

Gathering Children and Young People's Views

Guidance for Educational Setting Staff

We want all children in Warwickshire to be...

HEARD SAFE HEALTHY SKILLED HAPPY

Warwickshire Educational Psychology Service

iMPACT

ASK LISTEN ACT

This guidance was collaboratively developed by representatives from:

- IMPACT (the Young Person's Forum for SEND in Warwickshire).
- Warwickshire Educational Psychology Service (Dr Charlotte May, Dr Catherine Harrison).
- The Voice, Influence and Change Team (Dr Sam Craven, Glenn Kimberley).



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Section One – General Principles

Why is it important to gather children and young people's views as part of a graduated approach?

Introduction

Children and young people have a right to share their views, to feel listened to, and to know that their views can influence the decisions that affect them.[1] This guidance explains why gathering children and young people's views is important and highlights the benefits of doing so.

This guidance was developed for educational professionals working with children and young people aged 0–25 across a range of settings in Warwickshire. For the purposes of this guidance, the term *child* (or *children*) will be used to refer to all children and young people, unless otherwise specified. The term *staff member* refers to adults who support children within educational settings, including teachers, pastoral staff, teaching assistants, and learning mentors. Whilst this guidance is primarily intended for educational settings, it is important to recognise that some children may not currently be accessing education provision or may feel more comfortable sharing their views with another trusted adult, such as a parent carer or professional. Although the specific approaches used to gather children's views may vary depending on the context and the individual child, the underlying principles and importance of hearing children's voices remain the same.

Why do we gather children's views?

There are a variety of benefits in gathering children's views. This includes a positive impact on children's self-esteem, confidence, feelings of success, strengthening their social world, and developing trust in adults and themselves[2, 3]. The process of sharing views can also be fun and enjoyable!

Supporting children to share their views is critical to develop self-advocacy. Developing these skills will mean that children can enhance their ability to communicate effectively and confidently with others, make informed decisions about their lives, and build resilience and independence.

It is also important to recognise that gaining children's views is included as a key principle within the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice, to ensure the meaningful and direct participation of children in the decisions made about their support (for example, as a core part of Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments)[4]. Supporting children to share their views is therefore not an 'add on' to an assessment process or when deciding support, but an integral part of developing plans and an accurate understanding of what is going on in a child's world.

When do we gather children's views?

Gaining children's views is an everyday part of what we do. This helps us to learn what works best for that child, plan the most effective support, and help the child feel at the centre of decisions made about them. Children's views can and will change over time, and so it is necessary to regularly gather views, and support children to reflect on what is important to them.

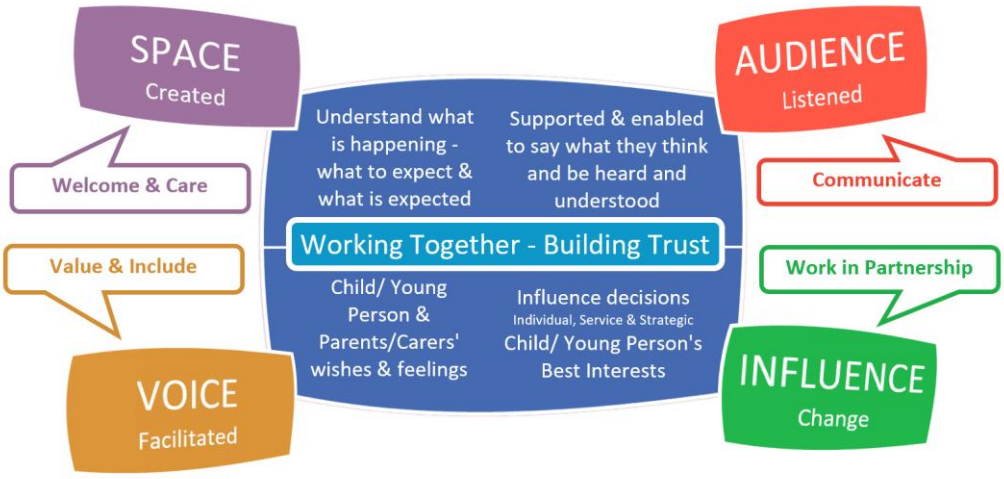
What are some best practice guidelines?

The Lundy Model of Participation provides a way of thinking about and structuring a child's participation in view gathering[5]. The model is based on The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) [1], stating that children have a right to be heard and for their views to be given due weight.

Work alongside key stakeholders in Warwickshire (e.g., young people and parent carers) highlights that this model is enhanced by including the Four Cornerstones Model of Inclusion and Coproduction, which forms the basis of our Working Together Charter for Warwickshire SEND and Warwickshire Schools' Inclusion Charter. Together these map out a framework for us to focus on, in developing our support for children, young people and their families and involvement in things that affect them.

This framework helps us to consider how we:

- **Create the spaces** for children, young people and families, through developing and nurturing **welcome and care,** where it is clear what is happening, what to expect and what is expected.
- **Facilitate their voices** through the way we **value and include** them as individuals and the ideas they share about what they need and how those needs can be met.
- Ensure the **right audiences are listening** to children, young people and families through effective two-way **communication** and opportunities to be heard, remembering that different people will have different needs around communication.
- **Influence change** through commitments to **working in partnership**, moving beyond engagement to sharing decisions about effective solutions and ensuring that there is feedback about the difference that their involvement has made.
- Developing and nurturing each of these to build **trust**, which is essential for effective **working together**.



Adapted from Lundy (2007), Four Cornerstones of Inclusion and Coproduction (2016) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

Giving options about where sessions happen, what tools are used to share views, or who is involved makes a big difference. The wrong tool can make some young people feel misunderstood or even excluded. The best person to help a young person gather their views depends on what the young person wants to share but needs to be **someone they trust**. Having choice matters, as does being able to adapt and change if something is not working.

When views are asked for in an education context, this can suggest to young people that these views must be about education. So, they may need questions to prompt or 'given permission' to **include views about the wider areas of their life.**

Remember, **children don't just appear at school** in the morning. Getting up and **travelling to school can be a struggle**. The child you see in school is **not always the one they are at home**. For some, effort in school, can mean **home is about recovery**, leaving less energy to socialise, play and learn life skills. When the balance is not right, the next day will be impacted.

We know that sometimes **what a young person wants may not be in line with what others consider to be in their best interests**, but the young person's views should **still be heard**.

iMPACT Said...

By having support, some young people can feel the role of their friends is 'reduced.' **Consider how friendships can be seen as part of a support network**, in the same way they are for young people who don't need special educational support.

Education is important but so too are other areas of life. What happens at home, with friendships and in the community make a big difference to how young people feel and how they do in education. **Opportunities outside of education can give young people a chance to achieve in the things they enjoy**, which can help them find success. This can help improve wellbeing and can make it easier to access and achieve in education, particularly for young people experiencing Emotional Based School Avoidance/Non-Attendance (EBSA/NA) or on reduced timetables. **These other interests can help motivate young people through tough times**.

It is Important to **understand what 'friendship' means** to individual young people. As young people get older, their **friendships often become more central** to their lives. For many, their friends are the people they will talk to when they are struggling. **For other young people, parents continue to be the most important source of support**.

The following ideas were developed by IMPACT, informed by their views and experiences.

SPACE
Created

Where: Select a space where the child feels safe and comfortable. Ideally somewhere chosen by the child.

Time: Ensure there is enough time, so the child doesn't feel rushed. Avoid interruptions to maintain focus. Consider what else they have going on.

Flexible: Children may prefer different setups; consider sitting at a table, on the floor, on a bean bag, or side by side. Adapt the environment and the method used to suit the child's preferences. Be prepared with different tools/methods, so you can adapt and consider what supports focus, including movement and avoiding distractions.

Breaks: Some children may prefer or benefit from several shorter sessions or need breaks. If so, ensure their views are recorded across all sessions.

Preparation: Gather previous views the child has shared, e.g., in termly reviews or previous sessions, and ideas of what has happened as prompts for reflection.

Why: Understand why the child feels they need support and the difference the support makes. Seek to understand what is important to the child/young person.

VOICE
Facilitated

Choice: Children should be able to choose who supports them in sharing their views and how they wish to express themselves.

Familiarity: A trusted adult can often help a child feel more at ease. Ensure the person gathering views is known and trusted.

Supportive: Adults should guide gently, offering prompts without leading. To help the child feel confident in sharing their views, emphasise that there are no right or wrong answers.

Authenticity: Use the child's own words and representations (e.g., drawings, videos, photos).

Advocacy: Is there anyone else the child/young person would like involved? (e.g., a parent carer or trusted peer).

Holistic: Help them talk about things that are important to them, not just school; with a focus on their progress and future, not just past challenges, and consider the child/young person in different contexts, including home and in the community.

Ask: Avoid assumptions; what do children/young people want people to know?

AUDIENCE
Listened

Explain: Provide clear information and explain why their views are being gathered and how they will be used.

Who's who: Share who is involved, what they do, when they may be involved, and who makes the decisions.

Share: Provide the child/young person with a copy of their views (e.g., a poster and summary).

Check: Confirm their views have been recorded and interpreted accurately. This reinforces that their voice matters.

Accuracy: Ensure that names and preferences are correctly recorded and reported.

Consent: Explain who else will see their views and why. Confirm this is okay and establish any concerns they may have. This helps build trust and transparency. Maybe they are comfortable telling some people some things, but not everyone everything. There is a need to understand any limitations on sharing information.

Reflection: Ensure that other documents and decisions reflect on the child/young person's views.

INFLUENCE
Change

Importance: It is important that children and young people are able to share their views because it tells their story and paves their future.

Evolving Story: Reflect the challenges and needs of a child/young person to evidence the need for support but ensure that the impact of support and progress is evident as part of their evolving story. Remember that the information shared will influence the impression created of the young person.

Recognise: Appreciate that children/young people are different in different contexts and across time.

Update/Review: Ensure that the views children share, and any records reflect them now, and are not stuck in the past. Children/young people lose the opportunity to create a first impression as these documents go before them, so ensure it is a fair reflection.

Goals: Be led by what the child/young person needs and is asking for.

Approach: Look for creative solutions that are flexible to the needs of the child/young person but then be consistent in sticking to the plan that has been agreed.

What would we like to know?

The ideas related to what we might like to know in this section were developed by IMPACT. Whilst it is never possible to capture an exhaustive list, these give a great sense of the types of prompts or themes (related to home, education, and the wider community) that could be helpful for staff members to consider when gaining a child's views.

Overall, Young People want information about them and their views to **represent them authentically and evolve as they do**.

Young People are **expected to share a lot** of personal details, which is hard when they don't know who will see this. It is **important that Young People know what is being shared, who with and why**. To avoid misrepresentation, it is good to **check with the Young Person that you have understood** their intended meaning and enable them to correct inaccuracies.

iMPACT Said...

Accuracy in sharing Young People's views is important, as **Young People don't want to be misrepresented or be held back in the past** where their needs have escalated. As the graduated approach progresses, the evidence for **an assessment may need to focus on the challenges** Young People face, **but a record of their evolving story should describe who the young person is now, not just past difficulties**; it **should be accurate, fair, show the Young Person's progress and what helps**. Including the dates of what happened when makes it clear what is current and what is historic. **Young People highlighted that often they lose the opportunity to make a first impression** because people read information about them before meeting them.

The prompts and themes in this section are intended to act as a conversation guide rather than a checklist. It is not expected, nor would it usually be appropriate, for every child to respond to every question. Staff members should use their professional judgement to select the topics and prompts that feel most relevant and meaningful for the child, considering their age, developmental stage, communication style, and the purpose of the view-gathering activity.

Children may also communicate information related to these themes in different ways and may not do so through direct questioning alone. The tools and approaches described in the next section can help staff gather information linked to these areas using a range of methods, including visual, creative, play-based, and symbol-supported approaches. The aim is to develop a meaningful understanding of what is important to the child, rather than to collect answers to a predetermined set of questions.

The following ideas were developed by IMPACT, informed by their views and experiences.

Welcome & Care

Wellbeing

- When do you feel most confident or successful?
- What helps you feel safe, calm, and happy?
- What supports you to manage change (e.g., transitions)?
- How do you best regulate when you are not feeling okay?
- How can others help when you are upset or distressed?

Spaces

- What spaces do you enjoy and why?
- What spaces do you avoid and why?

People

- Who are the trusted people in your life?
- Which people or characteristics do you find challenging?
- Which people or characteristics do you like working with?

Value & Include

Likes, Interests & Passions

- What are your likes, interests and passions?
- What do you like to do at home, school or in the community?
- Which subjects interest you?
- Which activities do you enjoy?
- Which activities do you avoid?
- What groups, clubs, or activities do you attend?
- What groups, clubs, or activities would you like to attend?
- Who do you like to spend time with?
- Who would you like to spend time with?
- What support do you need to do these things?

Strengths & Challenges

- What are your strengths?
- What would you say are your challenges?
- What are you good at?
- What can you do by yourself?
- What would you prefer others not to help you with?

Communicate

Listening & Understanding

- What is the best way to communicate with you?
- How do you prefer to communicate with others?
- What helps you understand? (e.g. 1:1, in small groups, conversations, written notes, shared interests, with support, non-verbal, simple language, visual aids, taking time, prior warning, recap important points, use of prompts)

Keeping in Touch

- How do you like to be contacted? (e.g. email, phone, text, informed before phoning, via a trusted person)
- How do you like to be informed? (e.g. when and where, face to face, 1:1, in writing, with a trusted person, not in front of peers, meet with trusted peers, let my parent carers know)

Being Misunderstood

- What would you like others to understand about you?
- What would you like others to understand about what you communicate through your actions? (e.g. how hard you try to get things right, your sense of justice, or actions when you are frustrated, angry, or needing space)

Work in Partnership

Aspirations / Goals

- What are your short-term and long-term aspirations for education/employment?
- What are your short-term and long-term aspirations for home life?
- What are your short-term and long-term aspirations towards participating in the community, hobbies and social life?

Support Needs

- What do you need support with, and what difference does it make?
- What would you like support with, and what difference would it make?
- What strategies, resources or people help when things are difficult?
- What supports your access to your education and learning?
- What barriers or challenges do you face during the school day?
- What barriers or challenges do you face at home or in the community?
- What situations or things do you find triggering?

Developing Plans

- What helps motivate you (screen time, treats, future goals etc)?
- What demotivates you?
- What changes would you like to see in your education experience?

What tools can help us?

There are a variety of methods and approaches which can help us to authentically gather the views of children. It is important to match the activity to the child's individual communication strengths and select approaches that reflect how best the child expresses themselves.

Children may have their own preferences in how they communicate. It is important that wherever possible children are involved in the selection of tools to gather their views. This will help to ensure that children feel the tool(s) selected supports their ability to share most effectively. Staff members will likely be working with a range of children, across ages and developmental stages, and therefore will need to be able to consider and adapt methods to gather views depending on multiple factors. However, consideration should still be given to a range of tools available initially, so that we avoid making quick assumptions as to the types of prompts or questions that might best support a child to share their views.

Ensuring that appropriate tools are used is an important part of effective view gathering. Before concluding that a child is unable to answer a question or share their views, we must consider whether we have provided a sufficiently accessible way for them to communicate. Selecting approaches that reflect a child's strengths and preferences helps us develop a richer understanding of their experiences and reduces the risk of making assumptions.

Staff members should maintain a consistent curiosity when exploring children's communication skills. Their understanding of the child will naturally evolve over time, shaped by ongoing, in-depth interactions and experiences with each child.

If a staff member feels that further information could potentially be gathered following a child's initial responses, they must consider how to adapt their approach. This may be by asking prompting or clarifying questions, providing further scaffolding, using another tool, or revisiting the topic on a different day.

It is important to consider both the **content** shared by the child, and **what this might mean**. For example, a child may share that they like being on a tennis court. We could assume that this is because they like tennis, sports, or being active. However, when asked "what do you like about the tennis court?" the child may share they like quiet and less crowded places. This highlights the importance of remaining open and curious, and using gentle questioning or prompts to explore a child's views further.

Staff members gathering children's views should remain focused on understanding and capturing the child's authentic voice. The role of the adult is to support communication whilst minimising their influence on what is shared. It is important to be mindful of factors that may affect the views gathered. Some children may alter their responses to please adults or provide answers they believe are expected. Likewise, adults may unintentionally shape responses through the prompts, suggestions, or scaffolding they provide. Staff should therefore regularly reflect on how their interactions may be influencing the process and seek to ensure that the views recorded are as representative as possible of the child's own perspective.

The resources in this section are presented in categories related to level of language demand. This is purely for ease of reference and to give a sense of when these tools may be helpful for different learners. However, this is not a fixed or exhaustive list, and there are many other tools available for gaining children's views. Activities can and should be adapted and staff members

are encouraged to adjust the format of the activity, the language used, and the level of adult support provided, as appropriate. Where a cost is associated with a tool, this is referenced.

Importantly, this guidance provides examples of tools and approaches that may support view gathering. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list or a prescribed set of activities. Many staff members will already use a range of effective strategies to support children to share their views. The examples included here are designed to build upon existing practice, provide additional ideas, and support reflection on how current approaches can be adapted for different children and contexts. Other resources and formats can be used where they are appropriate to the child's communication style, preferences, and needs.

Approaches with a Lower Level of Language Demand

Observation

Observation can be a useful approach for gathering information about a child's preferences, relationships, and emotional wellbeing when verbal discussion or more direct view-gathering activities are not currently accessible, appropriate, or meaningful for the child. By carefully observing a child across familiar environments and routines, staff may gain insights into what is important to them and how they experience their day-to-day world.

Observations might focus on:

- Which activities, resources, or interests the child chooses to engage with.
- Which areas of the environment they prefer to spend time in or avoid.
- Which adults, peers, or groups they approach, seek support from, or spend time alongside.
- How they communicate preferences, make choices, or indicate enjoyment.
- Behavioural and non-verbal cues which may suggest comfort, engagement, relaxation, stress, anxiety, or dysregulation (e.g., facial expression, body language, proximity-seeking, withdrawal, or changes in activity levels).

It is important that staff remain curious and avoid making assumptions about the meaning of observed behaviour. Wherever possible, observations should be considered alongside information from the child, family members, and other adults who know the child well. Observations can offer important clues about a child's views, but do not replace the child's own interpretation of their experiences.

Observation should not be used as a default alternative to more direct view-gathering activities. There should be a clear rationale for using observation as the primary approach, for example where the child has significant communication differences, finds direct questioning distressing, or is not currently able to engage in other methods. Where appropriate, staff should seek opportunities to check their interpretations with the child using their preferred communication methods and combine observations with other approaches to ensure the child's authentic voice remains central to the process.

Photo Elicitation

Photo elicitation is a participatory method that involves using photographs to prompt discussion and reflection. Use the prompts below (or others relevant to the child) and ask the child to take you to these places in the setting, where they can photograph or video the relevant space or item. Alternatively, walk through the setting together and invite the child to take photos or videos in each area, using the prompts as a guide:

- Favourite place/least favourite place.
- An item you like/don't like.
- Where you are good at something/find something difficult.
- Where you feel safe.
- Where you would like to change something.

The child can then be invited to talk about what the images mean to them, how they make them feel, or what they represent.

Photo elicitation can be adapted by using images of familiar and favoured resources, spaces, or routines, such as a favourite toy, a quiet corner, or outdoor play area. Staff can observe a child's reactions to these images, noting gestures, facial expressions, or choices made when selecting between pictures.

Preference Through Selection

Preference through selection is a structured yet flexible method that allows children to express their likes, dislikes, and priorities by choosing from a set of options. This method can be particularly helpful for children who may find open-ended questions challenging or who communicate more confidently through visual or tactile means.

Begin by presenting the child with a range of images, objects, photographs, or symbols that represent different aspects of their experiences. These might include:

- Activities (e.g., reading, PE, group work, playtime).
- Places (e.g., classroom, playground, lunch hall, quiet area).
- People (e.g., teacher, teaching assistant, friends, lunchtime staff).
- Routines (e.g., morning arrival, transitions, assembly).

You can invite the child to:

- Sort items into categories such as "like" / "don't like" or "easy" / "hard".
- Rank items in order of preference or importance.
- Choose a set number of favourites (e.g., "Pick your top 3").

Encourage the child to explain their choices, either verbally, through drawing, or using symbols. Their responses can offer valuable insight into what supports or challenges them, and what matters most in their day-to-day experience.

This method can be adapted by:

- Using real objects or photos for children who benefit from concrete representations.
- Offering fewer choices at a time for children who may be overwhelmed by too many options.
- Observing non-verbal cues such as pointing, facial expressions, or body language to interpret preferences.

Simple Visual Scales

Simple visual scales often use symbols such as faces, emojis, traffic lights, or numbered ladders to represent a range of responses, from “happy” to “sad,” “easy” to “hard,” or “like” to “don’t like.” Visual scales can be used to explore anything from how a child feels about school to how confident they feel doing a particular task.

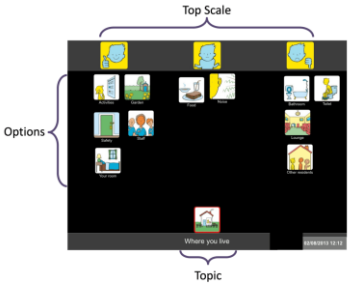
How to use:



- Present a visual scale (e.g., a row of faces showing different emotions, a numbered ladder, or a colour-coded chart).
- Ask the child to place a marker, sticker, or drawing on the scale to show how they feel about a specific topic (e.g., “How do you feel about playtime?”).
- Use follow-up questions to explore their choice, such as “What makes it feel like that?” or “What would help move it up the scale?”

Symbol Supported Communication

Symbol supported communication uses pictures, symbols, and visual representations to help children express their views, preferences, feelings, and experiences. Examples include Widgit symbols, communication boards, choice boards, visual templates, and approaches such as Talking Mats. These approaches can help to reduce the language demands of a task, making it easier for children to understand questions, organise their thoughts, and communicate their views.



Symbol supported communication should be child-led and used as a tool to facilitate, rather than direct, a conversation. The focus should remain on understanding the child’s perspective rather than leading them towards particular responses. Children may communicate by selecting, sorting, ranking, pointing to, moving, or discussing symbols, depending on their preferred communication style.

Visual symbols can support children in a number of ways, including:

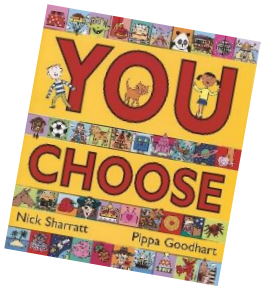
- Reducing the language demands of a task.
- Supporting understanding of questions, concepts, and options.
- Reducing demands on memory by keeping ideas visible throughout a conversation.
- Supporting executive functioning skills, such as organising thoughts, sequencing ideas, making comparisons, and reflecting on choices.
- Providing a concrete and visual record of the child's views which can be revisited, reviewed, and amended.

These approaches can be used to explore a wide range of topics, including likes and dislikes, learning preferences, emotional wellbeing, relationships, future aspirations, strengths, challenges, and support needs. Symbols can also be presented using physical resources or digitally through communication software. Staff should consider the child’s familiarity with symbols and adapt resources accordingly. Some children may benefit from a small number of concrete choices, whilst others may be able to engage with more abstract concepts and a wider range of symbols. A Resource to support symbol supported communication can be found here.

There may be a cost associated with this tool. Warwickshire Schools have access to InPrint4 as part of our Warwickshire Subscription; to gain access contact Warwickshire Education Services ICT Support for subscribers or Widgit for those settings that use independent ICT support.

You Choose Books

The *You Choose* book series by Pippa Goodhart and Nick Sharratt offers a highly visual and engaging way for children to express their preferences, interests, and aspirations. These books present a series of open-ended choices, such as where you would live, what you would wear, who your friends would be, or what job you'd like to do, accompanied by illustrations.



This method can be used to:

- Prompt discussion about the child's likes, dislikes, and dreams.
- Explore their sense of identity, belonging, and future goals.
- Encourage imaginative thinking and self-expression in a low-pressure format.

Read through the book together, pausing at pages that spark interest and invite the child to point to or talk about their choices. Ask follow-up questions such as "Why did you choose that?" or "What would that be like?" Record their responses using their own words, drawings, or photos of the pages and images they selected.

Adaptations:

- For children with limited verbal communication, observe pointing, facial expressions, or gestures to interpret preferences.
- Use simplified language or offer choices one page at a time.
- Create a personalised "You Choose" board or booklet using images from the book or similar visuals tailored to the child's context.

The full range of the *You Choose* book series can be found here: You Choose. *There may be a cost associated with these tools.*

Approaches with a Variable Level of Language Demand

All About Me Profile

An All About Me Profile is a personalised document which can be co-created with a child or young person to capture their views, preferences, strengths and support needs. It often includes sections such as how they learn best, what helps when they're feeling worried or stuck, what they enjoy, what they find challenging, and what they would like others to know about them.

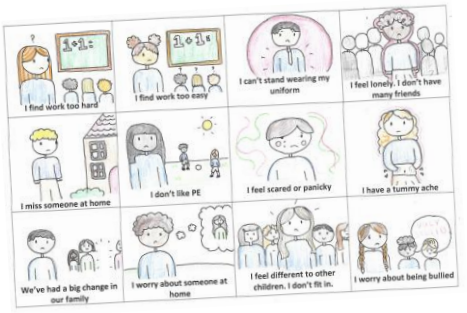


These documents, typically no longer than one page, can be tailored to the child's interests and communication style, for example, themed around favourite books, films, or characters. They may include drawings, photos, or symbols alongside written content and can be created in a variety of formats, including handwritten booklets or digital versions.

An example of this type of resource can be found here: The Pieces of Me Worksheet.

ATTEND Pupil Choice Cards

The ATTEND pupil choice cards are a visual tool designed to support children in expressing possible barriers to attendance, or areas for further support in school. This method uses a set of cards that can be printed and sorted by pupils to reflect their opinions and preferences.



The cards are grouped into two areas:

- Things I agree with
- Things I don't agree with

Staff can present the cards to pupils and invite them to place each one under the category that best represents their view. These cards can also be prioritised by pupils (for example, ranking the top five).

The ATTEND pupil choice can be found within the ATTEND framework, a copy of which has been provided to all Warwickshire schools. An alternative version of the ATTEND cards (created by Derby City Council) can be found here: Inclusion Partnership.

The Bear Cards

This resource uses illustrated bear characters to help children identify and talk about a wide range of feelings. Each card depicts a bear showing a specific emotion, such as happiness, worry, anger, or confusion, which are intentionally open to interpretation, allowing children to explore subtle emotional nuances like nervous excitement, quiet sadness, or frustrated tiredness.

These cards can be used in a variety of ways to support children to:

- Express how they feel about different aspects of school life, including learning, friendships, transitions, and the support they receive.
- Identify and explore their emotional responses to specific situations, such as times when they feel safe, anxious, included, or overwhelmed.
- Discuss factors that support or hinder their wellbeing, using the cards as prompts to consider what is working well and what could be improved.
- Reflect on their experiences of support, including their relationships with the adults around them and how helpful they find current strategies and interventions.



Contribute to their own story, by selecting cards that represent their feelings and using them to guide conversations about their needs, strengths, and aspirations.

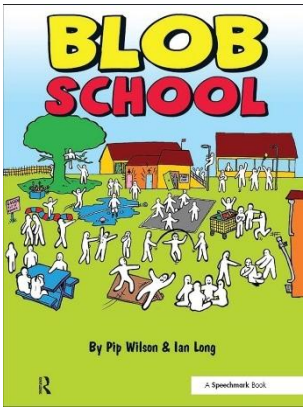
Information related to this resource can be found here: The Bear Cards. *There may be a cost associated with this tool.*

Blob Characters

The use of various blob characters, situated in different contexts, can be used to help explore children's views about a variety of topics (such as how they feel, how they feel others view them, what they think about others such as supporting adults, or how they might feel in the classroom). These 'blob' characters are presented as without distinguishing characteristics, for example genders, and are intended to be interpreted by individuals (e.g., related to facial expressions and body cues).

Staff can show children pictures of Blobs (in and out of contexts) and ask them different original prompt questions, such as:

- Which blob feels the most like you this week?
- Which blobs act the most like your friends?
- Which blob do you think is the happiest to be at school?



Children can either choose blobs in many ways, such as by pointing at them or colouring them in or may answer these questions verbally (using these prompts as a springboard into other conversations).

There are a wealth of different resources including Blob Characters such as:

- Blob School (Wilson & Long, 2015).
- The Big Book of Blobs (Wilson & Long, 2018).
- The Big Book of Blob Trees (Wilson & Long, 2018).

There may be a cost associated with these tools.

Creative Activities

Creative activities can be a powerful way of helping children to express their views, through the medium that they most enjoy. Supporting staff members can provide prompts to help guide this activity. These may be broad (such as "What do I like about school?", or more specific such as "Can you show me your favourite game on the playground?"). Rather than relying on verbal responses, children may prefer to express their answers (either entirely or initially) using a creative outlet or action.



This could include a variety of activities such as:

- Creating drawings.
- Building something out of Lego.
- Using clay.
- Creating a collage.

My School Experience Cards

The My School Experience cards were developed by Dr Rachel McKeating and Dr Deanne Bell. These card decks can be used as part of a sorting activity. The Strengths and Needs Deck supports conversations about school experiences across the four areas of need in the SEN Code of Practice: Communication and Interaction, Cognition and Learning, Social Emotional and Mental Health, and Physical and Sensory. The Strategy Deck is tailored to consider related strategies that may be helpful across these areas.



Information on these resources can be found here: My School Experience. *There may be a cost associated with these tools.*

Rating Scales

Using a numerical scale, typically from 1 to 10, children can indicate how much they enjoy certain lessons, how confident they feel in specific areas, or how important particular aspects of school life are to them. This method is flexible and can be presented visually (e.g., with emojis, colours, or number lines). Rating can also be used as a starting point for conversation, helping staff members explore the reasons behind a child's choices and encouraging deeper discussion about experiences, preferences, and difficulties.



It is important that the child understands what the scale represents and has a shared understanding with the supporting adult about what different points on the scale mean. Ratings should be viewed as a tool for helping children communicate their experiences, rather than as a precise measure or a way of comparing children with one another. Children may use scales differently depending on their own frame of reference, experiences, and interpretation of the numbers. Where possible, staff should explore the reasons behind a child's rating (e.g., "Can you tell me what makes it a 6?" or "What would help it move to a 7?") to develop a richer understanding of the meaning behind their response.

Resilience Cards

The Resilience Cards, developed by Young Minds, can help support conversations with children about various resources which are important for promoting resilience. The aim of these cards is to help children identify factors which support their resilience, and to consider other elements which may help to develop or support their coping.



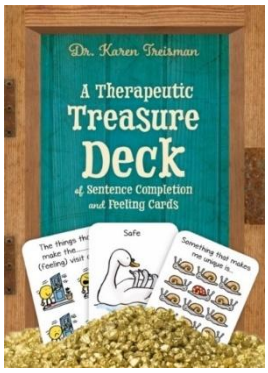
There is a set of cards designed for primary aged children, and another for secondary aged young people.

These cards could be used as part of a sorting activity, where children identify cards which they feel are 'like me' or 'not like me'. This could be incorporated into an activity where staff ask follow-up questions such as 'can you tell me more about that?' or 'when does that feel like you?', or otherwise the child may prefer to complete this activity independently.

A copy of this resource can be found here: Young Minds. *There may be a cost associated with this tools.*

Therapeutic Treasure Deck Resources

There are several examples of resources from Dr Karen Treisman which can be used to facilitate gathering views with children. This guidance will focus on A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Sentence Completion and Feelings Cards (Treisman, 2017), but other examples are included below.



Within the sentence completion cards, there are many highly visual prompt cards which can be used to begin conversations about important topics but in a fun way. These include examples such as:

- If I ruled the world I would…
- If I could go back in time to a moment, I would go back to…
- The thing I would change is…
- I'm happiest and feel good when…
- When I feel unsafe I…

There are also a variety of feelings cards, which include the name of the feeling alongside a picture of an animal which represents this feeling (e.g., a squirrel looking on jealously at another squirrel holding an acorn).

These cards could be used together (e.g., sentence completion cards where children could select a corresponding feeling from a group), as well as separately (where they could prompt verbal discussion, drawing, or selecting from a range of other visual cards to respond).

Other resources to explore include:

- A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Ground, Soothing, Coping, and Regulating Cards (Treisman, 2018).
- A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Strengths and Self-Esteem Cards (Treisman, 2021)

There may be a cost associated with these tools.

School Wellbeing Cards



The School Wellbeing Cards, developed by Dr Jerricah Holder (2022), are a set of child-centred tools, which are grounded in resilience research, and reflect common risk and protective factors that underpin school connectedness, belonging and wellbeing.

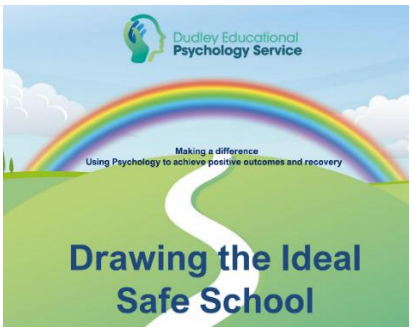
Each card represents a concept related to either risk (e.g., bullying, family stress, low self-esteem) or resilience (e.g., supportive relationships, hobbies, problem-solving skills). Through guided discussion, children can identify which cards resonate with their experiences, helping adults gain insight into protective factors and areas of vulnerability. School, College and Special School specific card sets are available.

Information related to these resources can be found here: School Wellbeing Cards.

There may be a cost associated with these tools. However, all Warwickshire schools have been provided with at least one set of The School Wellbeing Cards.

Approaches with a Higher Level of Language Demand

Drawing the Ideal Safe School



This activity (adapted from Drawing the Ideal School) was developed by Dr Jane Williams (2020) in response to children returning to school during the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst this guidance describes using the tool within a home environment, this can also be adapted to be used by staff and students.

This guide goes through various areas you might explore with children to consider what would make their ideal, safe school experience, such as:

- What would getting ready at home be like?
- What would your classroom and desk be like?
- What would your teachers and other helpers be like?

Children are given the opportunity to draw in response to these areas, and this aids discussion about what they feel would make their ideal safe school.

A copy of this resource can be found here: Drawing the Ideal Safe School.

This activity can be adapted to consider slightly different areas such as:

- What would the best school that you can ever imagine be like? (e.g., the classroom, the playground, the staff members, the food, the other children). *Children drawing in response.*
- What would the worst school you could ever imagine be like? C*hildren drawing in response.*
- How is your school, or your previous schools, any way like the best school or worst school ever? *Discussion activity, or the child pointing parts out on their drawing.*

This activity could also be adapted in terms of its format, for example using building bricks to create a visual representation of an ideal classroom.

Mapping the Landscape of Your School

This reflective mapping activity visually represents the spaces, relationships, and routines that shape a child's school day. Using a simple school layout template, pupils are invited to annotate or colour-code areas of the school to show where they feel safe, happy, anxious, or excluded. Prompts guide them to think about key places (e.g., classroom, playground, corridors), people (e.g., friends, staff), and experiences (e.g., subject areas, moving between classrooms, breaktimes).

Separate versions are available for primary and secondary settings. These resources are part of a broader toolkit aimed at supporting emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) and promoting pupil voice in educational planning.

Further information, provided by Lancashire Educational Psychology Service, can be found here (see page 10/Appendix E): EBSA Toolkit.

In Warwickshire, the term Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) is generally used. However, as this resource originates from Lancashire Educational Psychology Service, it

uses the term Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). Some children and young people may also prefer the term EBSA, particularly where emotional factors affect engagement with school activities rather than attendance alone.

Preparing for Adulthood: Person-Centred Planning Tools (National Development Team for Inclusion)

The NDTI have created a broad range of tools to support children to share their views, as part of supporting preparation for adulthood. These include a range of resources such as:

- **What Matters Island:** On a hypothetical island, who would you take with you? What would you do there? What things would you take? What am I good at? What do people like and admire about me?
- **Relationship Map:** Using a visual map to think about who is important to me in my in-person relationships, virtual relationships, and other areas of my life.
- **Decision Making Profile:** Using a grid to consider (specifically related to decisions and support) what information helps me, how choices might help, the best and worst times to make decisions.
- **Perfect Week:** Using a template of the week to consider what would be a hypothetical best week we can imagine (e.g., what would I be doing on each morning, afternoon and in the evening).

Staff can complete these resources with a child, displaying curiosity and non-judgemental interest by asking why they have given certain answers. It may be that some children want to complete a number of such activities ahead of a planned session to gather views, to help them feel prepared.

Copies of these various resources can be found here: NDTI Preparing for Adulthood: Person-Centred Planning Tools.

Shared Writing

In the creation of this guidance, it was shared that some children, particularly those entering adolescence, may prefer to share their views in a written form.

Staff can support children by providing them with an appropriate space and sufficient time to record their ideas, considering factors such as the physical environment, level of adult involvement, and whether the child would like opportunities to discuss their ideas with a trusted adult. This may take place during a single session or over a number of sessions, depending on the child's preferences and needs.

The prompts and themes outlined in the **"What Would We Like to Know?"** section on pages 9 and 10 can be used to support this process. Children may choose to respond to selected prompts that feel most relevant to them, rather than addressing every area. Some may prefer broad questions such as *"What would you like people to know about you?"* or *"What helps you at school?"*, while others may wish to focus on more specific topics such as friendships, interests, wellbeing, aspirations, or support needs.

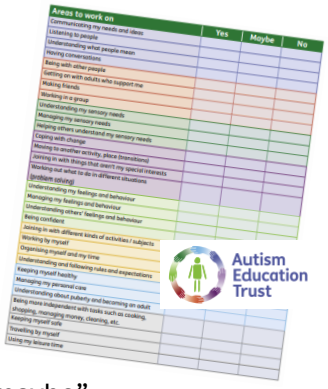
The written product may take many different forms, including:

- A letter.
- A diary or journal entry.

- A diagram or mind map.
- A list of key messages.
- A poster.
- A short essay or personal statement.

Some children may prefer to write independently, whilst others may benefit from adult support to scribe their ideas, organise their thoughts, or review what they have written. The focus should remain on capturing the child's own words, perspectives, and priorities as accurately as possible.

The Priorities Questionnaire (Neuroinclusive Education Network, formerly Autism Education Trust)



The Priorities Questionnaire was developed to gain the views of children with a diagnosis of autism. The first page covers general view gathering questions (which you may want to adapt or use as specified).

The second page includes a table of various areas a young person may want support with, which relate to a range of areas such as communicating with others, understanding and managing sensory/regulation needs, and personal care or independence. Children are asked to consider for each area if "yes" they would like more support in this area, "no" they would not like more support, or "maybe".

Staff can complete this questionnaire alongside the young person, allowing for opportunities to display curiosity and non-judgemental interest in asking about why a young person may have provided a specific answer. It may be that the young person wants to instead provide their views independently.

A copy of this resource can be found here: Progression Framework Accompanying Documents.

Three Houses

The three houses activity is a tool often used in social care to support children to share their views on a variety of topics.

There are three houses which are used to represent different areas of a child's life. This includes:

- **House of Worries:** where children can identify (either through talking, writing, or drawing) their concerns and worries.
- **House of Good Things:** where children share positives, elements of their lives that make them happy, their strengths, and things they are proud of.
- **House of Hopes and Dreams:** where children can highlight their goals and aspirations.

This tool can be used as a discussion-based activity (with prompts from staff) or could be completed with increased independence from the young person.

Further information about the three houses activity is shared by Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Wellbeing Passport/TTRIM Profile

Wellbeing Passports and TTRIM Profiles are examples of child-centred profile tools that support children and young people to communicate important information about themselves, their experiences, and the support that helps them thrive. These approaches bring together key information in a format that can be shared with the adults supporting them, helping to ensure that their views, preferences, and support needs are understood.

The information captured within Wellbeing Passports and TTRIM Profiles shares similarities with All About Me Profiles. However, these tools place a greater emphasis on understanding a child's wellbeing, regulation, support needs, and the practical strategies that help them feel safe, understood, and able to engage successfully in their daily experiences.

Wellbeing Passport

The Wellbeing Passport was coproduced in Lancashire and South Cumbria (alongside stakeholders such as Healthy Young Minds and Mind Lancashire). Whilst the Wellbeing Passport was developed specifically to support children and young people to share their views about their mental health and wellbeing, staff may choose to focus on particular sections that are most relevant to the child, such as:

- What you can do to support me.
- Things I can do that help me.

TTRIM Profile/Plan

The TTRIM Profile/Plan has been created by IMPACT to help children share what is important to them so that the adults around them can provide effective support. The profile focuses on five key areas that are likely to make a positive difference to how children experience education, relationships, and everyday life. Each profile is shaped by the child's voice and highlights what they would like others to know in order to help them feel safe, understood, and successful.
The Five TTRIM Areas:



- **Triggers** – What causes a strong reaction or triggers a fight, flight, freeze, or fawn reaction and what helps?
- **Transitions** – What changes and transitions are a struggle and what helps?
- **Regulation** – What helps you feel more relaxed and less overwhelmed, including to help recovery?
- **Interests** – What are you always/most interest in talking about or sharing with others?
- **Motivations** – What motivates you and helps you do the things you need/want to do?

The information in these passports/TTRIM Plan is also similar in part to the information shared earlier related to All About Me profiles. Access IMPACT's TTRIM Plan here.

Section Two – Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment Application Guidance

How does view gathering happen as part of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment application process?

Specifically, within the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) process, meaningfully seeking children's views helps them feel valued, to feel a sense of ownership within the process, and helps to ensure that resulting plans feel fully representative of their experiences[5].

Children's views are typically gathered at the start of the EHCNA process, when a parent carer or educational setting submits a request. However, this can also happen throughout the assessment, particularly during involvement from professionals such as educational psychologists. It's important to strike a balance between recognising that children's views may evolve over time and avoiding unnecessary repetition. To support the sharing of meaningful and relevant information during an EHCNA assessment, it is important for children and their supporting adults to understand:

- **Who their views will be shared with** (e.g., an educational psychologist, other members of the local authority).
- **Why their views are being gathered** (to clearly express their experience to others).
- **How their views will be recorded** (e.g., through a poster, letter, questionnaire format).

What are the key elements of this process?

This table explains how this guidance can support each step of gathering a child's views as part of an EHCNA application.

Steps	Action	Reference within this guidance
1	Consider the principles underpinning why we must gather children's views with care and purpose.	*Why is it important to gather children and young people's views?*
2	Consider contextual factors and practicalities: • Who will gather the child's views? • Where will this take place? • When will this take place?	*What are some best practice guidelines?*
3	Plan for the view gathering session(s): • What prompts could help facilitate the sessions? • What tools and resources could we use?	*What would we like to know?* *What tools can help us?*
4	Consider how to capture the views shared.	*What will our recording look like?*

What will our recording look like?

There are two key elements which will be submitted when recording the child's views as part of an EHCNA application:

1. **The Child's Views** - a visual or creative summary of the session, created with or by the child.
2. **The Child's Views Process Record** (please see appendix) - a written description of the process used to gather the child's views.

1. The Child's Views

This is completely individual and unique to the child. It may take various forms, such as:

- Photographs (e.g., from photo elicitation or a card sort activity).
- Drawings (e.g., from a structured task like 'Drawing the Ideal Safe School' or a free drawing session).
- Written activities (e.g., questionnaires, scaling tools, pupil passports, or open-ended writing).

These final products may combine multiple elements (e.g., writing and drawing). Children may also choose to express their views creatively, such as through a poster, collage, or a Lego model. This is the product of the view-gathering session, and it should be shared as part of the EHCNA by photographing or scanning.

It is important to recognise that valuable information may be communicated during the view-gathering process that is not fully reflected in the final product created by the child. This may include direct quotes, verbal comments, non-verbal communication, or interpretations made by the staff member in response to the child's words, actions, or interactions.

Wherever possible, the child's own words should be recorded to help preserve their authentic voice and ensure that any subsequent interpretation remains as close as possible to their intended meaning. This information may be documented either within **The Child's Views** or within **The Child's Views Process Record**.

It is important for the staff member to remain as neutral as possible and ensure that their own professional opinions do not cloud the message the child intended to share. Wherever possible, these notes will be shared with the child to ensure that they feel these ideas capture their views accurately.

2. The Child's Views Process Record

A form to capture information related to **The Child's Views** is to be completed by the staff member and can be found at the end of this document. It describes:

- The process of gathering the child's views.
- The tools, prompts, or approaches used.
- Any interpretation needed to understand the child's communication.
- Key themes or messages shared by the child.

Think of this as helping other professionals be a ‘fly on the wall’ during the session, giving them insight into how the views were gathered and what the child communicated. The form includes (please see appendix):

- The child’s name.
- The name(s) of the staff member(s) supporting the session.
- The date, time, duration and location of the session.
- Tools, approaches, or questions used.
- A summary (a few sentences) of the main themes or ideas shared by the child.

How will children's views be used as part of the EHCNA process?

The views captured during the child view-gathering session are an important part of the EHCNA process. However, it is important to remember that children's views can and do change over time. Staff members should continue to reflect on and update their understanding and records with the child or young person as part of an ongoing graduated approach.

The information generated from this/these session(s) may be shared with a variety of professionals as part of the overall EHCNA process, including:

- SENCos and/or other education setting staff who collated information to submit an EHCNA request.
- SENDAR representatives who are involved in managing any assessment, planning, and review processes.
- Statutory panel members who make decisions about EHCNA requests.
- Educational psychologists who provide psychological advice as part of EHCNA assessments.
- Other professionals (such as speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, paediatricians), who may provide other updates as part of an EHCNA assessment.
- Parent carers, particularly those with parental responsibility, who may receive a copy of any produced advice/report as part of an EHCNA assessment.

These views may be used to:

- Inform professionals' understanding of the child's lived experience.
- Shape assessment activities and approaches.
- Contribute to the development of meaningful, personalised outcomes.

The Child's Views can also be revisited and shared with the child throughout the EHCNA process, helping ensure their voice remains central and current. If a draft plan is created, these views will play a key role in shaping its content.

It is essential to consider the potential destination of the information shared. Children should be supported by staff members to understand who will see their views and why.

Some children may share personal or sensitive information during the session. Staff members should check in with the child before finalising **The Child's Views** or **The Child's Views Process Record** to ensure:

- They are comfortable with what has been written or created.
- They understand how it will be used.
- They have had the chance to remove or rephrase anything they do not want shared more widely.
- They understand that the information they share may remain in an EHCP for an extended period of time.

This helps protect the child's right to autonomy, privacy and dignity, and further reinforces that their voice is not only heard, but respected.

Section Three – Supporting Annual Reviews

As referenced in Section One:

> *Gaining children's views is an everyday part of what we do. This helps us to learn what works best for that child, plan the most effective support, and help the child feel at the centre of decisions made about them. Children's views can and will change over time, and so it is necessary to regularly gather views, and support children to reflect on what is important to them.*

This is particularly relevant in the context of Annual Reviews, which are a fundamental part of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) update process. The general principles and resources within this guidance document provide a framework for how children's views can be gathered routinely over time.

Appendix

The Child's Views Process Record

Session Details
Child's name: Date of session(s): Time & duration(s): Location(s): Staff member(s) supporting the session: Relationship of staff member(s) to the child:
View-Gathering Process
Tools/Approaches Used: *(e.g., drawing, scaling tools, photo elicitation, conversation prompts)*
Child's Preferred Communication Style: *(e.g., verbal, visual, written, creative, AAC, etc.)*
Level of Adult Support Provided: *(e.g., independent, guided, 1:1 support, prompts used)*
Adaptations Made (if any): *(e.g., by the supporting staff member, such as simplified language, sensory adjustments, breaks)*
Summary of Views
Main Themes or Ideas Shared by the Child/Young Person: *(Use the child's own words wherever possible. Include strengths, needs, preferences, aspirations). Please refer to the "What would we like to know?" section within this guidance.*

Consent and Sharing

It is important to remind children at this stage that their views will be shared with a variety of people as part of an EHCNA assessment process. If a child wishes to change what they wish to share because of this, any changes will need to occur **prior** to submitting their views as part of the application process. This may involve supporting the child to consider how they would like information to be reported (e.g., identifying key themes as opposed to referring to specific events).

Has the child been informed about who will see their views, and what will be happening with the information they share? *Please refer to the "How will children's views be used as part of the EHCNA process? section within this guidance.*

☐ Yes
☐ No

If you have answered no, please can you specify as to why:

Has the young person been asked if there is anyone else that they would like to share these views with? *This may include their class teacher, their Head of Year etc.*

☐ Yes
☐ No

If the child would like to share, who are these identified individuals and what is the plan for sharing this information:

Plan for revisiting or updating views:
(e.g., termly review, periodically, or when significant circumstances change)

Has the child been informed that they will have the opportunity to update their views?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If you have answered no, please can you specify as to why:

What will the next steps be in reviewing this information?

The Child's Views Process Record – Fictional Example

Session Details

Child's name: Billy

Date of session(s): 10.06.2026 and 18.06.2026

Time & duration(s): Approx. 20 minutes per session

Location(s): Small learning space adjacent to the classroom

Staff member(s) supporting the session: Miss Balis

Relationship of staff member(s) to the child: Teaching Assistant (Year 4)

View-Gathering Process

Tools/Approaches Used:
(e.g., drawing, scaling tools, photo elicitation, conversation prompts)

- Bear Cards
- Drawing activity
- Scaling questions
- Conversation prompts based on interests, strengths, challenges, and support needs

Child's Preferred Communication Style:
(e.g., verbal, visual, written, creative, AAC, etc.)

Billy preferred to talk whilst drawing. He responded well to visual resources and benefited from having time to think before answering questions.

Level of Adult Support Provided:
(e.g., independent, guided, 1:1 support, prompts used)

1:1 support throughout. Open-ended prompts and clarification questions were used where needed. Billy completed the drawing activity independently.

Adaptations Made (if any):
(e.g., by the supporting staff member, such as simplified language, sensory adjustments, breaks)

- Information gathered across two shorter sessions rather than one longer session.
- Visual resources used to support discussion of feelings.
- Questions rephrased when Billy appeared unsure about their meaning.

Summary of Views

Main Themes or Ideas Shared by the Child/Young Person:
(Use the child's own words wherever possible. Include strengths, needs, preferences, aspirations). Please refer to the "What would we like to know?" section within this guidance.

Billy described himself as "good at football and maths" and said he enjoys practical activities, breaktimes, and spending time with his friends.

As part of a scaling activity, Billy rated his enjoyment of different parts of the school day. He rated PE and maths as 9/10, explaining that he feels confident and successful in these lessons. He rated playtime as 8/10 because he likes spending time with friends. Billy rated whole-class independent writing as 4/10 and explained that he worries about making mistakes and feels less confident when he is unsure what to write.

Billy identified noise in the classroom as difficult, stating that "it gets too loud and I can't think." He reported that he sometimes worries about making mistakes in front of others and prefers adults to speak to him privately when discussing his work.

Billy said that using his desk partition and having extra time helps him feel successful in lessons. He identified Miss Balis and his class teacher as trusted adults in school.

When discussing the future, Billy said he would like to "get better at maths" and join the school football team.

Billy selected Bear Cards associated with feeling happy when learning with friends and worried when the classroom becomes noisy.

Consent and Sharing

It is important to remind children at this stage that their views will be shared with a variety people as part of an EHCNA assessment process. If a child wishes to change what they wish to share because of this, any changes will need to occur **prior** to submitting their views as part of the application process. This may involve supporting the child to consider how they would like information to be reported (e.g., identifying key themes as opposed to referring to specific events).

Has the child been informed about who will see their views, and what will be happening with their information? *Please refer to the "How will children's views be used as part of the EHCNA process? section within this guidance.*

X Yes
☐ No

If you have answered no, please can you specify as to why:

n/a

Has the young person been asked if there is anyone else that they would like to share these views with? *This may include their class teacher, their Head of Year etc.*

X Yes
☐ No

If the child would like to share, who are these identified individuals and what is the plan for sharing this information:

Billy shared that he would like me to tell the class teacher about his worries related to noise levels. He also agreed he is happy for me to mention to others that he would prefer to receive feedback more privately.

Plan for revisiting or updating views:
(e.g., termly review, periodically, or when significant circumstances change)

Has the child been informed that they will have the opportunity to update their views?

X Yes
☐ No

If you have answered no, please can you specify as to why:

n/a

What will the next steps be in reviewing this information?

- Share views related to noise and feedback strategies with class teacher.
- Consider noise-reduction strategies and their impact.

References

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[5] Lundy, L. (2007). Conceptualising a child's right to participation: the Lundy Model. *British Educational Research Journal,* 33, 6, 907-920.

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