

Guidance for schools and settings: Gaining the views of children and young people for their EHC Plans.

Children and Young People at the heart of the system.
Active Participation: "No decision about me, without me".

Guidance compiled by Dr Jennifer Newton
in Collaboration with Milton Keynes Speech and Language Service

Who is this Guidance for?

This guidance has been produced to support schools and settings in Milton Keynes to consider the ways in which the views of children and young people (CYP) are sought for the purpose of informing and participating in the development of their EHC plan.

What is this Guidance for?

Following recent SEN legislative changes, this guidance has been produced to support:

1. A child or young person's right to receive and impart information about themselves. This is enshrined in UN Convention.
2. The Children and Families Bill 2014, which promotes the participation of children and young people in decision-making about SEN.
3. One of the principles underpinning the new SEN Code of Practice, that children and young people have a right to have their views heard and listened to, and to be involved in making decisions and exercising choices.
4. The development of an EHC Plan, which is a holistic document centred on the child or young person's needs. The young person's voice is central to the process of its development and review.

This means that care and time should be taken over how the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people are sought, so that they are given the best chance to develop independence and reach their full potential.

Contents

	Description	Page number
•	Points to consider when seeking views of children and young people	4
•	How will schools and settings know they have been successful in ensuring active participation of their children and young people in the development of their EHC plans?	4
Part 1	<u>What / how / when / where:</u> Suggestions on strategies to support gaining views	5
Part 2	<u>EHC plan specific:</u> Prompts for answering each EHC plan question	9
Part 3	<u>Levels of communication:</u> Helps identify how well a child or young person can communicate and provides information on strategies to support different levels of communication.	13
	Resources & References	16

Points to consider when seeking views of children and young people

- It must be clear how the child or young person participated in the development of their EHC plan.
- Their interests, views and aspirations must be included.
- The manner of their participation in the process should be meaningful to them, and should recognise what is *important for them*, but equally what is *important to them*.
- Embedding sustainable participation and co-production principles and processes takes time and energy. This should be recognised and built into every school and settings' process of seeking and gaining views, wishes, interests and aspirations.
- Children and young people should feel that their contribution is valued. They should be able to trust that adults respect their views and that they will be supported in participating in the way they want to without discrimination or judgement.

How will schools and settings know they have been successful in ensuring active participation of their children and young people in the development of their EHC plans?

From a child / young person's perspective:

- People will know what is important to me and for me, and will know how to support me and communicate with me.
- I will be supported in thinking about what information I want to share and how I will share it.
- I will be involved in decisions about my life as far as possible.
- My involvement will result in positive changes in my life.

Part 1: Guidance on what to use, how, where and when to ask children or young people for their views about their EHC plan.

The professional asking the EHC plan questions should know the CYP well enough to be able to make informed judgements. This will be based on their knowledge of CYP about what to use; how, where and when to ask CYP for their views, in order to inform their EHC plan.

1. What will I use and how will I ask?

This will depend on the CYP Communication Level (band 1 – 4: see Part 3: pages 13 - 15) but at least two methods listed below should inform answers (see **Resources**, page 16 and **References**, page 17, for further information).

Observations

Write brief observations on post-it notes kept in a portfolio for the CYP to build an evidence base of information from observations, in a variety of contexts and over time:

- When playing or at unstructured times
- In lessons the CYP does well in
- In lessons the CYP finds harder
- Using eye-gaze where appropriate (refer to Band 1)

Communication aids

a) Specific to the CYP:

- PECS
- AAC
- iPad
- signing
- Other technological aids

b) Generic aids that can be used for all CYP whether verbal or non-verbal:

- Talking Mats with pictorial symbols depicting concrete and abstract objects / feelings etc.
- Drawing activities

Multiple choice options

For each EHC plan question:

- Use pictorial aids such as Talking Mat pictures or 'feelings faces'

- Use simply worded multiple choice answers that can be ticked for each question if CYP able to read and write
- Use rating scales
- Use 'Outcome Stars'

Photo elicitation

Tour the setting: allow CYP to take photos of places / people / objects in their environments that support their answers to the EHC plan questions, e.g. there might be a particular place or person they return to when feeling angry, upset, happy or proud.

Structured 1:1 conversations

For CYP at Communication Level band 4 or above:

- Use 'rich pictures' or art activities if felt appropriate, depicting good / bad days; actual / ideal self, etc.

Participation groups

For CYP at Communication Level band 4 or above:

- These could be embedded into curriculum, for example, through PSHE & Citizenship sessions.

2. Where will I ask?

Informed judgements need to be made about:

- Where it will be best to have potentially sensitive conversations. For example there may be difficulty in talking about the family in the home environment, or if school is difficult, it may be better to talk about school away from that environment.
- Whether the CYP will be able to talk about an environment that he/she is not currently in. For example, will the CYP be able to talk about home if his/her 'here and now' environment is school? (Refer to Band 1 Communication Level: page 13)

The following considerations will provide ethical opportunities to elicit the views of CYP:

- In a quiet environment free from distractions and where the CYP feels distanced from 'spectators';
- In familiar and comfortable environments;
- Whilst playing with the CYP;
- Whilst on a tour of particular environments, for example the school

3. How often and when will I ask?

Schools / settings should be asking CYP for their views relating to the EHC plan questions as part of an ongoing review cycle:

1. At the start of the EHC plan process (prior to Week 0 of the EHC plan timeline, when the school / setting is preparing EHC submission paperwork)
2. At the point of submission of the EHC plan (Week 0)

Educational Psychologists will ask for the views of the CYP as part of their assessment and psychological advice, which will be between Weeks 4 and 10 on the EHC plan timeline.

Once an EHC plan is in place (decision made at Week 11 on the EHC plan timeline and final EHC plan sent at Week 20), CYP views should be sought:

- Through ongoing review, e.g. via daily / weekly observations or other methods (see pages 5 – 6).
 - ✓ The frequency of review will depend on the age and abilities of CYP.
 - ✓ For older CYP evening or weekend review may be appropriate and it may also be necessary to seek their views after they have been taken to explore various day-service provisions / work placement opportunities
- Particularly at times of change such as when a new CYP starts in their class or when there are changes at home. This should be carried out via observation and other methods (see pages 5 – 6).
- Just prior to the Annual Review

Part 2: Prompts and guidance to support professionals asking the EHC plan questions.

Questions in EHC plan:

Prompts to help gain responses from CYP:

The best way to communicate with me is:

Detail how CYP views were gained and which strategies / techniques appeared to work well (refer to levels of communication, pages 13-15, and 'what will I use and how will I ask, pages 5-8). If possible, write down the CYP's views on this.

What people like about me:

Use 'feelings faces' / Talking Mats and pictorial prompts / multiple choice tick sheets / tours / photo elicitation etc. to support answers if necessary:

Personal characteristics:

- What sort of person am I?
 - Ask CYP to point to 3 faces / prompts they think a friend /teacher / parent might think they are like e.g. kind, happy, worries a lot etc.

Physical characteristics:

- Clothing
- Hairstyle etc.

Extra-curricular abilities / interests:

- What am I into?
 - For example, music, sport, dance / arts etc.
- What do I do well
 - For example, caring for a pet, part of a sports team, a particular talent they have, making people smile / laugh etc.

Abilities / interests at school:

- What lessons am I good at? What lessons do other people think I am good at?
- What lessons do I enjoy? What lessons do other people think I enjoy?
- What is my attitude / approach to learning like?

What (and who) is important to me:

Use 'feelings faces' / Talking Mats and pictorial prompts / multiple choice tick sheets / tours / photo elicitation etc. to support answers if necessary:

What / who is important to me at home; at school; in any other significant environment; wider friends and family; personal possessions; pets; personal care / appearance; routines and products, such as wearing the same jumper; cleaning trainers in a particular way; holding a particular object; same branded foods etc.

Possible phrases to use include:

How to support me:

- I like to... (e.g. particular games, activities, laughing etc.)
- I would like more of...
- I would like less of...
- I would like to stop...

Use 'feelings faces' / Talking Mats and pictorial prompts / multiple choice tick sheets / tours / photo elicitation etc. to support answers if necessary:

What support do I require to meet my physical needs?

- Personal care:
 - To help me wash / dress / use the toilet etc. you can...
- Space / mobility requirements
 - To help me move around you can...
- Food and drink
 - I like...
 - I don't like...
- Other
- Who is good at helping me with physical needs?
- Who is less helpful?

What support do I require to meet my communication needs?

- To help me understand the world you can...
- To help me express myself and communicate you can...
- To help me process / think about verbal or other information you can...
- To help me remember information I have been told / shown you can...
- These communication aids help me...
- Who is good at helping me with communicating?
- Who is less helpful?

What support do I need to meet my emotional / behavioural needs?

- When do I need space?
- When do I need physical contact or containment?
- If I run off the best way to help me is...
- What makes me angry? **
- If I get angry the best way to help me is...
- What makes me worried? **
- If I am worried the best way to help me is...
- What makes me upset? **
- If I am upset the best way to help me is ...
- If I am happy, excited, bored etc. the best way to help me is...
- If you want me to do something I am not keen on you can persuade me by...
- Who is good at helping me with my emotional / behavioural needs?
- Who is less helpful?

**** Encourage responses relating to their environments / particular activities / people (e.g. not shouting; not listening; teasing; interrupting) / sensory issues etc.**

Things that are working for me:

Use 'feelings faces' / Talking Mats and pictorial prompts / multiple choice tick sheets / tours / photo elicitation etc. to support answers if necessary:

- What works for my physical development
- What works for my communication skill development
- What works in supporting my emotional / behavioural development

At school these things work for me:

- Friendships; teachers; types of lesson (including practical activities, reading, active, table-top based activities)

What I find hard:

Use 'feelings faces' / Talking Mats and pictorial prompts / multiple choice tick sheets / tours / photo elicitation etc. to support answers if necessary:

- What I find hard in relation to my physical development
- What I find hard in relation to my communication skill development
- What I find hard in relation to supporting my emotional / behavioural development

At school these are the things I find hard:

- Friendships; teachers; types of lesson (including practical activities, reading, active, table-top based activities)

My hopes:

Use 'feelings faces' / Talking Mats and pictorial prompts / multiple choice tick sheets / tours / photo elicitation etc. to support answers if necessary:

- These might be short-term or long-term depending on CYP's age
- These might relate to physical needs; communication needs; emotional / behavioural needs
- These might relate to school-level factors e.g. friendships / schoolwork / gaining qualifications / participating in school activities such as school trips / hoping for more or less of a particular subject
- These might relate to life-skill factors e.g. seeking and gaining employment / independent living / relationships / planning and raising a family / learning to use the bus / learning to cross the road safely / learning to ride a bike / learning to walk independently
- These might relate to e.g. going on holiday / meeting a hero / swimming a certain distance / playing with a particular child






Questions to the CYP could be phrased in terms of:

- Things I would like more of (in the future)...
- Things I would like less of (in the future)...
- New things I would like (in the future)...





Part 3: Guidance on 'Levels of Communication'

Supporting professionals in considering how best to seek the views of CYP

(Adapted from 'Best Ways to Communicate' sheets provided by Lucy Smith, CTALD)

Communication Level:		 To help me understand you better and communicate with you: 
Band 1 (pre-intentional)	Strengths:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I explore with my mouth, hands or feet I respond to things that I like, dislike, want or reject – but you will have to interpret what I'm feeling I use facial expressions and body movements I may start to recognise highly familiar routines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use careful observation of my movements, facial expressions and behaviour Copy my sounds and movements and wait for my reactions Watch for my like and dislike responses Use real objects (objects of reference) Create familiar routines Create sensory activities and experiences Be consistent in how you respond to my communication Get to know me very well
	Difficulties:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not yet know that my actions will influence the world around me I do not understand words I cannot tell you what I want Introducing something new may be difficult for me 	
Band 1 (intentional)	Strengths:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can communicate some things using facial expression, vocalisation, body language or movement I can greet you, draw attention to something, make simple requests, reject things and hold eye contact I am starting to understand key words / signs associated with routines I am starting to be able to take turns in simple activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use real objects (objects of reference) to help me understand what is about to happen (e.g. my coat to show me that we are going out) Use simple signs and photos Create sensory activities and experiences Talk to me about what is happening (but keep your talking simple) Tell me the names of things Acknowledge my communication (e.g. if I reach for something to show you what I want, then please respond to it) Join in with me and take turns Get to know me very well. You will be able to build up a picture of how I communicate when I want you to do or share something for me

	<p>Difficulties: 🙅</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not understand things that are happening away from the here and now (e.g. I cannot understand tomorrow / today / yesterday) • I do not understand sentences or spoken conversations • Introducing something new may be difficult for me 	
<p>Band 2</p>	<p>Strengths: 👍</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can communicate using a combination of facial expression, vocalisation or some basic words / signs • I am starting to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicate where I want things to go - Show what belongs to me / you - Indicate that things have gone / finished - Request a person to carry out an action / to help me - Label and describe objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am learning to communicate more effectively; therefore I need your support. I need you to model good communication so I can understand you and learn how to use it myself • Use real objects (objects of reference) to help me understand what is about to happen • Use photos and sign with me in conversations (even if I do not always sign back) • Use symbol boards / key-rings / books with me • Offer me choices and wait for me to express myself • Talk about what I am doing but keep your language simple – try not to ask me lots of questions • Respond to what I am communicating through my sounds, signs and words • Use action rhymes, short poems, personalised rhymes, story bags, photograph books, texture books, picture books, books with flaps, buzzers and pop-ups
	<p>Difficulties: 🙅</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not understand complicated words or conversations • I cannot use more than one word / sign at a time • Introducing something new may be difficult for me 	

<p>Band 3</p>	<p>Strengths: </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have lots to say and will describe things to you • I link 2 words or signs together • I may ask questions, such as what or where? • I like to talk about what I'm doing and ask you to do things • I might try to correct my mistakes if I make them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use signing • Use a communication book and symbols • Use high-tech communication aids if I have them • Talk about things that are happening at the moment, not in the past or future • Give me small amounts of information at a time and give me time to think about it • Back up your speech with signs and gesture, and repeat what you have said • Use a structured pictorial timetable to help me understand what is happening • Encourage me to describe or comment on things that are happening (by talking, using sign or symbols) • Ask me questions that have a range of choices to help me develop longer answers. You might need to show me the signs or add in buttons to my communication aid • Encourage me to be independent and do things for myself • Extend what I have said, for example, by talking about what things look and feel like • Make communication fun!!
<p>Difficulties: </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I cannot understand long and complicated conversations • I find it difficult to understand and talk about things that happened in the past or future • I cannot read or write 		
<p>Band 4</p>	<p>Strengths: </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like to talk about what I'm doing and ask you to do things • I can plan and describe what I am doing during the day • I can ask questions that begin with who, where, when and why • I can predict what will happen next • I may be able to talk about events and things away from the here and now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use communication books and symbols • Use high-tech communication aids (if I have them) • Use simple and clear sentences • Avoid non-literal language e.g. "it's raining cats and dogs" • Be consistent. If you say something, then do it • Give me small amounts of information at a time and give me time to process this • Watch my body language and behaviour – you will be able to tell if I haven't understood you • Encourage me to describe or comment on why things happen or how I am feeling (by talking, signing or using symbols) • Ask questions that have a range of choices to help me develop longer answers. You might need to explain the words, show me the signs or add in buttons to my communication aid • Help me to plan, reason and predict what might happen in certain situations • Make communication fun and interesting!!
<p>Difficulties: </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I find long and complicated conversations hard to understand • I cannot read or write 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding more subtle inferences in what you say may be hard for me (e.g. social rules of conversation, non-stated implications) 	
Band 4+	Refer to FACT and FACT+ descriptors	Refer to strategies in the FACT / FACT+ document

Resources

The following list is by no means exhaustive. It is intended to provide a starting point for thinking about possible resources that may be useful in enabling the children and young people you work with to express and communicate their views.

- For all children and young people:**

www.talkingmats.com/

Talking Mats is a social enterprise whose vision is to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties. Talking Mats are mats to which pictures can be attached and re-arranged as required. This provides a visual framework to help people express their views using a selection of communication symbols that cover a variety of topics.

www.asdvisualaids.com

ASD Visual Aids is a company which provides resources to support CYP in communicating.

www.participationworks.org.uk

Participation Works is a partnership of seven national children and young people's agencies that provides a voice to anyone wanting to give a voice to children and young people

<http://acecentre.org.uk/>

The ACE Centre provides support and advice on children and young people with complex physical and communication impairments.

www.afasic.org.uk

Seeks to raise awareness and create better services and provision for CYP with speech and language impairments.

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk

This website aims to raise awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication across the children and young people's workforce.

www.ican.org.uk

I CAN works to promote the development of speech, language and communication skills in all children and young people with a special focus on those who find this hard.

<http://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/resources>

Useful resources related to children and young people with SEN

<http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk/Creating-Passports/Templates/>

Useful information and templates for eliciting CYP views

- **For older young people:**

<http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/content/assets/pdf/publications/personal-planning-book.pdf?view=Standard>

This links to a book which helps those with learning disabilities to create a detailed personal plan. It can be skimmed through to provide key prompts for young people when expressing their views for their EHC plans.

<http://www.gettingalife.org.uk/downloads/2011-Pathways-to-getting-a-life.pdf>

A framework for thinking about transitions into independent living post-16

<http://www.talkingpoint.org.uk/young-people>

Talking Point provides information and resources about communication for professionals, parents and young people. It also links to other information and websites.

<http://viper.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/>

The 'Vipers' are a group of young disabled people from across England who researched disabled young people's participation in decision making. Their aim is to increase opportunities for all children and young people to be involved in decisions.

References

- Alison Clark (2005). 'Ways of Seeing: Using the Mosaic Approach to listen to young children's perspectives'. Chapter in a book called: *Beyond Listening: Children's Perspectives on Early Childhood Services*, by Clark, Kjørholt and Moss (Editors). Bristol: Policy Press, pp29-49.
- Department of Health (2010). *Person-Centred Planning: Advice for using person-centred thinking, planning and reviews in schools and transition*.
- Sue Roulstone and Sharynne McLeod (Eds) (2011). *Listening to Children and Young People with Speech, Language and Communication Needs*. J&R Press.