HEARING ALL CHILDREN'S VOICES

A Guide to Child Participation

Including Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Early Years Settings

Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team is committed to supporting early year's settings to move to more inclusive environments for children with a variety of special educational needs and disabilities. Please contact your SEND Advisor for further information. This Document has been produced by Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team

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Hearing All Children's Voices

Introduction: Why consider child participation?

Everyone should have the right to give their opinion in matters that affect them. This, of course, includes children.

Children are the best authorities on what they like and dislike, what works for them and what doesn't. Their increased involvement in learning and planning for learning make these experiences more meaningful.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that

'all children have a right to express their views'

and their views should be given

'due weight in decisions affecting them in accordance with their age and maturity'.

The convention also further protects the rights of disabled children, stating that they should enjoy conditions that promote independence and enable them to participate actively in the community. This is also echoed in The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice 2014. Where adults will have a greater role to play in eliciting the views of children with SEN. Increasingly too, public services are being required by law to take seriously the wishes and feelings of children.



Experience shows that young children who express their wishes and feelings, benefit from doing so. Self-esteem is raised and meaningful involvement is heightened. It is the duty of all staff to provide young children and those with special educational needs and disabilities with the skills and resources to enable them to voice their opinions effectively.

This guidance aims to give some suggestions on how to encourage participation for all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities. Ideas are introduced in the guidance but for fuller explanations there are references to other published materials which can be purchased by settings or borrowed through the Barnet Early Years SEND Advisory Team.

How to Encourage Children's Participation

Listening and interpreting children's views: Conferencing, consultation, seeking opinions

Principles

- A rich and varied environment supports children's learning and development.
- Children should be able to play and explore, as well as learn actively, creatively and critically.
- Children should be able to select. This may be from familiar options or new ones.
- Opportunities for choice should be considered and set up.
- Good choices for children should be considered; different children may need to make different kinds of choices.
- Children with special educational needs and disabilities may need more adult support or frameworks within which to select.
- Children with communication difficulties may need communication aids in order to select. Adults may need to spend time familiarising themselves with non-verbal responses in order to interpret their wishes.

Have you thought about…?

- All children should be able to choose and self-select from a range of toys/equipment/activities. These need to be easily accessible in the nursery.
- For some children with special educational needs and disabilities, boxes may need to be labelled with clear photos/pictures and made accessible to them, according to their needs.
- For some children with special educational needs and disabilities choice may need to be more limited and adult directed e.g. Children may be offered a choice of 2 or 3 toys which are directly placed in front of them.
- Some children may choose what to play with through use of a visual timetable. Clear photos can be taken of activities or equipment and choices worked through as they use the timetable.
- Children with communication difficulties may need to request and make choices through the use of alternative communication systems such as PECs and Makaton.
- Children can be asked to make choices e.g. when buying new equipment, menus for lunch, activities that they would like to have set out, what they would like to learn about…..the possibilities are endless!!

N.B. methods for consulting children with special educational needs and disabilities should be considered.

Seven Stages of Pupil Voice' to support our pupils in the involvement and evaluation of their own learning

- Stage 1 – Adult to notice child's reaction to activity/ experience and give the child the language to describe this
- Stage 2 – Child to eye point to demonstrate choice
- Stage 3 - Child to reach towards or touch object/ symbol/ switch to indicate choice
- Stage 4 – Child to independently indicate choice by grasping and moving object/ using voice/ signing / symbols
- Stage 5– Child to say what they have done well, or need to try harder with, using AAC as needed
- Stage 6 – Child to say what they could do next time to improve using AAC as needed
- Stage 7 – Child to comment on their peers' achievements using AAC as needed
- https://www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/helping-to-make-self-advocacy-stronger/sharing-self-advocacy-best-practice/

Gathering views

Direct questions
Observations
Photographs
Achievements
Videos (VIG)
Self assessments
Learning dialogue/journey
Think out of the box
Choice boxes
Technology