

Voice of the child

A participation toolkit for practitioners



1.01 Introduction

Listening to young children is an integral part of understanding what they are feeling and what they need. It is key to providing environments in which all young children feel confident, safe and empowered to ensure they have the time and space to express themselves in whatever form suits them.

This toolkit has been produced to provide guidance and support to practitioners working directly within early years settings.

Viewing the world through the child's eyes

Listening to young children is an exciting and rewarding part of the early years practitioner role. It involves listening to children, understanding children, their lives, experiences and feelings.

This toolkit is designed to help Early Years practitioners identify and celebrate their existing work taking place in Early Years settings, to help create further opportunities to listen to young children.

It can start with informal listening such as giving children choices and opportunities to share their views throughout the day, or it can be a planned project to gather children's views about a particular topic.

Allowing children to have an input into their early years experiences is vital to building children's self-esteem, confidence and developing their decision-making skills.

The toolkit includes information on research relating to the Voice of the Child, and simple and easy to use guidance with planning and assessment materials.



1.02 Legislation for early years participation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a framework of 54 articles which includes three sets of rights:

Protection, Provision and Participation

Participation is recognised in the following articles: **having an active voice**

Article 4 (Protection of rights): Governments have a responsibility to take all available measures to make sure children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child): When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13 (Freedom of expression): Children have the right to get and share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others. The freedom of expression includes the right to share information in any way they choose, including by talking, drawing or writing.

It is our responsibility to find ways to uphold these rights
To protect and provide for children, we need to listen to them.

These principles are also embedded in a number of other pieces of legislation and documentation such as:

The Children's Act (2014)

The adult needs to ascertain the views, wishes and feelings of the child.

The Childcare Act (2006)

Adults should have regard to the views of young children in the design, development and delivery of childhood services.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (2014)

Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

As a result of this legislation, participation is given key focus within Hertfordshire plans. 'The 'Voice of the Child' is key to improving and developing services'. Hertfordshire Children's Services Strategic Plan 2015-2018

This legislation demonstrates the importance of participation in Early Years showing how it is the responsibility of **ALL** practitioners working with early years children across Hertfordshire to listen and respond to all children as part of their everyday practice.

1.03 Links to the early years foundation stage 2014 (EYFS)

The EYFS states:

- Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured
- Children learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships
- Children learn and develop well in enabling environments, in which their experiences respond to their individual needs and there is a strong partnership between practitioners and parents and/or carers
- Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

The seven areas of learning cover many of the skills children will need to have their voice heard in the setting:

The Prime areas of Learning and Development

Communication and Language	Personal, Social and Emotional	Physical
An ability to communicate with the people around them either verbally or non - verbally	A sense of self-awareness and confidence to share views with people who matter to them	The ability for children to use their body to express themselves and develop independence

The specific areas of Learning and Development

Literacy	Maths	Understanding the World	Expressive Arts and Design
Early mark making will represent children's thoughts and feelings	To collect views to share with others	To feel valued as part of a community and to use ICT skills to gather view and opinions	To engage in creative representation of their thoughts and feelings

Embedding the characteristics of effective learning in your setting enables children to see themselves as capable communicators and learners.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning

Playing and Exploring - Engagement	Active Learning - Motivation	Creating and Thinking Critically - Thinking
When children have a voice about what they engage in, this supports their understanding of having an opinion.	When children feel proud of their own achievements this grows their self-belief, and helps them feel valued for who they are and their contributions.	When children are empowered to have their own ideas and share these with supportive adults, this develops their independent thinking.

1.04 Listening to children to assist you in safeguarding

Early Years Practitioners Role in Safeguarding Children

All practitioners should have an up-to-date understanding of safeguarding children and be able to implement the safeguarding children policy and procedure appropriately. Policies should be in line with Hertfordshire Children's Safeguarding Board guidance and procedures.

Staff should be able to respond appropriately to any:

- significant changes in children's behaviour;
- deterioration in their general well-being;
- unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse;
- signs of neglect;
- comments children make which give cause for concern.

EYFS (2014) Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, The Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements.

Safeguarding children is not something to think about only when you have a child that gives you cause for concern, but it should underpin the reasons for many of your procedures and practices of your setting to ensure that children can be and are protected from harm.

The Relationships and Key Person Role

The key person role of safeguarding children is crucial. If children are ever worried, scared or upset about anything they need to have a special person

that they trust to listen and respond to them. They need to know that their views are valued and acted upon.

Create relationships that promote security to children.

"Each Child must be assigned key person. Their role is to help make sure that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, to help the child to become familiar with the setting, offer a settled relationship for the child and build a relationship with their parents" EYFS (2014) Key Person.

Make sure children know you want to hear their fears and concerns and that you value their views.

Remember:

"A key person meets the needs of each child in their care and responds sensitively to their feelings, ideas and behaviour" EYFS Commitment Cards

- Respond to children's views, opinions and feelings sensitively and with interest to ensure that children understand that you are there to listen.
- Respond to and record unusual behaviour and reactions with confidence and sensitivity to reinforce to children that you care and they can rely on you.

Introduction

Listening to children

Early years

Review and consultation

Practitioners' guides

The Environment

- Create spaces for children to retreat to and have privacy. Cosy spaces.
- Ensure there are resources that provide comfort to children. e.g. soft toys, family books.
- Ensure there are resources available for children to communicate their feelings. E.g. puppets, art materials, books, role play.

The Routine

- Create regular opportunities for children to share their views on all topics including feelings, so sharing their feelings and experiences becomes normal to them. E.g. feelings board, feelings books.
- Through a variety of activities develop the children's confidence in what to do if they ever feel scared, worried or upset.
- Through everyday routine and activities help children to understand danger and healthy risk. Support children to make decisions around this. E.g. stranger danger, climbing the big slide, running with scissors, using woodwork materials.
- Listen and record the many ways children communicate as normal practice so patterns of change or cause for concern can be identified quickly. E.g. observations of interactions and play, recording children's comments and interests in learning journeys and planning sheets.

(When a cause for concern is identified the recordings identified from these methods must be evidenced in the appropriate document for the setting's safeguarding procedures).

Recognising when a child may be communicating to us that they are afraid, sad or worried.

The physical signs of abuse are often the easier signs to recognise and respond to, but children can communicate their feelings and experiences in many ways and it is the early years practitioner's responsibility to listen and interpret these methods of communication, responding appropriately.

Here are some signs to look out for:

- Body language and non-verbal cues
- Behaviour changes
- Verbal communication
- Creatively through art work, music or dance
- Interactions with others
- Mannerisms
- Appearance
- Affection – over or lack of

Responding to a child who wants to communicate about abuse

- Listen to the child – always stop and listen, do not probe the child
- React calmly; be aware of your own non-verbal responses
- Keep your responses short, simple, slow, quiet and gentle
- Reassure the child – tell the child they are not to blame and have done the right thing by telling you
- Never make a promise to keep it confidential
- Tell the child what will happen – that you have to tell someone else
- Record exactly what the child has said – using their words as much as possible and noting where they repeat sentences/words.

Refer

Follow the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board's 'Recognise, Respond and Refer' flow chart. The latest version is available at www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk



1.05 A Brief introduction to 'lets listen'

Young Children's Voices Network have launched a new resource; part funded by **Participation Works**.

This resource is to support early years settings and local authorities to evidence and plan listening to young children and enabling young children's participation in children's services.

Let's listen is a resource which can be used to record, evidence and plan ways to listen to young children so that their voice is heard.

The resource follows a cycle of listening and acting on children's views:

Listen:

Promoting active participation from all children in what is important to them in their daily lives and in decisions they can be involved in.

Document:

Recording children's views and opinions and the ways in which you have gathered thoughts and feelings.

Reflect:

Thinking about what has been observed and recorded about what children have told you and, where appropriate what implications these views will have on practice.

Take action:

The responsibility of acting on children's views to show how the Voice of the Child is valued.

Feedback:

Round of the process by feeding back to the children how you will act on their views. When children's wishes cannot be met, honest feedback is essential.

This process of listening and acting on children's views recognises their rights and respects all contributions.

1.06 A brief introduction to 'The Mosaic Approach'

There are several resources available to deepen practitioners' understanding of the Voice of the Child. The following pages refer to some of these influential pieces of work.

Clark and Moss (2011) Viewing children as 'experts in their own lives', the Mosaic Approach offers a creative framework for listening to young children's perspectives through talking, walking, making and reviewing together. It is:

- Multi-method: recognises the different languages or voices of children
- Participatory: treats children as experts and agents in their own lives
- Reflective: includes children, practitioners and parents in reflecting on meanings and addresses the question of interpretation
- Adaptable: can be applied to a variety of early childhood institutions
- Focused on children's lived experiences: looking at lives rather than knowledge gained or care received
- Embedded into practice: a framework for listening which has the capacity to be both used as an evaluative tool and to become a part of everyday practice.

- Within this framework, Clark and Moss suggest a two stage approach:
- Stage One: Children and adults gather documentation and practitioners and parents reflect on what they think life is like for the child(ren)
- Stage two: Piecing together information for dialogue, reflection and interpretation and practitioners and parents listen to the child(ren's) own perspectives.

Clark, A and Moss, P (2011) Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach. London. NCB and Joseph Rowntree Foundation

1.07 A brief introduction to Communication Friendly Spaces

Elizabeth Jarman (2009) The Communication Friendly Spaces™ approach focuses on the role of the environment in supporting speaking and listening and emotional wellbeing.

The following three elements make up a communication friendly space:

- Physical environment: Creating spaces in the setting to help children to feel comfortable and able to talk. Spaces that help them feel secure and relaxed
- Resources: Having resources that are interesting, unusual and worth investigating. These resources allow children to voice their own ideas about what they can do and think
- Adult input: Children are regarded as researchers, commentators, developers, and their ideas for change are welcomed by the adults.

When adults create calm inviting spaces within the setting these give children the space and time to share their views. Listening to children's voice when working with Communication Friendly Spaces™ brings a multi layered set of benefits. The process of being listened to in a planned space increases self-awareness and self-confidence and an understanding that the child's voice and their ideas matter.

Jarman, E (2009) Communication friendly spaces™. Elizabeth Jarman Ltd



2.01 Creating a listening environment

The following prompts will help you to reflect upon your provision to ensure that your setting or home, has an environment that fully promotes listening to children.

The physical environment:

- Consider the noise level of the setting... can every child's voice be heard?
- Reflect on whether there are cosy, quiet spaces that gives children the opportunity to share their feelings and views on their experiences with peers and adults
- Are there interactive areas for children to demonstrate their choices? For example; self-registration or photographic choice cards.
- Review whether resources and materials are at child height and available for children to access easily
- Does the environment allow children to freely move around the learning environment including between the inside and outside space?
- Do labels use text and pictures so that children are aware of what choices are available?

Adults and relationships

- Is your key person system effective so that each child has a familiar adult that understands their experiences and needs?
- Reflect upon the ways in which adults tune into children, for example, interpreting body language to assess how both verbal and non-verbal children are feeling?

- How do children demonstrate and communicate their preferences to familiar adults?
- Is the body language of all adults positive in order to encourage children to initiate conversations and invite child interactions?
- Consider how adults talk and engage with the children, think about the language used, does it allow children to express feelings or limit them to their views of a simple 'yes or no' response?
- How does the environment promote communication for children with English as an additional language? Are photographs, symbols and familiar language displayed prominently.

Remember:

Provide time and relaxed opportunities for children to develop spoken language through sustained conversations. Allow children time to initiate conversations, respect their thinking time and silences - show sensitivity to the many different ways that children express themselves, verbally and non-verbally and encourage this expression through art, music etc.

2.01 Creating a listening environment

Involving children in a variety of daily decisions

Reflect on routines of the day. Below are some examples of potential daily events that will help you to consider whether there are sufficient opportunities for children to express their opinions.

- **Child initiated learning** time allows children to think about where they play, what toys or equipment they select and who they want to be with. Children should be able to voice their opinions and engage in conversations with adults and peers
- **Group times** encourage turn taking, listening, speaking, thinking and concentrating. Consider the size of the group and how all children are encouraged to contribute in their own way. Work in small groups wherever possible. Children may become bored and frustrated in large groups if they are waiting a long time share their views and have their voice heard. Shy children may feel less intimidated in a small group
- **Building a bank of familiar stories and songs** gives children opportunities to develop listening skills, make informed choices about those they wish to hear and discuss the story/song by making connections to their own their experiences.
- **A visual timetable** of the session can help children make sense of what is happening throughout their day. By using visual routines children are enabled to be interactive in their routine.

- **Meal times** are good opportunities for adults to create the right social conditions to model active listening to children, encourage them to make healthy choices and talk about their preferences.
- **Creative activities** allow children to express themselves through a variety of non- verbal ways. For example, movement to music.
- **Turn taking activities** promote the development of communication skills so that children are prepared to listen to the views of others.

TOP TIP: Ask children about their preferences; what do they like and dislike about their daily routines? Is there anything they would like to change or do differently?

When planning big decisions, do you ask the children for their views or comments? Why not consider how you:

- give children choices and involve them when purchasing new resources
- ask children for their views on the environment before making changes
- ask children for their preferences when planning a trip or outing
- gather feedback from children when recruiting staff
- ask children how they feel about any upcoming changes. For example, school transitions or family changes such as; a new baby or moving to a new house
- ask the children how you can overcome a problem when faced with a challenge.

2.01 Creating a listening environment

Remember:

Active learners need to have some independence and control over their learning to keep their interest and to develop their creativity. As children grow in confidence they learn to make decisions in a logical way. *EYFS Commitment Cards 2007*

Planning and managing children's involvement in planning activities

The following points will help you review how children are involved in your curriculum planning. It is important to consider how children's characteristics of learning and their interests inform learning experiences provided on a daily basis.

- Be flexible in your planning to ensure that children's ever changing interests are accommodated to support high levels of motivation and engagement in learning. When children show an interest in a certain topic it is important to demonstrate value to this by adapting plans and activities to reflect these. This empowers children to decide the context for their own learning.
- Ensure any assessment information, such as learning journals reflects how your knowledge of how children learn and their interests inform planning their next experiences.
- Consider how children's voice is captured to demonstrate their involvement in the evaluation of activities.
- Make sure you feedback to children how you have used their views, even if you have been unable to make any changes.

Remember:

Ensure children's well-being and involvement in learning by making each child feel secure and confident, and allowing them some control over their learning. *EYFS Commitment Cards 2007*

Valuing and supporting children's voices

Children need to see and feel that their contribution is valued and that their voice is heard. Below are some examples of how you could demonstrate this to young children.

- Display children's views and comments through displays. Be sure to capture the comments children make when completing a piece of work or taking part in an experience and displaying these prominently for children. For example, if exploring paint with hands children may make comments about how it feels, "It's wet" or what they are doing "I am mixing the paints". Adults should model writing children's comments using their exact words
- Use what children tell you when making changes ensuring that you visually display all children's opinions. Remember to feedback to children how you used their comments. For example, "You said you would like to have tea in the garden today, so that's what we shall do". Consider how you will sensitively feedback if you were unable to respond favorably to their comments so that children understand that their opinions were considered

2.01 Creating a listening environment

- Use resources and activities that will invite children to talk about and express their feelings. This allows children to become familiar with discussing their emotions and understanding how they feel
- Ensure learning journals capture the voice of the child
- Provide parents with information about what their child has been doing in the setting so that they can talk about these and listen to their child's views on their daily experience.

TOP TIP: Try using a prop like a weekend travelling bear and diary to involve parents in specific listening activities at home.

Remember:

When children know that their feelings and views are accepted they learn to express them, confident that adults will help them with how they are feeling". EYFS Commitment Cards 2007



2.02 Listening to babies 0-18 months

Listening to babies acknowledges their right to be heard from pre-birth and throughout their lives. It builds up positive relationships between adults and babies. Babies demand constant attention and this starts even before they are born.

Remember:

Babies develop competence in communication through having frequent enjoyable interactions, with other people in a variety of verbal and non-verbal contexts. When planning experiences for babies, we must start with the child. EYFS Commitment Cards

Why listen to babies?

Listening to babies helps adults to ensure that:

- babies are valued and feel valued
- they are responded to caringly and attentively
- their physical, emotional, social and cognitive needs are met
- their interests and experiences are developed
- relationships and trust develop between the adult and baby.

What is the adult's role in listening?

Through listening and observing babies, adults can gain a deeper understanding of each individual baby, their interests and their needs.

This gives them the knowledge to be able to provide for these needs and the babies wellbeing.

Effective listening involves:

- demonstrating respect and belief that babies are worth listening to
- having the skills to interpret the baby's sounds, movements and actions through observation, interaction, tuning in to their interests and reading body language
- seeing the world from the baby's point of view
- using the information from the baby to decide moment by moment, how best to provide for
- babies in their care
- developing good relationships with the baby
- identifying opportunities to listen to babies. e.g. nappy time, bath time, meal times
- having patience and taking the time to listen to and understand each baby.

Babies and children are sociable and curious, and they explore the world through relationships with others and through all their senses. Babies and children develop their competence in communicating through having frequent, enjoyable interactions with other people, in contexts that they understand. EYFS Commitment Cards

2.02 Listening to babies 0-18 months

How can we listen?

- Informal Observation is the easiest way to listen to babies, follow their interests and verbal and non-verbal cues to help you see the world through their eyes
- use a tally chart to monitor which toys the baby chooses or an area they choose to play in. This will tell you about their likes and dislikes
- tuning in- watch for body language to understand how babies are feeling and responding to experiences
- movement study- over a day or week, map where the baby chooses to play and who with
- recording the sounds and actions the baby makes and how you respond
- encourage their communication by responding to their sounds, actions and movements with interest [use sounds, actions or movements]
- reward their communication with interest [use smiles, cuddles and praise].

Remember:

Giving children choices helps them to learn that while there are several different options they can only choose one at a time. Children who are supported to make choices learn that sometimes they can have, or do something now, while at other times they may have to wait longer for a particular choice. EYFS Commitment Cards

How do babies communicate with adults?

Babies use a variety of verbal and non-verbal ways to communicate with adults. Here are some examples:

Action	Could mean	Action	Could mean
Cry	I'm Hungry	Hands up to an adult	Pick me up
Cry	'I'm Tired	Head shake	No more
Cry	I'm Scared	Smiling	I like you
Cry Moving feet and hands	I'm excited	Laughing	I am happy
High pitch gurgling noises	I am Happy'	Moaning	I am not happy
Blowing Raspberries	Look what I can do!"	Touching your face	I like you

2.02 Listening to babies 0-18 months

Every baby has different signals and ways of communicating how they feel to us.

When we listen and discover each individual child's signals we can make life easier for them and us. For example: If a baby always cries when they have their nappy changed, we discover this is a time they don't enjoy. We should use this information to think about reasons why this might be and how we can overcome it.

- is it cold in the nappy room?
- are they always tired at the time of nappy change?
- will singing help to distract them?
- does giving them a favourite toy help?

Remember:

Listen to what the children tell you, and act on non-verbal signals from them, especially from children who are unable to voice their anxieties. Always take action to follow up any concerns, even if these prove to be groundless. EYFS Commitment Cards

Things to Consider:

- a busy noisy environment can make it hard to observe and listen to babies. Look at the noise level and consider creating a quiet area

- lack of time to listen can mean you miss out on vital cues from babies. Use key one-to-one times such as nappy times to make sure you listen to babies daily a quiet baby does not always indicate a happy baby.

Reflection:

Think about your interactions with babies. Do you listen to the babies in your care and respect their ability to communicate without spoken language?

- do you know how each baby likes to sleep and do you respect these preferences?
- do you adapt activities and routines to follow the interests of the babies?
- do you try to see the world and environment through the eyes of the baby?
- have you tuned into each babies verbal and
- non verbal cues?
- do you make one to one time to listen to babies and build relationships?

3.01 Voice of the child methods

Informal listening

Children and young people often express their views and opinions in an informal way. For example, they may tell you their thoughts about their diet in a spontaneous discussion. This can then be recorded by an adult to inform ways of working.

We need to be open to hearing children's views, even when we do not agree or they appear critical. This may mean responding immediately to their concerns, possibly by simply explaining why their wishes are not possible, or making a note to take their concerns further.

Why it is useful:

- Allows us to understand each child's views and needs
- Supports language development and communication skills
- Adds to our existing knowledge of the child and allows us to adapt environments, plans to meet the interests of the child
- Develops confidence in the child and their ability to have their views heard
- Gives us the opportunity to demonstrate that we value their views and opinions.

Observation

Observation will enable you to gain a greater understanding of an individual child's needs and experiences.

Observing a child's behavior in different situations will give you valuable information. You can learn a lot without asking questions.

Why it is useful:

- For tuning into non-verbal children
- Over time use to monitor babies/toddlers interest
- To assess body language to understand how children might be feeling and what they might be subconsciously telling us
- Understanding children's interests.

Visual Walks

Visual walks offer children an opportunity to share their views about the strengths and weaknesses of an environment. "Walking and Talking", either with a camera or with an adult. It encourages lots of dialogue about what they like and dislike and what could be changed for the better.

Why it is useful:

- It provides an opportunity to hear the uniqueness of children's own perceptions of the physical and social world that playgrounds, and other outside and indoor spaces, represent for them
- Feedback improves practice and environments.

3.01 Voice of the child methods

Drawing, Painting or Collage

All of these can offer children real freedom with lots of choice to experiment with paint and to use it to explore their ideas, their feelings and situations.

Why it is useful:

- It encourages self-expression and there is no right or wrong
- Good for children to express how they are feeling about something
- Children are able to express their emotions through the arts
- The process is as important as the representation when finished
- To gather information about a child's preferences. e.g. a collage on favourite toys.

Music and Dance

Music and dance offers young children an opportunity to explore their experiences and feelings using music and movement and a range of props.

Observing children dance to music provides an opportunity to gain understanding of how children make sense of their experiences, through their movement to music.

Why it is useful:

- For children who are highly motivated through music
- For children that struggle to share how they are feeling verbally
- For children who prefer to be active

- To help children make connections with their emotions and prior experiences.

Role Play

Role play can give children the opportunity to re-tell their experiences without judgment. Children can use these experiences to express their thoughts and feelings. Imaginative play allows children to reenact experiences that are familiar to them where they can express their thoughts and feelings with others.

Why it is useful:

- Particularly good when trying to gather information about a child's past experiences
- Allows children to try new things and apply learn concepts in a safe environment
- Observing role play can tell us information about a child's life experiences that we might not pick up on verbally.

3.01 Voice of the child methods

Puppets and Soft Toys

Puppets give children the opportunity to express their views, feelings or wishes through another voice, as they talk through the puppet or soft toy.

Why it is useful:

- Particularly good for shy children, who struggle to express their thoughts and feelings
- To help children feel comfortable voicing their views in a safe environment.



3.02 Every day opportunities to listen to children

There are many ways to hear the voice of young children. Below are a variety of methods Early Years practitioners may use in daily practice to capture the individual child's voice.

Pre-school children 2-5yrs

Child Made Story Books

Can be any topic to provide a talking point helping build vocabulary for individual expression

Paintings and Drawings

Children make choices about the tools and materials they use to create and tell you about their work.

Children Led discussions

Provide opportunities for children to talk about their topics of interest with adult support, with careful and sensitive questioning.

Peer to Peer

Children talking to peers to describe experiences and feelings.

Emotion Activities

Use pictures to prompt discussion from children to help children to make sense of their feelings.

Picture cues

- Allow children to make choices about what or where to play
- Use simple methods to record feedback such as happy or sad faces
- Photo placed in an area can indicate where they are playing.

Record comments

To demonstrate that adults value children's comments and to help assess children's understanding on different topics or to provide commentary on their work for displays.

Voice recorders

Children can operate and record what they wish to tell you.

Family Books

A collection of photographs of their family being shared in the setting helps children feel settled and able to talk about those most familiar to them.

Routines

These should be flexible to follow the interests and appropriate for the stage of the children's development in the group.

Rules and Boundaries

The expected behaviors in the setting should be discussed and created with the children.

3.02 Every day opportunities to listen to children

Every Day Choices

What to eat and drink, where to play, what to play with, who to play with

Babies and Toddlers

Tally chart

Record the number of times a baby engages with a particular toy or activity to tell you about the babies preferences

Natural Observation and Key Person Relationships

A robust knowledge of young children's verbal and non-verbal communication will tell you about the child's thoughts and feelings.

Opportunities for choice

Present items to babies and toddlers allowing them to indicate their choice by crawling or pointing towards the chosen item.

Pictorial cues

Use large photos to capture the eye of the youngest child to enable choice preference and new vocabulary.

Family Books

Babies and toddlers can point and look at familiar adults and feel comforted by this.

As well as listening to the Voice of the Child during everyday activities and routines, here is a list of key times to listen to the Voice of the Child:

- every day routine and adapting existing activities
- to impact on planning of curriculum and meeting the individual child's needs and interests
- when changing routines
- when changing the environment
- recruiting new staff
- to impact on policy of settings
- staff changes
- to understand each child
- to support a child with additional needs or English as a second language
- to improve and reflect on practice and setting.

3.03 Role play

When trying to gather information about a child's past experiences or feelings about an upcoming event, role play can be a good way to establish children's views. It can demonstrate a child's understanding of a topic or experience and tell us information about their life and experiences that we may not find out verbally.

People and Communities: "children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members. They know that other children don't always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this" EYFS Sept 2014 (P12)

The benefits:

- Role play can give children the opportunity to retell their experiences without judgment
- Children can use their first hand experiences to express their thoughts and feelings making connections in role play scenarios
- Imaginative play allows relaxed, extended time in which children can lead their own play
- Allows children to try new things and learn new concepts in a safe and familiar environment.

What does it involve?

Role Play Area – This should promote opportunities for informal listening, as you observe the children in play. You should adapt the role play area to

accommodate the children's familiar experiences and ensure there are a variety of resources to enable extended play.

Planned Session – such as re-telling a story or an imaginative movement session. This can be centred around a familiar topic or experience.

Children should be encouraged to contribute their ideas to help reshape the activity with adults responding to their thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Consider:

- Your role in the experience
- Observing the process and children's learning
- Giving children the time they need to take the lead. Don't ask too many questions
- How you will record what you observe
- Inclusive practice

Reflective Questions:

- How often do you take note of the conversations and play happening in the role play area?
- How often is your role play area planned/ adapted as a response to your children's interest?
- How often do you use role play or drama to enable you to find out children's views or feelings on a topic?

3.04 Walk and talk

An easy way to gather information on children's likes and dislikes about their environment. This enables adults to use children's views to evaluate and improve practice and provision.

Self-confidence and self-awareness: "children are confident to try new activities, and say why they like some activities more than others" EYFS Sept 2014 (p11)

The benefits:

- Provides children with the opportunity to share their views verbally or non-verbally with adults
- The adult's responses demonstrate to children that their opinions are valued
- Acknowledges children as experts in their own lives Promotes children's language skills, confidence and self-esteem.

What does it involve?

Walk around the environment allowing children to share their views and experiences of using the space. You may need to start the discussion off by asking some easy questions. For example, ask them to tell you about what they like and don't like and what is important to them.

This could be carried out either as a one-to-one or in a small group. Using digital technology enables less vocal children to record their views.

Allow children to photograph what they wish and lead the walk. Record all verbal comments – this is additional evidence to support the photographs.

If taking photos, ask the children about the photos following the walk and talk. Never make assumptions about why they chose that image.

Consider:

How you differentiate this activity to ensure all children can be involved. When you will walk and talk so that there is plenty of time for children to fully explore their surroundings. Try not to ask them too many direct questions, give children time to think and respond.

Reflective Questions:

- How often do you gather the views of children to evaluate and influence your practice and provision?
- Do you give children a variety of tools to enable them to share their views, likes and dislikes?
- Do you really know what every child thinks of their current learning environment?

3.05 Children's expressive arts

Expressive art experiences are suitable for all aged children. They allow children to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions freely.

Being Imaginative "They represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role-play and stories."
EYFS Sept 2014 (P12)

Offering children a variety of materials and equipment empowers them to choose the way they wish to express themselves through their creativity.

The benefits:

- Children are supported to express their emotions freely through a range of expressive arts
- Demonstrates that adults value children's free expression
- Acknowledges children as experts in their own lives
- Promotes children's confidence and self esteem
- It can promote high levels of involvement
- Children have total ownership of their creativity.

What does it involve?

Providing a wide range of materials and equipment for children to use for music, imaginative play, art, design and technology and story making.

Children should be introduced to the range of age and stage appropriate resources and materials by adults who are confident children have the skills they need to use them.

Adults should support and respect children's choices during their exploration with no expectation of a particular outcome.

Consider:

- The range of materials you will provide to meet the different needs of the children in the group
- How you will observe, guide and support children during the process
- How you will capture children's voices and record what they say about their experience or creation.

Reflective Questions:

- Are art equipment and materials easily accessible to enable children to become confident in using art as a means of communication and expression?
- How often are children encouraged to think about their feelings when taking part in expressive art experiences?
- Do adults ask questions which enable children to talk at length about their creation?

3.06 Music and dance

Music and dance is an effective way for children to express themselves using their whole body

Expressive arts and design “involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology” EYFS Sept 2014 (P12)

The benefits:

- By observing children dance to music, adults can gain insight into how it is possible for young children to make sense of their experiences through movement.
- Promotes opportunities for children to explore different genres of music and how they make them feel.

What does it involve?

Adults should introduce the different types of music, instruments and materials available for children to use.

Time should be given for children to explore these resources.

When listening to music adults should talk about how the music makes the children feel and how this may be expressed through different movements

Adults may need to spend time modelling how to use the instruments and might consider the use of video clips of different types of dance as a talking point.

Adults must always ensure there is sufficient space for children to move around safely and to satisfy their expressive movement.

Consider:

- How you will model and value children's contribution throughout the session
- How you will build on children's responses to music and give them confidence to use movement to express themselves.

Reflective Questions:

- Do you regularly use music and dance as a planned experience to help children express themselves emotionally?
- Do you offer any additional activities for children that may benefit from dance as a medium of expression?
- Are all practitioners embracing music and dance as a method of communicating for children?

3.07 Stories & group discussions

Allows children to learn about listening to the views of others as well as considering their own. An effective way for adults to hear the voice of the child on a specific topic in a group situation.

Communication and language “development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations” EYFS Sept 2014 (p11)

The benefits:

- Stories help children to make connections with familiar experiences. This empowers children to confidently contribute to a discussion about the story content
- Group discussions promote children's growing ability to voice their opinion and thoughts on a shared topic of interest
- Children's views can be gathered on a particular topic to inform reflective practice for the adults.

What does it involve?

Find a comfortable place for children and adults to sit and share a story.

Select a story that is related to the children's interests.

Adults read the story asking questions that encourage children to offer their thoughts and ideas. Being mindful to actively listening to all contributions, demonstrating how children's voice is valued.

Consider

- additional resources that may enrich the experience such as story props
- any sensitive issues the topic may raise
- how you will try to include all children in the discussion, while always respecting a child's choice not to speak
- Not passing judgement on children's comments

Reflective Questions:

- Are books used effectively to find out what children think or to promote discussion about particular topics?
- How do you ensure all children have the opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas through group time?
- How are less confident children being supported to communicate their views at group/ story time?

4.01 Reviewing your practice using the voice of the children

All early years practitioners should be aware of the value of listening to children and parents to evaluate and improve practice and provision; not only is it embedded in legislation, within the Childcare Act (2006), the Early Years Ofsted self-evaluation, how do you know and use children's views and ideas' also asks settings to consult with the children to evaluate their provision.

"Leaders and managers actively seek, evaluate and act on the views of parents, staff and children to drive continual improvement" The Inspection Handbook (August 2015)

During Ofsted inspection, leaders and managers need to demonstrate how they gather and respond to the views of children and parents.

In order to gather a broad range of views from all children it is advisable for settings to use a variety of methods to collect the views of children, This enables practitioners to be confident that all children have been given the opportunity to have their views and opinions are interpreted.

When working with babies, toddlers and non-verbal children, it is expected that the majority of your results will be gathered through observation of the child in the setting and how they routinely interact with peers and adults.

Remember when discussing feelings, you must be sensitive to each child's emotional needs. The following consultation documents provide

practitioners with examples of questions about individual topics. These are a guide to the kind of questions you might want to ask in response to the children you are working with.

For example:

The Safeguarding consultation sheet asks the following questions regarding injuries:

- What happens when you hurt yourself?
- How do you feel if you hurt yourself?
- What do you want when you hurt yourself?

These questions could be gathered through an observation, for example below, a practitioner has observed a child's response when they are hurt.

"Observed a child approaching an adult, when they fell over. The adult comforted the child until they felt ready to start playing again."

After consulting with children it is the responsibility of the adult to feed back to staff and children about what they have learnt from them. They should share how they will use the information, identifying what is important to the children about the particular topic and how it will inform changes to practice, routines and environment. The information gathered should also inform the setting's self-evaluation process. Practitioners should consider how the changes they have made in response to the information gathered has had an impact on outcomes for children.

4.02 Children's voice: British values consultation

Mutual Respect

- Which adults help you here?
- Who do you like to spend time with?
- What can you tell me about other people and places?
- Do your friends like the same things as you?
- Have you ever been to another country, what did you see there?

Liberty

- What do you like to do here?
- Do you have a favourite place to play here?
- Do you like to try new things?
- Who do you tell important things to
- How do you know when you have done a good job?

Always consider the most appropriate methods to use taking into account the age and ability of the children you are consulting with.

Below are some example methods to gather the views of children on British values:

- **Observation:** Observe the children, read body language and how they make choices about where to play and how they
- **Interact** with others.
- **Puppets:** Allow children to use puppets to relay their feeling through a different character
- **Visual Walk:** Walk around the environment used by children on a daily basis. Allow children time to tell you or to indicate areas they have opinions about.
- **Discussion:** use photos and books to prompt verbal and non-verbal discussion about subjects such as friendship, people in other communities or rules.

Top Tip: Ensure you understand each child's preferred method of communication and where relevant make adaptations to accommodate their needs so that all children's views are.

Democracy

- Can you choose what you do here?
- Do you tell adults what you like or don't like?
- Can you play with your friends when you want to?
- Who is good at listening to you?

Rule of Law

- Do you feel safe here?
- Who helps you when you need it?
- What happens here when you disagree with your friends?
- Are there any rules here?
- How do you help to keep everyone safe?

These are example questions. You can add to these or adapt to suit children in your setting.

Introduction

Listening to children

Early years

Review and consultation

Practitioners' guides

4.02 Children's voice: British values consultation

Please list the methods used to gather the views of the child:

Challenges:

Please record the feedback and main themes from children in the boxes below.

Mutual Respect:

Liberty:

Democracy:

Rules of Law:

How will you or have you used this information to impact on outcomes for children?

How will have you feedback the findings to the children?

4.03 Children's voice: parent partnerships consultation

Daily Routine

- Why do you come here?
- What do you like doing here?
- How does your family find out what you do here?
- Who looks after you here?
- How do you know what's going to happen next?

Transitions

- Do you go to another nurseries, pre schools or child minders?
- Who brings you here?
- Can you remember when you first started coming here? How did you feel?
- Have you always played in this this room? If no, how did you feel when you came here?

Always consider the most appropriate methods to use taking into account the age and ability of the children you are consulting with

Some example methods to gather views of children:

- **Role play:** Provide familiar resources to enable children to recreate familiar experiences and express how they feel about them
- **Discussion:** use photos and books to prompt verbal and non-verbal discussion about families
- **Art:** Provide a range of materials for children to use as a form of self-expression
- **Puppets:** Allow children to use puppets to relay their feeling through a different character
- **Pictures:** Use of feeling images to allow nonverbal or shy children to indicate their feelings.

Top Tip: Ensure that you listen to the children's views and comments being mindful not to judge or correct them. Take care to consider the language you use and how your comments can influence children's responses.

Community

- Tell me about where you live?
- Do you go on walks or trips when you are here?
- Do you ever have people to visit you here?
- Can you tell me who can help you here?
- Do your family ever come and play with you here?

Parent Partnership

- How do your family find out what you do here?
- Can you bring in things from home?
- When you are here, who can you talk to about your family?

These are example questions. You can adapt to suit children in your setting.

Introduction

Listening to children

Early years

Review and consultation

Practitioners' guides

4.03 Children's voice: parent partnerships consultation

Please list the methods used to gather the voice of the child:

Challenges:

Please record the feedback and main themes from children in the boxes below.

Daily Routine:

Transitions:

Community:

Parent Partnership:

How will you or have you used this information to impact on outcomes for children?

How will have you feedback the findings to the children?

4.04 Children's voice: safeguarding consultation

Feeling Safe

- What do you do if you are worried or sad?
- Who is here that makes you feel safe?
- When do you feel safe?
- What makes you feel scared here?

Injury and Illness

- What happens when you hurt yourself or you have been ill?
- Who helps you when you hurt yourself or are feeling poorly?
- Who do you tell when you have hurt yourself?

Always consider the most appropriate methods to use taking into account the age and ability of the children you are consulting with

Some example methods to gather views of children:

- **Role play:** Provide familiar resources to enable children to recreate familiar experiences and express how they feel about them
- **Art:** Provide a range of materials for children to use as a form of self-expression
- **Puppets:** Allow children to use puppets to relay their feeling through a different character
- **Discussion:** use photos and books to prompt verbal and non-verbal discussion about subjects such as friendship, people in other communities or rules.

Top Tip: You must always feedback to the children what you have heard and how you intend to use the information even if you are unable to make changes. Children need to feel their views are valued.

Relationships

- Who are special people to you here?
- Who keeps you safe here?
- If you feel sad, who do you want to see?

Assessing Risk

- Is there anything dangerous here?
- What do you do if you see something that is broken?
- Is there anything you find tricky or difficult here?

Introduction

Listening to children

Early years

Review and consultation

Practitioners' guides

4.04 Children's voice: safeguarding consultation

Please list the participation methods used to gather children's views:

Challenges:

Please record the feedback and main themes from children in the boxes below.

Feeling Safe:

Injuries:

Relationships:

Illness:

How will you or have you used this information to impact on outcomes for children?

How will have you feedback the findings to the children?

4.05 Children's voice: being healthy consultation

Healthy Eating

- What foods are good for us?
- What foods are bad for us?
- What foods would you choose to eat and why?
- What foods do you like to eat at home?

Emotional Wellbeing

- What makes you happy?
- What makes you sad?
- What makes you angry?
- Who can you talk to about how you are feeling?

Always consider the most appropriate methods to use taking into account the age and ability of the children you are consulting with

Some example methods to gather views of children:

- **Puppet Activity:** Use the puppets to start a discussion about healthy lifestyles.. This allows children to relay their feeling through a different character
- **Story followed** by group discussion.
- **Use a topic** related story to promote discussion amongst the children.
- **Art work.** Ask the children to use a range of available materials to create a picture around the subject.

Top Tip: Use what you know about the home experiences of children in your setting as a starting point.

Hygiene

- Why should we keep clean?
- What are germs?
- Why do we get ill sometimes?
- When should we wash our hands?

Physical

- What keeps our bodies strong?
- Why should we exercise?
- What happens to your body when you exercise?
- What exercise do you like doing?

Introduction

Listening to children

Early years

Review and consultation

Practitioners' guides

4.05 Children's voice: being healthy consultation

Please list the methods used to gather the voice of the child:

Challenges:

Please record the feedback and main themes from children in the boxes below.

Healthy Eating:

Hygiene:

Physical:

Emotional Well Being:

How will you or have you used this information to impact on outcomes for children?

How will you or have you fed back the findings to the children?

4.06 Children's voice: teaching and learning consultation

The Environment

- Tell me about this room?
- Do you like where things are?
- Where do you like to play outside?
- Is there anywhere inside or outside that you don't like to play?
- Do the adults sometimes make the room look different? If yes, do you help to decide where things go?

Choices

- Can you choose what to play with when you are here?
- What do you do if you don't like what there is to play with?
- Who do you tell if you want to play with something different?

Always consider the most appropriate methods to use taking into account the age and ability of the children you are consulting with

Some example methods to gather views of children:

- **Photography.** Support children to use technology to take photographs which show their likes and dislikes
- **Walk and Talk.** Walk around the environment and allow the child to tell you about the areas within it.
- **Discussion:** Use photographs or particular objects to prompt discussion.
- **Observation:** Observe the children and record how they make choices about what to play with and where.

Top Tip: When using photography, ensure the children are familiar with the cameras and how to use them. Be careful not to misinterpret a picture, always ask the child what they intended to photograph instead of assuming it was the object in the centre of the photograph.

Relationships

- Who listens to you here?
- Who do you tell if you are not enjoying yourself?
- Who is interested in what you are doing here?
- How do you know when you have done something well?

Recognising Learning

- What do you learn here?
- Who helps you to learn new things?
- Is there anything you find tricky?
- How do you feel when you learn new things?

Introduction

Listening to children

Early years

Review and consultation

Practitioners' guides

4.06 Children's voice: teaching and learning consultation

Please list the methods used to gather the voice of the child:

Challenges:

Please record the feedback and main themes from children in the boxes below.

The Environment:

Relationships:

Choices:

Recognising Learning:

How will you or have you used this information to impact on outcomes for children?

How will you/or have you, feedback the findings to the children?

5.01 Planning a voice of the child project

As well as embedding the Voice of the Child throughout daily practice, you may want to undertake a project to gain children's views and ideas on a specific area or idea. It is important to consider the following when planning the project:

- **The purpose:** Ask yourself and the team: why are you undertaking the project and what do you hope to achieve?
- **The process:** Consider the voice of the child methods you will use, what resources you will need and why this method is suitable for the children you will be working with
- **The ethics:** Ensure the children understand the project in an age and stage appropriate way and can give their consent for their voice to be shared
- **Feeding back to the children:** How will you feedback to children to ensure children understand how their views have been valued and used
- **The Outcomes:** Reflect on what you have learned from the project and how this will inform any changes to practice
- **Evaluation:** Review and record how you used the information gathered to improve your provision and the impact this had on outcomes for children

The following templates are included to help you plan the project:

- Voice of the child project plan template
- Voice of the child project example plan
- Voice of the child evaluation template
- Ethical considerations
- Child consent form
- Child evaluation form.



Introduction

Listening to children

Early years

Review and consultation

Practitioners' guides

5.02 Early years voice of the child project plan

Setting name:	Date:
Specific aim/s of project:	Why is it being done:
Questions to ask:	Who will be involved in the project:
Methods to be used to gain children's views	Resources needed
How will the project information be gathered:	
How will it be fed back to the children:	
How will the impact be measured:	

Introduction

Listening to children

Early years

Review and consultation

Practitioners' guides

5.03 Example of early years voice of the child project plan

Setting name: Flower Tots Nursery	Date: 4.4.2016
Specific aim/s of project: To gather the children's views on how the garden could be developed so that the children can use all areas of it	Why is it being done: Staff have observed that the children mainly use the area closest to the building and do not use all of the garden.
Questions to ask: What do you think of our garden? What do you like doing in the garden? Is there anything you don't like about the garden? What would you like to play with in the garden?	Who will be involved in the project: Carly to plan and lead the project. Room leaders to consult with the children in their own room, using age and stage appropriate methods.
Methods to be used to gain children's views	Resources needed
Cameras: staff to encourage children to take photos of the garden that they like and dislike. Catalogues: to look through with the children to gain their views on what they would enjoy to do in the garden. Discussion: with verbal children in groups of two or three. Observation: observe the younger children to establish favourite activities inside to include in the outside area. Drawing, painting and collage: children to plan a new garden area.	Cameras Catalogues of resources Planned questions for discussions Creative resources set up as planned activity to design a garden space

5.03 Example of early years voice of the child project plan

How will the project information be gathered:

All records to be kept together in a project folder. A display will be developed showing the project. A book will be developed for the book area called 'We made a garden' showing the project from start to finish.

How will it be fed back to the children:

All pictures to be displayed or put into learning journals. After each project activity is done the adult will explain to the children how their views are important and are helping to make the garden better to play and learn in.

How will the impact be measured:

Observation of how the children use the improved garden. Children's and parents views gathered on what they think of the improvements. Progress in children's learning.

Introduction

Listening to children

Early years

Review and consultation

Practitioners' guides

5.04 Early years voice of the child project plan evaluation

Setting name:	Date:
Project and specific aims:	
Were the aims met:	
Outcomes for children:	
Project strengths	Challenges
Overall evaluation of project:	
How were the findings of the project fed back to the children and what was their response:	
Future ideas for voice of the child project work:	

5.05 Ethics in early years voice of the child projects

Ethics is the understanding of the purpose of an activity, so that all involved can give their full consent to be part of it. All participants must be fully informed of how it will affect them.

To ensure you are ethical in a voice of the child project consider:

Purpose

- How you will explain the project to the children
- How will you inform the children what their role is in the project
- How you will ensure each participant is informed of the benefits and consequences of participating
- How you will explain what you will do with the children's views, comments and photographs you might take
- Ensure the information is given in a way that children can understand and that there
- There is time for children to ask questions.

Permission / Consent

- How you will ensure children have choice to participate and that they are fully aware of what they are consenting to, For example how their views and any photos or recordings or documents will be used
- How will children know they have the right to change their mind and withdraw

Remember:

- Consent is an ongoing process. Adults should use observation of body language to ensure children are still happy to take part.
- To use a consent form for the child and the parent. Ensure the child consent is user friendly **(See Example 1)**
- When creating parent consent forms, consider how you will share information with parents. It is generally considered that parents should receive a summary report detailing the findings of the project - this should not contain individual comments or findings of a particular child.

5.05 Ethics in early years voice of the child projects

Confidentiality

- Consider how you will keep confidentiality and ensure everyone's views are respected
- Ensure transcripts and other evidence is stored securely.

Collating Findings

When looking at photographs the children have taken, it is important that you do not make assumptions about the content or assume any were taken by mistake.

Always allow the child to make this decision and inform adults of their views, wishes or feelings on the information gathered.

- Ask the children for feedback on the activity. **(Example 2)**
- Ensure you are being non-judgmental about their views or comments

Feedback

- Ensure you tell children how the information has been used or whether any of it cannot be used and why
- Ensure you feedback in an age and stage appropriate manner.

Other Considerations

- Ensure children are aware of the opportunities they have to make choices and decisions during the process
- Be reflective about each stage of your voice of the child work. This will help improve further projects by considering what you would change next time. Would you change anything next time?
- When carrying out any voice of the child work the researcher should be mindful of any other people the work may affect

5.05 Ethics in early years voice of the child projects

Example 1 Child Consent Form

Child's name

.....



I am happy to talk with Dawn		
You can take my photograph		
You can write down what I say		
You can show my photo to other people who I know		

My signature or special mark:.....

Date:.....

Example 2 Activity Evaluation Form

Child's name

.....



Did you enjoy this activity?		
What was the best bit?		
Was there any bit that you didn't like?		

My signature or special mark:.....

Date:.....

5.06 All about me...

When working with younger children in your setting and undertaking a Voice of the Child project, it would be beneficial to gather information about each child using this 'All about me' form. This will help you to 'tune in' to the non-verbal, individual views of each child.

Child Name:	Date:
I like to be called	
My Key Person is	
About my family	
About my culture and background	

Communication

When I am hungry I tell you by:
When I am happy I tell you by:
If I want a cuddle I tell you by:
When I am sad I tell you by:
When I am tired I tell you by:
When I am excited I tell you by:
Some of the sounds I use mean:
Other things I tell you about me:

5.06 All about me...

Communication

Friends I like to play with are:

People who are important to me:

Likes and Dislikes

Places I like to be are:

My favorite activities are:

Things that I find hard are:

I like:

I dislike:

Foods I like are:

Anything else that you have interpreted about me that would be helpful to record

When you have gathered these views of the child for the project, consider how you will use this information to adapt your daily provision and practice to ensure you are meeting children's needs.

It is important to remember that as with all people, views, preferences and feelings can change. This must be updated regularly to continue to understand individual children.

5.07 All about my family

When working with younger children in your setting and undertaking a voice of the child project, it would be beneficial to gather information about each child's family using this 'all about my family' form. This will help you to ensure children and families feel welcome in your setting and that their needs are catered for.

Child Name:

Date:

Name of person completing form:

My Family

People in my family are:

Other important people to me are:

About my culture and background:

Places I often visit with my family are:

Things I often do with my family are:

Objects, toys, places or pets that are important to me are:

Communication

When I am hungry I tell you by:

When I am happy I tell you by:

If I want a cuddle I tell you by:

When I am sad I tell you by:

When I am tired I tell you by:

5.07 All about my family

When I am excited I tell you by:

Some of the other sounds I use mean:

Other things I tell you about me:

Likes and Dislikes

Places I like to be are:

My favourite activities at home are:

I like:

I dislike:

Foods I like are:

Anything else that you have interpreted about your child that would be helpful to know:

When you have gathered these views of the child for the project, consider how you will use this information to adapt your daily provision and practice to ensure you are meeting children's and family's needs.

It is important to remember that as with all people views, preferences and feelings can change. This must be updated regularly to continue to understand individual children.

5.08 Voice of the child audit

Reflect on each of the statements, considering what you do now and possible areas for improvement

Unique Child	What we do now	Areas for development
Children are supported to develop a positive sense of their own identity, culture and self-image		
Children understand and embrace differences in gender, language, culture, ethnicity, religion, special needs and disabilities		
Children are involved in developing the rules, boundaries and limits that help them to feel safe and secure		
Practitioners understand how to promote a sense of wellbeing in all children		
All children including babies, children with English as an additional language or disabilities are listened to and their views valued		

5.08 Voice of the child audit

Reflect on each of the statements, considering what you do now and possible areas for improvement

Positive relationships

Practitioners show respect for children, their views and their individuality		
Practitioners build warm trusting relationships and show sensitivity to the needs and feelings of children at all times		
Practitioners know how to tune into children in order to listen and respond to all methods of communication		

5.08 Voice of the child audit

Reflect on each of the statements, considering what you do now and possible areas for improvement

Enabling Environments		
The environment reflects children's interests and preferences		
The learning environment inside and out has a wide range of open-ended resources that invite thinking and communication		
All adults organise the environment so that it promotes independence and confidence in children's learning		
Children are supported to make choices about where to play and for how long		
Children feel comfortable to ask questions, take risks, make mistakes and learn		
Practitioners monitor children's interests and engagement levels in each area of the environment and make changes in response		

5.08 Voice of the child audit

Reflect on each of the statements, considering what you do now and possible areas for improvement

Learning and development

Child development is understood and discussed regularly by staff		
Practitioners extend and develop children's communication in their play through age and stage appropriate interactions		
Experiences are planned that follow children's interests		
The characteristics of effective learning are understood and valued		

5.08 Voice of the child audit

Reflect on each of the statements, considering what you do now and possible areas for improvement

Voice of the child		
Staff frequently ask children for their views and opinions		
Children's views are respected and acted upon		
Time is given for children to share their views in group times		
Practitioners seek new methods to enable all children to contribute and have their voice heard, including shy and quiet children		
Children are involved in decision making		
The environment has many visible examples of the children's voice		

5.09 Developing a whole team approach to capture the voice of the child

In order to help the whole staff team appreciate and value the Voice of the Child, it is beneficial for leaders to facilitate talk about children and how adults in the setting can encourage them to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions. The statements below could be used effectively to establish how the team listen to children and will identify areas for professional development.

It is not essential to use all of the discussion statements at the same time. These could be used over time to develop practice.

Staff discussion statements

We listen to all young children because	
We listen to all young children to	
We help all children express themselves by	
We listen to babies and pre-verbal children by	
We listen to children learning English as an additional language by	
Children's voice is displayed in the setting	
We let children know we value what they say or communicate to us by	
Through listening to children we benefit by	
Through listening to their views and opinions children benefit by	