Voice of the child

Guidance 2017

"The child's needs are paramount, and the needs and wishes of each child, be they a baby or infant, or an older child, should be put first, so that every child receives the support they need before a problem escalates."

Working Together to Safeguard Children March 2015

Complex Dependency Model

The Local Safeguarding Children Board
Working to Keep West Cheshire's Children and Young People Safe

Cheshire West and Chester

Contents

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously and considered.

Article 12 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Introduction and context

The principle of good practice is to ensure that children and young people's views are heard and recognised. If you become concerned about a child or young person it may be useful to use some of the tools available in the **multi-agency assessment toolkit** .

This guidance has been developed to provide workers with the underpinning principles to effective communication with children and young people and links to a range of tools and methods that may support them to capture the voice of the child within their practice.

Considerations and first steps

The following considerations are positive qualities, principles or approaches that underpin effective communication and aid workers ensuring the voice of the child is captured.

- Be flexible in your approach. No one method or tool will work for every child

- Workers must ensure they make sufficient time to spend with each child or young person

- Need to establish a working relationship with the young person and engage their interest. (Establish ground rules and boundaries)

- Develop trust and a rapport through non-intrusive questions.

- Give the young person a good introduction to your role and duties to them

- Consider how you could make the child more comfortable

- It is important to have a variety of tools available to help communicate with children and young people

- Workers need to work at the child's pace and tailor their communication style to the best way of communicating with the individual

- Understand their diversity needs, plus their interests and activities. For example, use open-ended questions or T.E.D questions[1] to give them the opportunity to share

- Activity based communication helps both children and young people feel more comfortable expressing their feelings, and helps build trust
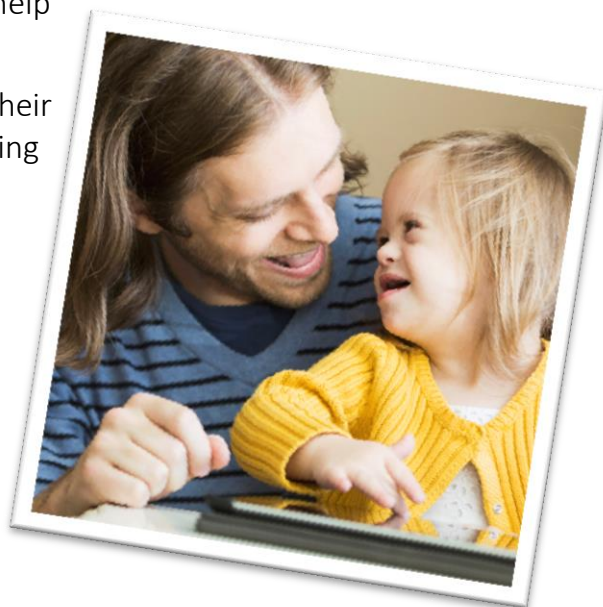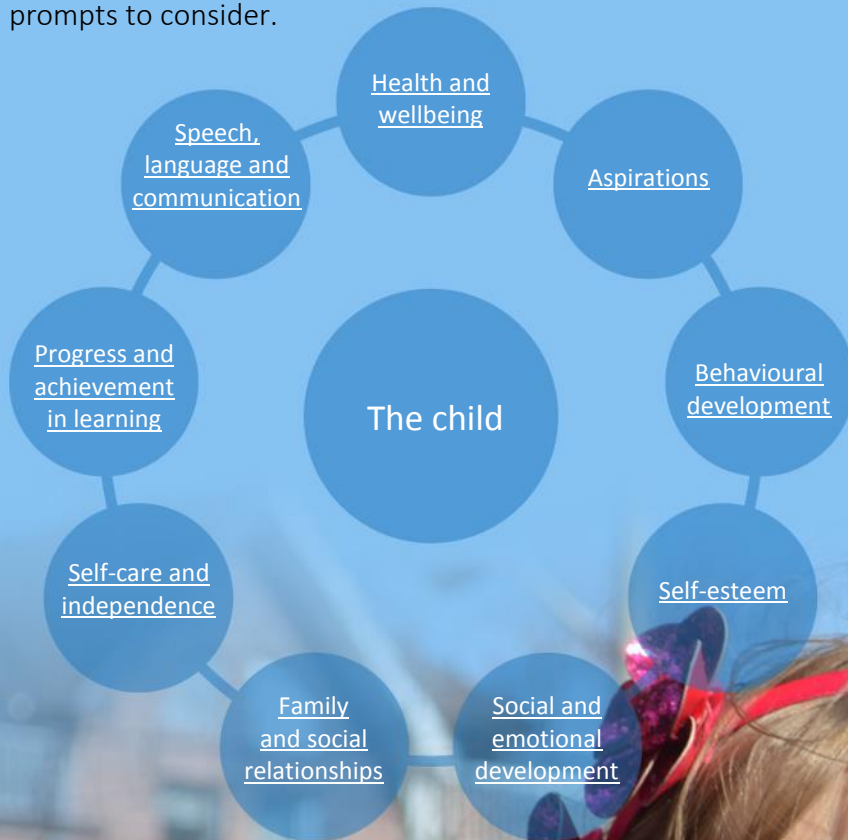
[1]TED Questions begin with Tell, Explain or Describe. Examples of TED "questions" Tell me more about that. Explain the situation to me. Describe that to me.

Voice of the child areas of consideration summary

The following model has been developed to support practitioners to consider the different areas when gathering the voice of the child. Behind each heading there are a range of questions or prompts to consider.

- Health and wellbeing
- Speech, language and communication
- Aspirations
- Progress and achievement in learning
- The child
- Behavioural development
- Self-care and independence
- Self-esteem
- Family and social relationships
- Social and emotional development

Using tools

Many workers use tools to enable them to seek the views of children or to aid participation, enabling children to draw or write their views more freely than in direct conversation.

Useful examples are available to assist workers but not intended to replace other good practice. Workers should plan ahead and adapt tools to suit particular children & young people or circumstances. There are no right answers to how to do this, just opportunities in the available tools and resources such as books, dolls and figures, drawing materials, and games.

A wide range of tools are available to encourage us all and help with our direct work. Please take care and exercise professional judgement as they do not fit all children or all circumstances. They are intended as a guide and can be adapted for individual use. There are many more available and in use. Please share what you use yourself among teams and services.

There are more formal tools used within organisations that form part of assessments or reviews such as those used with looked after children and young carers.

"A court shall have regard in particular to – the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned considered in the light of his age and understanding".

Children Act 1989

Every child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media on the child's choice.

Article 13 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Examples of tools and approaches

- **Bold text (all ages)**
  One of the simplest methods of ensuring the voice of the child is clearly visible through any assessment is to highlight or use bold text to represent the child or young person's views, thoughts and feelings within any assessment or report.

- **Three houses / Three island exercise (6-11 age range)**
  This takes the three assessment questions from the signs of safety model – what are we worried about/what is working well/what needs to happen – and puts them in the three houses / islands drawn to engage children in filling in their worries/good things/dreams.

- **My views (6-17 age range)**
  This updated form can be used by workers to record a child or young person's thoughts and feelings gathered through other methods or able to be used with older children and young people directly. This type of form has a number of direct questions that aim to identify the individual's view of a current position and what they would like to see.

- **One page profiles (all ages)**
  A one page profile captures all the important information about a person on a single sheet of paper under three simple headings: what people appreciate about me, what's important to me and how best to support me. One page profiles are deceptively simple, and in this simplicity is their strength. They help us to support people better by: helping us build better relationships by truly understanding what really matters to the person in their life and the way they are supported to live it. Can be adapted to use with all ages and very useful when working with those with differences in their communication style. Examples and editable templates

Further examples and useful links

Cheshire West and Chester Autism Service Pupil Voice Resource Pack (all ages)
[Pupil Voice Resource Pack](#)
The Autism Service has developed a pack of tools to help collect the voice of the pupil for those with differences in their communication style. The pack contains twelve separate methods that can be used including templates.

In My Shoes (2006) (4+ age)
[Child and Family Training](#)
In My Shoes is a paid for computer package and training that helps children and vulnerable adults communicate about their experiences, including potentially distressing events or relationships. It can be used in a wide range of circumstances, including interviews with children who have difficulties in expressing emotions, are hard to engage or have developmental delay

Sheffkids (all ages)
[Sheffkids](#)
Home of Sheffield City Council Children's Involvement Team. The team has developed a wide range of free to use resources in addition to some pay for materials all designed to support practitioners to engage and work with children and young people.

ELSA Support Website (all ages)
[ELSA Support](#)
Extensive resource website aimed at those working with children and young people. Site contains both free and paid worksheets, activity plans and programmes of work that can be used with children and young people to enable them to express themselves and develop

'Say it your own way'. Children's participation in assessments (2006)
[Barnardo's/DfES](#)
This pack includes a range of practical resources to support professionals to give children a voice within assessments

Children in Care Council (CICC)
[CICC](#)
Website designed by young people for young people. Providing accessible information and resources to looked after children/young people and care leavers in Cheshire West and Chester.

Outcome Star (4+ age)
[Outcomes Star](#)
The Outcomes Star™ is a unique suite of licenced tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people. Organisations can pay for use of existing Outcomes StarS. The stars can prompt discussion with a young person on their current position and support identifying what they want to happen.

Solution-focused practice toolkit (2015)
[NSPCC](#)
Helping professionals use the approach when working with children and young people. The solution-focused practice toolkit provides inspiration for worksheets and activities to use, adapt or devise for the children and young people you work with.

My Needs, Wishes and Feelings Pack (all ages) [CAFCASS](#)
Example of best practice this is an extensive pack of resources developed by CAFCASS to support its workers to enable and ensure that children and young people are able to express their views and feeling.

Talking Mats
[Talking Mats](#)
Talking Mats is a social enterprise whose vision is to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties, and those close to them, by increasing their capacity to communicate effectively about things that matter to them. Range of free and to buy resources.

Listening to Young Children (2003)
Penny Lancaster and Vanessa Broadbent,
ISBN-10: 0335213723
The pack provides a conceptual framework for listening to young children. The key principles embedded in each of the elements of the resource are inclusion, participation and support.

Communication and assessment apps for use with children and young people
Child and Family Training
Child and Family Training have developed a range of pay for apps designed to work on touch screen devices. They have been carefully designed to help a range of professionals engage in direct work with children.

Understanding child development
Research in practice
Range of informative publications to support practitioners expand their understanding of child development including this link to a self-guided learning section.

Child and adolescent development 0-19
Learning Wales
Guidance and information site developed by the Welsh Government. Is a source for the latest education policy, guidance, research and more. Within the site there are a number of eLearning programmes including an extensive course on child development.

Kids R Central "All About Me"
All About Me
An international example of good practice developed by the institute of child protection studies at Australian Catholic University. This pack of resources was developed from the CAFCASS resources.

Voice of the child: Evidence Review (2015)
Research in practice
The lived experiences of children, young people and families are a core element of the evidence that must inform our work, alongside research and practice expertise.
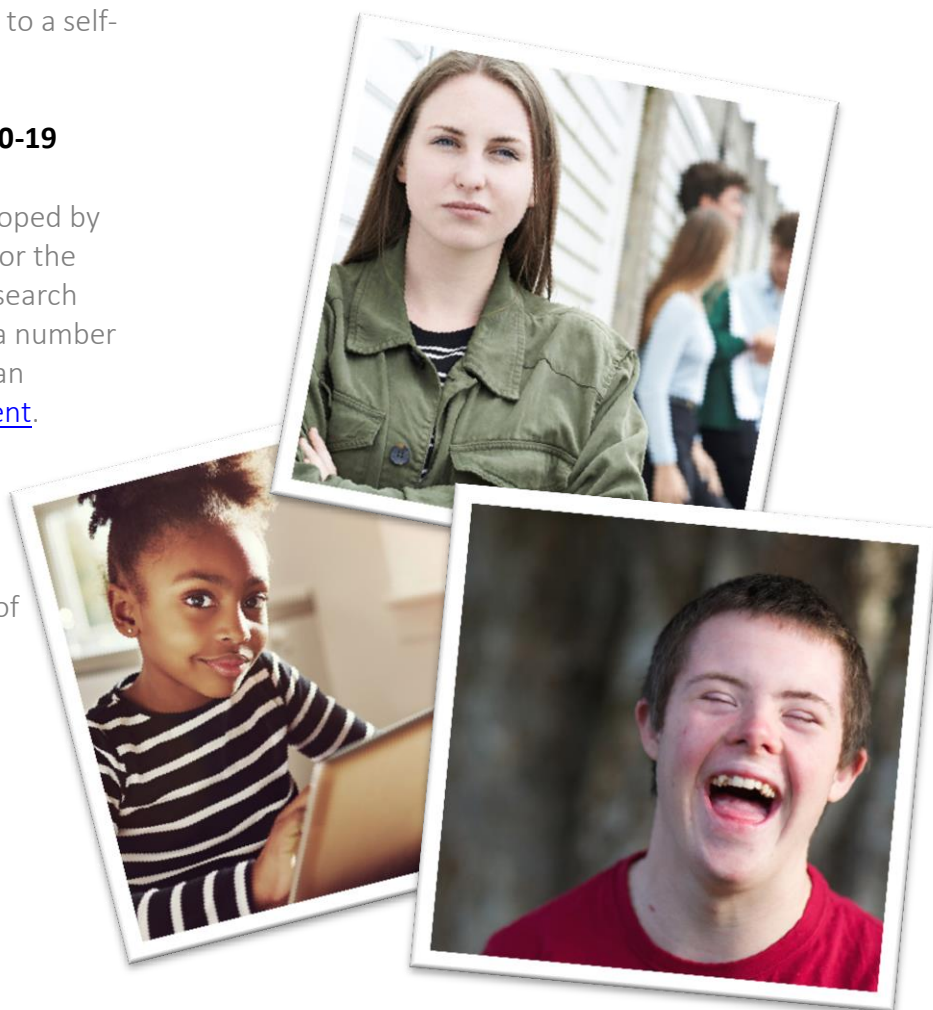
Appendix

Voice of the child areas of consideration model

The model will be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. To reflect recommendations and to share further good practice examples.

Health and wellbeing				
Age range	**0-5 years**	**6-11 years**	**12-18 years**	**Special educational need and disability**
General prompts, questions to consider or methods to use	Observations on the child – are they thriving, active, lively, tired and lethargic, development of motor skills, known health issues, likes and dislikes, diet (preferences / patterns) sleep, routines and play		Observations, known health issues, diet (preferences / patterns) drug and alcohol awareness, sexual health awareness, risk taking behaviour etc	Same as for the respective age
Possible tools, approaches to use	WellComm Cheshire Child A Talker(CCAT) Development Timeline	My views About me One page profiles	My views One page profiles	Chat Mats One page profiles

Aspirations				
Age range	**0-5 years**	**6-11 years**	**12-18 years**	**Special educational need and disability**
General prompts, questions to consider or methods to use	Observations and play. Likes and dislikes,	Observations and play. Likes and dislikes, views of school / learning setting, direct questioning	Direct questioning	Observations and play. Likes and dislikes, views of school / learning setting, direct questioning
Possible tools, approaches to use		My views My journey tool One page profiles	My views One page profiles	One page profiles

Behavioural development				
Age range	**0-5 years**	**6-11 years**	**12-18 years**	**Special educational need and disability**
General prompts, questions to consider or methods to use	Observations and play: Can the child be calmed down when upset, if so how? How long does it take the child or young person to calm down? How does the child or young person react to behaviour management strategies which may be used? What makes the child or young person sad/angry? Likes/dislikes Is there a pattern to any behaviour which is displayed? Does the child or young person take risks?			
Possible tools, approaches to use	Development Timeline	Strengths & difficulties Risky Business Activity		Good Day Bad Day worksheet

Self-esteem, self-image and identity

Age range	0-5 years	6-11 years	12-18 years	Special educational need and disability
General prompts, questions to consider or methods to use	Observation of the child with older ones you can ask direct questions, Does the child tend to be happy/sad? Does the child recognise family members? What reactions does the child have to family members? How do they refer to themselves? Are they confident or apprehensive about in situations? Have you seen a change in their behaviours			
Possible tools, approaches to use	ELSA Self Esteem Resources	ELSA Self Esteem Resources Strengths & difficulties One page profiles	Strengths & difficulties One page profiles	ELSA Self Esteem Resources One page profiles

Social and emotional development

Age range	0-5 years	6-11 years	12-18 years	Special educational need and disability
General prompts, questions to consider or methods to use	Observations and play. E.g. group / independent / sharing etc How do they react to strangers? Does the child play- solitary, parallel, co-operative. Do they display strong attachments, what is the child or young person's relationship like with peers			
Possible tools, approaches to use	Leuven scales		Relationship circles	Relationship circles

Family and social relationships

Age range	0-5 years	6-11 years	12-18 years	Special educational need and disability
General prompts, questions to consider or methods to use	Observations and play. Do they talk of family relationships / Self/ Roles/ Home /community?			
Possible tools, approaches to use	Three houses Whos who activity Family trees	Three houses Whos who activity Family trees Relationship circles My normal day (weekday and weekend)		

Self-care and independence

Age range	0-5 years	6-11 years	12-18 years	Special educational need and disability
General prompts, questions to consider or methods to use	Observations, What can the child do independently? Does the child have a desire to be independent? Does the child make choices? How the child does express his/her own choices?		Observations, direct questioning	
Possible tools, approaches to use		My views One page profiles My normal day (weekday and weekend)	My views One page profiles My normal day (weekday and weekend)	Relationship circles One page profiles

Progress and achievement in learning

Age range	0-5 years	6-11 years	12-18 years	Special educational need and disability
General prompts, questions to consider or methods to use	Observations and play, ages and stages, Early Years foundation stages ,	School data, attendance, punctuality, attainment Observations of teachers or other workers		
Possible tools, approaches to use	WellComm Assessment Cheshire Child A Talker(CCAT)	Likes and dislike activities One page profiles	Likes and dislike activities One page profiles	Likes and dislike activities One page profiles

Speech, language and communication

Age range	0-5 years	6-11 years	12-18 years	Special educational need and disability
General prompts, questions to consider or methods to use	Observations and play, school data, health data	Observations and engagement in activities , school, school data, health data – how long can they concentrate for, do they have a favourite book how do they interact with peers		
Possible tools, approaches to use	WellComm Assessment Cheshire Child A Talker(CCAT)			

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