

### What questions could I ask to seek the views of pupils with SEND in relation the management of issues arising from their SEND?

Schools and services could use the following questions as a starting point to seek the views of the child:

- What is going well for you in school?
- What is not going well for you at school?
- What things do you do to help yourself?
- What would be useful to help you at school?

Responses can be recorded in different formats.

*\*It is important to remember that a pupil with SEND may choose not to share their views with a member of staff\**

### What methods can I use to seek the views of the child with SEND?

Children with SEND have a variety of needs and preferences for communication. They have a right to express their views through a medium of their choice. As well as using traditional surveys and questionnaires, other methods to seek the views of the child may include:

- **Assistive and augmentative communication** - PECS, Makaton, apps, tablet, switches
- **Creative and arts-based** - drawings, photographs, drama, role-play, mind maps, construction of models using Lego,
- **Electronic**—text, email, blog, video diaries, podcasts, recordings on a tablet

### Is there a model of participation that I should use to seek the views of and involve pupils with SEND in making decisions?

In many cases, schools are involving pupils daily in making decisions at all levels within school. Although the Department of Education (2014) has highlighted that there is no single approach to best support the participation of children in making decisions relating to their SEND, the following models may be useful to help schools identify areas of good practice as well as highlighting areas to develop:

- **Hart (1992) Ladder of Participation**

This model looks at the eight level of participation that may exist within the school or service setting, ranging from *non-participation, partial participation through to full participation.*

- **Shier (2001) Pathways to Pupil Participation**

Shier's model encourages schools and services to identify how ready and *open* they are and if they have procedures in place to provide *opportunities* for participation taking into account their *obligations* to meet policy requirements at each level.

- **Lundy (2007) Model of Participation.**

The Lundy model highlights that *space, voice, audience and influence* are the factors which contribute to a pupil's right to participation as understood by Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989).

#### USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.ccea.org.uk](http://www.ccea.org.uk)

[www.childrenslawcentre.org](http://www.childrenslawcentre.org)

[www.nickey.org.uk](http://www.nickey.org.uk)



## Seeking the Views of the Child with Special Educational Needs or a Disability



## A summary guide for schools and services

[www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk)

[cyps-send@eani.org.uk](mailto:cyps-send@eani.org.uk)

## Why do we have to seek the views of children with special educational needs/disabilities?

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 amended the law in relation to special education and disability discrimination in schools by making it compulsory for the views of the pupil with SEND to be sought. To adhere to this duty, the Education Authority and Boards of Governors shall:

- a) so far as reasonably practicable, seek and have regard to the views of that child;
- b) have regard to -
  - I. the importance of that child participating in decisions; and
  - II. the importance of that child being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions.

### Why is this important?

It is important to respond to this duty as early as possible within the child's school career so that they will be better prepared to assume the rights that a parent traditionally held in relation to their child's education, once they are over compulsory school age.

**This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**



## What are the key principles in seeking the views of the child with SEND?

The following principles are helpful for schools and services in seeking the views of the child with SEND:

- Respect;
- Open and honest communication;
- Tolerance of different ideas and opinions;
- Acceptance of individual differences;
- Awareness that pupils with SEND have the right to give their views;
- Active and meaningful involvement of pupils in decision-making;
- Support to enable pupils to participate; and
- Engagement processes are monitored, evaluated, reviewed and feedback is given.

**What are the benefits/challenges for professionals to show “an understanding of the significance of pupil voice to establish an effective learning environment” (GTCNI, 2007 p. 23).**

By understanding the pupil's views, professionals can tailor their lessons/interventions to reflect the pupil's needs. This may help to make the pupil feel valued, included, respected and encourage them to develop a sense of responsibility for their learning. However, sometimes it can be difficult to encourage pupils who are uncomfortable at expressing their views and there may be a lack of resources to make the necessary changes.

## In which aspects of school life should the views of the child with SEND be sought?

Seeking the views of the child and supporting them to make decisions regarding the management of their SEND is a whole-school and EA responsibility. This should be considered as part of normal school practice and service delivery.

It is important that pupils with SEN can have a say in making decisions in school and service delivery about matters that affect them. They will have unique experiences and personal insights not only about the nature and impact of their SEND, but about what could be done to support them. This will enable them to feel better included within the school or service setting and have a greater opportunity to avail of the support provided so that they can reach their potential.

Potential areas to consider seeking the views of the pupil with SEND may include:

- Assemblies
- School council
- Writing the PLP/IEP
- School policies/rules
- Barriers to learning
- Seating arrangements
- Homework
- Asking for help/use of support
- Uniform