



Children & Young People's Participation Toolkit 2023



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1. Introduction

This Participation Toolkit for everyone in Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) who works with children and young people aged 0-19 years of age (up to 25 if they have a disability or are included in the Looked After Cohort including Care Leavers). This includes those staff who work directly with children and young people or who commission or manage staff, services and organisations whose work either supports or impacts on the lives of children and young people and our wider partners.

It should be read alongside the Participation Strategy <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/your-council-and-democracy/consultations/consulting-children-and-young-people/strategy-part> that sets out B&NES vision for participation, linked to the strategic priorities for children and young people are set out in the B&NES Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/policy-and-documents-library/children-and-young-peoples-plan>

The Council has one overriding purpose.

“To improve people’s lives”.

In order to do this, there are two core policies.

1. Tackling the climate
2. Nature emergency and giving people a bigger say.”

With 3 principles:

1. prepare for the future.
2. deliver for local residents.
3. focus on prevention.

This process starts with commissioning the Commissioning Framework for consultation with children and young people. Our Community Engagement Guide can be found [here](#).

2. Vision for Participation

Our vision for all children, young people and their families in B&NES is to ensure that they will all have the opportunity to participate in decisions which affect their lives and to help shape some of those decisions.

3. Definition of Participation

Participation - is the process by which service users influence decision making and bring about change. It is about making sure the voice of service users is heard when decisions are being made that affect their lives. It is a process rather than a 'one off' event and has varying degrees of involvement. If undertaken successfully, it will lead to active engagement and a positive two-way process.

In B&NES, we are committed to the active participation of children, young people and their families wherever possible. However, we recognise that children, young people and their families may want to engage at different levels with services that affect them. Some may wish to be *informed*, some may wish to be *consulted* while others may wish to be actively *involved* in both decision making and service delivery. This is important in all aspects of a child or young person's life at home, in their community and at school / college and is key part of everyone's safeguarding roles and responsibilities.

Anyone working with children, young people and their families should see and speak to them directly, listen to what they have to say, take their views seriously and work with them when deciding how to support their needs. Children's and young people's participation is key to improving outcomes.

4. Law and guidelines for involving children and young people in participation

In [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) (2018) states what children have said that they need:

- ✓ **vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them.
- ✓ **understanding and action:** to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- ✓ **stability:** to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- ✓ **respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not.
- ✓ **information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns, and plans
- ✓ **explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response.
- ✓ **support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of

their family

- ✓ **advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views.
- ✓ **protection:** to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee.

Anyone working with children and young people should see and speak to them: listen to what they say, take their views seriously; and work with them and their families collaboratively when deciding how to support their needs.

<https://intranet.bathnes.gov.uk/our-community-engagement-framework-%E2%80%93-nine-step-guide-engagement>

Special provision should be put in place to support dialogue with children and young people who have communication difficulties, unaccompanied children, refugees, and those children who are victims of modern slavery and/or trafficking.

The **Munro Review of Child Protection (2010)** set out 8 principles which together to make a good child protection system. The first is that:

the system should be centred on the child: everyone involved in child protection should focus on children and young people, respecting them as individuals with rights, including having a say in decisions about them whenever they are capable of giving their views.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/munro-review-of-child-protection-final-report-a-child-centred-system>

- ✚ **The Children Act 1989 & 2004.** This Act requires local authorities to give due regard to a child's wishes when determining what services to provide under section 17 and before making decisions about action to be taken to protect individual children under section 47. These duties compliment requirements relating to the wishes and feelings of children who are, or may be, looked-after (section 22(4)), including those who are provided with accommodation under section 20 and children taken into police protection (section 46(3)(d))

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

✚ **The Equality Act 2010**, which puts a responsibility on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. This applies to the process of identification of need and risk faced by the individual child and the process of assessment. No child or group of children must be treated any less favourably than others in being able to access effective services which meet their particular needs.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

✚ **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**³.

This is an international agreement that protects the rights of children and provides a child centred framework for the development of services to children. The UK Government ratified the UNCRC in 1991 and, by doing so, recognises children's rights to expression and receiving information. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.



This child centred approach is supported internationally by the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

Article 12 which states that 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.

Article 23 states that a child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in their community. as well as by national legislation and guidance.

It is also found in many of our laws, in those listed above and, more recently, the Children and Young Persons Act 2008).

Of all the rights that children now have, the one they rate the most is the right to protection from abuse. Children and young people have told adults time and time again that what they value most are good relationships with professionals they can trust and practice that focuses on their needs. Building a trusting relationship with professionals is seen as important as it provides children with

ways of getting information, knowing about their rights, having their say and making choices, and finding out how decisions about them are being made.

“Spending time with children, talking to them, and making sure that you are actively listening and taking seriously what they say is an essential safeguarding activity.”

NCB Communicating with Children 2006

What Ofsted found (these are inspectors of schools, children’s homes, foster care and other services for children) *taken from ‘The voice of the child: learning lessons from serious case reviews; A thematic report of Ofsted’s evaluation of serious case reviews from 1 April to 30 September 2010’*

A common criticism in reports of inquiries/reviews into child deaths is that people did not speak to the children enough and the importance of listening to the child continues to be repeated in serious case reviews (these are reviews that are usually carried out when a child has died or been badly hurt as a result of abuse or neglect).

The report highlights 5 main messages with respect to the voice of the child:

1. The child was not seen often enough by the professionals involved or was never asked their views and feelings.
2. Agencies did not listen to adults (such as advocates or teachers) who tried to speak up on behalf of the child and who had important information to give.
3. Parents (or carers) stopped professionals from seeing and listening to the child.
4. Workers paid too much attention to the needs of the parents, and not enough on the needs of the child.
5. Agencies did not understand well enough what was going on to protect the child.

5. The Seven Golden Rules for Participation?

Bath and North East Somerset Council have a set of principles that not only underpin this toolkit but influence all work carried out by Children Services staff, and commissioned services and we would recommend these to our partners and stakeholders in relation to all work in relation to children’s rights and participation. Designed to help anyone working with, and for children and young people to support them to understand, experience and exercise their participation rights.

The Golden Rules inform adults what children and young people’s participation should involve and feel like. The Golden Rules are directly informed by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child’s Article 12 and support the requirements necessary to achieve effective, meaningful and ethical implementation of participation rights. The Golden Rules resource is not a tokenistic exercise or a set of 7 rules to tick off one-by-one. Instead, they are fundamental principles to be used within day-to-day work with children and young people. Building participation into practice is about building respectful relationships with children and young people. It’s not about holding ‘one off’ events or consultations.



6. Models of participation

To help practitioners gain feedback and the voice of the child or young person they are working with we have included two models of good practice. The first is the Ladder of participation sometimes, participation is explained using this model (see page 12) where children and young people are making the important decisions at the top and working together with adults to influence change. We want to avoid being near the bottom of the ladder where you are not involved in decisions that affect the child and young person life and have no real understanding of what that means for them. Another model is Lundy’s model (see page 14) which is a way of explaining Article 12 and is what’s called a rights-based model of participation.

In the UK children have told us they need:

- **Vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- **Understanding and action:** to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- **Stability:** to be able to develop an on-going stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- **Respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- **Information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns, and plans.
- **Explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- **Support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- **Advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views

In addition to practitioners shaping support around the needs of individual children, local organisations and agencies should have a clear understanding of the collective needs of children locally when commissioning effective services. As part of that process, the Director of Public Health should ensure that the needs of children are a key part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/strategic-evidence> developed by the Health and Wellbeing Board. Safeguarding partners should use this assessment to help them understand the prevalence and contexts of need, including specific needs relating to disabled children and those relating to abuse and neglect, which in turn should help shape services.

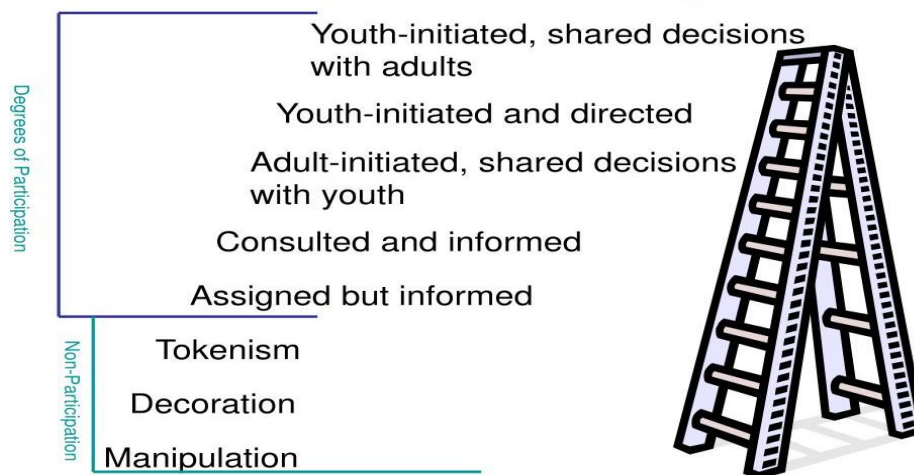
6.a. Ladder of Participation

Dr. Roger Hart, who developed a widely used conceptual model for youth participation called the “Ladder of Participation,” (1997) 2 defines participation as a fundamental right of citizenship.

“Children need to be involved in meaningful projects with adults. It is unrealistic to expect them suddenly to become responsible, participating adult citizens at the age of 16, 18, or 21 without prior exposure to the skills and responsibilities involved”.

The Ladder of Participation, developed by Roger Hart (1997) 5, is a model that may be considered in the planning and development of any project where young people take part. The bottom three rungs describe youth involvement that is not true participation whereas the top five rungs describe true participation as defined in this toolkit. While a group that is at Rung 8 may appear to be working better than one working at Rung 4, this is not necessarily so. Working at a certain rung is a description of where a group is at any one time. If a group starts on a new project or if it takes in new members, it may need to go a rung or several rungs down in order to go up again. This will ensure that it fully understands its new task or that it inducts its new members inclusively and successfully. While a group may strive to reach the top rung, the ladder is not a competition and youth workers will serve a group best when they ensure they the whole group has a full understanding of what is going on and all are able to participate, at whatever rung that may be.

Ladder of Youth Participation



PARTICIPATION MATRIX⁶

DEGREES OF PARTICIPATION

8	YOUTH INITIATED AND SHARED DECISIONS WITH ADULTS		This is when projects or programs are initiated by young people and decision-making is shared between them and adults. These projects empower young people while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults.
7	YOUTH INITIATED AND DIRECTED		This is when young people initiate and direct a project or program Adults are involved only in a supportive role.
6	ADULT INITIATED, SHARED DECISIONS WITH YOUTH		This is when projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision making is shared with the young people.
5	CONSULTED AND INFORMED		This is when young people give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The youth are informed about how their input will be used and how the outcomes of the decisions will be made by adults.
4	ASSIGNED BUT INFORMED		This is where young people are assigned a specific role and informed about how and why they are being involved .
3	TOKENISM		This is where young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate
2	DECORATION		This is where young people are used to help or "bolster" a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by young people.
1	MANIPULATION		This is where adults use youth to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by young people.

⁶ Adapted from Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation 1997

6.b Lundy's Model of Participation

Another model is Lundy's model is a way of explaining Article 12 and is what's called a rights-based model of participation. The model breaks Article 12 down into 4 elements which follow each other in order:



1. **Space:** Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view.
2. **Voice:** Children must be facilitated to express their view.
3. **Audience:** The view must be listened to.

4. **Influence:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

What is important to remember is that adults recognise the importance of being able to capture the impact of influence that children and young people have had and let them know what difference their involvement has made. Sometimes that difference might be seen straight away but sometimes, participation can affect how adults understand children and young people's lives which might only make changes in the future. We need to ensure we are finding ways to capture, feedback and celebrate that impact and influence over time.

Checklist for the Lundy Model of Participation

1. Space

How: Provide a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views

- Have children's views been actively sought?
- Was there a safe space in which children can express themselves freely?
- Have steps been taken to ensure that all children can take part?

2. Voice

How: Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views

- Have children been given the information they need to form a view?
- Do children know that they do not have to take part?
- Have children been given a range of options as to how they might choose to express themselves?

3. Audience

How: Ensure that children's views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen

- Is there a process for communicating children's views?
- Do children know who their views are being communicated to?
- Does that person/body have the power to make decisions?

4. Influence

How: Ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate

Were the children's views considered by those with the power to effect change?

- Are there procedures in place that ensure that the children's views have been taken seriously?
- Have the children and young people been provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken.

We want to think creatively about the areas of our work where children and young people can participate and influence how we work.

These might include the following 7 points:

1. How our services work, how we evaluate what we do and how we measure our progress.
2. How we communicate with you
3. How we recruit, train, and supervise the staff that work with you
4. The policies that we write and work by
5. The services that we ask to deliver services to you on our behalf.
6. Our long-term strategic planning
7. How we spend money

7. The National Youth Agency (NYA) and Participation

The NYA is the national body for youth work, and the Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) for youth work in England. They have been transforming young people's lives through youth work for over 50 years. By championing, professionalising, and enabling youth work, striving to find better, more inventive ways to empower more young people.

7a. Four Cornerstones of Youth Work

The curriculum framework is founded on four cornerstones, which describe the broad aims of youth work:



1. Education. Youth work offers informal learning opportunities that can complement formal learning in schools and colleges. It gives young people the opportunity to learn about themselves, about others, about issues they care about or that concern them and about society and how to engage in their communities.
2. Empowerment. Youth work helps young people to develop the skills and confidence to make decisions and act on issues that affect their own lives, the lives of others, their communities and society. This enables young people to take control, have a voice and get involved as advocates.
3. Equality. Youth work is for all young people. It respects differences and builds connections between different groups and individuals. It recognises and promotes human rights, social justice and anti-oppressive practices, supporting and challenging young people to reflect on their understanding of themselves and their behaviour towards others.
4. Participation. Youth work supports young people and works with them to become partners and leaders in their own learning, to help them gain influence over issues they are concerned about and to engage them with democratic processes, click to see a short video that explains it <https://www.nya.org.uk/quality/curriculum/>

7b. At the heart of the youth work curriculum are young people:

Young people who are sufficiently confident to make decisions now and in the future about their lives, as well as benefiting young people themselves, for wider society, youth work helps to engage young people in playing an active role in their local communities and tackling a broad range of societal issues and disadvantages.

7c. Leadership, civic engagement and participation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that young people have a right to 'express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously'.

The engagement of young people in local democratic processes is essential; it fosters a sense of belonging and allows communities to become stronger. Services that are offered have the best chance of making an impact when they are informed by the people that use them. Young people engaging in projects around these topics can learn to understand power, how to use power, how to advocate on behalf of themselves and others and, therefore, how to increase their sense of agency. They can also learn wider transferable skills, including confidence, public speaking, organisation, campaigning, running workshops and meetings, and leadership. There are many ways to open up these opportunities, through volunteering, social action, leadership programmes and formal structures. Youth Councils and formal structures give young people a voice to advocate and campaign for change and influence decisions. Other forms of involving young people, such as through consultations, citizens' juries and participatory budgeting, are more time limited and may focus on a particular area of interest. This can often be best achieved when offering activities that young people enjoy and want to participate in and are fun.

Youth work supports leadership, civic engagement and participation by:

- Enabling young people's voices to direct discussion, activities and projects that they participate in.
- Providing opportunities for young people to participate in democratic decision making within youth projects, and engage in campaign groups or youth councils.
- Helping young people to understand different types of engagement and the respective power that this gives to individuals.
- Advocating for and encouraging young people to challenge and question services and organisations they come into contact with, to be heard and responded to; and lobby local government on issues they are passionate about.

8. Voice of the Child / young person, in interventions and assessments

Practitioners often use tools to enable them to seek the views of children or to aid participation, enabling children to draw or write their views more freely than in direct conversation. It is important to note that tools are not intended to replace other good practice. Practitioners need to plan ahead and adapt tools to suit individual children & young people or circumstances. There are no set ways to do this.

A wide range of tools are available to encourage us all and help with our direct work with children and young people. Please take care and exercise professional judgement as they do not fit all children or all circumstances. There are more formal tools used within organisations

that form part of assessments or reviews such as those used with looked after children and young carers.

Tools can help 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
- ✚ identify what help they would like and who from
- ✚ identify and share what is important to them
- ✚ give their views on actions for change
- ✚ review what has worked or not worked for them

Tools can enable practitioners to build positive relationships and gain a better understanding of the child or young person to best support their needs. They can also support improved outcomes and evidence what differences listening to the child or young person has made. There are many ways you can talk to a child or young person about the reasons why you are assessing them and their family and what you will be looking at to make decisions.

I: Example of how to explain assessment

Hello, my name is _____

I have come to see you because you are important and sometimes we need to check that you are happy and safe where you are living/at home with your family.

It is my job to make sure that you are safe and happy.



To do this we will talk to each other and I will listen carefully to what you want to say and what you would like to do.

Then together we will try to decide what would help you be happy and safe.

We can draw pictures, chat or play games.

I will write down what you think so I can remember.

This will help me to decide how to help.

If you or anyone else is being hurt then I will have to help make you safe.

In Appendix 1 on page 27, we example developed by E. Potter this a useful tool to explain to children and young people what the focus of assessments will be and how we will record their voice. Whatever way you explain an assessment to a child or young person it is important to carefully explain this at the engagement stage of work.

Understanding the child and young person's view of what is happening and what they would like to change is a central part of any assessment. What is communicated should be made explicit and inform the assessment.

On page 29 you will see the 3 houses tool, this was designed to help children think about and discuss risks, strengths, hopes and dreams. They mirror a risk assessment tool from the signs of safety approach (Turnell 2012) which asks professionals and adult family members to think about 'what is going well' 'what are we concerned about' and 'what needs to happen'. It was developed by Niki Weld/Maggie Greening in Australia.

Remember we should involve children and young people in throughout our journey with them not just their assessment. We should involve them in the development of plans and reviews, by doing this they are more likely to be successful and to improve the felt experience of the child or young person at home or elsewhere.

Although we should always try to engage all family members including younger children and teenagers, we must always be honest, don't ask for their opinion if it won't make any difference. You must always make sure that children and young people feel welcome, while also thinking about their age, ethnicity, ability, language, culture, religion. Recognising that we are all different and celebrate this. You should always have a respectful relationship which means that we will sometimes disagree, which is okay, but you need to make time to talk about this. Remember that it is my choice to participate and therefore I may choose not to take part. Please make sure that it is okay for a child or young person to opt out but keep them informed and give them the chance to change their mind.

We should celebrate success with them too, not just at the end of our work but through the journey of our involvement, as this shows them you are interested in their life and aware of the efforts they make. It improves their self-esteem and confidence to try new things and tackle problems in the future. helps to foster a mindset that they should be proud of all achievements, big or small.

9. Participation in Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES)

There are a range of ways which B&NES currently involves children and young people in delivery of services they include:

- ✚ Being part of the recruitment process
https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/toolkit_for_engaging_with_cyp_in_recruitment.pdf
- ✚ Commissioning
https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/participation_standards.pdf
- ✚ Service design and review
- ✚ Monitoring and evaluation

Participation in B&NES is a Commissioned Service. Off the Record will run the Councils Participation Service from 2021-2026 <https://www.offtherecord-banes.co.uk/participation-youth-forum>

They work with the following groups:

- In Care Councils
- Youth Forum , working with the wider Youth Networks across B&NES

In addition, wider participation includes:

- Service Users groups of other commissioned services.
- Advocacy
- Young people have the opportunity to give feedback or comment on their IRO reviews and CP plans.

The Community Engagement Charter builds upon one of the council's core policy objectives to give people a bigger say and sets out the standards for how it will engage with its community. It was developed alongside a number of community representatives building on good practice and learning from past experiences. The Charter's commitments are to:-

- ✚ discuss a proposal when it is at a formative stage.
- ✚ provide sufficient information to allow intelligent consideration.
- ✚ ensure there is adequate time for a considered response.
- ✚ conscientiously take responses into account
- ✚ provide feedback on our decisions.

For more information about the Charter's commitments visit the website here

<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/bnes-council-corporate-strategy-2020-2024/community-engagement-charter>

✚ <https://intranet.bathnes.gov.uk/our-community-engagement-framework-bath-and-north-east-somerset>

10. What Children and Young People have told us?

- ✚ Get to know us; spend time with us and give us your attention.
- ✚ Don't get us to repeat our story over and over again.
- ✚ Keep us at the centre of the decisions you make.
- ✚ Be honest with us and explain in a way we can understand.
- ✚ Let us make some decisions about our own life.
- ✚ Don't make assumptions about our thoughts and feelings.

10a What happens when Children and Young People are not listened to?

- ✚ Children are less safe.
- ✚ Children are less happy, and their wellbeing is lower.
- ✚ Children become less visible; adult needs can dominate.
- ✚ Assumptions are made about children's lives.
- ✚ Knowledge about children is limited to their relationships with adults.

10b What practitioners could do?

- Take time to know the young person you are working with, what they enjoy, what are their concerns and what are their ambitions and aspirations.
- Document the child or young person's journey from needing help, to receiving help.
- Record the child or young person's wishes and feelings.
- Observe and record their behaviour and experiences.
- Ask other professionals for their knowledge of the child or young person as they may have significantly more contact with the child.
- Evidence the Child's Voice throughout all assessments, including:
 - Early Help Assessments

- Single Agency Assessments
- Single Assessment,
- Section 47 Assessment
- CIN Plan Review (plan and review section)
- Children in Care Plan Review
- Thread the Child's Voice through all recording; creative activities used to listen to children and young people can be kept on record in one place.

11. The Child's Voice: Quality Standards

- ✚ Record how rapport has been built with children and young people and the activities you have done together, relationships matter.
- ✚ Record the child or young person's journey through the service.
- ✚ Gather feedback from children and young people throughout an intervention, and not just at the end of an intervention.
- ✚ Keep children and young people appropriately involved in a realistic way.
 - Age and stage need to be taken into account.
- ✚ Acknowledge the reality of the child's life, with the child directly.
 - "For children who need additional help, everyday matters." (Working Together 13).
 - The little things can really matter.
- ✚ Demonstrate an active interest in the child or young person's life, their views, aspirations interests and activities, and undertake those activities with the child.
- ✚ Identify what is important to the child or young person, and what is important for the child or young person.
- ✚ Record how the child or young person interacts with other people, in different settings and at different times (of day, before and after placement). At times appropriate to the child.
- ✚ Record a child's development and needs.
- ✚ The difficult and painful issues need to be recorded, along with how these issues can be addressed.
- ✚ Adult fears and expectations around involving children and young people are acknowledged and managed.

- ✚ The context and challenges for evidencing the Child's Voice is recognised; it can be harder to implement consistently in crisis work.

12. The Child's Voice: What Does Good Look Like? (Practice-led)

- ✚ Making the child or young person central to the story being told. Ensuring they feel important.
- ✚ The child or young person should "jump off the page".
- ✚ Child centred thinking.
- ✚ No child is too young to have a voice. Involve the child regardless of age.
- ✚ Creative methods used to involve the child or young person, meeting their learning and development needs, and their preferences.
- ✚ Co-production of plans, assessment, and reviews; children and young people can participate in producing essential documents about their lives.
- ✚ Involving the child or young person is a continual process that needs reviewing as the child changes and develops.
- ✚ The child or young person shouldn't have to tell their story over and over again. Practitioners need to read what has already been written.
- ✚ Ownership and commitment across the structure through managers, outreach workers and assistants.
- ✚ Sharing understanding and meaning of the Child's Voice across agencies. Other agencies will spend more time with the child or young person, and they need to be involved and recording the Child's Voice.
- ✚ Not rushing contact with the child or young person; even if you only have limited time, focus on them. Children and young people should not know how busy you are, or how many other meetings you need to attend.
- ✚ Managing how you leave a child or young person after a hard moment.
- ✚ Drawing a picture of the child or young person's day to capture what their day is like.
- ✚ Use a profile format to consider what the child or young person looks like, their likes and dislikes, their personality, their fears and what makes their day good.
- ✚ Having a real understanding of what makes a child or young person's day good or not so good. What is a good start to their day? This links to their specific likes and dislikes.

- ✚ Enabling choice for the child or young person. Where do they want to meet their worker?
- ✚ Feedback from the child or young person on the value of being included and involved is essential. This can also support professional and practice development.
- ✚ Recording the journey travelled; achievement and attainment is more than standard (national) indicators.
- ✚ With the Child's Voice well evidenced, handover between workers, case closure and transitions are optimised.
- ✚ Endings are important and need to be planned for.

13. Benefits of Participation

13a Some of the benefits for children and young people include:

- ✚ Children and young people feel listened to
- ✚ When children and young people are involved, plans are more successful.
- ✚ We can see their experience, from their point of view.
- ✚ Children and young people can develop their own story about what is happening in their lives.
- ✚ Increasing their self-worth, self-esteem, and confidence
- ✚ Being able to take control of their lives and influence the decisions being made about their lives.
- ✚ Developing skills such as negotiation, problem solving, raising awareness of their needs and the needs of others.
- ✚ Making positive contributions and long-term changes.

13b. Benefits for adults include:

- ✚ Gaining an insight from children and young people so that their needs can be met.
- ✚ Changing our perceptions about ourselves as adults.
- ✚ Shared decisions making.

13c. Benefits for Services / organisations include:

- ✚ Services becoming more responsive to the needs of all children and young people.
- ✚ Gaining fresh perspectives and new ideas about how services can be delivered.
- ✚ Being more effective in delivering the right services.

13d Benefits for the community include:

- ✚ Seeing children and young people as active and engaged citizens.
- ✚ Where children and young people are heard they can influence what happens within their communities.

13e The Nine Step Guide to Engagement

The Nine Step Guide to Engagement can be found [here](#).

13f The Community Engagement Framework Resources Guide

The Resources Guide can be found [here](#).

14. Conclusion

In conclusion I hope that this a helpful guide to ensure you are working with children and young people from the outset in a way that not only improves their lives, but importantly that you support them to make decisions and that you have children and young people at the heart of the consultation, planning, delivery and feedback. There are so many reasons why you should work with children and young people to increase the levels of participation in their everyday working practice, to improve their lives and help them reach their full potential why would you?

15. Appendix 1 - Resources

The social work Tools and resources toolbox contains some really helpful resources to help practitioners to engage with children and young people, many of which could be adapted for use by early help staff too

<https://www.socialworkerstoolbox.co>

Here are some examples:

The Child and Youth Participation Toolkit, developed by Tulsa Child and Family Agency, is an invaluable resource designed to facilitate meaningful engagement with children and young people. This comprehensive toolkit offers ready-to-print worksheets, activities, and practical suggestions for workers to better understand the wishes, feelings, and needs of children and young people.

Organised into different sections, the toolkit covers essential aspects of child and youth participation. It begins with an introduction that highlights the importance of good participatory practice. The subsequent sections provide guidance on creating a safe and inclusive space, facilitating voice and active listening, providing a receptive audience, and empowering children and young people to have a genuine influence on decisions that affect them.

The activities and suggestions in the toolkit are designed to encourage self-expression, promote active participation, and empower children and young people to contribute their perspectives. By utilising this toolkit, workers can foster an environment where children and young people feel valued, respected, and heard. <https://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/child-and-youth-participation-toolkit-wishes-feelings-direct-work-worksheets-activities/>

Voice of the Child Toolkit

This was developed by Derby City Council and offers a collection of useful tools designed to engage and hear the perspectives of children and young people. This toolkit is a valuable resource for social workers seeking to better understand the voices and experiences of the individuals they work with. It includes a range of tools focused on different aspects of a young person's life. Utilising the Voice of the Child Toolkit can help ensure that the voices of children and young people are truly heard and considered in their care and development.

<https://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/voice-of-the-child-toolkit/>

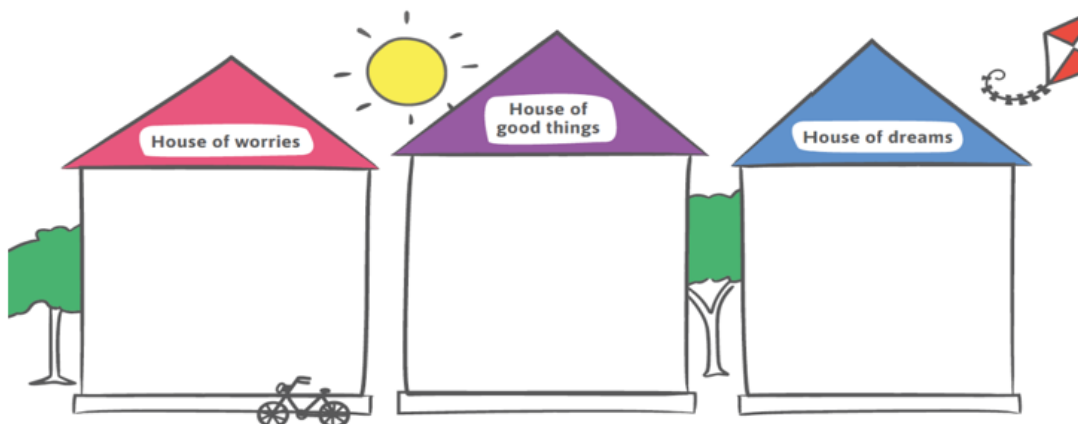
30+ tools for 1:1 work with children (assessment, planning & intervention)

The Kids Central Toolkit aims to provide workers and services with information, resources and tools to use child-centred approaches in their work with children, young people and families. The Toolkit is based around six key principles that support child-centred practice, and each principle includes a range of tools and resources, which are available to download <https://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/30-tools-11-work-children-assessment-planning/>

Emotions Activities Workbook

This 9-page resource from Partnership for Children provides a diverse collection of printable activities to help children ages 5-11 explore emotions. It aims to build emotional literacy and resilience by improving children's ability to identify, understand, and manage feelings. <https://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/emotions-activities-workbook/>

The Connecting Families Team have adapted one of the tools called 3 houses which is a very useful tool to help children and young people consider their feelings.



Voice of parent / carer / child / teenager

1. What are your thoughts/views on your current situation and how does this impact on you and your family?
2. How would you know if things have improved? What would need to change?

Three Houses (6-11 age range)

The three assessment questions from the signs of safety model are used:

- what are we worried about
- what is working well
- what needs to happen

The child puts them in the three houses / islands drawn to engage children in filling in their worries, their good things and their dreams. <http://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/the-three-houses-template/>

The Blobtree written by Pip Wilson & Ian Long

What are the Blobs? A Feelosophy

The Blobs are simple. They deal with deep issues using the primary languages we learn from infancy – feelings and body language. This is why they are used with children as young as 4, all the way through to the elderly. The Blobs are neither male nor female, young nor old, European nor African, ancient nor modern. They are outside of culture.

Blobs are the best of us and the worst of us. They don't tell us what we ought to do, or what we mustn't do...they merely show us how a variety of people feel. Without words, the Blobs can be interpreted in a hundred different ways. There is no right and wrong about the Blobs, which is very important. A leader who uses them in a 'one way of reading them only way' will find that the rest of their group become very frustrated in discussions. Each picture is a means to a conversation, rather than a problem to be solved or a message to be agreed upon. If the people you are working with read the characters in totally opposing ways, that's fine. We each see the world through our own eyes. Allowing others to share their feelings enables group members to understand and appreciate one another. When we are children, our feelings say one thing, sometimes more purely than when we are adults. School is beginning to encourage children to understand their feelings and to master them. For each of us, emotional literacy is a journey of self-understanding. We hope the Blobs will contribute a useful tool to that journey, for all ages.

Here are some examples:

NAME:.....

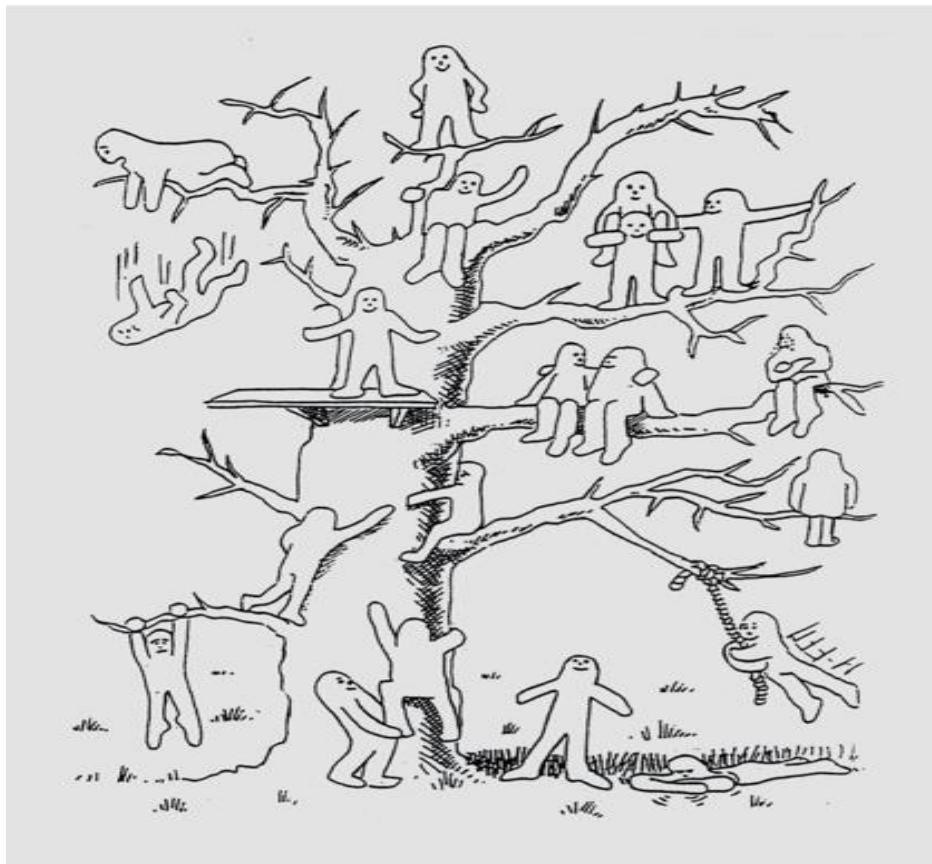
ALL ABOUT ME!!!

Things I like about myself?...

Things that I am good at?...

What I would like to be when I'm older?...

Things that I am not so good at?...



To find digital downloads of high quality printable & projectable images of the Blob Tree communication tools go to <https://www.blobtree.com/>

Using Tools to gain the voice of the child

Practitioners often use tools to enable them to seek the views of children or to aid participation, enabling children to draw or write their views more freely than in direct conversation.

It is important to note that tools are not intended to replace other good practice.

Practitioners need to plan ahead and adapt tools to suit individual children & young people or circumstances. There are no set ways to do this.

A wide range of tools are available to encourage us all and help with our direct work with children and young people. Please take care and exercise professional judgement as they do not fit all children or all circumstances.

There are more formal tools used within organisations that form part of assessments or reviews such as those used with looked after children and young carers. Tools can help 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.
- identify what help they would like and who from
- identify and share what is important to them.
- give their views on actions for change.
- review what has worked or not worked for them.

Tools can also enable practitioners to build positive relationships and gain a better understanding of the child or young person to best support their needs. They can also support improved outcomes and evidence what differences listening to the child or young person has made.

Example Tools

The pages that follow are examples of tools that the WSP have identified that may assist practitioners to gather the child's voice. Your own organisation may use other tools that are as effective. If you feel that you use a tool that works well and want to include it within this toolkit,

please contact safeguardingpartnerships@warrington.gov.uk for consideration of inclusion in future versions of this toolkit.

One Page Profiles (all ages)

A one-page profile captures all the important information about a person on a single sheet of paper under three simple headings:

- what people appreciate about me?
- what's important to me.
- how best to support me.

One-page profiles are simple. They help us to support people better by, helping us build better relationships by truly understanding what really matters to the person in their life and the way they are supported to live it. They can be adapted to use with all ages and are very useful when working with those with differences in their communication style.

Examples and templates can be found at

<http://www.sheffkids.co.uk/adultssite/pages/onepageprofiletemplates.html>

The Wizard and the Fairy

The Fairy/Wizard tool serves the same purpose as the Three Houses Tool, but with different pictorial representation. Rather than Three Houses, you can explore the same three questions, using a drawing of a fairy with a magic wand or a Wizard figure. The same process for using the three houses tool applies in using the Wizard/Fairy tool. The practitioner can present the child with a pre-drawn.

[Sheffkids website](#) hosts a wide range of free to use resources in addition to some pay for materials all designed to support practitioners to engage and to work with children and young people.

'Say it your own way.'

40+ engaging worksheets facilitating children's participation in assessments.

The worksheets help workers to ascertain children's daily routine, likes, dislikes, feelings, wishes as well as their views on their family, friends, helpers, home, neighborhood, school etc.

Available from the social workers toolbox website at www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/say-way-40-

Outline or begin with a blank page and draw the wizard or fairy from scratch, asking the child to help, depending on what best suits the situation.

Sheffkids (all ages)



The Wizard and Fairy Tool:

ELSA Support Website (all ages)

Extensive resource website aimed at those working with children and young people. The site contains both free and paid worksheets and activity plans of work that can be used with children and young people to enable them to express themselves and develop.

<https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/>

Resource topics include:	
All about me	Managing strong feeling
Bereavement and loss	Nurture group resources
Circle time	Online Learning

Display Resources	Planning
Emotions	Secondary Resources
Friendship	Self-esteem
General Resources	SEN Toolkit

Talking Mats

Talking Mats is a social enterprise whose vision is to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties, and those close to them, by increasing their capacity to communicate effectively about things that matter to them. Range of free and to buy resources.

Talking Mats is an established visual communication framework that uses a mat and picture symbols as the basis for communication. It is designed to help people with communication difficulties think about issues or topics in a different way and it provides people with a way to effectively express their views visually.

Research evidence demonstrates that Talking Mats is a very useful tool for assessing and helping children and young people to make decisions about their future targets.

<https://www.talkingmats.com/>

CAFCASS - My Needs, Wishes and Feelings Pack (all ages)

An extensive pack of resources developed by CAFCASS to support its workers to enable and ensure that children and young people are able to express their views and feeling.

<https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/grown-ups/professionals/resources-for-professionals/>

Children's Participation Toolkit for Social Workers (activities & worksheets)

This resource contains various activities, worksheets and templates assisting social workers and early help workers to involve children in the process of assessments, intervention planning as well as conducting reviews in a positive, supportive and enabling way.

The resource is available from the social workers toolbox website at

www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/childrens-participation-toolkit-for-social-workers/

'Animal talk' activity: using animal pictures to get to know children and discuss their views and feelings

This tool contains 24 pictures of various animals and suggestions how they can be used to get to know children and discuss their views and feelings in an interactive and fun way.

The resource is available from the **social workers toolbox** website at www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/animal-talk-activity-using-animal-pictures-get-know-children-discuss-views-feelings/

Getting to know a child's routine activity tool

This tool supports social workers to gain an understanding of a child's or young person's daily routine in an engaging way. The document contains 40+ individual slips with various activities/feelings which a child is asked to sort out into three piles – every day, sometimes or never, depending on how often they engage in this activity/have this particular feeling.

The resource is available from the **social workers toolbox** website at www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/getting-know-childs-routine-tool/

Establishing a day in the life of a school age child (sheet)

This tool supports professionals to gain a good understanding of a child or young person daily routine. It should help to identify positives or strengths in the child/young person's daily routine, as well highlighting areas where there may be concerns.

The sheet is available from the **social workers toolbox** website at www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/establishing-a-day-in-the-life-of-a-school-age-child-sheet/

Culturagram

A culturagram is a family assessment tool used in the practice of social work which was first introduced by Dr. Elaine Congress. Find out more on the websites

socialworkculturagram.weebly.com/culturagrams and socialworkculturagram.weebly.com/example

Scaling

Some of the feelings that children experience can be difficult to articulate or make sense of. Scaling is a useful tool when the words don't come easily.

Scales can be used for a variety of things such as:

- Happiness
- Sadness
- Anger
- Anxiety



Autism Toolbox website

The Autism Toolbox website is an online resource to support the inclusion of children and young people with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream education services. As well as introducing and describing some of the more common challenges a pupil with autism might face, it provides real life case studies from Scottish schools and practical examples of supports that practitioners can translate and use in their own school setting. It also signposts to other useful websites.

www.autismtoolbox.co.uk

NSPCC Solution-focused practice toolkit (2015)

Helping professionals use a solution-focused approach when working with children and young people. The solution-focused practice toolkit provides inspiration for worksheets and activities to use, adapt or devise for the children and young people you work with.

Solution-focused practice concentrates on helping people move towards the future that they want and to learn what can be done differently by using their existing skills, strategies and ideas – rather than focusing on the problem.

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2015/solution-focused-practice-toolkit>

16. Appendix 2 Key language and definitions:

Some other key language and terms you might hear when you participate:

Consultative practices – this is where adults seek children and young people's views, then work with them around what they say to shape the outcome. It may be that some of your ideas are taken on board and others not, but this should be explained at the beginning of the process.

Co-production or Collaborative practices – this is where adults work with children and young people in partnership. Usually, adults have the initial idea or issue, then involve you in what needs to change, what needs to be done and how. This approach recognises that you have strengths, skills and experience that are just as valuable as those of adults or professionals.

Child-led practices – this is where you have the ideas or raise an issue important to you. Adults will then support children and young people to develop their own projects, activities or support them to make changes they think are important. Ideally, we want to be moving towards more child-led practices and greater decision-making involving children and young people!

Hearing young people individually, operationally, and strategically. We think it's important for them to understand that you can participate in different ways.

Individually - for example meaningful involvement in their support plan.

Operationally - for example delivering training, interviewing professionals, telling them how our services work or don't work for them.

Strategically – for example meeting with and influencing elected members, contributing to commissioning activities, having a seat on partnership boards.

Individual

- Decisions relate directly to the participants' own lives.
- Decisions are made about day-to-day activities.
- Outcomes primarily impact the individual.

Operational

- Decisions relate to planning, delivery and evaluation.
- The activity aims to improve the quality-of-service provision.
- Outcomes affect the individual and other service users.

Strategic

- Decisions relate to long term planning.
- The activity includes meaningful roles in priority setting, monitoring, and designing services.
- Outcomes influence policy and practice

