

Voice of the Child

# Toolkit Guidance for Practitioners



Derby City Council

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# Voice of the Child 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
  - explore and express their feelings about school.
  - explore different types of relationships, good/bad relationships and how to develop and maintain positive relationships.
  - explore their attitude and knowledge of relationships, sexual health, drugs and alcohol, and risk-taking behaviour.
  - 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.

## Guidance

- The child or young person should:
  - have a better understanding of themselves, their identity and different types of relationships
  - 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
  - should feel their experience at home has improved.
  - should feel their experience at school has improved.
  - 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.
  - have improved anger management and dispute resolution.
  - be able to explain or demonstrate the roles and responsibilities of adult life and where further learning is needed.

- be able explain and demonstrate their ability to seek, access support and positive change.
- have developed more resilience to tackle challenges of adult life.
- have increased ability to proactively sustain themselves in the following areas: Money, Health, Education, Training and Employment, Family and Relationships, Accommodation, Looking After Yourself, Having Your Say, Legal Rights, Being in Care, Life Skills.
- The practitioner should have a better knowledge and understanding of the child or young person.

## Outcomes

- It is important to plan a safe space for children and young people to participate in this work.
- The child or young person should fill out the identified worksheet(s) which should take about 20 minutes (the practitioner can support the child or young person, but it is important that you write exactly what they say).
- 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.

# Toolkit Guidance

## 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.
- The child or young person should circle the words 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.

## Getting to know me

- Examines relationships 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: Family, Friends, Feelings, Me at My Best.
- 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.

## My identity

- Examines who and what is important that helps shape the child or young person's identity.
- The child or young person should put their own name in the centre circle (me) on the worksheets.
- Discuss with the child or young person the area of identity they would like to focus on.
- With the worksheet 'Who is important to me' show the child or young person help sheets 5 and 7.
- 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.
- With the worksheet 'What is important to me' show the child or young person all help sheets 1 to 14. Provide scissors so they can cut out the words relevant to them (the practitioner can support the child or young person to do this). Explain there are blank cards to write their own words.
- Once all relevant words are cut out ask the child or young person to place them on the circle. Explain that the closer to the 'Me' circle the closer the relationship and the more important it is and the further away the less close or important it is.
- 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.

## Wishes and Feelings

- This tool should be used on a regular basis to review the child or young person's wishes and feelings and prior to any future meetings.
- Facilitate a discussion with the child or young person when completing the questions and scales.

## At Home I Feel

- This tool is recommended for children aged 5 to 10 years (average cognitive ability).
- 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 (under 11's and Over 11's)

- 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.

## Anger Map

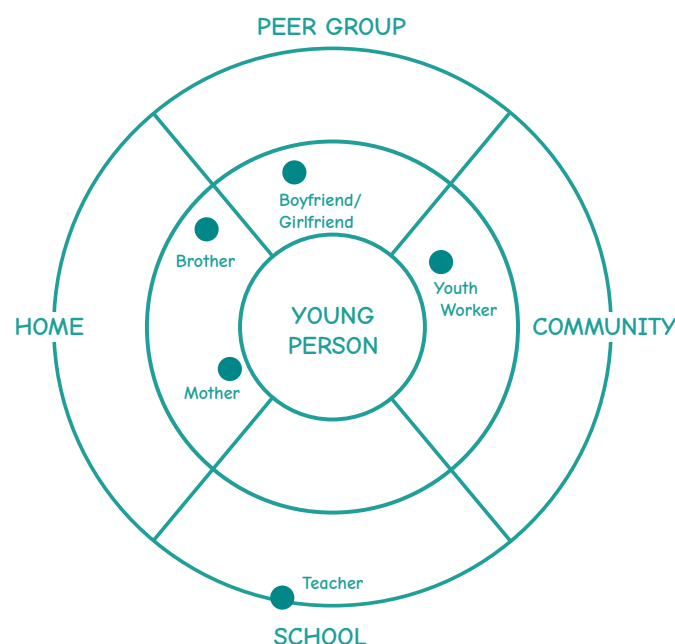
- Facilitate a discussion and ask for the child or young person to talk about:
  - how changes in thoughts and feelings will lead to changes in their body language and their behaviour such as:
    - clenched fists
    - tightness or tenseness in their body
    - verbal outbursts
    - a particular facial expression
    - hitting out
- the cause of their angry emotions:
  - how to deal with anger healthily to reduce likelihood of angry emotions causing the child/- young person and others distress
  - identify strategies they can use against anger
  - identify the early warning signs which could allow others to recognise and better support them
- what they have learnt about themselves and how they can best use this, this should transfer into actions and responsibilities.

## Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scales

- Google RCADS scoring. This will bring up Resources-Child FIRST. <http://www.childfirst>
- Click in this and scroll to the form of the language you require. You can print the form off or complete online with the child or young person. It is preferable to have a printed question version with you as your guide.
- The programme can be saved on your electronic device which gives the option to work offline.
- This is a US programme which means the school grading is different to the UK. Please see below equivalent grades:
  - Grade 3 Year 4 (age 8 - 9 years)
  - Grade 4 Year 5 (age 9 - 10 years)
  - Grade 5 Year 6 (age 10 - 11 years)
  - Grade 6 Year 7 (age 11 - 12 years)
  - Grade 7 Year 8 (age 12 - 13 years)
  - Grade 8 Year 9 (age 13 - 14 years)
  - Grade 9 Year 10 (age 14 - 15 years)
  - Grade 10 Year 11 (age 15 - 16 years)
- In each case it is important to explain to the child or young person this is not a way of diagnosing their mental health and well-being, but it may identify areas in which they might want to work on.
- When introducing RCADS to a child or young person the following are possible opening lines:
  - I was wondering if you would mind completing this form. It is a tool we use to help us unpick some of what might be going on for you.
  - the RCADS form can show your progression each time you complete it and if there are other areas you may need to address.
  - what's great about this tool (RCADS) it has a graph showing your areas you may be finding difficult.
  - I've used this tool with many other children and young people, and they find it helps them to see things clearer where they may need help. Would you mind completing this and we can have a look at what yours comes up with?
- Once the information has been inputted click 'intro', then back to scoring (small boxes at the bottom) this will then bring the results up on a graph. You can print off the answers obtained, which can open a discussion with the child or young person.

## Relationships

- Introduce the subject of 'relationships' and explain that you are going to explore the different types of relationships the child or young person has, for example family, friends, boy/girlfriends.
- You will need the Relationship Grid worksheet and the example Grid.
- Asking them to score these relationships on the grid to show who is close to them and who is less so.
- The grid is split into four sections to represent different aspects of their lives – for example home, peer group, school, wider family.
- The circles radiating out of the centre represent how close they feel to a person. They should put themselves in the centre of the grid and then place the people they have relationships within the relevant sections.
- They may not need to use all four sections. The closer they place people to themselves on the grid the more important that relationship is to them (see example).
- Ask the child or young person to 'thought shower' the people they feel they have relationships with. This will help them to understand the different types of relationships they are involved in and compare them, for example the relationship they have with a teacher may not feel the same as the one they have with a parent/carer.
- Facilitate a discussion and ask for the child or young person to talk about their grid – why are some people closer than others, are they all good relationships? What aspects of those relationships are not so good (for example, parents may be close but want to control aspects of their lives - this should lead to a general discussion).
- Prompt questions could be: what helps now to maintain these positive relationships? How could the not so good relationships be better? How could we support you to improve your relationships?
- This should lead to some discussion about how they 'manage' relationships and the skills they have developed/could develop to help them do this, for example, compromise, taking control and ask them to suggest ways to improve relationships.
- Make the point that no relationships are ideal but that they are already using skills such as compromise, taking control, resolving conflict, to make them work better.





## Sexual Health

- The Sexual Health tool is split into 5 sections; Information and Advice, Your Knowledge, Sexual Health Quiz, Contraception and Sexually Transmitted Infections. You might only use one section or worksheets independently, only print off what you need.
- Facilitate a discussion and ask for the child or young person to talk about:
  - knowledge and understanding
  - good and bad relationships
  - barriers to accessing information and support
  - the law
  - consent and saying no
  - keeping healthy and safe including CSE.
- Answers to all the questions asked can be found on the NHS Choices website [www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx)

## Drugs and Alcohol

- Facilitate a discussion and ask for the child or young person to talk about:
  - Knowledge and understanding
  - Reasons and triggers
  - Risks
  - Keeping safe
  - Changes in behaviour
- Answers to all the questions asked can be found on the NHS Choices website [www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx)
- If you have any concerns about a child or young person's alcohol and/or drugs use please contact Derby Integrated Family Health Service, Connexions, Curzon House, 8 Curzon Street, Derby. DE1 1RZ. Telephone: 01332 641661 or email: [tr.childfamily-derby@nhs.net](mailto:tr.childfamily-derby@nhs.net) for further advice.

## 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.
- 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).

## Three Houses

- The child or young person can either draw three houses, one house on each piece of paper or they can choose to use the 3 houses worksheet.
- Starting inside the first house, the child or young person should write down anything internal that makes them scared or worried such as self-perceptions, values, beliefs, thoughts and feelings. Inside the second house, anything internal that makes them feel positive and happy. Around the outside of the first two houses the child or young person should write anything external that makes them scared or makes them happy and positive such as wider family members, peers, school etc.
- For the house of hopes and dreams, ask the 'miracle question' – what would life be like if there was a miracle overnight and you woke up in a perfect world?
- Once you have completed the drawings, discuss what is needed to address the fears, bolster the strengths and achieve the hopes and dreams. Your first focus should be on resources within the family, as this will increase their motivation and avoid giving the impression that external support is being imposed.
- The final part of creating the '3 houses' with the child or young person involves drawing a pathway from the 'House of Worries' to the 'House of Dreams'. If all the '3 Houses' have been drawn on one large sheet of paper, the path or scale can be drawn at the bottom of these houses, or if separate paper has been used, then the path can be drawn on a separate piece of paper.
- This pathway creates a visual scale and the child or young person is invited to say how they think things are in the family right now, by locating (drawing) themselves on the pathway. Placing themselves at the beginning of the path (near the 'house of worries') would mean that the child or young person thinks the things they are worried about might happen in the future are definitely going to happen, and placing themselves at the end of the path (near the 'house of hopes and dreams') would represent that all the things in their house of hopes and dreams are already happening and the child is not feeling worried at all.
- The conversation summary sheet should be used to record the child or young person's words including views and wishes and feelings.

## 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.
- Explain to the child or young person that this is a game and that they live on the first island. Ask them to draw themselves or use one of the toys to represent them. They can then draw anything else they want to be on this island with them (which could include people, animals, activities, objects).
- On the second island, ask the child or young person to draw or put anything that they want to see but not all the time. Explain they have the only key to the gate on the bridge, so anything on the second island can only cross when the child or young person lets them.
- On the third island, ask the child or young person to draw or put anything that they want to be far away from them or never see again.
- 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 women fighting, this would 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

## Getting Ready for Adult Life

- The 'Get ready for adult life young people's pack' is designed to be a guide to highlight some of the things that young people may already be thinking about, and to provide tips on where they can get more information and support if needed.
- This pack could also be used for young people who are thinking of leaving home or left home to help them prepare for adult life.
- At the front of each of the ten sections is a checklist to identify what young people already know and can do and what things they will need further support with.
- Each section has activities for you to try with young people to help them develop and to discover what they need to work on. You might only use one section or worksheets independently from each section, only print off what you need.
- There is an action record for each of the ten topics in this Voice of the Child tool and this should be used with the young person to facilitate meaningful consultation, it is important that you write exactly what they say and to ensure work progresses at a pace suitable to each individual young person.
- The action record should be used as a live document to be built up over time and to allow progress to be reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- The ten topic areas can be used in any order and at a pace appropriate, dependent on the individual young person's needs.