

Child-led tours

Child-led tours take place in locations that are significant to children, such as playgrounds, schools, hospitals or their home/residence. The child leads you through the space and describes his/her feelings about what they like about it.

This is an ideal method if you want to know a child's perspective about the quality or experiences of a physical environment.

Child-led tours are appropriate for children as young as three-years of age.

Strengths

- Enabling children and young people to lead a tour gives them a sense of control. It can also distract them from the fact that they are being interviewed, and therefore, makes them more relaxed and more open about the information they share.
- Children can often provide a unique perspective and highlight features that adults can miss.

Things to think about

- There is a risk that tours of a space could bring back memories that upset the child. It is advisable that if the child becomes upset or if they avoid an area of a toured space, you discuss this with the child and provide further support if required.

Tips and tricks

Conducting child-led tours

- **One or two children at a time** – keep the tour focused with minimum distractions.
- **Plan your route** – identify the location for your tour and if possible walk it yourself first to estimate the time needed for the tour. Remember, children generally have short attention spans, and they will disengage if the tour is too long.
- **Have some prompts ready** – while it is child-led, be prepared to prompt, e.g.
 - Tell me what you like/don't like about this space.
 - What is interesting about this space?
 - How does this area make you feel?
 - Do you feel safe here?
- **Look for verbal and non-verbal clues** – the child's body language may tell you if they like the space, if they are excited or afraid.

Child-led tours can be used with children with disabilities to get them to point out any accessibility issues in their school or community.

- **Has something upset the child?** – physical environments can be a trigger to bring back strong or upsetting memories. Be prepared to provide further support to the child if required.
- **If in doubt, seek ethical advice** – consider if there is any possibility that your questions may be sensitive and upset a child, or lead to them share information about themselves or others being at risk.

Examples

- A primary school uses a child-led tour of the school grounds to check for any health and safety concerns.
- Hospital management is shown around a children's ward by children to identify areas of the physical environment that are not child-friendly.