

- Use open questions that start with a 'wh' e.g. who, what, where, etc. These usually require more than a yes/no response.
- Use a factual approach e.g. 'lunchtimes—are they good or bad? Doing homework—thumbs up or thumbs down? Mrs Lyon's literacy lesson—red, amber or green?'
- Try the 'wondering' technique e.g. You seem to be really enjoying PE this year. "I wonder if this is because..."
- Deliberately get things wrong e.g. "I think that you'd like to do maths (something they find difficult) everyday ", so they will correct you!

Your child with SEND may not communicate with you by speaking but through facial expressions and gestures.

They may also want to either give or record their own views using a preferred style of communication such as:

- **Assistive and augmentative**—PECS, Makaton, apps, tablet, switches
- **Creative and arts-based**— drawings, photography, drama, role-play, puppets, toys, mind maps, construction of models using Lego or modelling clay
- **Electronic**—text, email, blog, video diaries

Sometimes you may need to record their views over several weeks as they may tell you what they think you want to hear.

What questions could I ask to seek my child's views about school/working with an EA Service?

Some of the following questions may be helpful to get information that you need to represent your child's views to others so that they can get the support that they may require:

- What are you good at/your strengths?
- What are you most proud of?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What things do you not enjoy/find difficult at school/with a service?
- How could things be made better for you at school/working with a service?
- What would you like to do when you grow up?
- How do you feel about your special educational needs, medical condition or disability?

****A child with SEND may choose not to attend meetings/share their views of school with their parent, member of school/EA staff.***

What can I do if either my child or I am unhappy that their views have not been listened to?

- Speak to the class teacher/ SENCo/ principal/ follow the complaints procedure;
- Contact the Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Service (Tel: 028 9072 606); or
- Contact the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (Tel: 028 9072 4847).



Seeking the Views of the Child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities



A Guide for those with Parental Responsibility

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.ccea.org.uk

www.childrenslawcentre.org

www.eani.org.uk

www.niccy.org.uk

Why does the EA and schools have to seek the views of my child who has SEND?

The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the SEND Act) amended the law in relation to special education and disability discrimination in schools.

The Education Authority (EA) and Board of Governors of schools now have a duty to take reasonable steps to seek and listen to the views of the child with SEND. Children also have to be given information and support so that they can participate in making decisions about their SEND.

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.

The SEN Code of Practice recommends that those with parental responsibility are also given information and support to help them make decisions about the management of SEND for their child.

Why is this important?

By understanding a child's views, schools and the EA can set targets and make plans to provide the right support at the right time, so that the child with SEND can reach their full potential.

What role does someone with parental responsibility have to support this duty?

With very young children, the person with parental responsibility often speaks on behalf of the child about their needs and the type of support that would be helpful.

They play a role in encouraging the child as they get older to talk about their ambitions for the future and to support them in gaining the experience to make decisions. This will help them to become more independent and prepare them for becoming an adult.

When might my child's views be sought?

As well as being sought as part of their everyday education, the views of the child are as important to seek as the professional in the following situations:

- Creation of and monitoring targets for their individual education plan.
- Specialist assessments, e.g. by an educational psychologist.
- Transitions e.g. pre-school to nursery, primary to post primary.
- Provision of interventions from EA or health and social care trusts.
- Statutory Assessment/ annual review.

How do I seek the views of my child and record this information?

It is important to let your child know that when they are talking to you about school that you are not making any judgements and that they will not get into trouble for anything they say.

The following ideas may be helpful to ensuring that whatever your child's age or ability is, that they feel safe, comfortable and relaxed in communicating their views to you:

- Choose one of your child's interests to talk about or play with. This can help give you both something to do if it is difficult to have a conversation.
- Explain why you are wanting to know their views e.g. "to help grown-ups understand and support you better." Be honest that sometimes changes that they have asked for cannot be made.
- Try talking to them when you don't have to 'directly' look at each other e.g. when going out for a walk or a drive in the car.
- Dip in and out of the conversation about school e.g. talk about things that they are interested in and don't like. Then ask about what a good school day looks like and why.
- Write down what they say or record it in some way before you forget it. A quote can often sum up how they think or feel.