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Background

Since the adoption of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) in 1989, Article 12 – the provision that children have a right to express their views and have them taken seriously in accordance with their age and maturity – has proved one of the most challenging to implement.

Time and again, experience shows that children – even very young children – given the time and opportunity, demonstrate not only that they have views, experiences and perspectives to express, but that their expression can contribute positively to decisions that affect the realisation of their rights and wellbeing.

2

Why it matters

The 'Childs Voice' does not only refer to what children say directly, but to many other aspects of their presentation. It means seeing their experiences from their point of view. The 'lived experience of the child is; 'What a child sees, hears, thinks and experiences on a daily basis that impacts on their personal development and welfare whether that be physically or emotionally. As practitioners we need to; actively hear what the child has to say or communicate, observe what they do in different contexts. Ultimately we need to put ourselves in that child's shoes and think 'what is life like for this child right now?'

3

Information

It is essential when completing or reviewing an assessment, statutory review papers or care plan to gain a clear picture of a child's wishes, thoughts and feelings. It is a good practice to ask the child or young person which professional they would like to gather this information from them.

We must also see the child alone so they are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings freely without duress.

4

The right of a child or young person to be heard is included in the UN convention of rights and the [Children Act 2004](#) emphasises the importance of speaking to the child or young person as part of an assessment.

This has also been highlighted in lessons learnt from serious case reviews .

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Children who are silenced cannot challenge violence and abuse perpetrated against them. The capacity to learn is restricted without the chance to question, challenge and debate. [Save the Children](#) believe that children have a unique body of knowledge about their lives, needs and concerns, together with ideas and views which derive from their direct experience. Decisions that are fully informed by children's own perspectives will be more relevant, more effective and more sustainable.

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What to do

Talk to the child – this may be dependent on age and level understanding.

Ensure you are highlighting in your assessments the actual words and wishes of the child so that they stand out from the page.

Consider the location of where you have your conversation. A more neutral environment could be more productive.

7

Questions to consider

How creative can we be when capturing the **voice of the child**?

How do we capture what's not being said, and how do you know? (i.e. Sexual exploitation, coercion)

How curious do we have to be?

Have we spoken to the child alone to get their views?

Have we used tools available to capture the child's views?

