

A GUIDE TO CONSULTING WITH CHILDREN - GATHERING CHILDREN'S VOICE.



To prepare for and evaluate transition processes

When gathering children's views as part of a consultation it is advisable that you use a variety of different methods to help them express their thoughts and opinions. These methods may include questions, play, stories, art, photography, drama, puppets. This will enable practitioners to confidently use every child's feedback to inform and adapt provision in response to their thoughts and ideas.

When working with babies, toddlers and non-verbal children, it is expected that majority of your information will be gathered through observation of the child in the setting and how they routinely interact with their peers and adults.

When starting a children's voice consultation around a specific topic (e.g. transitions) it is important that the practitioners consider and plan around the following points.

The purpose:	Ask yourself and the team: why are you undertaking the consultation and what do you hope to achieve?
The process:	Consider the consultation methods you will use, what resources you will need and why this method is suitable for the children you will be working with.
The ethics:	Ensure the children understand the consultation topic in an age and stage appropriate way and can give their consent for their voice to be shared.
Feeding back to the children:	Ensure you consider how and when you will feedback to children to ensure they understand how their views have been valued and used.
The Outcomes:	Reflect on what you have learned from the consultation and how this will inform any changes to practice.
Evaluation:	Review and record how you used the information gathered to improve your provision and the impact this had on outcomes for children.

Focus on Ethics:

Ethics is the understanding of the purpose of an activity, so that all involved can give their full consent to be part of it. All participants must be fully informed of how it will affect them.

To ensure you are ethical in a voice of the child consultation consider:

Purpose

- How you will explain the consultation to the children
- How will you inform the children what their role is in the consultation
- How you will explain what you will do with the children's views, comments and photographs you might take
- Ensuring the information is given in a way that children can understand and that there is time for children to ask questions.

Permission/Consent:

- How you will ensure children have choice to participate and that they are fully aware of what they are consenting to take part in. For example, how their views and any photos, recordings or documents will be used

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- How children will know they have the right to change their mind and withdraw e.g. they may just walk away and that is fine.

Remember:

- Consent is an ongoing process. Adults should use observation of body language to ensure children are still happy to take part
- To use a child friendly consent form or process for the child and the parent/carer
- When creating parent/carer consent forms, consider how you will share information with parents/carers at the end of the consultation. It is generally considered that parents/carers should receive a summary report detailing the findings - this should not contain individual comments or findings from or about an individual child.

Confidentiality

Consider how you will maintain confidentiality and ensure everyone's views are respected. Ensure transcripts and other evidence is stored securely.

Collating Findings

When looking information gathered from children, for example, photographs children have taken or artwork, it is important that you do not make assumptions about the content but allow them time to explain, their views, wishes or feelings.

Ask the children for feedback on the consultation activity.

Ensure you are non-judgmental about their views or comments.

Feedback

Ensure you tell children how the information has been used or whether any of it cannot be used and why.

Ensure you feedback in an age and stage appropriate manner.

Other Considerations

Ensure children are aware of the ways in which they can make choices and decisions during the process so that they can express their views.

Be reflective about each stage of your consultation. This will help improve further consultations by considering what you would change next time.

When carrying out any consultations, the researcher should be mindful of any other people the work may affect.

More advice on listening to children and carrying out children's voice consultations can be found at: www.hertfordshirefamiliesfirst.org.uk/assets/1/079113_participation_toolkit_final-1.pdf