

## 8. (10min) Reflection Interview

### Alignment

- After your redesign, do you feel the function is now more aligned with your original design goals, or more complicated? Why?
- Has your understanding of agency changed? In what ways?

### Impact

- What blind spots did the design-for-agency analysis help you uncover?
- How did it influence your overall thinking about your system? Did it make things clearer, heavier, or more structured?
- Did it make your design process easier, deeper, or more constrained?
- What else you think might be helpful?

### What's needed next

- If you were to continue refining this function, what tools, templates, or support would you need next?

## 9. (8min) Post-workshop Questionnaire

- Please fill out the questionnaire: <https://forms.office.com/e/74u86QFAzU>

### Alignment

- After your redesign, do you feel the function is now more aligned with your original design goals, or more complicated? Why?

More aligned — but it took the full process to see that. Our original design goals from Stage 1 said Ella should feel like a "curious explorer" with a sense of ownership over her discoveries. But the original F1 flow actually undermined that: by having the AI speak first, we were making Ella a responder rather than an explorer. She was reacting to the AI's knowledge instead of building her own.

The redesign is structurally more complex — there are more branches, more paths, more actors involved — but Ella's experience is actually simpler and more coherent. She follows a natural rhythm: notice → wonder → guess → learn → decide. That maps directly onto how real nature exploration works. A child in a forest doesn't have a label hovering over every plant — she notices, she wonders, she asks someone, she learns. The redesigned F1 mirrors that natural process rather than short-circuiting it with an AI declaration.

The complication is real, though: the co-agency branch (walking with a friend) and the collective layer (community sightings) add development effort. If we had to ship tomorrow, we'd launch with just the individual agency improvements (child observes first, AI responds second) — that single change delivers the biggest alignment gain with the least complexity.

- Has your understanding of agency changed? In what ways?

Three shifts happened through this workshop:

First, agency isn't the same as control. Before the workshop, we would have said "Ella has lots of agency — she can choose what to photograph, she can reject the AI's answer." But the workshop framework revealed that having a reject button isn't meaningful agency if the AI has already anchored your thinking. Agency is about whose voice comes first, not just who presses the final button.

Second, proxy agency isn't a failure mode. We initially treated parent involvement as something to minimise — "let Ella be independent." The framework helped us see that well-designed proxy agency (where Ella shapes how the parent helps) is actually a form of supported agency, not diminished agency. A 7-year-old saying "just give me a hint, don't tell me the answer" is exercising sophisticated agency through the proxy relationship, not despite it.

Third, collective agency needs infrastructure, not just intentions. We had the community groups feature (F5) and thought that covered collective agency. But the mapping exercise showed that collective agency was completely absent from the core interaction loop (F1). Adding the Mystery Board and community sighting layer wasn't just a feature addition — it was acknowledging that knowledge itself is collective, even when observation is individual. That's a philosophical shift in how we think about the app.

### Impact

- What blind spots did the design-for-agency analysis help you uncover?

The biggest blind spot was invisible proxy agency in F2 (Collection Management). Before the mapping exercise, we hadn't even considered that content filtering — if it exists — represents a parent making decisions about Ella's collection without her knowledge. That's low proxy agency, and it directly contradicts our design goal of Ella feeling ownership. We wouldn't have spotted this without systematically going through every function and asking "who is acting on the child's behalf here, and does the child know?"

A second blind spot was the absence of collective agency in everyday interactions. We had designed a dedicated collective feature (community groups) but hadn't embedded collective thinking into the core experience. The workshop showed us that agency types shouldn't live in separate features — they should be layers within the same interaction. Now the identification flow includes individual, co-, proxy, and collective dimensions all within a single journey. A third blind spot was the AI's role as an authority rather than a dialogue partner. We designed the AI to be helpful and accurate, which inadvertently made it authoritative. The child's relationship to the AI was "ask → receive answer" — a pattern that mirrors the least agentic classroom experiences. Reversing the order (child observes first) transformed the AI from an authority into a companion.

- How did it influence your overall thinking about your system? Did it make things clearer, heavier, or more structured?

All three, in sequence. Initially it made things heavier — seeing the empty cells in the matrix was overwhelming, and we wondered if we needed to redesign everything. Then it made things more structured — the framework gave us a vocabulary (types, levels) to talk about problems we'd sensed but couldn't articulate. Finally it made things clearer — we could prioritise. Not every cell needs to be "High." Some low-agency decisions are appropriate (a 7-year-old doesn't need to configure backup settings). The framework helped us distinguish between intentionally low agency (a deliberate design choice) and accidentally low agency (a blind spot).

The most useful mental shift: thinking about agency as layers within each interaction rather than separate features. Before the workshop, we had individual features (camera), social features (messaging), and community features (groups) as distinct modules. Now we see that every feature should have individual, co-, proxy, and collective dimensions — some deep, some light, but all intentional.

- Did it make your design process easier, deeper, or more constrained?

Deeper and initially more constrained, but ultimately easier. The matrix felt constraining at first because it asked us to consider dimensions we hadn't planned for (collective agency in the camera feature? Really?). But that constraint turned out to be generative — it pushed us to think about connections between features that we'd designed in isolation. The Mystery Board idea came directly from asking "what would collective agency look like in identification?" — a question we would never have asked without the framework.

Going forward, the process will be easier because we now have a shared language. Instead of debating vaguely about whether a feature "gives kids enough control," we can ask specifically: "What level of individual agency does this represent? Is proxy agency visible or invisible here? Where could co-agency enrich this?" That precision saves design time.

- What else you think might be helpful?

Three things we wished we'd had:

- Age-differentiated guidance. The agency levels mean different things for a 6-year-old versus an 11-year-old. High individual agency for a 6-year-old might be "choose from three exploration modes." For an 11-year-old, it might be "design your own identification workflow." We'd love a supplementary layer that maps agency levels to developmental stages.
- An agency audit for AI specifically. The workshop framework treats the AI as an actor in the system diagram, but AI has unique agency implications — it can anchor, persuade, and model behaviour in ways that human actors can't. A dedicated set of prompts for "how does your AI's behaviour affect child agency?" would be valuable.
- Worked examples of trade-offs. We learned that not every cell should be High, but we lack guidance on when to deliberately choose Low or Medium. Case studies showing intentional low-agency choices (and the reasoning behind them) would help teams feel confident that "Low" isn't always a red flag.

### What's needed next

- If you were to continue refining this function, what tools, templates, or support would you need next?

For our immediate next step (refining F1), we'd need prototyping support — specifically, a way to test the "child observes first" flow with real children. The agency framework tells us this should increase individual agency, but we need to verify that 6–7 year olds can actually articulate observations before seeing the AI's suggestion. If they freeze ("I don't know what to say"), we might need scaffolding prompts, which introduces a new design challenge.

For scaling across all functions, we'd use the completed matrix as a backlog. Each cell with a gap between current and target level becomes a design task. We'd prioritise by ripple effect: F1 first (core loop), then F3 (family circle proxy gap), then F2 (invisible proxy issue), then F4/F5 (already relatively strong). Tools we'd want:

- A Figma component library for agency annotations — colour-coded badges, level indicators, and comparison cards we can attach to any wireframe
- A testing protocol for agency with children — how do you actually measure whether a 7-year-old feels more agentic? Observation rubrics, interview prompts, behavioural indicators
- A stakeholder communication template — how to explain agency design decisions to developers, product managers, and parents without requiring them to complete the full workshop