

Supporting Strengths-based Practice

The core belief in a Strengths-based Practice (SBP) approach is that people have the strengths, skills, resources and capability to effect positive change in their lives if enabled and supported to do so. Problems need to be externalised as separate from the person.

The key to SBP is hearing and acting upon the voice of the child or young person. The focus is on having reflective conversations and listening to what young people want to say, rather than on what social workers need know.

SBP encourages the involvement of children and young people in decision-making so that they are more in control of the support they receive and thereby their everyday lives.

Viewpoint self-assessment tools support this process.

- + They provide young people with the opportunity for self-reflection, enabling them to identify their strengths, skills, capabilities and connections.
- + Strengths (assets) are presented in a graphical format and can be combined to inform different outcome areas, providing young people with a visual display of their strengths as they assess them.
- + Repeat use of the tool periodically enables a young person to see how their assets are increasing

SBP focuses on what young people can do with their skills and resources and what others around them can do in their relationships with the young person to support them.

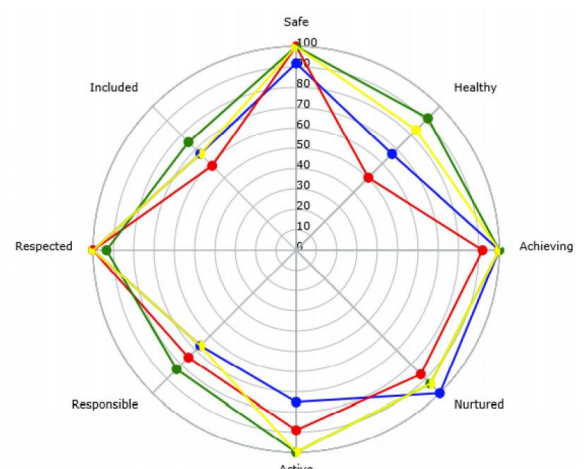
This process needs to embrace the fact that a young person's perspective of their reality is primary, that they are experts on their lives and therefore any change process needs to start with their story. It appreciates that the valuable skills and experiences children and young people have are key to getting alongside them and co-producing solutions.

Using strengths-based skills in communication is imperative, for example:

- + using positive language when engaging, Because the right words and type of language can be empowering
- + allowing the child, young person to tell their story without interruption
- + being respectful, non-judgemental and compassionate
- + highlighting strengths
- + celebrating successes
- + inducing hope
- + providing support to reflect.

In SBP, all communication should be goal- and outcomes-oriented. Practitioners should aim to identify what a child or young person believes is important to them, their best hopes and aspirations. This is about identifying the child or young person's vision of their future, establishing realistic goals and identifying achievable steps and strategies. As far as possible, decision-making should be devolved to children and young people and they should be supported to make meaningful choices. They should seek to enable children and young people to take the lead and be supported to make meaningful choices.

The Viewpoint strengths-based web report provides a good basis for these conversations.



Graphical presentation of a strengths-based individual assessment associated with outcomes, with repeats over time.