



West Dunbartonshire Council

Helping Children and Young People to Have Their Say

A PRACTICE GUIDELINE

Getting It Right for Every Child in West Dunbartonshire

Acknowledgements

This document is the synthesis of a number of short-life working groups that have been tasked over the last three years with looking at means of consulting children both on an individual basis and in terms of wider strategic planning.

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Foreword

As with any topic, clearly defining terms from the outset is a necessary feature of this guideline. In this regard, whilst a number of terms such as listening, participation, engagement and involvement are often found alongside or used synonymously with consultation, and some distinctions between each can be found in the literature, it should be evident that an inclusive definition has been adopted here that demands more than simply seeking and taking account of children and young people's views as an expression of rights. Additional key elements, therefore, include consultation as:

- **A process not an event:** evidence should be collected using different methodologies in a phased way rather than 'one-off' or 'tokenistic' efforts.
- **An expression of ethical practice:** if we are able to recognise difference, to accept different interpretations and engage in dialogue, then we are conducting democratic practice.
- **Empowerment:** children and young people should not only feel listened to but *heard* in the sense that action or decisions follow which, as far as feasible, genuinely reflect these views.

These elements present challenges not only in terms of practical implementation but also in terms of underlying attitudes towards the role of children and young people in having genuine involvement in decisions affecting their lives. Indeed, such is the evolutionary nature of consultation as a social construct that any guideline can only be provisional and aspire to capture some of the good practice at a given point in time.

A particular emphasis has been placed upon those children and young people with additional support needs and disabilities. However, it is clear the principles and procedures of good practice identified for such children are those that are also likely to be helpful when considering consultation with any child, especially those that have been traditionally marginalised or excluded from such a process.

It is also useful to point out that there was some debate over whether consulting children on an individual basis should be separate from how services or indeed the council as a whole consults with children and young people at a wider strategic level. However, at the risk of creating a less user friendly document, this guideline has included both levels on the basis that it affords readers the opportunity to infer mutual links between the good practice at the levels of individual planning and those at a wider service or strategic level.

With this in mind, it is hoped that this guideline is a useful reference point for practitioners that will prompt the development of further creative and innovative means of consulting children and young people in the shared journey towards excellence.

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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction and Rationale

Evidence of a cultural shift in terms of people's thinking and attitudes towards the position and rights of children in society in general and the needs and rights of those with a disability in particular are not difficult to find in the literature. Indeed, such a shift is reflected in a wide range of policies and legislation which has been gathering force since at least the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, (UNCRC).

Children, who are capable of forming views, have a right to receive and make known information, to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account in any matters affecting them. The views of the child should be given due weight according to the age, maturity and capability of the child.

See Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC

Undoubtedly a variety of pressures and influences have contributed towards this change and are reflected in a range of movements that have worked towards increasing personal choice, participation and involvement in decision making in the services and opportunities afforded to all previously disempowered groups. Conceptually a number of movements can be highlighted including 'normalisation', 'self-advocacy', and within education, 'citizenship', 'equality of opportunity' and 'inclusion'.

West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC) is committed to inclusion, both in policy and practice, where it is stated 'Every person has the right to be educated in a climate in which individuality is recognised and in which everyone feels valued'. (WDC, Mission Statement).

It is recognised that aside from legal requirements, consulting children and young people is valuable for the development of inclusive practices, whereby the recipients and clients of education, social work and health, including children and young people themselves, can inform change and progression. Indeed if it is accepted that evaluation of inclusion involves a focus on the **quality** of education provided for each child and young person, it is clear that children and young people, with a diversity of strengths and needs, will have wide ranging experiences of services and 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' practices.

Kelly's (1955) Personal Construct Theory underscores the importance of understanding another person's attitude and perspective by exploring these further, ensuring no judgements or opinions are imposed on the child or young person's views. Indeed in terms of inclusion, 'how things are, is often less important than how people think, or perceive, things are' (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004, p.6). Therefore identifying what the issues are for the children and young people themselves is a crucial component for the development of quality inclusive practice.

Furthermore, consulting children and young people leads to greater empowerment of the young people, enhancing self-esteem, motivation and a sense of belonging to the school and their local community. One of the strengths of consultation is the opportunity it provides to hear from the silent – or silenced – pupils and to understand why some disengage and what would help them get back on track.

Ultimately consulting children and young people not only deepens the understanding of inclusion, but also supports and enables children to become active, responsible citizens within their educational and social world.

This shift represents a challenge to all services as it implies the redistribution of traditional power relations between adults and children and addressing their inequalities, if genuine consultation as described below is to be achieved.

1.2 Legislative Context

It is generally acknowledged in the literature that recent changes in legislation are a key pre-requisite to creating a climate and ethos of listening to children. A key principle is that professionals should be aware of this legislation and for this reason some of the important elements within a Scottish legislative educational context on the requirement to and value of consulting children and young people are highlighted below.

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995

Section 17 of the 1995 Act names Local Authorities as having a responsibility to have regard to the views of the child, and in doing so these agents “...*taking account of the age and maturity of the child concerned, shall so far as practicable, give him the opportunity to indicate whether he wishes to express his views; if he does so wish, give him the opportunity to express them; and have regard to such views as he may express*”. (Section 16.1)

The 1995 Act also introduced a new legal framework for assessment, services and support to children with disabilities, children affected by disabilities and their families. It states that children should be:

- ⇒ ***“actively involved in assessments, decision-making meetings, case reviews and conferences”*** and
- ⇒ ***“should be given help to express their views and wishes and to prepare written reports and statements for meetings where necessary”***.

The Act therefore makes it necessary for all children and young people to be consulted over any important decisions which are made about them, and as such, the necessary systems and procedures need to be put into place to ensure children

referred to support services, including psychological services, are given adequate opportunities to express their views.

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000

The 2000 Act (under Section 2) requires the education authority to secure that school education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential. In so doing, the authority must have regard to the views of children and young people (if there is a wish to express them) in decisions that significantly affect their education.

The Education (Disabilities Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records) (Scotland) 2002 Act

This Act requires Local Authorities to improve, over time, access to education for children and young people with disabilities and additional support needs. This is to ensure that children and young people with a disability are not placed at a substantial disadvantage.

One area for improvement is communication and delivery of information to young people with disabilities. This includes seeking their opinions and ensuring that young people have the opportunity to communicate their views.

It also involves consultation with young people with disabilities about all aspects of their education; their curriculum, the physical environment of the establishment and the appropriate provision of school information.

Targets are set within the Accessibility Strategy on a three yearly planning basis following consultation with a wide range of personnel.

Education: Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004

Supporting Children's Learning, Code of Practice (2005)

The Act highlights all children's rights to be involved in decisions about their education. It stresses that all children and young people should have the opportunity to make their views known about decisions which affect them and they should be given the opportunity to express their opinions, which must then be taken seriously.

More specifically, children should also be encouraged to contribute to decision-making processes, the setting of educational objectives, the preparation of learning plans, reviews and transition planning. They need to know that what they have to say will be respected, listened to and, where appropriate, acted upon.

When seeking the views of parents, young people and, where appropriate, children, and when carrying out an assessment, education authorities need to take into account the parent's, young person's or child's ***preferred method of communication***. For example, assessments of bilingual children should take into account the child's level of skills in the first language as well as their educational attainment.

SECTION 2: A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Whilst legislation is necessary it is an insufficient condition by itself to bring about a change in the context in which consulting with children and young people takes place. Instead, a clear strategic framework, informed by the core principles as outlined below offers a means for translating policy into practice and, ultimately, better outcomes for children and young people.

Scottish Government policies on Children's Services consistently identify the importance and value of promoting consultation, participation and engagement of children, young people and families in both individual care planning and the development of services. Policies include:

For Scotland's Children: Better Integrated Children's Services (2001)

It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright (2002)

Getting Our Priorities Right (2003)

Getting It Right for Every Child (2004)

There is already a lot of evidence that involving children and young people in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services brings benefits. For example, Landsdown, 2001; DfES, 2004; Children and Young People's Unit, (CYPU) 2001; have outlined the following **advantages** and core principles

Better services.

It is accepted that the effectiveness of services depends on listening and responding to customers. Giving children and young people an active say in how policies and services are developed, provided, evaluated and improved should ensure that policies and services more genuinely meet their needs.

Promoting citizenship and social inclusion.

Promoting early engagement in public and community life is crucial to sustaining and building a healthy society. As successive reports from the Social Exclusion Unit have shown, listening to young people is a powerful means of persuading disadvantaged young people that they count and can contribute.

Personal and social education and development.

Good participation opportunities produce more confident and resilient young people. Promoting citizenship is already an important part of the Government's education agenda, both pre-16 through the national curriculum and post-16. Departments and agencies that have a local presence can support participation projects that play their part in developing these skills.

The benefits of better policies and services provide the most immediate and powerful driver for action, and the examples of good practice in this document illustrate those benefits, using a range of approaches in a range of settings.

2.2 Core Principles for Service Providers

A number of common themes can be derived from the literature on core principles and these provide an important strategic framework for consultation. The following based on guidance by the CYPU (2001) provides a useful summary of the most salient.

A visible commitment is made to involving children and young people, underpinned by appropriate resources to build a capacity to implement policies of participation

- ⇒ There is visible commitment to the principle and practice from senior management teams.
- ⇒ Participation is built into the departmental or agency values and is reflected in strategic planning, delivery, resourcing, communication and business improvement activities.
- ⇒ There are budgetary implications for implementing a participatory approach to providing services. This relates to the costs of consultation as well as the resource implications of taking children's views seriously.
- ⇒ Opportunities are provided to enable relevant staff to develop the skills and attitudes to engage effectively with children and young people.

Children and young people's involvement is valued

- ⇒ Children and young people are treated honestly. That means that their expectations are managed and that they are helped to understand any practical, legal or political boundaries of their involvement.
- ⇒ The contributions of children and young people proportionate to their age and maturity, are taken seriously and acted upon, and feedback from children and young people confirms this.
- ⇒ Feedback on the impact of children and young people's involvement is timely and clear.

Children and young people have equal opportunity to get involved

- ⇒ Children and young people are not discriminated against or prevented from participating effectively on grounds of race, religion, culture, disability, age, ethnic origin, language or the area in which they live.
- ⇒ Departments and agencies take a proactive approach in targeting those facing greatest barriers to getting involved (for example, younger children, children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, those living in rural areas or disadvantaged neighbourhoods, children missing school, young people in the youth justice system, refugees, traveller children, disabled and other children with additional support needs or special personal or family circumstances) to ensure they are aware of and take up appropriate opportunities to have their say.
- ⇒ Where necessary support and opportunities for training and development are provided to children and young people so that they can contribute effectively.
- ⇒ Relevant information is available to children and young people in good time

and in appropriate formats, is jargon free, culturally appropriate and accessible.

Policies and standards for the participation of children and young people are provided, evaluated and continuously improved

- ⇒ The rationale and success criteria against which progress will be measured are set out from the start.
- ⇒ Children and young people are involved in reviewing lessons learned.
- ⇒ Departments and agencies agree quality standards and codes of conduct for working with children and young people, and set out how confidentiality and child protection issues will be handled.

2.3 Guidelines for consultation and engagement with children and young people in strategic planning and service development.

The Scottish Government guidance notes on community engagement set out expectations that we should endeavor to engage and consult communities at all levels.

Community engagement involves the development of policies, practices, skills and attitudes among service providers to ensure that the communities who are affected by their actions have a central role in the development and delivery of strategies and services.

Consultation should be a meaningful, continuous process which forms an integral part of service planning and provision, rather than just a one-off or occasional exercise.

Children and young people have an important contribution to make to planning and development of services which directly affect them. The process should be inclusive of all young people.

It can be difficult for any child or young person to have their views heard by professionals; it is even more challenging if the child or young person is vulnerable or disadvantaged either through social circumstances or by virtue of a disability or communication difficulty. These are usually the hard to reach groups.

Agencies and professionals must ensure that the right kind of supports are in place to meet the needs of these particularly vulnerable groups of children and young people to support their participation and inclusion in any consultation mechanisms or exercises undertaken.

Issues to be considered when planning consultation exercises

- ⇒ What mediums of communication will be used?
- ⇒ Do these promote inclusion of children and young people with disabilities or communication difficulties?
- ⇒ What assistance is required to support the design and delivery of the consultation process?
- ⇒ A question on disability could be included in response forms in consultation exercises undertaken through the Youth Strategy, to help identify young people participating.
- ⇒ Efforts should be made to provide appropriate support to enable young people to participate in Focus Groups. This can be drawn from staff with relevant skills and knowledge of the young people, using appropriate tools.

The following documents are recommended for further detailed guidance information:

Save the Children (2001) Re:Action Consultation Toolkit.

This is an invaluable resource of guidance on different means of consulting children and young people on policy related issues using a phased approach.

Save the Children (2004) Children are Service Users Too: A guide for consulting children and young people. ISBN 1 84187 086 2.

Children in Scotland (2007) Involving children and young people in decisions about their education. Scottish Executive, Enquire Guide: Edinburgh

Hear by Right: The National Youth Agency.

This provides a standards framework for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people.

A free electronic mapping and planning tool (2008) can be accessed at:
http://hbr.nya.org.uk/resources/hear_right_mapping_planning_tool

SECTION 3: INDIVIDUAL PLANNING

3.1 General Principles for Professionals

This guideline recognises consultation as a process of not just hearing, but also considering and responding to children's views. However, consulting children and young people meaningfully goes beyond a simplistic discussion of process and procedures. It is not just what is said and done, but how and why it is said and done.

In particular, consultation with children and young people requires consideration and potential adaptation of the adult-child power relationship, whereby the young person's views are valued, respected and responded to, within the legal framework of the welfare of the child (Lewis, 2004).

For example,

"When voice is 'conferred' upon 'the other'...without recognising or attempting to alter the inequities that created the original distinctions, the 'giving of voice' or 'listening to' just becomes another colonizing apparatus" (Cannella and Viruru, 2004).

Genuine consultation, therefore, also requires consideration of the level to which children and young people are involved in **decision making**. The 'ladder' of participation below¹ illustrates the potential range of involving children in decision making at a personal and organisation level and offers a useful conceptual framework against which practice can be measured. Full participation and inclusion, therefore, needs to be regarded as part of a 'new sociology of childhood' whereby children are viewed as:

- ⇒ active subjects.
- ⇒ citizens with rights.
- ⇒ 'experts in their own lives' i.e. possess their own theories, interpretations, and questions, and are protagonists in the knowledge-building processes.
- ⇒ active participants in research.

Moving beyond rights to the ethics of consultation involves recognising 'listening' as:

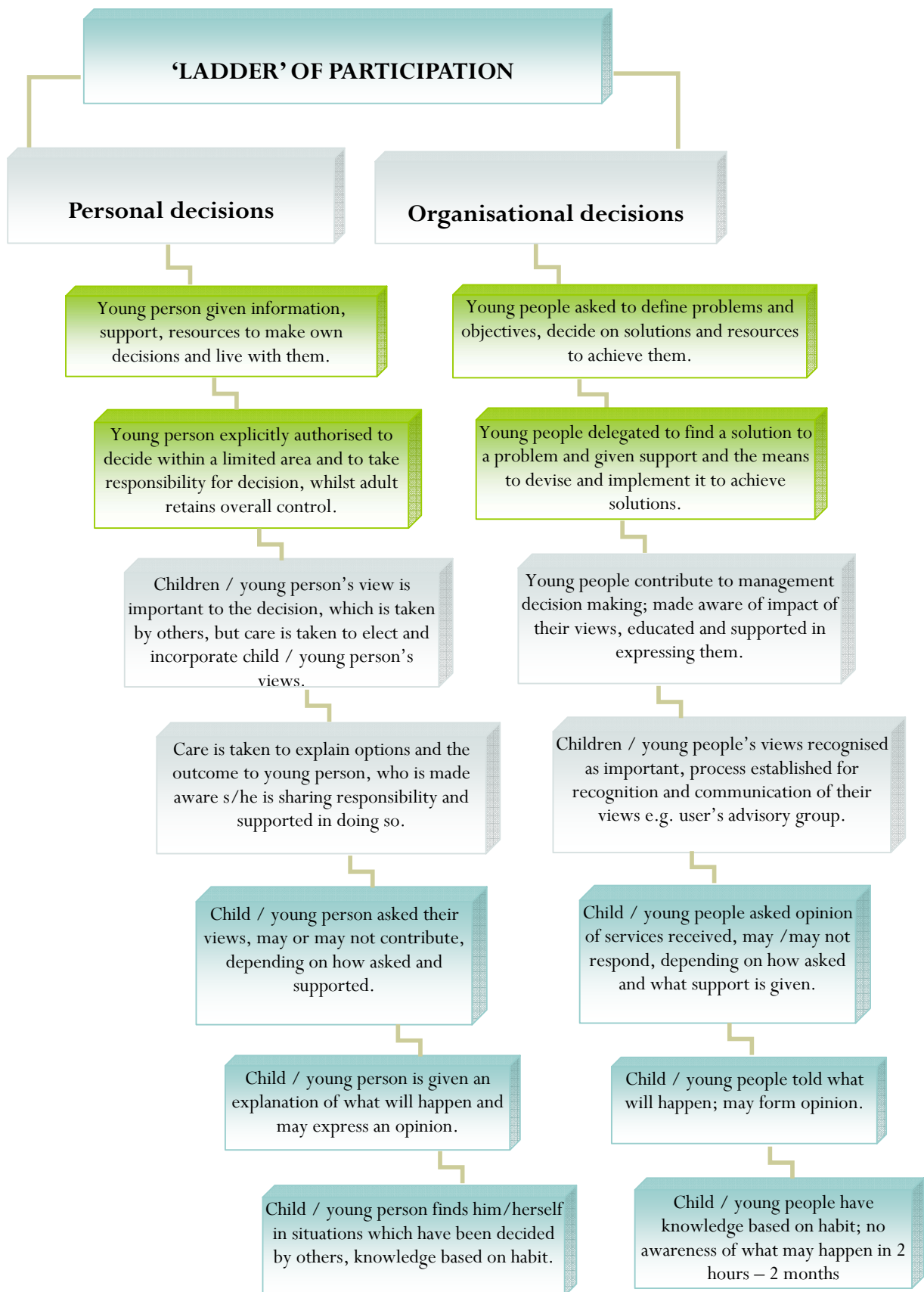
- ⇒ An active verb that involves **interpretation**
- ⇒ Does not produce answers but **generates questions**
- ⇒ Generated by **doubt and uncertainty** "which is not insecurity but...the security that every truth is such only if we are aware of its limits and its possible falsification"

¹ Adapted from Hart (1995)

Authentic 'listening' thus means:

- ⇒ Not just with our ears but ***all our senses***.
- ⇒ To the ***thousand languages***, symbols and codes we use to express ourselves and communicate.
- ⇒ Is ***emotion***, generated by and stimulating emotion.
- ⇒ As ***welcoming*** and being ***open to differences***.

"Listening is not easy. [It requires] suspension of our judgements and above all our prejudices; it requires openness to change".



3.2 Guidelines for Professionals within the Cycle of Individual Planning and Staged Intervention

The extent to which other professionals are involved with children and young people will depend on a number of factors connected to the 'Staged Model' of Intervention applied to all children and young people in the education authority. Whilst the actual stage guides the extent of this involvement, much also depends on what part of the on-going process and interactive cycle of assessment, planning and reviewing the child and professional converge. It is impossible to consider how to effectively involve children/young people in the process of decision making without also considering the extent to which parents are involved and how professionals behave, as these three elements are inter-connected.

It is also necessary to consider the benefits of consulting with children and young people in partnership with other agencies and professionals involved. The information and relationships that other people can have with children and young people can enhance the participation and consultation process. For example professionals within social work and colleagues in health (Speech & Language Therapy) can contribute a wide range of information and also assist young people in having their views and opinions heard.

As different agencies strive to provide increasingly seamless and co-ordinated care for individuals, it is increasingly likely that the young people themselves are not going to be able to identify any one aspect of their care. It therefore makes sense that the child's entire package should be consulted upon, and not left to each individual agency to attempt consultation alone.

The following, therefore, *offers guidelines rather than prescription* for each part of the cycle of **preparation, initial or referral/consultation meeting, assessment, planning and review**. It is intended that the following points will offer a useful starting point for thinking about the level of participation of the child in this process which can be developed to suit the circumstances in which professionals work.

Prior to meeting with a child/young person for the first time

- ⇒ Ensure that parents/carers – or another adult known to and trusted by the child – has discussed the professional's involvement with the child – and have a copy of the appropriate leaflet to assist the discussion.
- ⇒ Ask a third party, known to and trusted by the child, to introduce the child to him/her – e.g. teacher, parent, classroom assistant etc.
- ⇒ Know the communication level of the child / young person and taking account of :



the child / young person's **own behaviour and responses** (e.g. body movements, eye gaze, facial expression etc).



the **representational system** used by the child / young person.



the **type of aid** used by the child / young person and how.

(See section 4.1 'Children with Communication Support Needs' for further details)

Initial contact with a child/young person

- ⇒ Introduce him/herself, check the child/young person's understanding of his/her role and confirm the child/young person's consent.
- ⇒ Consider the shared understanding of language, whereby the respondents understanding of words is the same as the consultants.
- ⇒ State what he/she is planning to do and give reasons.
- ⇒ Ask questions the right way. Professionals should be **aware that the way questions are phrased can influence the child's responses and that this can be particularly the case for children and young people with certain additional support needs** (see Appendix 1 for further guidance).
- ⇒ Clarify the limits of confidentiality – what will be done with information gathered about the child/young person and/or the child/young person provides, with whom information will be shared, how it will be shared, circumstances when information must be shared with others.
- ⇒ Ensure that the child/young person has every opportunity to describe his/her view of events/the difficulties reported by others – enlisting the help of a trusted adult with this – where appropriate.
- ⇒ Consider offering the option of identifying a “named” peer to represent the child/young person's views – if he/she has difficulty representing him/herself (NB: There may be issues re obtaining consent from the named peer and his/her parents/carer re this):
- ⇒ Where possible, offer choices to the child/young person to determine the order in which any assessment activities are completed.

The referral/consultation meeting – older child

The presumption is that the young person over the age of twelve has the maturity to understand, and therefore should routinely be involved in the initial consultation meeting alongside their parents or carers, a representative of school staff and the professional involved. This should take the form of a semi-structured interview that may:

- ⇒ Introduce all present including statement of profession.
- ⇒ Ensure the service leaflet has been read and understood, allowing opportunities for further clarification.
- ⇒ Consider the details surrounding the referral from all perspectives.
- ⇒ Consider deploying a solution-focussed approach to describe current information.

- ⇒ Provide a statement of what will happen next, the reasons for a particular course of action, individual remits, the timescale of an intervention and how and when feedback will be given.
- ⇒ Negotiate and detail points for action.
- ⇒ Allow ample opportunities and time for questioning and reflection.

The referral / consultation meeting – younger child

Because of the age and stage of a child his or her presence at a referral meeting may not be possible. In such instances a decision would have to be made prior to the referral meeting about informing the child about what would be discussed. Such information could be imparted through discussion with a known and trusted adult – staff member or parent – and an information leaflet could be used. This allows the potential for the child to be a partner from the beginning of contact.

In the absence of the child at the referral meeting those present who know him or her well must be able to represent the child's views. It is important that the questions a child may have about the nature of his or her difficulties and what might be done to address them are included in the negotiation of the work to be done.

Following the referral meeting (format as for older child), attended by parent/carer, member of school staff and external professional, feedback to the child about the outcome of discussions. Who should give this and how, will need to be agreed. In addition at the referral meeting it will be necessary to clarify which known adult will introduce the external professional to the child and also when and where this will happen.

3.3 The Assessment Process

Consulting young people should be at the centre of any assessment process, with young people contributing to the development of an intervention, rather than being subject to it.

'Consulting with children and young people should be reflected in the way professionals interact in their work with them – it is not an add on. If one approaches working with children and young people as an interactive social process which accepts that they have something valuable to contribute to the understanding of issues relating to them, then the legislation becomes less necessary to ensure consulting with children'

Conn, Hazelden, Jamieson, MacLulich & Mackenzie, 1999

The purpose and extent of any assessment should be explained to and discussed with the young person and their consent received before the process begins. Information about WHAT you will be doing together, HOW you will be doing it and WHY should be clearly explained.

In subsequent contact with a child/young person, the professional should:

- ⇒ Provide information/feedback about information gathered and his/her interpretation of this. Where appropriate – and feasible – this should be done at the end of every session. A summary of the information gathered and the professional's interpretations should be provided at the end of contact with the child.
- ⇒ Check out the child/young person – his/her feelings about the areas of concern identified by others, the information gathered and interpretation of it – by the professional.
- ⇒ Ensure that the child/young person has every opportunity to describe his/her view of events/the difficulties reported by others – enlisting the help of a trusted adult with this – where appropriate.
- ⇒ Consider offering the option of identifying a 'named' peer to represent the child/young person's views – if he/she has difficulty representing him/herself (NB: There may be issues re obtaining consent from the named peer and his/her parent/carer re this);
- ⇒ Where possible, offer choices to the child/young person to determine the order in which any assessment activities are completed.
- ⇒ Explain what will happen when work undertaken has been completed;
- ⇒ Offer choices to the child/young person as to his/her involvement in 'next steps';
- ⇒ Explain how the child can contact him/her before – or after – any agreed subsequent meeting.

3.4 Contributing to Staged Support / Care Plans

***Individualised Educational Programmes (IEPs) & Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSPs)*²**

Wherever possible children and young people should be involved in setting their own aims and targets for their support plan, in agreeing and implementing appropriate strategies, and evaluating the outcomes. Where possible, targets should be recorded in the pupil's own words or symbols. Professionals should usually aim to talk to children about their support plan in a quiet place away from the rest of the group or class.

Building pupils' confidence

Children and young people will need to practice and gain confidence in setting targets, helping to identify strategies, and monitoring their own progress. It may sometimes be easier to build a child's confidence by talking to them separately from their parents. Another child may find working with their parents more supportive. Professionals will need to account for this in their planning. They will also need to identify the most appropriate member of staff to work with the child or young person. This may be especially important in secondary education where a number of staff may need to contribute to the Support Plan. A young person may find it difficult, if not intimidating, to discuss their support plan with a large group of professional staff.

Working with parents

Parents may also need time to understand the staged intervention process and help in supporting their child to understand their needs, and identify targets and strategies to help. Some parents may not initially understand, for example, that a support plan may only concentrate on three or four targets at the most, and will need reassurance that prioritizing targets does not mean that all of the child's needs will not be met over time. Professionals will need to consider whether to talk to parents with the child present or whether it may be more helpful to do so prior to their child being involved.

Encouraging pupils to monitor their own progress

Wherever possible, children and young people should be encouraged to monitor their own progress towards targets and, as they mature, to take more responsibility for their support plan. However, professionals should recognize there is a balance between ownership and confidentiality – a child or young person may not wish their peers to be aware of the targets and strategies.

² Source: DfES (2001) SEN Tool Kit 'Enabling Child Participation' Section 4

3.5 Contributing to the Review or Transition Process

Meetings are good opportunity for all children and young people with additional support needs to express their views and take part in important decisions which may affect them. Children and young people with the most complex needs may be unable to make their views known directly. However, professionals should find ways of bringing the child / young person's feelings to the attention of others attending the review meeting (see following section). A valuable method of achieving this has been by supporting the child via a **Visual Annual Review** process whereby the child / young person is supported through the review with photographs and symbols (see Appendix 2 for details)

Wherever possible, children and young people should be empowered and encouraged to attend. However, the choice not to attend should be respected. Sometimes a positive alternative is to invite the child / young person to the start of the meeting, ask for their views and explain that they may leave the meeting at any time.

Preparation of the child / young person before any meeting is crucial and should include:

- ⇒ An explanation of what the meeting will be about.
- ⇒ Explaining that their views are very important and will be listened to and taken into account.
- ⇒ Explaining that there is no guarantee that everyone else will agree or that their views and wishes will prevail.
- ⇒ Asking them who they would like to invite.
- ⇒ Telling the child / young person who will be at the meeting.
- ⇒ Forewarning the child / young person what kind of things will be said and by whom.
- ⇒ Provide help for the child / young person with their contribution.
- ⇒ Check if they want or require an advocate or friend present.
- ⇒ Check suitability of venue and layout of meeting area.
- ⇒ Professionals should be sensitive to the content of the discussion and should aim to make the meeting an understandable and positive experience for the child or young person in terms of being directly addressed and with opportunities to make their views known. The chair of the meeting should, for example:
 - ⇒ Make sure the child / young person is given time to think about what they want to say.
 - ⇒ Check that the child / young person is satisfied that all their questions have been answered.
 - ⇒ Give the child / young person the opportunity to ask further questions.
 - ⇒ Sum up the main points of the meeting clearly and in a way the child / young person understands.

In some circumstances, if sensitive issues are to be discussed, related perhaps to home circumstances or medical conditions, it might not be appropriate for the child / young person to be present. However, instead of the child / young person being excluded for part of the meeting some consideration should be given to some adults only being present for part of the time. Where confidential or personal issues are being considered only the relevant adults should be present. Striking a balance should help build the confidence of children and young people and their parents.

Parents are very often present at review meetings when their child's views are reported or the child is encouraged to express opinions. It is important that they understand the benefits and importance of their child being involved in the review meeting. The **chairperson of the meeting has a key role** in explaining to parents that the child's opinions will be considered alongside their own.

Following a meeting the chairperson or another clearly identified key/ lead person should:

- ⇒ Provide an **accessible** copy of the report or at least the recommendations.
- ⇒ Check whether the child / young person wishes to talk about the meeting.
- ⇒ Make sure the child / young person receives feedback about decisions in a positive way.
- ⇒ Ensure that they are available to explain the implications of any decisions.

(see **Appendix 4** for guidelines on accessible writing)

The above is based on:

DfES (2001) SEN Tool Kit 'Enabling Child Participation' Section 4

East Lothian Educational Psychological Services (2003)
'Practice Guidelines for Educational Psychologists: Informing and consulting with children and young people.'

SECTION 4: SPECIFIC AREAS

4.1 Children with Communication Support Needs³

It is clear that meaningful consultation with children and young people requires consideration and assessment of their ability to understand and communicate information. The presence of learning and/or communication difficulties should not negate the participation of young people, but does require understanding and consideration to ensure young people's views are adequately captured.

It should also be recognised that children and young people need to develop the knowledge and skills to be able to meaningfully identify and communicate their views. This requires a listening and participative ethos within a school, in addition to a curriculum which supports and develops the necessary conceptual knowledge and skills to facilitate the consultation process.

Similar to all areas of enquiry there are numerous interactional influences which may impede or promote the consultation process. Therefore consideration is required not only for the additional support needs of the child/ young person, but also the methodology and approach to consulting young people and the context (including the purpose and topic) in which listening and consulting will take place.

Some of the main ways that a child's communication may be impaired are due to:

- ⇒ difficulties in understanding what people are trying to communicate;
- ⇒ difficulties in expressing views, preferences;
- ⇒ visual impairment;
- ⇒ hearing impairment;
- ⇒ language spoken at home.

Using a Communication Profile

As each of these factors can operate on its own or in combinations with one or more of the others assessment of the child's communication is a crucial first step. In this regard, the communication profile devised by Sense Scotland and the Call Centre in their book 'A rough guide to listening' (Aitken and Miller, 2002) offers professionals and others a useful 'route map' through some of the complex areas of communication and helps develop awareness and skills.

There is no point trying to consult children for their views at a level that does not match their level of communication, or their capacity to understand the subject matter. At best it may yield no results (or confusing and ultimately distressing

³ This section is based on the book by Aitken, and Miller (2002) Listening to children with communication support needs. Book 2 A rough guide to listening, Sense Scotland & CALL Centre

results). At worst, it can mislead and perhaps seriously misrepresent the child. It can make it look as though consultation is impossible when in fact it might be quite feasible, by using more appropriate techniques. Conversely, it can seem as though proper consultation has taken place when in reality it has not.

The approach to consulting children and young people needs to involve them in a way that is creative and fits both with the child and the situation.

4.1.2 Creating a Communication Enabling Environment: Practical Steps

Aitken and Millar (2004) found in their study that an ambivalence remains about the need to and the practice of consulting children with high communication support needs. To a large extent this ambivalence appeared to be related to practitioners not having the knowledge and experience of appropriate methodologies and practical steps rather than the extent of the child's communication support needs.

Some of the key methods, therefore, are summarised below and the reader is again directed to Aitken and Miller's book (2002) 'A rough guide to listening' for more details.

Methods of listening and consulting that support children with communication difficulties.

Many formal methods are used to consult people. These include focus groups, phone-ins, community meetings, advisory or consultation committees, electronic or on-line forums, interviews, discussion papers and a host of others. We know that these methods present access difficulties for people with communication difficulties.

Some methods of consulting are more difficult to access than others: a one-to-one interview is generally easier to participate in than responding to a technical report.

A number of basic steps can be taken to make it easier to listen to children and young people with communication support needs

Creating a Supportive Visual Environment.

Prompts and aids to communication such as pictures, signs, symbols, audio and video materials can be used e.g. Photographs or videos of the child / young person showing when they are happy or when they are uncomfortable can show what are positive stimuli and what are not.

Indicating preferences, making choices

Producing simple questionnaires or other visual materials in **word, pictures, signs or symbol** format that could be used by the child directly to indicate their choice e.g. talking mats can be used by parents or school staff to elicit children's views.

Some Caveats:

Questionnaires need to be drawn up carefully, as the way in which questions are posed can influence the pupil's response. **"Blanket" questionnaires may not suit all pupils.**

Producing symbolled resources is a skilled task that needs thought, time and knowledge of the individual child.

The challenge is both to find a means by which a child can communicate effectively and adults can understand and interpret accurately the child's views.

The checklist contained in Aitken and Miller (2002) indicate some stages in the development of choice-making abilities and may help listeners to identify appropriate levels of choice-making for different children (or give ideas about the order in which the process of choosing may be introduced, taught and practised)

The Role of the Adult in creating a communication-enabling environment.

Considerations include:

- ⇒ Using a **minimal speech approach** whereby adults consistently use only one or two relevant concrete words when interacting with children who understand little speech.
- ⇒ Giving children the initiative by **reducing spoken prompts**. This is characterised by the adult's use of long pauses at critical points in the interaction to give children time and opportunity to communicate.
- ⇒ **Proximal communication** involving adults using a range of generally non-verbal strategies to encourage children to initiate communication e.g. imitation of the child, use of bursts of activity contrasted with frequent pauses, along with the use of a minimal speech approach.

See Appendix 4 for more specific information on 'Keeping Speech Simple'

An Example: Talking Mats™ Approach

Talking Mats is a low tech communication tool which uses a mat with pictures symbols attached as the basis for communication. Based around a specific topic, the child is presented with a series of pictures individually and is encouraged to sorting them under a symbol to indicate 'Yes' on one side, 'No' on the other side or 'not bothered' in the middle. In this way, Talking Mats can support children to express their preferences and feelings in relation to things, activities, places and people. It can also be used to help identify future topics or sensitive issues that require further exploration.

The topic can be as abstract or as simple and immediate as is appropriate to the situation and to the age and level of ability of the child. For example, it could be used to explore preferences at school, at respite, or feelings in relation to a hospital visit etc.

Generally it is suitable for children who can:

- ⇒ See and recognise pictures;
- ⇒ Understand that pictures represent objects and activities that are not currently present;
- ⇒ Use their visual skills more effectively than auditory/language comprehension skills;
- ⇒ Indicate YES and NO more or less reliably by any method;
- ⇒ Point somehow, even if only vaguely, by finger, hand, eye or whatever.

The Talking Mats approach can also be helpful for children who are able to communicate through spoken language but have other additional support needs. The visual support of the pictures and the act of sorting them helps children process concepts, to focus on the topic and provide them with control and the opportunity to say 'no'. Talking Mats has also been used successfully as a method of helping people to sort out their priorities and to set goals for themselves.

A Practical Example of a Talking Mat

The child who completed the mat below has Autistic Spectrum Disorder and has a shared placement between two different authority provisions. Normally a photograph of the child would be included at the top of the mat but in the interests of confidentiality, it has been removed.

The completed mat was shown to the class teacher who felt that, by and large, the response was as she would have expected, with one notable exception. That item was then retested using a photograph rather than a symbol. The child did not change his mind. The teacher and tester agreed that as the results had been consistent with all the other symbols and pictures that this was a genuine response. It was agreed that he would be tested again next term to see if the child's was temporary or long-term dislike of the activity.



4.2 Children with Significant Communication Support Needs.

'For a child who does not understand questions and cannot express views through speech, sign symbol or written form, a one-to-one interview session is just as inaccessible as a technical report'.

(Aitken and Miller, 2002)

Observation

Nearly all behaviour can be interpreted as having communicative value. For children and young people with significant communication support needs this is especially so. Aitken and Miller (op.cit) thus rightfully claim that observation is *the* most important tool that practitioners have in identifying what a child really feels.

This not only demands a record of actual observable behaviour but also a full consideration of the **context** in which it occurs over time and in a range of different situations.

However, if an accurate interpretation of the behaviour is to be realised full account also has to be taken of the views of those who have a relationship with the child or young person. Being 'attuned' to the child is key if the nuances and minute detail of the micro-behaviours observed are to be more completely understood.

Aitken and Miller thus offer the following practical tips:

Hints and Tips on collecting reported observation from others

DO

- ⇒ ask more than one person;
- ⇒ ask (a) member(s) of the family and staff member(s);
- ⇒ in schools and other institutions, ask learning assistants and other staff as well as the professional 'in charge'. Care staff and assistants often spend much more time with the child and often have valuable insights to offer;
- ⇒ if possible, brief the person to record and report not only the child's behaviours, but also the context in which the child produced that behaviour.;
- ⇒ if possible, ask about specific situations and give examples, rather than asking a general question or a leading question (What happens when... NOT Does he like...? and NOT He doesn't like..., does he?);
- ⇒ ask people to report exactly what the child did, before discussing their interpretation of the behaviours;
- ⇒ try to get people to describe behaviour in detail, not just to give an impression;
- ⇒ try to interview people in person to get their reports, so that you can ask supplementary questions;
- ⇒ try to get a recording of the situation on video, so that there is time for different people also to view and review the child's behaviours later.

DON'T

- ⇒ rely on the report of one person only. Three is better than two.
- ⇒ rely on reports from one single session (it may just be 'a bad day').
- ⇒ rely on a written report only.
- ⇒ rely on 'general' statements (He often bangs his hand) – investigate further.
- ⇒ accept people's interpretations of behaviour without cross checking.

Passive and active observation

Aitken and Miller further describe two types of observation.

1. Passive observation: shadowing the child through naturally occurring events throughout the day, without intervening or affecting routines in any way.
2. Active (or directed) observation: a means of structuring the observation by preparing in advance a list of situations to find out about. The child's family or helpers can then plan a day that incorporates some activities and situations likely to produce the responses in question. For example, you may want to observe the child:

- ⇒ doing something people think that he or she really likes doing.
- ⇒ doing something he or she really doesn't like.
- ⇒ doing something that he or she has never done before.
- ⇒ with people he or she knows really well.
- ⇒ with new people he or she doesn't know.
- ⇒ in different rooms or areas of the building.
- ⇒ in different physical positions, with different equipment and furniture.
- ⇒ with different levels and types of background sounds.

Although more intrusive, **active** observation is likely to provide practitioners with a fuller picture of the child or young person's communicative behaviours.

Interpretation of Observations

Following the collation of the contextualised observation data, efforts to check the reliability of the information with that gleaned from other sources is likely to provide a more valid interpretation. Aitken and Miller thus advise asking the observers to interpret their own observed materials and that of all the others, in order to arrive, as far as possible, at a clearer consensus as to the meaning of the child or young person's behaviour.

The following practical steps have also been suggested in order to aid this process:

- ⇒ Try to get a discussion going amongst the people;
- ⇒ As a group, review a video of examples of the behaviour and discuss;
- ⇒ Collect more information over a longer period;
- ⇒ Create a structured record sheet for noting the occurrence of particular stimuli or situations, and the child's responses to each, to see if consistency emerges over time.

Examples of Approaches

Intensive Interaction

The term was coined by Nind and Hewitt (1994; 2001) and is based on the style of interaction people naturalistically adopt when interacting with infants. However, it should not be construed as treating children or young people with complex needs as infants. Instead, it is an approach based on the reciprocity of early communication behaviours – a person does something, you do something in response.

Key elements include being 'attuned' and responsive to the child by:

- ⇒ learning how to 'read' body movements, slight changes in facial expressions so you can relate them back to the person, showing you have understood;
- ⇒ focusing your attention on the child's interests, even if only for fleeting moments;
- ⇒ picking up on changes of attention and interest, following the child's lead;
- ⇒ reducing demands and lots of extraneous noise;

By responding consistently over a period of time to behaviours understood to have communicative intent, such as looking, smiling or vocalising to show pleasure, this can be gradually built upon to provide the child with a more generalised way of indicating preferences.

The Walkabout / Mosaic Approach

'Going Walkabout' is a kind of 'on the move' form of active or directed observation. For very young children or children and young people with complex learning difficulties it can be more meaningful to observe how they react and respond to real or concrete situations rather than perhaps using more abstract means such as symbols or even pictures.

The approach will often involve accompanying the child to familiar contexts and observing their responses in situ. However, it may also involve accompanying a child to a significant new place or activity to compare and contrast their responses and thus give an insight into a child's preferences and feelings.

The approach is similar to the Tours and Mapping described by Clark and Moss (2001) as one component of their 'Mosaic Approach' whereby young children can take a visitor around their nursery and tell the visitor about each area.

The approach is especially relevant when transitions are being discussed e.g. to a new school or respite placement etc. In essence, it is about 'walking the talk' and can be helpful in gleaning information on a child's views with respect to new places, future times and hypothetical events that may be difficult to glean through other means.

4.3 Child Protection – Taking Account of Children's Views (including children with communication support needs)

The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 places a responsibility on Local Authorities (LA) to have regard to the views of children wherever possible, in making decisions or taking actions that may affect their lives. The Act also places a responsibility on the LA to carry out investigations if they receive information suggesting a child may be in need of protection from child abuse and to consider the need for any actions that might be required to protect the child or reduce the level of risk.

Obtaining the views of children when child protection issues may present can be challenging i.e. children may be confused, fearful, traumatised and uncertain about what has happened and what might happen in future. These challenges can be even greater when children have communication support needs.

West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC) are committed to ensuring that all children are afforded child protection and that their views are taken into account whenever possible, in making decisions that affect children's lives.

This Practice Guideline is one of a range of training procedures, guidance and tools which have been put in place within WDC area to assist professionals in obtaining the views of children. These are designed to compliment each other and when used appropriately will enhance our ability to take into account children's views and contribute to better decision making and outcomes for children.

Below is a brief outline of what is in place within WDC area to facilitate obtaining the views of children involved in child protection processes.

Social Work Child Protection Procedures

WDC has child protection procedures in place addressing all aspects of child protection work. These procedures make it clear that the views of the child must be taken into account, whenever possible, at every stage of the child protection process from responding to an initial referral and investigation to making decisions at case discussions or case conferences.

In addition detailed guidance is available to social workers and police officers planning and conducting investigative interviews of children that, if followed ensure that investigations are child centred and take account of the child's views.

Supplementary "Guidance for Staff Involved in Supporting a Joint Investigative Interview" has also been produced and distributed to all relevant staff who may be involved in interviewing or supporting an interview of a child with communication support needs.

In addition to using the child protection procedures and supplementary guidance referred to above, relevant staff should also use the appropriate sections of these Practice Guidelines to support their work with children.

Child Protection Training

There is a range of single and multi-agency training courses run within West Dunbartonshire designed to promote awareness and expertise across agencies working in this area. This includes intensive joint training for police and social work staff on carrying out investigative interviews in a way that is evidentially sound, child centred and takes account of the child's views. In addition specialist development training is now provided for these staff which specifically addresses interviewing children with communication support needs.

An interagency training programme is run by West Dunbartonshire Child Protection Committee (CPC) which includes sessions on Communication with Children with a Disability, targeted at a range of staff from various agencies, designed to enhance understanding and child protection awareness.

Tools to Assist in Obtaining the Views of Children

West Dunbartonshire CPC has endorsed the use of "Viewpoint", a computer interactive programme for obtaining the views of children to contribute to care planning, including those children who are subject to child protection case conferences.

We are also committed to "In My Shoes" a computer programme for assisting skilled professionals in working with children both therapeutically and in obtaining their views. West Dunbartonshire CPC is committed to a programme of training professionals in the use of this tool.

For further information on "Viewpoint" and "In My Shoes" see the following web-links:

<http://www.vptorg.co.uk/>

<http://www.inmyshoes.org.uk/>

And Finally

It has not been the intention of this guideline to provide a comprehensive or static list of all methods that practitioners may wish to deploy. Notable omissions, for example, include the use of **Communication through Play, a Passports Approach, and the use of Communication Aids**. Again the reader is referred to the Aitken and Miller's book 'A Rough Guide to Listening' for further details on such methods.

Instead, the key message is that practitioners need to continue to challenge and evolve their practice in creative and imaginative ways that places the involvement and encouragement of the full participation of **all** children and young people at the centre.

SECTION 5: APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Asking Questions the Right Way

Research Based Pointers: (based on an article by Lewis, 2004)

Permit or encourage 'don't know' responses and requests for clarification

In contrast to informal advice about discouraging don't know responses there is evidence that encouraging children to state explicitly that they do not know the 'answer' or do not understand the question is valuable. Young children can be taught to identify non-comprehension and to ask for rephrasing

Stress not knowing the events or views of the child to counter the child's assumption that the adult knows the answer.

- Children, more readily than adults, will assume that the adult questioner knows more than they do – especially if the adult has credibility with the child.
- Proneness to suggestibility can be prevalent through:
 - Yielding – to leading questions or misinformation.
 - Shifting – in response to negative or no feedback.

Use statements rather than questions.

- Making statements triggers fuller responses from children

If using questions, use an appropriate level of generality

- Open or moderately focused questions seem to generate more accurate responses from children with learning difficulties than do highly specific questions.

Avoid repeat questions

- Children are tuned into the idea that a repeat question means that the first response was incorrect.
- This applies to closed but not open questions.

Avoid yes/no alternatives

- Young children, particularly those with learning difficulties, will tend to have an affirmative bias (acquiescence), i.e. to answer yes to yes / no questions.
- Deliberately giving the child many opportunities to practise saying 'no' by, for example, introducing very improbable alternatives such as 'Is your favourite pet a penguin?', is a useful strategy.
- With others sets of limited alternatives e.g. Were you happy or sad at that school? There is a recency effect i.e. a bias to the later of the alternatives heard. However, this does not happen when picture cards are used.

Avoid successive prompts

- Generally, young children tend to be accurate but incomplete in their accounts. There is a well-documented tendency to confabulation i.e. filling in gaps in memory with invention.
- Successive prompting tends to lead to inaccurate responses.
- With repeated questioning, children fill in imaginary details that they then come to believe with great conviction.
- Confabulation seems to be more likely in relation to descriptions of people or things rather than events.

Be wary about the use of modifying terms

- Modifiers are adjectives or adverbs, e.g., fast/slow; clever/stupid
- Marked modifiers such as 'slow' contain a possible zero, i.e. not moving.
- Children generally acquire unmarked forms, e.g. 'fast' – it is limitless, before marked forms such as 'slow'.
- These issues concerning the use of modifiers in questions to children have implications for interviews with children in which they are asked to choose (verbally or non-verbally) between polar opposites.

Be aware of the impact of referents and pronouns.

- Children are slow to master referents and pronouns so may be swayed by the use of the definite compared with an indefinite article (the definite article leading to a positive bias).
- Did you see a man on your way to school today?
- Did you see the man on your way to school today? (leading to a greater tendency to say 'yes').
- Young children and children with learning difficulties, often misunderstand referents such as that, they, them, those, here, there.

Aim for an uninterrupted narrative.

- One way to counter the dangers of recurrent and over-specific prompting, as well as possibly inadvertent misinformation, is to endeavour to set up the interview context in a way that prompts an uninterrupted narrative.
- Cue cards provide one way to do this, based on 'script' theory, to guide the child's recall.
- This generic structure contains key common elements: people, location, speech, actions, feelings and consequences. After training, the cue cards are presented in turn and so act as non-verbal prompts for the child's retelling of her narrative.

Appendix 2: Visual Annual Reviews (Hayes, J (2004))

Background

- ⇒ Originated from an adaptation of the MAP (Making Action Plans) child-centred approach, devised by Forest, Pearpoint and O'Brien (1996).
- ⇒ A holistic review process and planning tool celebrates the strengths that a person has, as well as their difficulties, before looking at the dream for their future and plans for first steps to get there.
- ⇒ It is based on the belief that for any plan to succeed one must involve those people closest to the child – the child him/herself and his/her immediate community (e.g. friends, family and all the professionals involved).
- ⇒ The whole meeting is minuted via a large three metre square graphic on which a graphic facilitator draws pictures and illustrates key words to represent what is being said.
- ⇒ The purpose of the graphic is not only to encourage creativity and inspire further thought but also to provide an alternative means of access to the information being discussed.

The Procedure

- ⇒ A visual annual review is a child-centred review process made accessible for the pupil through preparation before and during the meeting.
- ⇒ The meeting is structured using four named quadrants within a circle, which has been drawn and represented on a large piece of paper or large screen / interactive white-board.
- ⇒ The four quadrants are as follows: school, home, outside agencies (called 'other people') and next steps.
- ⇒ Within each section the young person represents what they are good at or enjoy and what they find difficult or dislike. Other people at the meeting support the young person, who may have invited some of them. They also have an opportunity to present their views. The responses of all involved are represented by pictures or graphics, and inserted by the graphic facilitator prior to and, as appropriate, during the review.
- ⇒ If the young person uses alternative forms of communication, such as symbols,

they can also be used on the graphic.

- ⇒ The views of the class about the young person's strengths are also recorded and represented visually on the graphic. These are collated using a large digital photograph of the young person prior to the meeting.

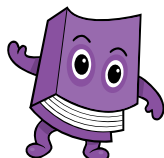
The Process.

- ⇒ The method involves two adults working together. One to lead / chair the review and another to be the graphic facilitator.
- ⇒ The process begins with asking the young person to communicate their strengths (what they are good at and enjoy) and difficulties (what they find hard or don't like) at school (quadrant 1) and at home (quadrant 2).
- ⇒ Each quadrant is explored in turn with the child / young person being the main person to speak, with support from others at the review.
- ⇒ The review does not include attainment levels as in the normal review process which are explained to the pupil.
- ⇒ The third quadrant is about other agencies. Other agencies views / reports should also be represented visually using graphics / key words/ symbols that are *meaningful for the child / young person*.
- ⇒ The last quadrant is 'first steps'. This asks every person in the room to name a 'first step' to tackling issues raised during the review. This should be a small step that is achievable in the next three working days. The purpose of this is to encourage people to act on the information. By breaking down the task into small steps it is more likely that further action will be taken with regard to bigger issues raised.
- ⇒ The graphic facilitator records what is being said by inserting appropriate pictures that capture the main points.
- ⇒ The final step is a 'round of words'. This involves every person giving a key word to describe how he or she found the review. This is again recorded in a way that is meaningful for the child / young person by the graphic facilitator.

Appendix 3: Accessible Reports

Many people find reading difficult. They may prefer to get information on audio tape or face to face. If you have to provide written material there are ways to make it easier to understand.

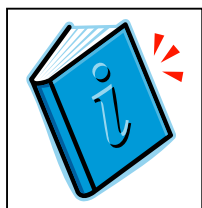
You can:



Use clear and simple text (plain English) with short sentences, simple punctuation and no jargon.



Use larger print (at least 12 point), a clear typeface and plenty of spacing.



Use:

- bullet points or
- story boxes and
- fact boxes to make the main points clear.



Use images such as photos, drawings or symbols to support your text. Aim to make the subject of your material clear at a glance, even to a non-reader.



Do not rely heavily on abstract symbols unless you know your readers are confident symbol users. Choose one or two simple, pictorial symbols and put them to the side of the words.

Appendix 4: Keeping Speech Simple

How YOU speak to a child can make a big difference to how well they understand you and how well they respond to you.

Non-verbal communication

Communication is only partly to do with speech and language. It will help to use plenty of extra clues to go along with your speech. The pitch, tone, and volume of your voice can emphasise and clarify your meaning.

Remember to keep your non-verbal signals straight. Children will use these for clues to support their limited understanding of spoken words.

- ⇒ If you are trying to attract someone's attention, move to be beside them and wait until they look at you (or possibly touch their arm lightly) to alert them to the fact that you are going to speak to them.
- ⇒ If asking a question and expecting an answer, use questioning intonation, look at the child, lean towards him or her, cock your head and use your eyebrows (or even point at them) to show you are waiting for a response.
- ⇒ If you are feeling cross or being firm, use a stern facial expression and a strong tone of voice.
- ⇒ If you are making a light comment or a joke, smile.
- ⇒ Use everyday gestures like waving, or the child's signs, if you know them.
- ⇒ If you are referring to something in the room, point to it (or use a picture).

Examples of simple speech

Keeping your own speech and language short simple and direct never does any harm and can do a great deal of good. It can make all the difference to some children. So, whatever the child's level of language comprehension – and especially because you may not know exactly what this is - always keep your own speech and language simple!

- ⇒ Speak quite slowly (but within normal limits, not artificially word-by- word).
- ⇒ Leave short pauses between each sentence, to allow the child time to process the meaning of the language used.
- ⇒ Emphasise key words Cut out as many 'little' words as possible (or at least, bear in mind that they may be meaningless to the child)
- ⇒ Use repetition.
- ⇒ Use short sentences.
- ⇒ Try to use positive sentences, not negative (some 'don't' 'not' etc but just pick up the key words).

- ⇒ Keep it straightforward and concrete.
- ⇒ Try to be clear about *when* you are talking about (as a child may not understand time words like later'; 'soon'; 'before' etc.).
- ⇒ If you are asking a question, use a direct question.
- ⇒ If you are making a statement, do not turn it into a 'false question'.
- ⇒ Use simple grammar, for example, active and direct sentences not passive or indirect.
- ⇒ Use the word you mean (even if you have to keep repeating it), rather than lots of dangling 'it' or 'him' or 'she' etc words, it may not be clear what these words refer to.
- ⇒ Avoid colloquialisms and metaphors, irony or puns and jokes.

Appendix 5 - Questions / Issues to Consider when Seeking and Taking Account of the Views of Children and Young People ⁴

Developing a Culture of Participation (adapted from Kirby et al, 2003)

How integral is children and young people's participation to your organisational culture?

Are you clear why you want to involve children and young people?

What values underpin your work?

What do you hope to achieve: for services/ professionals/children/ young people?

Participation in Practice: Power and control

Have you defined your objectives for planned participation activities?

How can children and young people be involved in defining objectives?

How will differences in defining objectives be accommodated?

Have you ensured they understand the extent to which their views can influence decisions?

What information is being given to the child/ young person to enable them to make an informed choice about whether or not they want to participate?

How is the information being presented? Is it given in a way that they understand?

Do children and young people have a choice to opt in and out of taking part? How is this choice communicated to them? How often do you check their desire to continue being involved?

Is there a clear and shared understanding of issues of confidentiality?

What choices do the child/ young person have re setting, timing and people involved?

How can you involve children/ young people in setting the agenda?

Are you asking children and young people what issues are of concern to them? How do you know?

To what extent can children/ young people be given a choice about the type of activities they engage in? Do you share their views?

⁴ Source: Mackay, F, Barrett, W, Crichton, R, Chick, H, Dunlop, L, Inch, W, Oliver, L and Thomson, A (2007) Seeking and Taking Account of the Views of Children and Young People, SEED, PDP Paper

Child-centred approaches: Building relationships

Importance of spending time with children/ young people and developing positive relationships.

To what extent are you aware of what is going on for them in their life and how this might impact on their involvement?

How do you demonstrate interest and respect for children and young people? Do you spend time and actively listen?

Are you genuinely interested in what children and young people have to say and how do you show this?

How do you assess their individual abilities and interests?

Do you take time to regularly feedback and check that you have understood what the children/young people are telling you?

Choice of participatory approaches and techniques

Consideration should be given to using a variety of different approaches.

Multi-sensory activities that are **high interest** and **fun** – use of computer technology has been demonstrated to be particularly helpful in engaging children and young people.

Activities that involve doing something together with a focus for joint attention and communication.

Are your activities flexible and creative? Can you **adapt** activities to meet the individual needs of children and young people?

It is helpful to provide examples in order that children and young people have something from which to build from if required.

Where possible provide opportunities for children and young people to exert **control** over pace, structure and degree of eye contact (specific to individuals).

Be open and honest about any information being recorded during activities.

Interactive and ongoing **feedback** is paramount and structures need to be embedded to seek feedback from children/ young people and adults.

Incorporate structures to seek **feedback** from children and young people about their experience of the participation process e.g. evaluation target diagram.

Impact

Importance of empowering children and young people to be involved in the processes affecting them.

What are the effects of participation on pupils' self-theories – including **empowerment**, increased **belonging** and recognition of talents?

What will change as a result of the child/ young person's views?

Will their voice be **heard**?

Will their voice be **acted upon**?

Have you been **honest** about the likelihood of their views making a difference?

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SECTION 6: USEFUL RESOURCES, TOOLKITS AND CONTACTS

Action Research Toolkit

A practical guide to consultation with children and young people including techniques, preparation and analysing and using the findings to effect change.

Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership

Tel: 0131 555 5111 **Web:** www.youthinclusion.org

ISBN 0 9540397 0 X

Bored Meetings? Meeting Skills for Young Decision-Makers

A practical resource aimed at workers who have to convert policies on youth involvement into good practice on the ground.

Bored Meetings? supports young people involved in group meetings i.e. management

committees, youth fora, housing association groups, school councils and boards.

Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Partnership & Edinburgh Voluntary

Organisations Council

Tel: 0131 555 5111 (EYSIP) or 0131 555 9124 (EVOC)

Web: www.youthinclusion.org

Children in Scotland Publications

Children in Scotland offers a number of publications on participation.

Use the following link and select 'participation' from the drop down menu to view the full list.

Web: www.childreninscotland.org.uk/html/pub_list.php

Department for Education and Skills publications:

Core principles for children and young people's participation in the planning, delivery and evaluation of government policies and services

Web: <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/CYPUCP1-PDF1.pdf>

The SEN Toolkit — Section 4: Enabling Pupil Participation

Web: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/4609/Toolkit%204%20Text.pdf>

Having a Say!

Disabled children and effective partnership in decision-making.

Philippa Russel, Council for Disabled Children 1998

Council for Disabled Children

Tel: 020 7843 1900 **Web:** www.ncb.org.uk

Hear by Right – by the Participation Team of The National Youth Agency

Hear by Right offers tried and tested standards for organisations to improve their practice and policy on the participation of children and young people. The web site has a rich library of resources and examples of participation in practice.

Tel: 0116 242 7406 **Web:** www.nya.org.uk/participation

Listening to Children: Research and Consultation Centre for Research on Families and Relationships

This link has tips for research and consultation with children and young people were compiled and edited by Michael Gallagher from responses to an email-shot in October 2004.

Web: www.crfr.ac.uk/cpd/listeningtochildren/toptips.html

National Children's Bureau.

Communicating with children: A link with six PowerPoint files and four PDF files. It addresses communication throughout child development, highlighting useful research studies, analysis, books, tools and techniques.

Web:

http://www.ncb.org.uk/resources/free_resources/communicating_with_children.aspx

Participation - Spice it Up!

A user friendly practical toolkit for engaging children and young people in planning and consultations. Crammed with activities to make participation fun.

Dynamix Ltd 2002

Tel: 01792 466231 **Web:** www.seriousfun.demon.co.uk

ISBN 1 84187 062 5

Re:action Consultation Toolkit

A practical toolkit for consulting with children and young people on policy issues in a systematic and inclusive way.

Save the Children 2001- Save the Children Scotland Programme

Tel: 0131 527 8200 **Web:** www.savethechildren.org.uk

ISBN 1 84187 040 4EYSIP

'Safe and Sound' Youth Scotland. Child Protection Resource

'Keep it Real – The Participation Pack for Youth Groups'. Youth Scotland

Web: www.youthscotland.org.uk; click on 'resources'

UNICEF - The Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF

Tel: 0870 606 3377 **Web:** www.unicef.org.uk

ISBN 1 871440 11 4

Article 31 Action Pack

PLAYTRAIN

Tel: 0121 449 6665 **Web:** www.playtrain.org.uk

ISBN 0 9519013 1 1