

Why is it important to gain the views of children and young people?

Everyone wants to be listened to and be heard. It is a human right to express opinions and to be a part of and make decisions about your own future. It is important that children and young people are supported to develop self-advocacy skills so that they can access their education and services confidently and with as much independence as possible. Children and Young People need to feel and be part of the process.

“Schools with a strong commitment to pupil voice have reported many positive outcomes. These include a reduction in exclusions, better behaviour, better relationships across the whole-school community, and improving attainment and attendance.”

Anna Freud – Mentally Healthy Schools

Under the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** all children, including those with ASN and disabilities, have the right to have their views sought and expressed. UNCRC Article 12 – “Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.”

Unicef Rights Respecting Schools

Ofsted Inspectors will make a judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management by evaluating the extent to which they actively seek and listen to the views and experiences of learners.

Education Inspection Framework

The **SEND Code of Practice (CoP) 2015** sets out the importance of the child or young person (CYP) participating as fully as possible in decisions and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions. There must be high regard given to the views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person.

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014

How should we gain the views of Children and Young People?

Tips and hints shared by children and young people:

Warm and welcoming environment

Make everybody feel welcome and say hello, how are you?

Make sure the environment is suitable, accessible and takes reasonable adjustments into account

Ensure you have the right communication tools for that meeting/event (e.g. PECS, Makaton, interpreter, hearing loop, electronic devices etc).

Planning and processes

Be very clear of the purpose of the meeting and the expected outcomes

Send paperwork out in advance of the meeting with guidelines if required.

Make any paperwork simple that anyone can read and understand. Think about the colour of paper

Be respectful

Make sure people understand and can hear you

Encouraging a safe space

Make sure no one is left out the conversation

Don't use acronyms and jargon

Actually listen and take on board what is said. The more you engage with the community and do not listen to and use the information they are giving you, the less those communities will be willing to get involved

Be open and honest as this is how we build trust

Language and communication

Allow the individual time to process the information, don't rush and give people time

Make sure you use words that everybody understands and keep the language simple – avoid/explain acronyms and jargon

Don't make me feel like the odd one out

Be mindful of your body language e.g. slouching, messing around with phones?

Think about using images and simple diagrams

When should I gain the views of Children and Young People with SEND?

Ongoing

Gathering views of CYP should be an ongoing part of everyday teaching and learning, enabling teachers to know and understand their young people well. Settings should develop a positive environment where CYP feel safe and secure to share their views and foster a culture where these are valued and acted upon. This can be achieved through building opportunities for dialogue through everyday teaching activities.

CYP views should be considered at every point in the decision-making process, enabling settings to build positive relationships with pupils so that they are active participants in their education.

Reviewing provision

When the provision for the CYP is being reviewed they should be at the centre of the process. Where the CYP is able, this should involve a rich conversation with the young person which can be supported by a range of different tools. (See additional information in Section 2: Tools to Support Gathering Pupil Views)

Evidence of pupil views gathered from a range of different people (staff/parent/carers) obtained in different ways and contexts (observation/conversation) should be collated and considered when making adjustments to outcomes and provision.

Statutory Reviews of EHCPs

EHCPs should show clearly the contributions made by the child or young person. Settings should consider the most appropriate ways to gather the views of CYP regularly throughout the year and use these to inform next steps as part of the review process. Whilst there are formal local authority pupil views documents settings can submit views in whichever format is most appropriate for the CYP.

What about children and young people who are EAL or who are non-verbal?

For these children, we should:

1. Translate information for children who speak another language.
2. Use adaptations such as objects/pictures/signs/symbols/adapted language and resources that you know work for the young person to help them communicate.
3. Most importantly, we must trust and value information about the child and young person's views from all the people who know and understand them well, for example, class teacher, teaching assistant, lunchtime supervisor, mentor, sports coach.

Section 2: Tools to Support Gathering Pupil Views

Making time for rich and meaningful conversations with CYP is the best way to gain their views. There are a variety of different tools which can be used to support conversations. Different tools will be needed in different situations. Settings should choose the tool which best suits the CYP and ensure you are clear how the CYP wants to be communicated with.

Suggested tools to use gather the views of CYP:

- [Person Centred Tools Booklet \(multiple tools in here\)](#)
- [4+1 Questions](#)
- [What's Working / What's Not Working](#)
- [Communication Charts](#)
- [Good Day / Bad Day](#)
- [My ideal school](#)
- [The Children & Young People's Views Toolkit](#)
- [Person Centred Review](#)
- [Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope \(PATH\)](#)
- [Know You're Normal \(Ambitious About Autism\)](#)
- ['What's important to' them, now and in the future](#)
- [Three houses](#)
- [PfA Aspect Cards](#)
- [Opportunities to support conversations - document](#)
- [Structured conversations](#)
- [Planning My Future Life Booklet](#)
- [Vocational Profile](#)



For pre/non-verbal/EAL/situational selective mutism:

- observations
- views from a variety of people who know and understand the child well including parent/carer
- use of objects/photographs/symbols, e.g. widget
- use of Microsoft forms
- questionnaires
- talking mats
- feelings ladders
- Likert scales
- Card sorting

To support communication you may need to consider:

communication aids
 advocates
 interpreters
 right physical environment

Tools to record views

- [One Page Profile](#)
- Pupil passports

Useful materials:-

- Know Your Normal – Ambitious About Autism - [Know Your Normal | Ambitious about Autism](#)
- Know Yourself Series including Energy Accounting – National Autistic Society (for teenagers): [Resources for autistic teenagers \(autism.org.uk\)](#)
- Helen Sanderson Associates (HSA) Person-Centred Reviews: [Helen Sanderson Associates \(HSA\) Person-Centred Reviews](#)

Further Reading:

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/whole-school-approach/pupil-voice/>