

Voice of the Child

What is the voice of the child?

Capturing the voice of the child goes beyond their spoken words. It includes representing those unable to express their views—whether due to being non-verbal, fearful, or otherwise restricted. Professionals must consider a child's lived experience, behaviours, interactions, non-verbal cues, and insights from those around them to fully understand their needs and wishes.

How do we gain the voice of the child?

Professional Curiosity involves actively seeking a fuller understanding of a child's circumstances by drawing on existing information and triangulating insights with other professionals and agencies.

Practitioners should consider:

- What the child may be experiencing or exposed to that could negatively affect them
- Their lived experiences, presentation, physical appearance, interactions, and behaviours
- Verbal disclosures (if applicable), alongside non-verbal cues and observed responses
- Their wishes and views—even if unspoken—through informed professional judgement
- Their identity, background, and cultural context
- The perspectives of parents, carers, and other significant individuals in the child's life

Where appropriate, speaking with the child alone can help gather their honest views and better inform safeguarding decisions.



Why is it important?

- The views and wishes of children must be at the heart of all safeguarding practice. Listening to the child's voice is essential for taking meaningful action to protect and support them.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) affirms every child's right to be heard. Local and national learning from Safeguarding Children Reviews consistently show that failing to consider a child's voice and lived experience can have serious consequences for their welfare.
- Professionals must remain focused on the needs of the child—not be disproportionately influenced by the needs or perspectives of parents and carers.

Remember to ask yourself:

- Do I understand what this child's life is like?
- What do they do each day?
- What do they feel about their lives?
- How would they want things to change?

What does it look like?

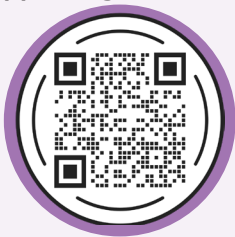
"Robbie tells us that professionals don't understand him. Robbie spends most of his time online or in his room, professionals find some of his behaviours challenging, for example swearing or walking away from conversations. Robbie doesn't think his use of cannabis is a problem and does not want any support with this, his carers are continuing to work with him on his ideas about this."

"If Unborn Smith could contribute to this report, she would wish to be born into a calm, loving home free from domestic abuse, where her parents can safely prioritise her emotional, developmental and basic needs. She might wish that her mother did not feel stressed by arguments at home, as this may already affect her, and that her parents are able to attend important appointments to ensure she is developing well. She would want to grow in an environment where she is protected from harm, and may take comfort in knowing her family are preparing the home for her arrival and are excited to meet her."

Resources:

Please see links to resources below to support your understanding around Voice of the Child which can be accessed through clicking or scanning the boxes below:

Good practice in
supporting VoC - SWCPP



How can we hear and
facilitate VoC - NSPCC



VoC: Learning from
Case Reviews - NSPCC



What is the Voice of the
Child? - YouTube



We need you to work
together - YouTube



Was not heard
- YouTube



Why is it important to
hear the VoC? - YouTube

