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What is The Voice of the Child?

This is a phrase used to describe the real involvement of children and young people. It does not only refer to what children say directly, although it is essential this is heard, but it refers to many other aspects of their presentation. It means seeing their experiences from their point of view and taking into account the child's daily lived experience. The phrase means more than simply seeking their views; is about enabling them to take as active a role as possible in decision making.



Voice of the Child



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What is the Legal Context?

- A **legal duty** exists to listen to the wishes & feelings of all children, including children in care.
- The **United Nations Convention on the rights of the child** states that it's a child's right to be heard & taken into account
- The Voice of the Child is part of Ofsted inspections

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Where Can I Get More Information?

- [West Yorkshire Procedures](#)
- [7 Minute Briefing – Practice Review concerning “Emily”](#)
- [Voice of the child](#)
- [Protecting Disabled Children](#)

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What is Local Context?

Reviews have found that opportunities were not always created to ensure that children's voices were heard and recorded; with one child telling us, “why was I not asked what outcomes I wanted”.

Other reviews highlighted that practitioners have listened to the child, but their reports and concerns were challenged or negated by other agencies, sometimes bolstering parental denial of the concerns

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What is Good Engagement?

- Strong relationships between children and workers
- Children are part of decisions made about them
- Children have an understanding of their situation
- There is good recording of children's views
- Children's views are reported, considered and recorded in reviews and plans are formulated to reflect them

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What Else Should I Do?

- Create opportunities to see the child alone
- Record what children say in direct quotes (e.g. 'I feel sad/happy/worried when...'). This is more powerful than something interpreted by a professional.
- Even if children are too young to speak it is still essential to convey a sense of what life is like for them. Describe their presentation; how others interact with them and how they respond;
- comment on whether you consider they are functioning at a developmentally appropriate level
- Use the [Resolving Professional Disagreement Process](#) when partner agencies are challenging or negating my reports of the child's voice

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What Should I Consider?

- Consider what skills children may need to participate effectively.
- Make sure you plan ahead
- Think about the best environment for the child
- Adapt your use of language to suit the child
- Remember that research has shown that only 7% of communication is verbal! Being observant is very important as children may say one thing but their body language & behaviour may signal something different