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Clinical Psychology



## Guidelines for hearing the ‘voice’ of young people with moderate, severe or multiple and profound learning disabilities

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Stream 3 of the wider project: Gathering feedback and measuring outcomes and change with Children and Young People with Learning Disabilities (LD)

*We created some guidelines for hearing the ‘voice’ of young people, based on our learning from the project initiatives and thematic analysis.*

We were interested in hearing about helpful ways to listen to the ‘voice’ of children and young people with moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities. When we say ‘voice’ we mean communication, in whichever form works best for the child or young person.

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**Find more information here:**

<https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/feedback-and-outcome-measures-for-children-and-young-people-with-learning-disabilities/>

### 1. GROUND YOURSELF USING A VALUES BASED APPROACH

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Think about what is important to you and use this to ground yourself and guide what you are doing.

**Some points that might be helpful:**

- All children and young people have the same needs and rights.
- Children and young people, and those closest to them, know themselves the best
- Some children and young people need to learn that they have the right to, and can make choices
- Children and young people have the right to be given the opportunity to influence their own care, for example, express what they like and don't like
- Children and young people with learning disabilities are more likely to experience poor care or their needs not being listened to - they may have some clear ideas about what is helpful and not helpful

### 2. WORK TOGETHER WITH OTHER LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

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Gain energy from working and planning together with young people and the people who care for them.

Look for opportunities to share ideas with colleagues across different agencies, for example, a Health worker might approach a Specialist Educational Setting to co-facilitate a participation group.

### 3. USE LEGAL AND STATUTORY FRAMEWORKS

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Use legal and statutory frameworks to inform planning and also as support when you speak with senior managers about participation.

**These include:**

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Human Rights Act (1998)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Children and Families Act (2014) & SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years
- Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014)
- Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal (ALNET – Wales) Act
- Education Scotland Act 2016 and amendments for those with additional support needs
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (Northern Ireland) 2016

### 4. USE RESOURCES FROM THE HEARING THE VOICE RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONS GRID AND THE GOOD PRACTICE INITIATIVES

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Look around and make use of resources/organisations from our project 'Hearing the Voice Resources and Organisations grid' (twenty) and the eleven Good Practice Initiatives which show inspirational activities with impact across levels.

We know from the workshops that some people and places are already doing much 'Hearing the Voice' across all abilities, whilst others are not yet.

Some of resources and good practice examples include learning about how children and young people have experienced the pandemic and what can assist- something we'll be continuing to learn about.

### 5. PROMOTE INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

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Promote, celebrate and consider diversity and inclusion across age and abilities/disabilities and all the protected characteristics the Equality Act calls us to consider, and both personal and systemic intersectionalities.

Make and take opportunities for recognising and acting on wider issues around stigma, discrimination and racism with children and young people, their families, services and communities. This includes our individual and collective unconscious biases -we may not know what we think we know, and also what we don't know, and how this influences what we attend to, think and do, and how.

Look for opportunities to be creative and flexible to connect with people in un-thought of ways.

### 6. LINK WITH MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURES OF SUPPORT

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Find allies amongst the decision makers who are able to influence what you can and can't do.

Link them directly with children and young people and their families so they can experience the power of hearing their 'voice'.

### 7. ALLOW EXTRA TIME AND RESOURCES

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From the initial planning stages, it is important to factor in the need for extra time and resources in order to:

- Get to know children and young people directly and through the people who know them well
- Use visuals, objects of reference, intensive interaction, creative arts, sensory prompts and other creative ways of setting up a ‘conversation’ as supports for communication
- Promote accessibility and inclusion

Though initially some extra time may be needed, often communication, connections, engaged ‘being and doing’ gets easier, quicker, more fun and effective – leading to ‘virtuous’ circles.

### 8. SETTING UP THE INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP OPPORTUNITIES TO HEAR THE VOICE: THINK ABOUT ‘REGULATE’ AND ‘RELATE’ FROM THE 3 R’S (SEE THEMATIC ANALYSIS)

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**Consider:**

- Spending time getting to know the children and young people and the people who know them well
- The impact of the environment including the building, the room, sensory input and other children, young people and carers
- Routine, structure and consistent messages
- Using visual, practical and sensory supports for communication

### 9. INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP OPPORTUNITIES TO HEAR THE VOICE: THINK ABOUT ‘REASON’ FROM THE 3 R’S (SEE THEMATIC ANALYSIS)

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**Promote confidence and ‘conversation’ skills by:**

- Teaching new skills, for example, looking, listening and turn taking
- Noticing and Celebrating every small step and achievement

Consider the interaction between ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’ within a ‘conversation’ and always look for ways to promote clearer and more attuned connections.

Listen to and act on what the children and young people communicate so they get feedback that they are making a difference.

## 10. RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

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Find ways of developing and evaluating co-produced approaches, resources, processes and services collaboratively with children, young people and their families.

Write about and share what you are doing on social media, in local press, articles and journals and through conferences.

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