decision-makers in all sectors. This should include, at minimum, a rights-based justification for child participation, training in methods, documentation and child safeguarding.

Despite the identified shortcomings, a giant leap has been taken in Swedish society to ensure children can participate in publicly funded activities such as public state enquiries, governmental assignments and research projects. The impact of the involvement remains to be analysed, and the focus now is more on providing excellent and feasible examples of how to involve children. The recommendation made by the Ombudsman for Children to mainstream child participation in schools (Barnombudsmannen, 2022) could help us teach coming generations of children and young people to understand the rights of children, methods for participatory activities and relevant ethical principles (United Nations, 2009).

Child participation is often motivated by quality-improving effects and efforts to address issues that are the most relevant for different target groups (Brett et al., 2014). The development of services based on the needs and desires of children is well in line with developments in the management field, where more attention is being paid to user experiences (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2009). Knowledge of how to combine understanding of experiences and needs with strategic leadership obtained in the management field could be helpful to facilitate improvements in public sectors like health care and social services, too. This may need a firm policy for public governance that positions clients as the focus, such as recent efforts in Finland (Ministry of Finance, 2020).

Further development of practical models to involve children exposed to violence in service and policy development is warranted. In this work, it is essential to pay attention to the involvement of children of different ages and backgrounds and to develop methods allowing adjustments, such as those needed for children with disabilities or requiring alternative communication tools.

Apart from model development, knowledge and competence improvement activities should be initiated regarding child participatory approaches among staff members and managers. Also, students at all university levels should be trained to enhance child participation in the public sector.

Conclusions

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12, a child has the right to express their views in all matters affecting them. This urges mainstreaming child participation in research and development projects,

and policy-making in the field of violence against children. Access to user-friendly methods and training are essential components in the facilitation of mainstreaming.

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