



dialogue

Hearing the Child's Voice

Regulation 44 . Session 3

Focus points:

- Review of current issues in relation to hearing children's voices- ALL children
- Links to safeguarding
- Small group review of practice



UN Convention:

- enshrined in law- UN Convention on human rights and UN Convention on the rights of disabled people to communicate
 - to enable communication
 - to listen and act on their voice
 - to give their view
 - what help would they like and from whom?

The issues.....

- We know that there are still issues in relation to the voices of children with difference or disability being heard (see Hesley phase 1 and 2)
- Why?
 - ignorance / lack of knowledge
 - fear
 - paternalism
 - medical model ?
 - time
 - tokenism
 - communication needs and rights not understood
 - parents' and professional's voices dominate
 - ANYTHING ELSE YOU CAN THINK OF?





Breadth of difference and disability.....

- The breadth is enormous and thus hearing the voices of children is highly individual with practice approaches tailored to fit the unique needs.
- Generic approaches run the risk of capturing only “broad brush “ information or missing an individuals’ viewpoint.
- Can include
 - a range of additional needs
 - special needs- primary and secondary
 - hidden disabilities
 - ANYTHING ELSE?



Principles of practice

- Giving disabled **children** a **voice** promotes self esteem and self worth
- By giving **children** a **voice**- choice, opinion, feelings and emotions can be expressed
- **Children** can develop and learn that they are **important** and valued.
- Feeling valued plays a large role in how a **child** develops and relates to others

- ANY examples?



Audit:

1. Are all adults in the home aware of age / stage/difference / disability and what we expect in terms of development of communication for each of the young people?
1. Are we setting the bar too high with assumptions? Particularly when some young people communicate in a way which makes them seem more cognitively able than they really are.
2. Is there internal challenge to assumptions?
3. Is the child's voice embedded in practice- with all staff?
4. Is training appropriate and up to date- link to SoP and WF Development plan. ?



Audit

Is the environment suitable

- ▶ Layout
- ▶ Lighting
- ▶ Space
- ▶ Noise levels- quiet area?
- ▶ Opportunities to communicate ?

Is the equipment diverse enough to meet need?

Is the equipment accessible?

Does the set up enable children to communicate independently?

Children's Guide-different formats, info re: advocates, Children's Rights etc

Audit

- Specific communication needs may be linked to:
 - Processing
 - Vocabulary
 - Comprehension
 - Complex needs
 - Alternative methods- Makaton , PECS, Grid, Pro Loquo to Go, Widget, Eye Gaze, photo cues, social stories, BSL, Big Mack, Braille, objects of reference
 - Non verbal communication
 - Mental health/trauma/PTSD
 - Depression
 - English as a second language
 - ANYTHING ELSE?





What next?

- Staff training- essential..... and often overlooked unless a formal alternative method of communication is in place
- Ask the young person / involve them in how they express their views
- Work in partnership- young person and other professionals
- Value , respect , time
- Patience
- Positivity
- Active listening and hearing
- Alternative methods equipment – working , available , charged ?
- Body language
- Reflection
- ANYTHING ELSE?



Small group work:

- Thinking of the services visited consider –
 - the barriers you have encountered in the service and with other agencies and professionals ?
 - ease of access to SALT support if needed?
 - staff confidence?
 - staff advocacy?
 - role of the EHCP?
 - any other thoughts?

**NOMINATE ONE PERSON TO TAKE NOTES
AND FEEDBACK**

Useful information

- Equality Act 2010-covers Disability Rights (Replaced DDA in 2010)
- Safeguarding children with disabilities and complex health needs in residential settings Parts 1 and 2 (Hesley)
- Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities
- Looked-after children and young people: NICE 2021
- SCCIF 2023
- Promoting the Wellbeing of Children in Care: NSPCC
- Positive Environments where children can flourish: Ofsted