

Voice of the Child  
Under 11's

# Toolkit Guidance for Practitioners



Derby City Council

# Voice of the Child Under 11's Toolkit

## Guidance for Practitioners

### Purpose

- To enable the child or young person to:
  - have a voice which is listened to and acted upon.
  - give their view on the support they receive, what has worked or not worked for them and action for change
  - recognise emotions and develop more positive coping strategies and problem-solving skills
  - identify what help they would like and who from.
  - identify and share what is important to them, their worries and concerns, strengths, hopes and dreams.
  - understand more about their identity.
- To enable practitioners to build positive relationships and gain a better understanding of the child or young person to best support their needs.
- To improve outcomes and evidence what difference listening to the child or young person has made

### Outcomes

- The child or young person should:
  - have a better understanding of themselves and their identity
  - be able to recognise areas of strength, identify areas of concern and what keeps them safe
  - be able to recognise any difficulties with self-image
  - be able to identify what has helped or not helped.
  - be able to identify where further support is required and this should inform assessments and/or any future referrals.
  - be able explain and demonstrate their ability to seek, access support and positive change.
- The practitioner should have a better knowledge and understanding of the child or young person and an insight into what life is like for them.

## Guidance

- It is important to plan a safe space for children and young people to participate in this work and consider their level of development, preferred method of communication and functioning.
- Be clear from the onset how long the session will be and what will happen. Remove all expectations on how long each section should take as attention spans and amount of engagement will vary widely.
- The child or young person should fill out the identified worksheet(s) where possible (the practitioner can support the child or young person, but it is important that you write exactly what they say). The tools should be adapted to meet their individual needs.
- To make the tasks more accessible, it is recommended any help sheets are laminated and cut out so they can be used as prompt cards. There are blank spaces so the child or young person's own words can be written.
- For those children and young people who are nonverbal, practitioners should capture the child or young person's voice through observations, and if this is unsuccessful one to one discussion with parents/carers, key workers and anyone that knows the child best.
- Carefully observe the child when in their presence or carrying out the work, how they feel may be almost imperceptible changes in their body language or facial expression.
- Do not underestimate the child or young person's abilities. Expressive communication may be very limited but that does not mean they do not have a lot to say.
- Be wary of interpreting communication, this is rarely accurate and can be very frustrating for the child or young person. Acknowledge that you do not understand; rephrase or distract or go back to this later.
- Use a photograph of the child or young person or if possible, encourage the child or young person to have a go at drawing a picture to represent them, or provide the opportunity for the child or young person to do a handprint. Mark making gives the child or young person ownership of the work.
- Encourage the child or young person to contribute as fully as they are able in this process.
- Facilitate a discussion with the child or young person to explore further the reasons for their viewpoint.
- You are free of course to use this tool flexibly to meet the needs of the individual young person for example using a large piece of paper and coloured pens.
- The child or young person (with the support of the practitioner) should complete the action plan to identify the support they feel they may need.
- Practitioners should ensure their words are recorded and work progresses at a pace suitable to each individual child or young person and set a date to review progress.
- The child or young person with the support of the practitioner should complete the review form recording the child or young person's words.
- The action plan and review should be used in line with other plan processes as appropriate, for example Team Around the Family (TAF), Children in Need (CIN) Reviews and Child Protection Reviews. This tool should contribute to the overall plan for the child or young person.

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## **Who am I?**

- Examines personality characteristics by asking the child or young person to look at how they see themselves and how they think other people see them.
- Prior to meeting the child or young person gather information from other sources regarding their preferred method of communication. This is often highly individualised. Consider enlarging and laminating symbols.
- Encourage the child or young person to have a go at drawing a picture to represent them or provide the opportunity for the child or young person to do a handprint or use a photograph of the child or young person. Mark making gives the child or young person ownership of the work.
- The child or young person should circle the words/choose a picture on the worksheets to describe how they see themselves and how others see them. They should use the box to explain why they have chosen those particular words.
- There is space underneath for the child or young person to write their own descriptive words.
- Facilitate discussion with the child or young person about self-image and self-esteem allowing identification of any difficulties and what may help, encourage the child or young person to contribute as fully as they are able in this process.
- Discuss with parents/carers and/or key workers the patterns of behaviour the child or young person displays when feeling happy, sad and angry. Encourage the parent/carer and/or key worker to provide their own description of the child or young person using the word list to prompt if required.
- There are also additional tools in the appendices to support the child or young person to participate.

## Getting to know me

- Examines interests and feelings by asking the child or young person to make 3 statements on each area.
- Discuss with the child or young person the area they would like to focus on: Things I like & Things I don't like, Things I do well & Things I can do better, Things that make me feel or Things I need help with.
- Facilitate discussion by asking the child or young person the reasons for their choices to enable them to reflect and allowing identification of any difficulties/concerns and what may help.
- There are also help sheets to support the child or young person to participate.
- Using photographs are ideal for children with low cognitive ability. For example: the actual people, buildings and objects. They may not understand a nursery symbol but recognise the place they go most days.

## My identity

- Examines who and what is important that helps shape the child or young person's identity.
- It also explores areas of safety with the worksheet Things that make you feel safe or unsafe with help sheets 22 to 26.
- The child or young person can use the Family, Friends and Other Important People Tree worksheet with help sheets 3 to 6 to show who is important to them.
- The child or young person can use the Circle worksheet putting their name in the centre and demonstrating in order of importance the closer it is to them with help sheets 7 to 21.
- Show and discuss with the child or young person the area they would like to focus on: Things I like to do, Sensory, Communication, Where I like to spend my time, Gender and Sexuality, What I can do for myself, Ethnicity, Religion,
- Provide scissors so they can cut out the words relevant to them (the practitioner can support the child or young person to do this) or bring them already cut out. Explain there are blank cards to write their own words. These should be placed on the circle or tree worksheet.
- Using photographs are ideal for children with low cognitive ability. For example: the actual people, buildings and objects. They may not understand a nursery symbol but recognise the place they go most days.
- Using the What would you change worksheet to facilitate a discussion by asking the child or young person the reasons for their choices to enable them to reflect and allowing identification of any difficulties/concerns and what may help.

## My Mixed Emotions

- Explores a child or young person different emotions and behaviours at any given point in time.
- Before starting the activity, ensure you have all the communication tools needed to give the child or young person their voice.
- The tool can be utilised in different ways, either after a display of challenging behaviour or to understand how the child would react in different situations.
- This should be a collaborative piece of work with the child where coping mechanisms and/or strategies can be discussed with the child to develop insight of actions and consequences.
- When using the 'How do I behave' (Volcano) section, here is an example on how you could use this tool: Showing signs of aggression, verbal, non-verbal

Child swears/shouts/causes disruption.

Use of expletives	Unacceptable in environment ↓
↑ Disruption in class	Consider individual resource
↑ Negative reaction to comment	What/Who can help
↑ Unable to concentrate	Strategies to prevent disruption
↑ Hungry	Coping mechanisms
↑ No breakfast	Stop swearing

## At Home I Feel

- This tool is recommended for children aged 5 to 10 years (average cognitive ability).
- Encourage the child to complete the family and friends tree, this can also include carers, step-parents and pets.
- Facilitate a discussion (without asking any leading questions) and ask the child to talk about: - how they feel about home and any concerns - why they feel this way.

## At School I Feel

- This tool is recommended for children aged 5 to 10 years.
- Facilitate a discussion and ask the child or young person to talk about:
  - how they feel about school and any concerns
  - how well they feel they are doing
  - behaviour
  - friends.

## Three Islands

- The child or young person can either draw three islands on the pieces of paper or they can choose to use the 3 islands worksheet.
- Before starting the activity, ensure you have all the communication tools needed to give the child or young person their voice.
- Allow the child or young person time to choose from a range of objects/pictures/toys. Be aware that if you need to give the child an unlimited choice due to their needs you may mislead the outcome.
- The green island is where the child or young person wants to be, and they can put anything and anyone they would like on their island with them.
- The orange island with the bridge to the green island is the place where the child or young person would like to be sometimes and can move across by the bridge. It also could be a place for visitors who can come over the bridge to their green island or it could be to have objects that they could have sometimes.
- The red island with the shark next to it is a place where the child or young person can put people, places and objects that they do not want to be part of their lives.
- A discussion needs to take place with the child or young person to explore the reasons for their choices and decisions. If the child or young person is not cognitively able then the discussion needs to take place with parent/carer or key worker who knows them best. • Please use 'I wonder questions...' to help explore the child or young person's views for example: I wonder what made you put your dad on the green island.
- The child or young person should fill out the conversation summary sheet (the practitioner can support the child or young person, but it is important that you write exactly what they say). If you discuss this with a parent/carer or key worker, it should be recorded that it is their view and not that of the child or young person.
- As the child or young person is drawing or putting toys on the islands, make sure you ask them who or what they are and why they have put something on a particular island.
- The conversation summary sheet should be used to record the child or young person's words including views and wishes and feelings.
- Be careful about interpreting what is drawn or shown too literally. For example, if they draw a picture of a man and a woman fighting, this will not necessarily mean they have experienced domestic abuse. Drawings / modelling are a way for the child to express an emotional state or process something they have seen or experienced.
- Avoid questioning where the child places things. For example, you can ask why they have put their mother on the second island, but you should not say: 'Oh, but I would have thought your mummy should be on island one?' The child may end up trying to please you (or displease you).
- There may also be immediate reasons why a child has put something on either the second or third islands – for example, they may put their pet cat on island two because the cat scratched them earlier in the day.

## Improvement Ladder

- Facilitate a discussion and ask the child or young person to talk about any worries or concerns they may have and what they would like to change or improve.
- Place the worries sheet at the bottom of the ladder and 'This is what I would like to change' or the magic wand worksheet at the top of the ladder. Then explore with the child or young person how they get from the worries sheet to the 'This is what I would like to change' / magic wand worksheet using the ladder. For those less cognitively able you may want to discuss this with their parent/carer or the person who knows them best.
- The child or young person should write on the rungs of the ladder what they would like to change starting at the 1st rung of the ladder (the practitioner can support the child or young person, but it is important that you write exactly what they say).