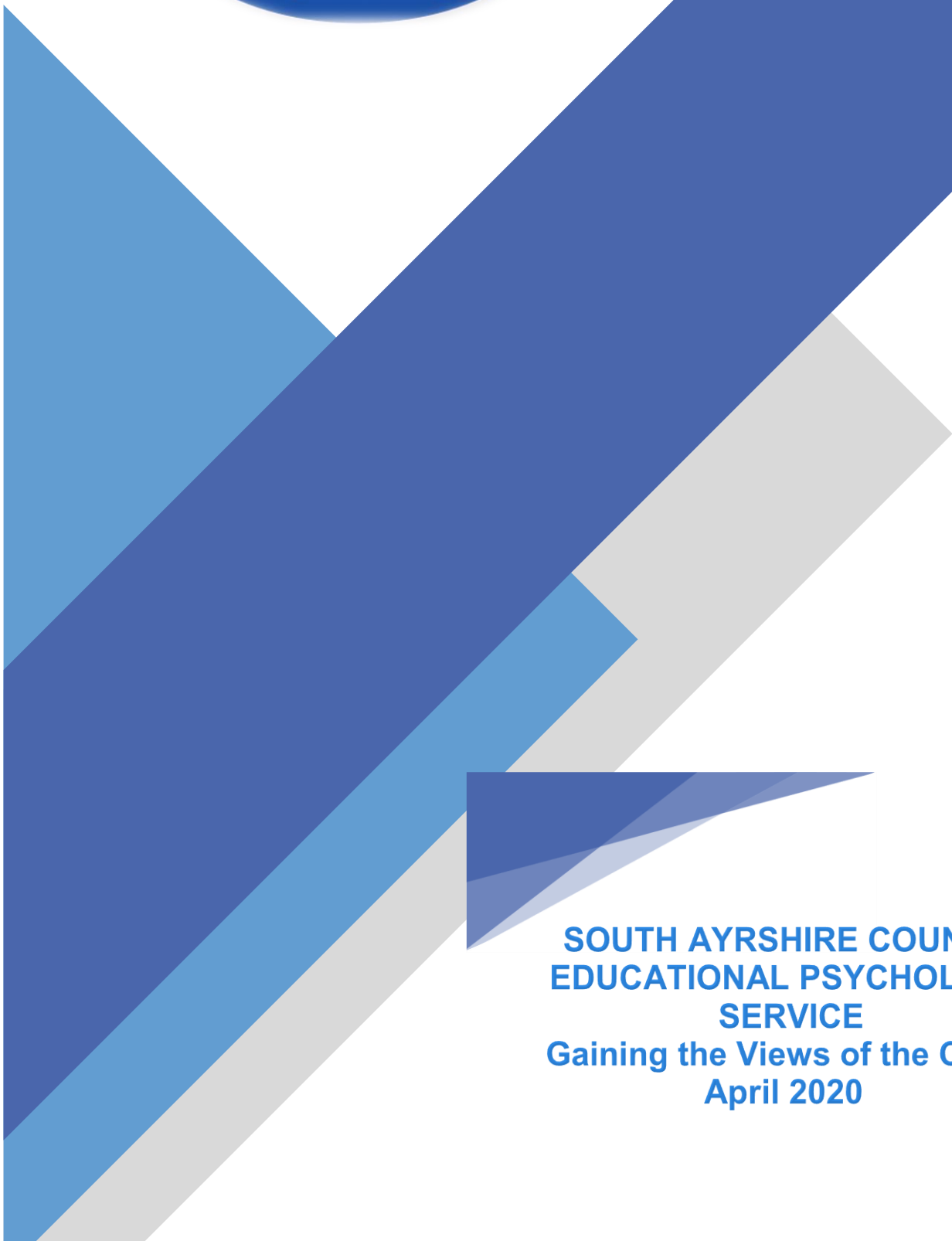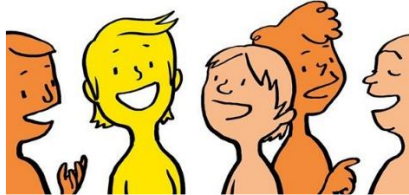Equity, Excellence & Empowerment through Psychology

**SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE**
**Gaining the Views of the Child**
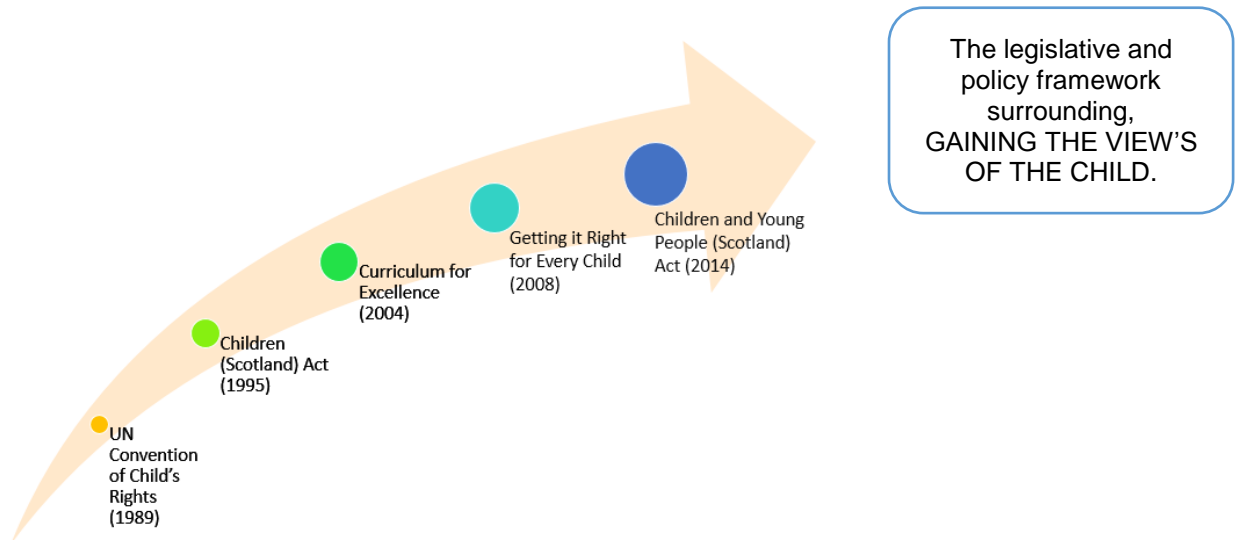**April 2020**

# Contents

Legislative and Inclusive Context

Over the past thirty years there has been an increase in development which focuses upon gaining the views of the child (Hobbs, Todd &Taylor, 2000).  With regards to best practice, it has been highlighted that, *'working with children and young people is an interactive process which accepts they have something valuable to contribute to our understanding of the issues relating to them'* (PDP, 1998-1999).

The legislative and policy framework places a value upon capturing the child's voice can be surmised as follows:



The legislative and policy framework surrounding, GAINING THE VIEW'S OF THE CHILD.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014)

Getting it Right for Every Child (2008)

Curriculum for Excellence (2004)

Children (Scotland) Act (1995)

UN Convention of Child's Rights (1989)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child increased the emphasis on the entitlement of children to have their voice heard (UN Convention, 1989, Article 12).  The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) also highlights:

- ✓ *Each child has a right to be treated as an individual,*

- ✓ *Each child who can form a view on matters affecting him or her has the right to express those views if he or she wishes.  Depending on* "age, maturity and capability"

The consultation process raises challenges when consideration is given to vulnerable populations, e.g. children experiencing trauma and violence, those requiring nurturing, those in care and children with English as an additional language etc. Many children's voices are arguably difficult to access, rarely heard and therefore open to being marginalized and overlooked. Our drive towards inclusive practice in the Scottish Education system is mirrored by the Social Justice model of support (National Inclusion Framework, 2015). This assumes that everyone has a right to share their opinion and have a voice, including those who traditionally could be viewed to have the 'least power' i.e. those who are typically marginalised. As (Bragg, 2010) argues, consulting with young people not only involves *'recognizing their rights',* but is also includes:

'*Practitioners developing the skills of cooperation that are necessary in order to achieve a more cohesive and democratic society'* (Bragg, 2010, p. 20).
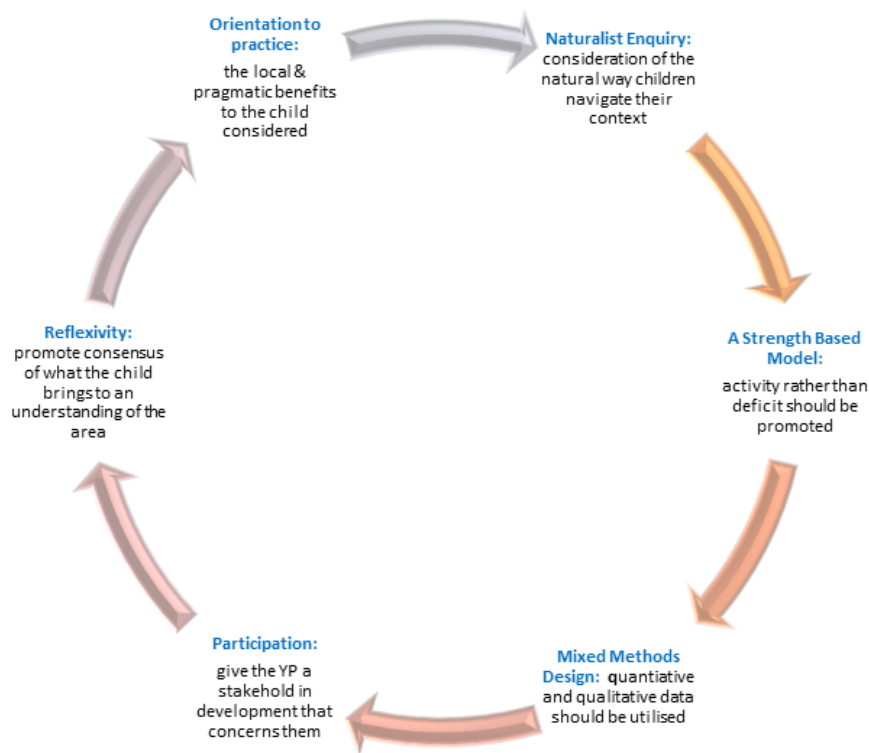


South Ayrshire authority have incorporated gaining the views of the child into their own local guidance, via the insertion of section 16 in their Child Assessment and Plan documentation:

| 16. Views of Child and Carer |
| --- |
| **Informed Views of Child/Young Person (including response to any grounds of referral)** |
| |

This requires school staff, social workers and health to be confident regarding gaining the views of the young people they support.

The need to involve children and young people's voice is recognized widely, however it is important to adopt appropriate consultation methods that ensure children and young people are able to participate effectively. A six-stage framework for gaining the voice of children is advocated by Christensen and Prout (2002). When consulting with young people practitioners should consider the following principles:



**Orientation to practice:** the local & pragmatic benefits to the child considered

**Naturalist Enquiry:** consideration of the natural way children navigate their context

**A Strength Based Model:** activity rather than deficit should be promoted

**Mixed Methods Design:** quantiative and qualitative data should be utilised

**Participation:** give the YP a stakehold in development that concerns them

**Reflexivity:** promote consensus of what the child brings to an understanding of the area

*Figure 7: Christensen and Prout (2002) 6 best-practice principles to consulting with children.*

Most data collection methods used within the field of pupil voice have tended to involve the use of interviews (either one to one or focus groups), or questionnaires - however these methods have had varying degrees of success. This following section includes some alternative ways to effectively consult with children and young people.

## 2) Methods to illicit the Views of Children and Young People

## Wellbeing Web:
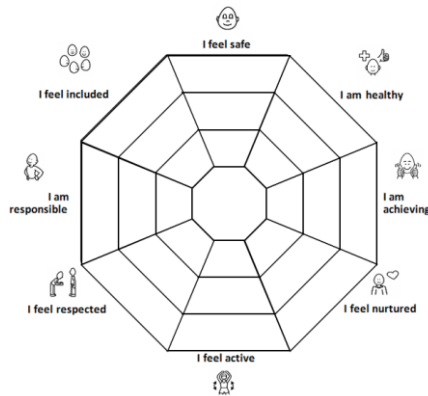


- ✓ Strength-based coaching model focusing on people's potential rather than their problems.

- ✓ Linked with SHANARRI indicators – provides a wellbeing profile.

- ✓ Prompt cards for each SHANARRI indicator which could be used to support this dialogue with young people.

- ✓ For use with children of differing ages (4 -16) and their parents.

- ✓ Has been adapted to include symbols to reduce the complexity of language and make the content accessible for young people who have ASN.

- ✓ See appendix 1 for examples.

## Strength Cards:
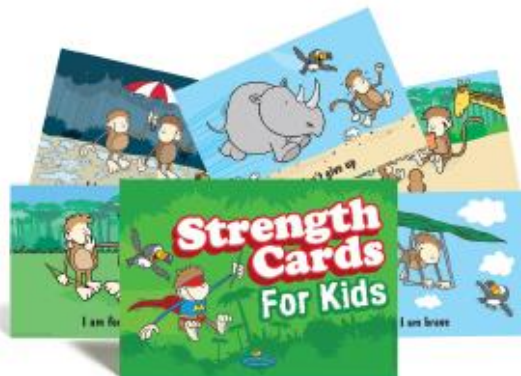


- ✓ Designed specifically to help children to identify, name and celebrate their inherent strengths, qualities and abilities.

- ✓ Typically for the use of children 3 years and up.

- ✓ To boost childrens' self-esteem and confidence. When children recognise their strengths they can be encouraged to develop and build on them, and be better prepared to deal with problems and challenges in an optimistic and constructive way.

- ✓ Can be used flexibly as a game, as a discussion point or as flash cards to label and identify.

## The Blobs:



✓ The Blobs can be used as prompts to explore feelings, to develop understanding of emotions, empathy and self-awareness.

✓ The series of books show templates regarding a variety of different scenarios (e.g. the classroom, playground, hobbies) that can be used as a springboard for conversations with people of any age group.

✓ Helps teachers, assistants, school workers, pupils and parents can reflect upon a wide range of contexts and issues which occur throughout the year. See appendix 2 for example templates.

## Person Centred Planning:



✓ Person Centred Planning (PCP) is a planning process that enables the young person to participate fully in the planning.

✓ It comes from a positive, solution-oriented standpoint and seeks to empower people to plan for the future and to recognise all the supports that they will require to realise this future. It supports consultation with the young person and their family and friends and others within their 'personal network'.

✓ There are many specific PCP tools, e.g:
1) the PATH (Planning Alternatives for Tomorrow with Hope) and MAP (Making Action Plans) focus strongly on a desirable future or dream and what it would take to move closer to that;
2) the Giftedness Poster can be used to gather information about an individual's view of their strengths and qualities.

Mood Dudes:



- ✓ Mood Dudes are a set of squeezable, attractive and humorous cartoon faces that depict different emotions.

- ✓ They are a good tool that facilitators, counsellors, teachers and psychologists can use to help young people of a range of ages share and express their feelings.

- ✓ Example of how to use: put the faces in the centre of the sharing circle and ask each child to pick a face that best describes a feeling that they experienced. Each child then shares why they chose the feeling they did.

Talking Mats:
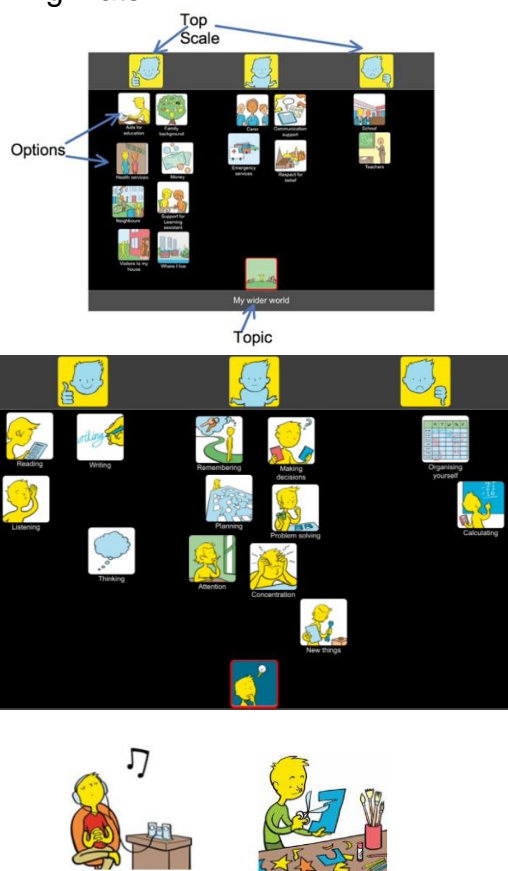


- ✓ Talking Mats is an interactive resource that uses three sets of picture communication symbols – topics, options and a visual scale – and a space on which to display them (typically a mat).

- ✓ Talking Mats is used by practitioners, carers and support workers in a wide range of health, social work, residential and education settings.

- ✓ It can: help children and adults to express their preferences or feelings, provide a 'thinking tool' to enable people to explore issues and help them to structure and verbalise their thoughts.

- ✓ It can also help those with: 1) a learning disability to understand what is involved in a decision and to give their opinion, 2) communication difficulties to express negative as well as positive views.
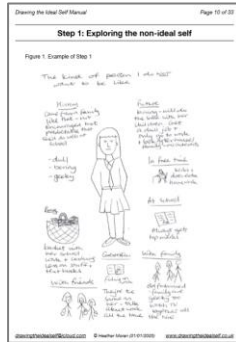
## Highlands Interactive My World Triangle:
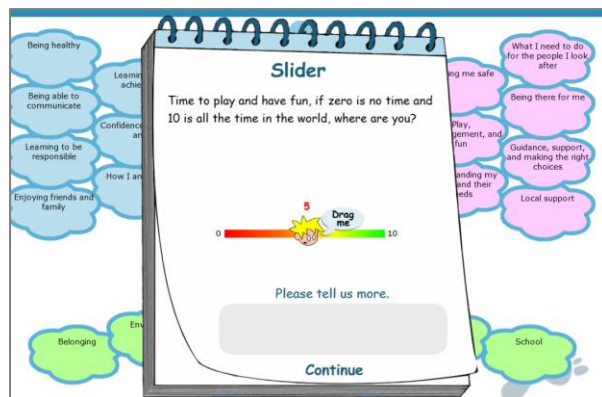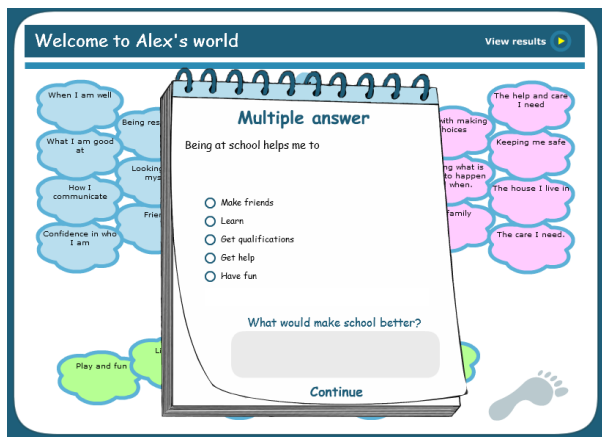




- ✓ Online interactive, Getting it Right for Every Child (2008) tool, focusing on the My World Triangle. Website address: http://www.plexusmedia.co.uk/triangle/credits.htm

- ✓ Supports young people to visualise their skills and achievements, and use them to make plans for the future. It also helps the team around the child to consider the views of the child and/or plan for a child who is transitioning. Useful for children who like ICT.

- ✓ Can be used for children with additional support needs as it has a range of differing question sets i.e. autism spectrum, complex health conditions, difficulties at home, hearing impairment, looked after children, young carer etc.

## Personal Construct Psychology: Draw on Your Emotions
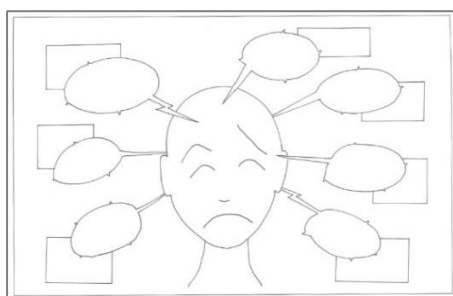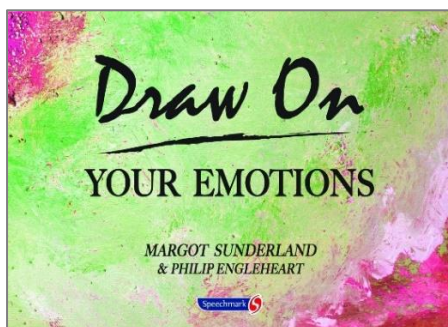




- ✓ This manual contains a series of structured, easy to do picture exercises to help people of all ages express, communicate and deal more effectively with their emotions in everyday life.

- ✓ Providing a series of photocopiable exercises and pictures specifically designed to ease the process of talking about feelings.

- ✓ It helps to promote a new clarity of thought as a first step towards positive action and bring seemingly huge, unmanageable and insoluble problems into a new perspective.

- ✓ It also offers opportunities to rehearse other ways of functioning by trying out alternatives safely on paper in exercises that can be adapted for any age range and ability. A helpful non-verbal counselling tool.

## Personal Construct Psychology: Drawing the Ideal Self (Moran 2020)

## The Incredible Five Point Scale:





✓ Can be used to assist young people to become more aware of their emotions, such as anger or pain, and the stage or level of the emotion. It can be used with a variety of students but can be particularly affective for students with Autism.

✓ Using the scale, the young person rates their emotions/status. Possible area of focus may include: anger, worry, anxiety, voice level body space, etc. This then allows the pupil to (a) provide information to the adult about how they are feeling, (b) become more effective in managing their thinking process, and (c) implement the desired behaviour as a proactive approach.

✓ Giving a number instead of trying to describe or name an emotion helps students think efficiently in order to make good decision in a variety of

Unstructured Interview using Pupil View Template:



14. Pupil Views – Working with an interactive whiteboard

Name:
Age:

Name: Olivia

Age: 4

School: Leaf Lane Infants

① When I was stirring the chicken (doing the actions)

② When my hands started to ache.

③ No

④ Jessica because she is my friend.

① I made some chicken – I thought about how mummy did it.

② With the pans.

③ No

④ Yes

cooking in the café.

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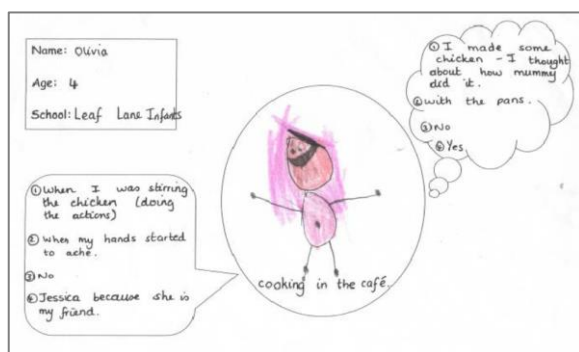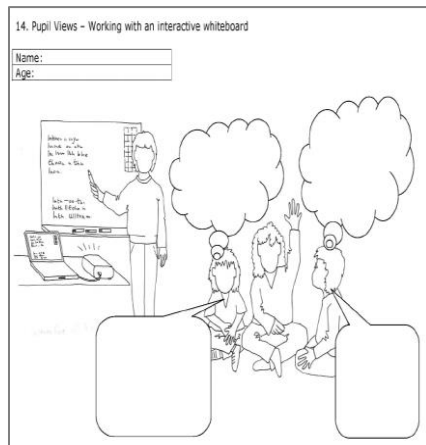
✓ Helps practitioners [...]
  regarding metacognit[...]
  use as a mediational t[...]

✓ It involves speech an[...]
  thought bubble prov[...]
  conscious 'internal' [...]
  speech bubble looks [...]
  individual i.e. the le[...]
  practicalities of learni[...]

✓ This method helps to [...]
  interviewee tensions[...]
  structuring of pupils' [...]
  visual and verbal soci[...]
  the pupils to be mot[...]
  further information).

---

Focus Groups:







✓ Highlighted as being particularly suitable for gathering information from a wide-range of pupils.

✓ A safe space is created where peers can reflect in a small group setting, similar to what they are used to experiencing within the classroom or nursery.

✓ Information gathered from children can however be filtered by adult interpretation, an issue which is particularly salient when gathering the views of children with additional support needs.

✓ A multi-modal approach can maximise the quality and accuracy of the information elicited. Using pictorials, visuals or games, can support children to share their views in these set-ups.   See appendix 4 for an example multi-modal approach.

## The Mosaic Approach:

- ✓ The practitioner collects the child's views via a wide range of means or "individual tiles". The practitioners then puts these individual pieces together to form one big picture i.e. "a mosaic".

- ✓ Example sources include: children's conferences, children's use of cameras, role plays, tours and mapping to conversation with relevant adults and caregivers.

- ✓ The children themselves are asked to use cameras for example to highlight areas in the playground that are interesting and important to them.

- ✓ Offers unique insights in the lives of young people. Can be used with children with additional support needs and very young children.

## ICT package:
## In My Shoes
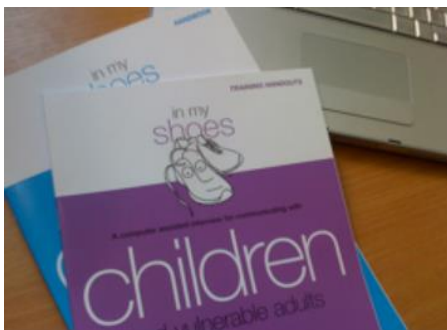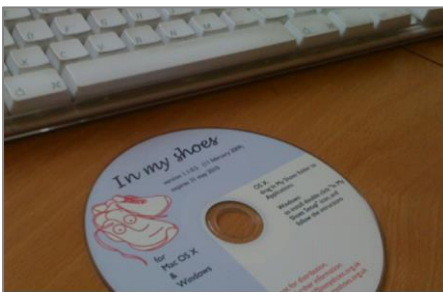
- ✓ *A* computer package for Macintosh and Windows that helps professionals communicate with children and adults with additional support needs about their experiences, views, wishes and feelings. This includes potentially distressing experiences such as illness and abuse in home, educational and other settings.

- ✓ The interviewer sits alongside the child and assists, guides and interacts with them through a structured interview process.

- ✓ *In My Shoes* has a sound research base and has been sponsored by the Department of Health/DfES and others. It is useful for psychologists, social workers, child psychiatrists, other mental health staff, health workers, educational workers and specialists in forensic services.

### 3) Whole Class/Group Ideas to Gain the Views of Children and Young People
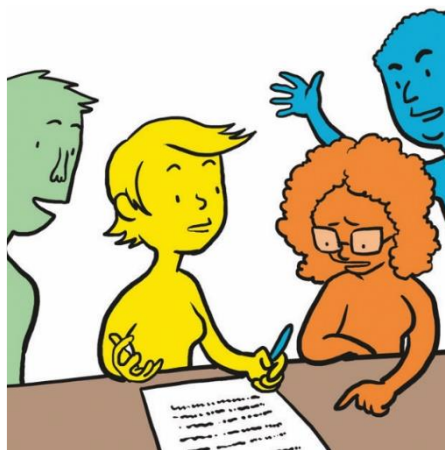
## Volcano in my Tummy:
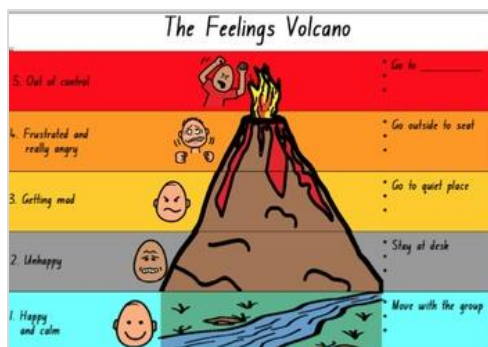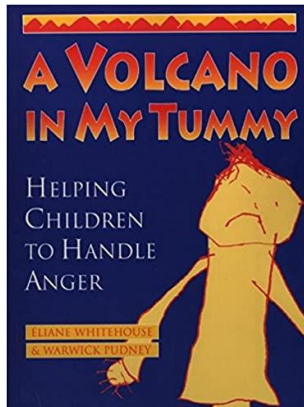




- ✓ Supports 6 to 15 year-olds manage and understand their negative emotions (self-regulation), so that they can live successfully, healthily and happily with motivation, without fear and with good relationships.

- ✓ It offers engaging, well-organized activities teaching the communication of emotions and helping adults to overcome the fear of children's anger. It carefully distinguishes between anger the feeling, and the externalising behaviour, helping to create an awareness of anger, enabling children to relate creatively and harmoniously at critical stages in their development.

- ✓ Uses activities, stories, articles, and games allowing a multi-subject, developmental approach to the topic at home and in school. Supports gaining the child's view regarding their understanding of anger and in turn helping them to learn more positive self-regulation techniques. Can be undertaken as whole class exercise.

## Worry Monster/Box:





- ✓ Worry Monster: to act as a 'waste bin' for children's' fears, troubles and woes.

- ✓ These can be used at home or at school to gain the views of young people who may feel more comfortable posting their 'worry' through the mouth of the soft monster. The adult can then check the concern and support the young person to manage their concerns.

- ✓ Worry Box: By using a worry box, children can focus and think about the things that are making them worry, and then contain their worries in the box for someone else to hold on to for safe keeping. They can then come back and talk about their worries again at a specified time.

## Positive/strength-based lessons:
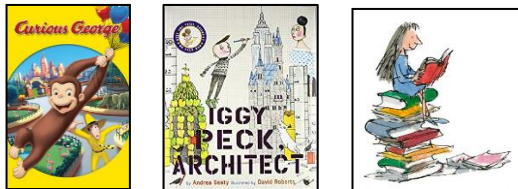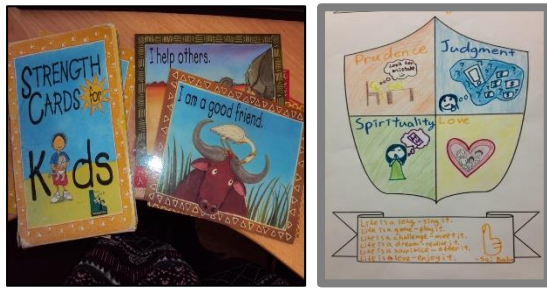






- ✓ The strength cards highlighted in section 2 above, can be used whole class for individual children to identify their strengths and the strengths of their peers/teacher. This allows pupils to share their views and consider the views of others.

- ✓ Whole class activities such as strength shields and strength bunting can be used to make salient each child's strengths, increasing confidence, efficacy and positivity in the class.

- ✓ This can be used for children of all age/stage if differentiated accordingly.

- ✓ A useful way to introduce the language of 'strengths' is via children's' stories during class story time ie. Curious George (curiosity), Iggy Peck Architect (creativity), Matilda (self-regulation).

## The Whole Brain Child:
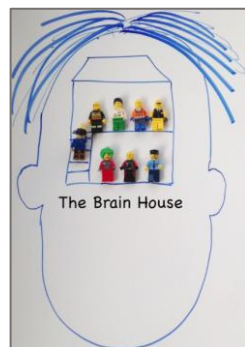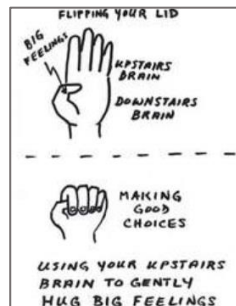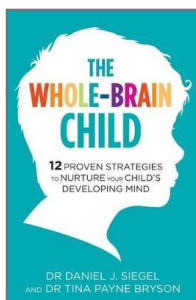


- ✓ The book contains a number of strategies to support children with managing their emotions. It helps children to have a view regarding their inner processes and learn useful coping strategies.

- ✓ The Flipping your Lid strategy supports young people to share their views regarding what 'losing control' feels like and comprehend what might be happening biologically using simple illustrations and poster-games.

- ✓ The can be undertaken individually, or as a whole class e.g. a whole-class brain poster with pupils designing the downstairs and upstairs characters (i.e. the emotions and thinkers).

- ✓ The pupils can then take it in turns to describe and illustrate a strategy they use to cope when they feel like 'flipping their lid'. These strategies can be collected and used as a class self-regulation tool box.

## Emotion Check-In supported by visuals:
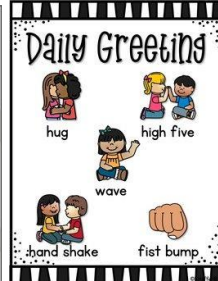


- ✓ Emotion check-ins and check-outs can take place in class during points of transition i.e. entering class in the morning, leaving class at home time or after break/lunchtime.

- ✓ They are designed to help children slow down, be more aware of their feelings and understand how these might impact. Often children can be unaware of their emotions - emotion check-ins can help an adult to illicit this information and in the process teach the child emotion vocabulary.

- ✓ Emotion check-in can take various forms depending on the age/stage of the children. Many educators use tools to further illicit the childs' perspective such as visuals, worksheets, emotion books,

## Transition Passport:



- ✓ Transition passport can be useful for a child or group of children transitioning to a new stage e.g. to secondary school or from nursery to primary 1.

- ✓ The child can complete the passport sharing key information about self i.e. likes, dislikes, future plans, adaptations required etc.

- ✓ These can be particularly useful for children who attend non-mainstream school as it allows the child to explain, in their own way, their most important information.

- ✓ These can be personal and engaging for the child and help the child to envisage a plan of support moving forward that they

## Introducing the language of wellbeing/SHANARRI:
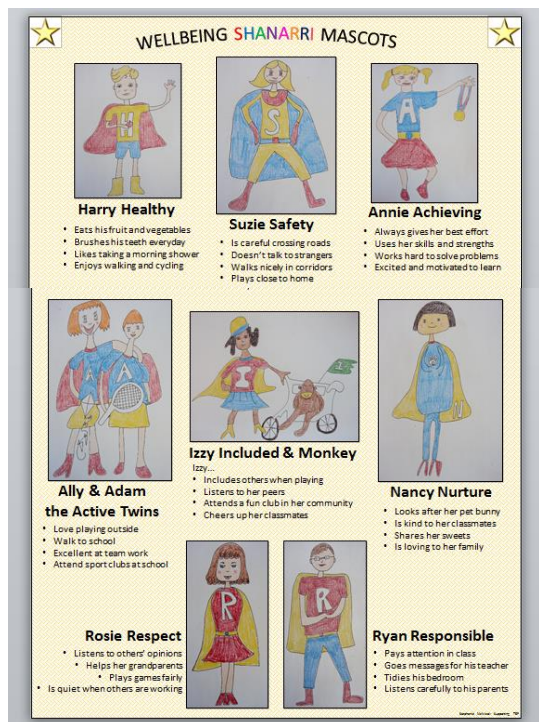


- ✓ The SHANARRI indicators (safe, healthy, active, nurturing, achieving, respected, responsible and included) are themed categories of the 54 articles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

- ✓ When children are taught the language of SHANARRI they become more aware of their wellbeing and fundamental needs. They are also more able to support others' wellbeing needs and make a plan to better their own wellbeing.

- ✓ The indicators can be taught via picture books, video clips, puppets etc. In one school, the children undertook a SHANARRI mascot project - each stage of the school designed a SHANARRI character and assigned a description together. The stages then presented these mascots during assembly regarding using representative songs and mini-plays.

## Introducing the language of wellbeing/SHANARRI:



- ✓ There are a range of therapy cards available to use with individuals, groups of children or whole class.

- ✓ These allow conversations regarding emotions, resilience, feeling safe, friendships etc. to be explored with children within a safe space.

- ✓ Children can share their views and both listen and learn from feedback and the views from their peers. These can be used as both an information gathering and intervention tool.

- ✓ The cards can be differentiated to suit a wide range of children with additional support needs. The visual cards can be particularly helpful for young children and children with an additional support needs.

## Hot Topics:
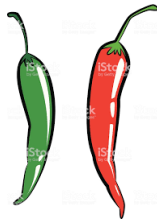




- ✓ The individual leading the session should come with red and green paper cut into the shape of chillies.

- ✓ They can then ask pupils what is important to them regarding a specific topic, and pupils will write their "hot" topics on the chillies.

- ✓ The important topics will go on green chillies, and the most important issue will go on a red chilli for each person.

- ✓ This method of collecting pupil views is from a resource by Education Scotland's Young Ambassadors for Inclusion. A video by the group can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkGecrJC2ME

## Body Voting:





make your voice heard!

- ✓ Body Voting can be used to poll pupils and acquire their views about several options.

- ✓ The voting options can be written on pieces of card and stuck to different areas of a room. The pupils are asked the option they want and to stand beside. The practitioner counts the number of pupils that have moved to each station.

- ✓ This can be a useful if you are asking multiple questions e.g. if you want to know '*Whether pupils feel they know where to go for help?*'
  - the cards round the room could have the name of the different type of person a child might go to (e.g. class teacher, guidance, teacher, parent, friend, GP, nobody etc.),
  - the facilitator could ask "Who would you talk to if you were worried about your school work?" "Who would you talk to if you were being bullied?"

https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/YoungAmbassadorsForInclusionPLResource.pdf

## The Zones of Regulation:





- ✓ The Zones of Regulation is a systematic, cognitive behavioral approach used to gain the views of a child regarding their emotions and teach self-regulation.

- ✓ It does so by helping pupils to categorise the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete colored zones.

- ✓ The framework provides strategies to help students become more aware of and independent in controlling their emotions and impulses, manage their sensory needs, and improve their ability to problem solve conflicts.

- ✓ By addressing underlying deficits in emotional and sensory regulation, executive functioning, and social cognition, the framework is designed to help move students toward independent regulation.

- ✓ Go to www.zonesofregulation.com for further information.

## Inside/Outside Class Project:





- ✓ Similar to the zones of regulation, a whole class project can be undertake based on the film Inside Out (Pixar, 2015) to help teach children the differing emotion states.

- ✓ In the film, the little characters live inside the child's head and help her navigate around the feelings of anger, worry, disgust, happiness, sadness etc.

- ✓ These visuals can be used to support emotion check-in, helping pupils to share their feelings and views.

- ✓ The teaching of the characters can be accompanied by online youtube clips to support i.e:

  1) Disgust and anger:
     www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1oXx4delIY

  2) Sadness:
     www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8h_6uV7Yzs

Gaining the views of children with learning and communication needs.

Within the research literature, Mannion (2007) highlights two key reasons to gain the views of children:

- **Enlightenment:** children have something important to tell us (adults) that may change the decisions we make on their behalf. Children's voices and participation in this context provides information to adults about how *they might better care and provide for children's health, welfare and education* (Warshak, 2003).

- **Empowerment:** Gaining the voice of the child also empowers the young person. Childrens' voices and participation research, views young people *as a minority group who are seen to have their 'interests' served* (Qvortrup, 1994).

For both these reasons, it is important that we are able to gain the views of all our children, including those with learning and communication needs. These children can often become overlooked as eliciting their views can require further differentiation of materials, alongside skillful and attuned interaction.
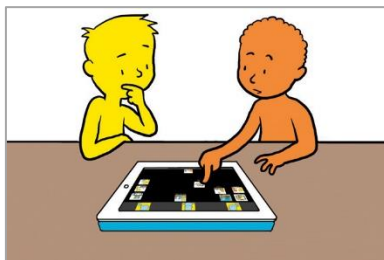


A number of the tools highlighted above have been specifically designed for those with learning and communication needs. These include:
- *Talking mats,*
- *The Incredible Five Point Scale,*
- *The Highlands Interactive My World Triangle (e.g. choose option 'communication needs' at the start).*
- *In My Shoes ICT Package,*

- *The Zones of Regulation (used within Dalmilling Base and Primary).*

Other tools available to support and gain the views of young people with learning and communication needs include:

Comic Strip Conversations:
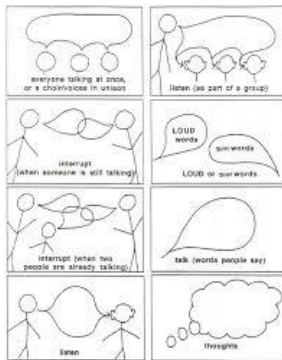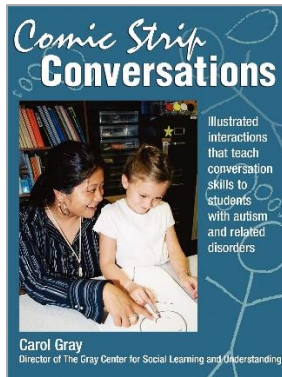


- ✓ A technique developed by Carol Gray to help people with autism share their views and develop greater social understanding.

- ✓ They provide visual representations of the different levels of communication that take place in a conversation, using symbols, stick figure drawings and colour.

- ✓ By seeing the different elements of a conversation presented visually, some of the more abstract aspects of social communication (such as recognising the feelings and intentions of others) are made more 'concrete' and are therefore easier to understand.

- ✓ They can offer an insight into how a person with autism perceives a situation.

Picture Exchange Communication System:



- ✓ An augmentative and alternative communication system. It allows people with little or no communication abilities to communicate using pictures at home and school.

- ✓ Typically the family/school would work alongside a speech-language therapist to teach the child how to use PECS to share their thoughts and feelings.

- ✓ People using PECS are taught to approach another person and give them a picture of a desired item in exchange for that item.

- ✓ By doing so, the person is able to initiate communication. A child or adult with autism can use PECS to communicate a request, a thought, or anything that can reasonably be displayed or symbolized on a picture card.
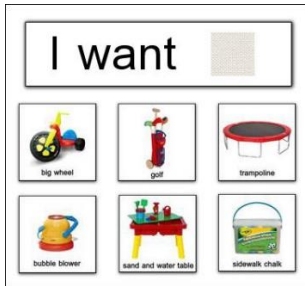
## Eye tracking Assistive Technology:
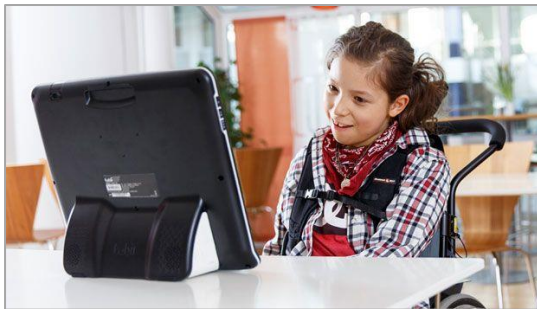




- ✓ May benefit young people with limited upper body strength - a spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, Rett Syndrome.

- ✓ Individuals using the PCEye Mini or other eye tracking software, are able to unlock all the functions of their computer by only using their eyes.

- ✓ The gaze interaction software grants access for users to share their views and have personal independence.

- ✓ Users are also able to keep in touch with friends and family. They can write emails, access social networking sites etc.

- ✓ Artistic expression can also be achieved via eye control allowing the user to acquire new skills,

## Makaton Signing



- ✓ Makaton is a language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to share their views and communicate.

- ✓ It supports the development of essential communication skills such as attention and listening, comprehension, memory, recall and organisation of language and expression.

- ✓ It has been used with young people who have cognitive impairments, autism, Down syndrome, specific language impairment, multisensory impairment and acquired neurological disorders that have negatively affected the ability to communicate, including stroke patients.

- ✓ It's a multimodal approach using a combination of speech, signs, and graphic symbols. It consists of a Core Vocabulary of roughly 450 concepts that are taught in a specific order there are 8 different stages.

| Sign | Symbol |
|------|--------|
| | |

Chair

## Auditory Word Buzzers

- ✓ These buzzers can be used to help young people with communication difficulties share their views and perceptions.

- ✓ They can record certain words e.g. 'yes', 'no', 'drink', 'table' etc. which can then be taught to the young person. The child can then communicate with others via pressing the buzzers to indicate their views.

- ✓ Auditory sound boxes can also be used in additional support needs school to help children navigate around the building.

- ✓ For example, the auditory box can be placed outside varying rooms i.e. gymhall. Before entering the room, the child can press the buzzer and become familiar with what's inside. This promotes independent transition throughout the school.

## TEACCH Approach:

- ✓ The TEACCH approach supports children with autism in a way that makes the most of their strengths and works around their weaknesses.

- ✓ It uses a broad range of visual structures to help organise the environment and tasks when teaching skills to individuals with autism.

- ✓ The range of visual supports help the child organize their activities, share their views with others and engage with the curriculum.

- ✓ The approach centres around being flexible and teaching flexibility.
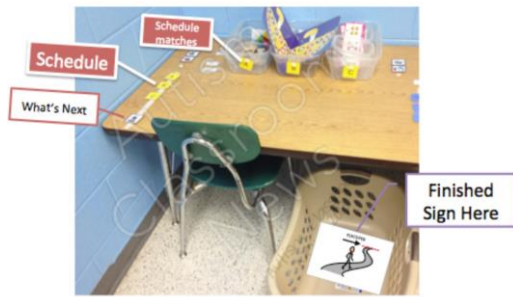
The other tools highlighted in the individual and whole class/group section above can of course be differentiated to support children with a wide range of needs. For example Person Centre Planning has been used with a range of children with additional support needs.
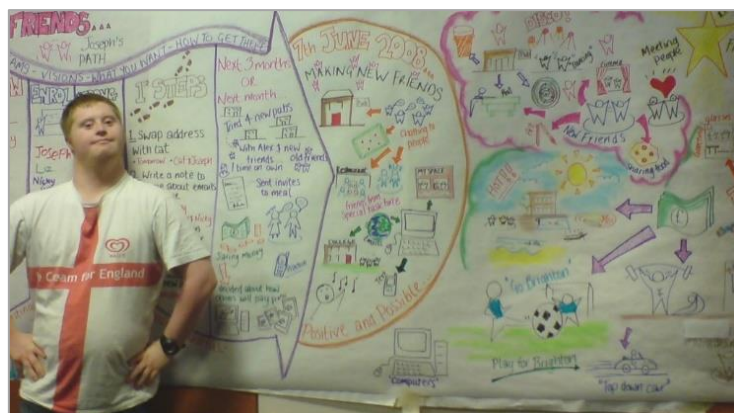


The key to using differing tools is ensuring sound differentiation and attunement to the individual child. Key aspects of differentiation highlighted by the Teacher Toolkit online include:
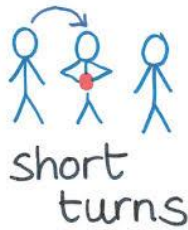
- **Allow the student to take the lead:** It's a high-risk strategy for some teachers to allow students to take over the activity, but it something best-served in great activities where teachers are always in control.
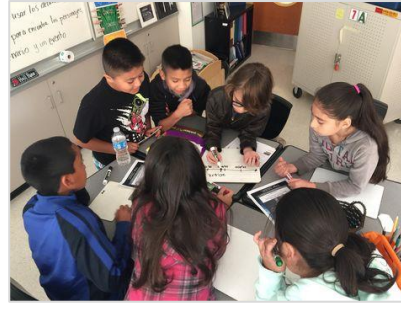
- **Forming and reframing questions:** How you ask a question can make all the difference. If undertaking focus groups, the **Pose-Pause-Pounce-Bounce** questioning sequence can support. This sequences is much more suited to elicit deep thinking. The teacher poses a question; pauses to allow suitable thinking time; pounces on one student for an initial answer; and finally bounces the answer to another student who builds on the response.

- **Verbal Feedback:** must be meaningful, sophisticated and tailored to the individual child. A 'well done' or a 'that's very good', is enough to provide positivity, but it might not help students make further progress. Extend the praise comments with pinpointed formative assessment. This will help them learn, develop and become more skilled at sharing their views.
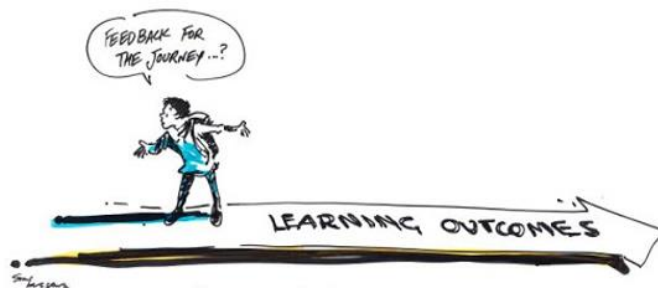


- **Students teaching their peers:** This again may be useful when gaining childrens' views as a group. Challenge students consider others' perceptions and how that may in turn advance their own views. The rewards are great when students can begin to self-regulate and learn from one another.

- **Use the building blocks of attuned communication:**

short turns

give space

warm + friendly

eye contact

listen

show you noticed

offer choices

name what you notice — I see.....

Adapted from www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/2017/03/28/differentiate/
Impact of Gaining the Views of the Child

Meaningful and inclusive engagement and participation of children and young people, of all ages and abilities, in their education will not only improve outcomes for children but for the whole school community.

Below are some of the impacts of gaining pupils views:

- **Contributes to achievement and the capacity to learn effectively:**  Research by SCCYP (2015) highlighted a strong correlation between schools approaches to learner participation and levels of achievement and attainment.

- **Helps the child or young person to recognise their strengths and areas of need, and supports them with building resilience:** Sharp (2014) suggested that children who perceive themselves as powerful in relation to change issues are more resilient and adaptable to difficulties in their later life.

- **Improves relationships and communication skills:** Rudduck et al (2003) found that increased pupil engagement improved relationships between pupils and teachers and led to better communication between pupils and the school.

- **Increases motivation and engagement:** When a child or young person engages in planning for their future and actively takes part in target setting, this leads to increased motivation during activities due to understanding their long-term goals.

- **Builds confidence and promotes self-esteem**: National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (Halsey et al 2007) reported that pupils' confidence and self-esteem will increase when they have the opportunity to influence decisions that affect them.

- **Encourages children and young people to become reflective learners:** Consulting young people about their learning will enhance their capacity to become self-reflective learners, a skill often held to be necessary to thrive in today's flexible, 'knowledge' based economy (Fielding & Bragg, 2003).

- **Benefits for children and young people with additional support needs:** involving children with additional support needs can be in danger of being 'tokenistic', but when executed properly listening to the voices of these young people can increase motivation, independence, and responsibility (Harding & Atkinson, 2009).

  - The positive impacts of participation are frequently


Learner Participation in Educational Settings (3-18)

Education Scotland
Foghlam Alba
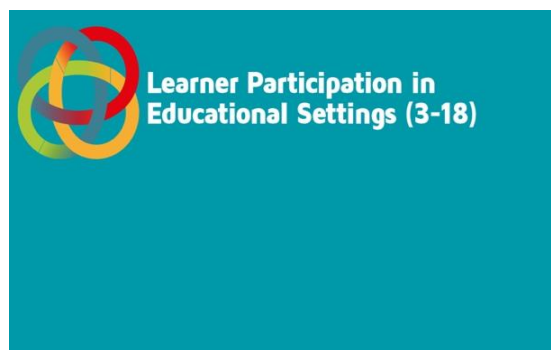
mentioned in the literature in relation to key groups, such as those with additional support needs, looked after children, or homeless young people (Halsey et al., 2006).

Recently, Education Scotland (2020) published the 'Learner Participation on Educational Settings (3-18) document which provides guidance and support materials to support schools and early years settings develop an understanding of learner participation and plan for implementation within their setting.

The document is based on the research 'How young people's participation in schools supports attainment and achievement' (Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland). Evidence from the research supports the view that addressing learner participation makes for effective policy making, enhances school life, and improves a range of outcomes for learners.

A recent Scottish study showed that schools achieving better than expected exam results, given their catchments in areas of deprivation, were all making comprehensive efforts to address learner participation across school life. Other effects of enhancing learner participation included:
- improved pupil-teacher, child-staff, and peer-to-peer relations
- improved wellbeing
- improved teaching and learning
- improved guidance and support
- a better school ethos and greater sense of a shared community
- a reciprocal sense of feeling valued, trusted and respected
- development of life skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and citizenship
- improved engagement, empowerment, and commitment to education
- improved achievement and attainment
- an addressing of the 'attainment gap' between learners from more and less deprived backgrounds

The four arenas of participation are outlined in the guidance document:
- In learning teaching and assessment

## Four Arenas of Participation

The 'Four Arenas of Participation' provides a framework to help us understand and develop when, where, and how learners can have a say in schools and ELC settings. Recent research in Scotland in high-achieving schools serving deprived areas has shown that, in order to do well, learners valued and availed of opportunities for participation in all four arenas.

The four arenas are indicative of the main overlapping emphases in learner participation in school or ELC settings. As the diagram shows, all arenas are inter-linked: for example, a pupil-led group could decide on possible destinations for an international trip. Similarly, dialogue with community members about an environmental issue could lead to a curriculum project about sustainability.

Importantly, learner participation will not be limited to the work of formal pupil councils but will be richly and deeply experienced across the four arenas by all children and young people. Learner participation must not be considered as an 'add-on' but be experienced as intrinsic to everyday ways of working.

in Learning, Teaching, and Assessment

in Opportunities for Personal Achievement

in Decision Making Groups

in connection with the Wider Community

- In opportunities for personal achievement
- In decision making groups
- In connection with the wider community

These arenas outline all the places that participation can take place and extend it beyond the scope of decision-making groups (see visual below). For example, children might participate in giving their opinions on aspects of lessons including the content and delivery. Some aspects of assessment is for learning would be helpful in this arena. Opportunities for personal achievement include children and young people being included in all those wider areas in school such as volunteering, award schemes, visits, etc.

Full details of the resource can be found at: https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/learner-participation-in-educational-settings-3-18/

# The role of the Educational Psychologist



- EPs are required to actively consider how they involve children in research and evaluation, how they promote agency and empowerment for children, and how they can assist establishments to embed children's participation in their policies and practices. As part of their training and general work, EP's have developed and use a variety of approaches and tools for consulting with children and helping particularly the more vulnerable groups to feel confident and capable in giving their views and in finding different ways to express themselves.

- EPs play an essential role in working collaboratively with schools to develop their skills to support children and young people's educational experience. EPs can contribute to teachers and school support staff's professional development through training, offering advice and support, and by recommending methods or strategies to support children and young people. With their expert knowledge, EPs can support schools to successfully implement some of the materials and resources mentioned throughout this document to gaining the voice of the child.

- Once children have been consulted with, their contributions should be used meaningfully – EPs are also able to provide support around how to share the voice of the child with others in an appropriate, ethical manner. Interpreting the views of a child can be subjective; it is argued that this should be carried out in as empowering and consistent a manner as possible, which EPs can support (Ingram, 2013).

- As EPs are external to educational establishments, they can have an important professional distance and objectivity which lends itself to listening to children, rather than directing or controlling their contributions. In some cases, a child or young person may find it difficult to open up to a teacher or someone they know well, and therefore might feel more able to speak with someone like an EP. EPs can play an important role in understanding and communicating with children and young people.

- Due to the training EPs receive and carry out as part of their practice, they are well-placed to support with new or novel techniques to elicit the voices of children & young people. This can be particularly helpful for children who have additional support needs or, as previously mentioned, those who feel less comfortable voicing their opinion to a familiar adult (Vingerhoets & Wagner, 2016).

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Examples of Completed Wellbeing Wheels

**What it is?** SHANARRI Wheel: Adapted from Grampian Wellbeing Web Materials

**How we would use it?**

Use web to incorporate questions based on the GIRFEC indicators: Healthy, Safe, Responsible, Nurtured, respected, included, Active and Achieving.

There are cards for each individual indicator which could be used with young people to prompt them to figure out where they see themselves for each indicator. For example, the Nurtured card has the following prompts: who lives in your house, who looks after you? Tell me about your home, what does it look like? Is it cozy? Who do you tell if you don't or do like something? Children and young people could use this information to complete their individual web. The use of emoticons could be used rather than numbers to make it more accessible for younger children to understand.

Pupil S.

| NOTES | |
|---|---|
| Safe | Rating 5 out of 10<br>I feel safe in school but some children can be unkind to me.<br>My teachers make me feel safe.<br>I feel safe at home. |
| Healthy | Rating 1<br>I feel sick at lot because I don't want to come to school. I can't do my work in class because it is too hard. I would stay at home if my mum lets me. When I feel sick I feel sad too. |
| Achieving | Rating 3<br>I'm trying really hard in P7 and my teachers have told me they are pleased.<br>I'm worried all the time about high school – being bullied and not being able to do the work. I think the teachers will want me to work fast and I can't. If I was in a small class I would be able to ask for help.<br><br>[S. became very tearful whilst talking about high school]. |
| Nurtured | Rating 8<br>I know people care about me in school and at home.<br>I enjoyed going to the Friday club and the Seasons group in school. |
| Active | Rating 10<br>I play football but don't go to a dance club anymore.<br>I would like to learn how to ride a bike and swim more.<br>Maybe join a club. |
| Respected | Rating 5<br>I think people listen to me but other children could be nicer. |
| Responsible | Rating 1<br>I didn't want to be a buddy for primary 1 but I'll think about it.<br>Maybe to do some things in class to help the teacher. |
| Included | Rating 6<br>I feel part of my class but get angry when I can't do the work. |

*Wellbeing Web Plan Example:*

| | Expected Outcome | Priority Actions | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | What? | How? | By Whom? | By When? | How do you/others know? |
| Safe | | | | | |
| Healthy | | | | | |
| Achieving | | | | | |
| Nurtured | | | | | |
| Active | | | | | |
| Respected | | | | | |
| Responsible | | | | | |
| Included | | | | | |

*Example of web used in North Lanarkshire Psychological Services:*

Appendix 2:  Blob Examples



**PEOPLE TREE** [1]

On the picture above choose which character best describes you at the moment. OR which character best described you before the project and which best describes you now after the project?

Ask young people to colour in their characters.

**PEOPLE TREE**

Which character(s) did you choose?

What made you choose that character(s)?

What new things have you learnt about yourself from completing the Reflection Tree?

Note down any other thoughts that are important to you.

**How could it be used:** The People Tree and its associated questions could be given to children and young people (in groups or individually) to prompt thinking and exploration of their feelings. It could also be used as a before and after measure of intervention/assessment.

## Appendix 3: Unstructured Interview Example

**Unstructured Interview using Pupil View Template**
The pupil view template was designed for speaking to children about metacognitive processes, and was developed to use as mediational tool during an interview. It involves the use of speech and thought bubbles to support discussion; whereby the thought bubble provides information about the conscious 'internal' mental processes: what they perceive 'is going on inside their head' (metacognition). In contrast, the speech bubble looks at factors external to the individual: the learning of other pupils, teachers, and parents and practicalities of learning in the specified context (cognition in general). Wall, Higgins and Smith (2005) used the template with a group of four to six primary children to look at pupils' perspectives of how ICT (interactive whiteboards) can be used to aid learning.

The image on the template is recognised by children as the learning context under scrutiny and discussion is initiated by this. The design of the image means that the pupil can interact with it: adding faces to the teacher and pupils and drawing representations of their favourite lesson on the IWB.



14. Pupil Views – Working with an interactive whiteboard

Issues arising from the stimulus were discussed and the pupils were encouraged to write down their thoughts and ideas in the appropriate bubble on individual templates.

By providing an image of the learning environment under examination, the process becomes a three-way interaction between the researcher, the pupils, and the template, stimulating talk about the learning context.

The pupil comments are categorised according to whether they were positive, negative, or neutral. And then broken down into key emerging themes.
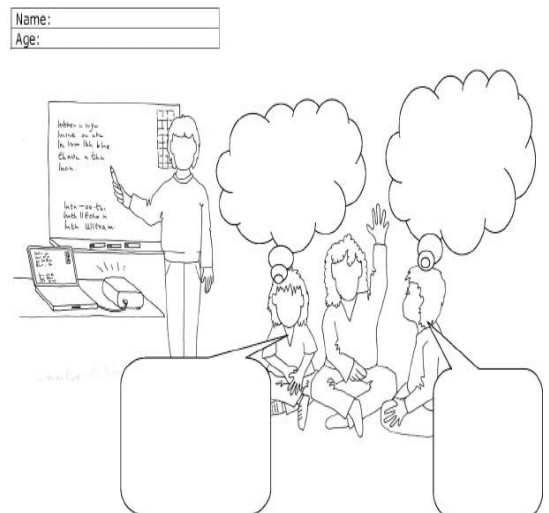
Benefits
- This method helps to overcome any interviewer-interviewee tensions, a variance that can be particularly pertinent between adult and child (Greig and Taylor, 1999).
- The templates have proved effective at structuring pupils' thinking and have successfully gathered data on metacognitive process.
- This method incorporates visual and verbal social learning; which is seen by the pupils to be motivating and reinforces concentration and attention.

*Note: North Ayrshire Psychological Service used this method successfully, along with semi structured interviews to obtain pupil views*

# Appendix 4:  Focus Groups

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups are highlighted as being particularly suitable in gathering information from pupils.  They create a safe peer environment and reflect the small group setting that children are used to experiencing within the classroom (Mauthner, 1997).  However, information gathered from children is often filtered by adult interpretation, an issue which is particularly salient when gathering the views of children with additional support needs (Williams and Hanke, 2007).  A multi-modal approach can maximise the quality and accuracy of the information elicited.

3 Activity Stations Focus Group- East Renfrewshire

East Renfrewshire gathered children's views to gain insight regarding the impact of the educational psychologist contribution to CLPL for teachers in the areas of ASD, Dyslexia and Learning Centres. A sample of children and young people who experience ASD, Dyslexia or attend a Learning Centre from schools across the authority worked in groups at three task stations.

- Snakes and Ladders where children are asked to share positive and negative experiences
- Giant Jenga where children will answer specific questions about their support
- My Ideal School Poster where pupils will be encouraged to reflect on what the ideal support for their needs might look like.

The purpose of the task stations is to stimulate and clarify children's thinking about the support they have received through supported discussion with peers with similar needs.  Children were then supported to collectively complete an adapted Scoping and Scanning Cycle from Transforming Learning (Education Scotland, 2016).  Thy completed cycle should summarise the information generated at the three previous stations and highlight transformational change actions.



Snakes and Ladders Positive and Negative experiences question prompt examples:

- 'It's helpful for me when my teacher does X'
- 'I don't like it when my classroom is X'
- 'What's going well/not so well at school?'

Giant Jenga Questions:

- 'My favourite part of reading wise was X'
- 'My least favourite experience with X was X'

# Appendix 5:  My Feelings Colouring Chart and Feelings Number Line



CAF—My Feelings Colouring Chart

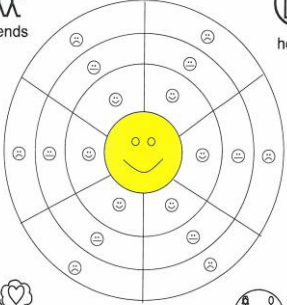Name _____ Age ____

How happy are you?

friends  home  hobbies  school  about you  family

Thinking about everything we've talked about, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is being as happy as you could be... where are you now?

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9



CAF—My Feelings Number Line

Name _____ Age ____

How happy are you?

home  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
family  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
school  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
friends  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
about you  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
hobbies  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



CAF—My feelings Number Line

Name _____ Age ____

Thinking about everything we've talked about, on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is being as happy as you could be... where are you now?

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10



CAF—My Feelings Feedback Record:

Form for **practitioners** to record child/young persons views and ideas

CHILD/YOUNG PERSON'S
NAME: _____  DOB: ____

home

Where are you now? Are you generally happy at home? Sad at home? Or somewhere in between?

What makes you feel like this?

If things were better what would they look like?

What could you do or someone else do that could make this better?

school

Where are you now? Are you generally happy at school? Sad at school? Or somewhere in between?

What makes you feel like this?

If things were better what would they look like?

What could you do or someone else do that could make this better?

## CAF—My Feelings Feedback Record:
Form for **practitioners** to record child/young persons views and ideas

**CHILD/YOUNG PERSON'S**
**NAME:** _____  **DOB:** _____

| | |
|---|---|
| family | **Where are you now?** Are you generally happy? Sad? Or somewhere in between? |
| | **What makes you feel like this?** Tell us about your family |
| | **If things were better what would they look like?** |
| | **What could you do or someone else do that could make this better?** |

| | |
|---|---|
| about you | **Where are you now?** Are you generally happy about yourself? Sad? Or somewhere in between? |
| | **What makes you feel like this?** |
| | **If things were better what would they look like?** |
| | **What could you do or someone else do that could make this better?** |

## CAF—My Feelings Feedback Record:
Form for **practitioners** to record child/young persons views and ideas

**CHILD/YOUNG PERSON'S**
**NAME:** _____  **DOB:** _____

| | |
|---|---|
| hobbies | **Where are you now?** What do you enjoy doing in your free time? Are you generally happy with your hobbies? Sad? Or somewhere in between? |
| | **What makes you feel like this?** Are you able to do them? How often do you do them? |
| | **If things were better what would they look like?** |
| | **What could you do or someone else do that could make this better?** |

| | |
|---|---|
| friends | **Where are you now?** Are you generally happy with your friends? Sad? Or somewhere in between? |
| | **What makes you feel like this?** Tell us about your friends |
| | **If things were better what would they look like?** |
| | **What could you do or someone else do that could make this better?** |

**How could it be used?** The feelings colouring chart or number line could be used with children of varying ages as a standalone self-rated measure of their happiness on a holistic basis. The practitioner record forms could be used to capture further information expressed by the child.