

Involving children and young people with SLCN

A toolkit for education settings



Contents

Introduction

- > Background and context p5
- > Participation and the Code of Practice p6
- > What does this toolkit aim to do p7
- > Achieving participation p8
- > What does participation look like? p9
- > Levels of participation p11
- > Challenges with children and young people with speech, language and communication needs p12

Step One

How to enable participation in your setting

- > Enabling *all* children and young people to be involved in decision making p14
- > Checklist related to the Code of Practice to help you review current practice p15

Step Two

Information, ideas and activities for enabling participation

Section 1

We gain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people:

- A** > We actively seek the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people p21
- B (i)** > We look at what the child or young person understands and how they communicate p24
- B(ii)** > We use this to inform our approach p29
- C (i)** > We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs p44
- C(ii)** > We use strategies and approaches that are relevant for the purpose of the consultation p58

Section 2

We enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making:

- A** > We embed choice and decision-making within the child or young person's daily experience p63
- B** > We help children and young people to understand their role in decision-making p70
- C** > We plan and make time to ensure we support effective participation p76
- D** > We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people p79
- E** > We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate to the child's or young person's strengths and needs p44
- F** > We review our approaches to participation, check the level of participation we're achieving and gain feedback from children and young people on how well they feel it works p87
- G** > We actively involve children and young people in transition planning p90

Section 3

We help children and young people to achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes

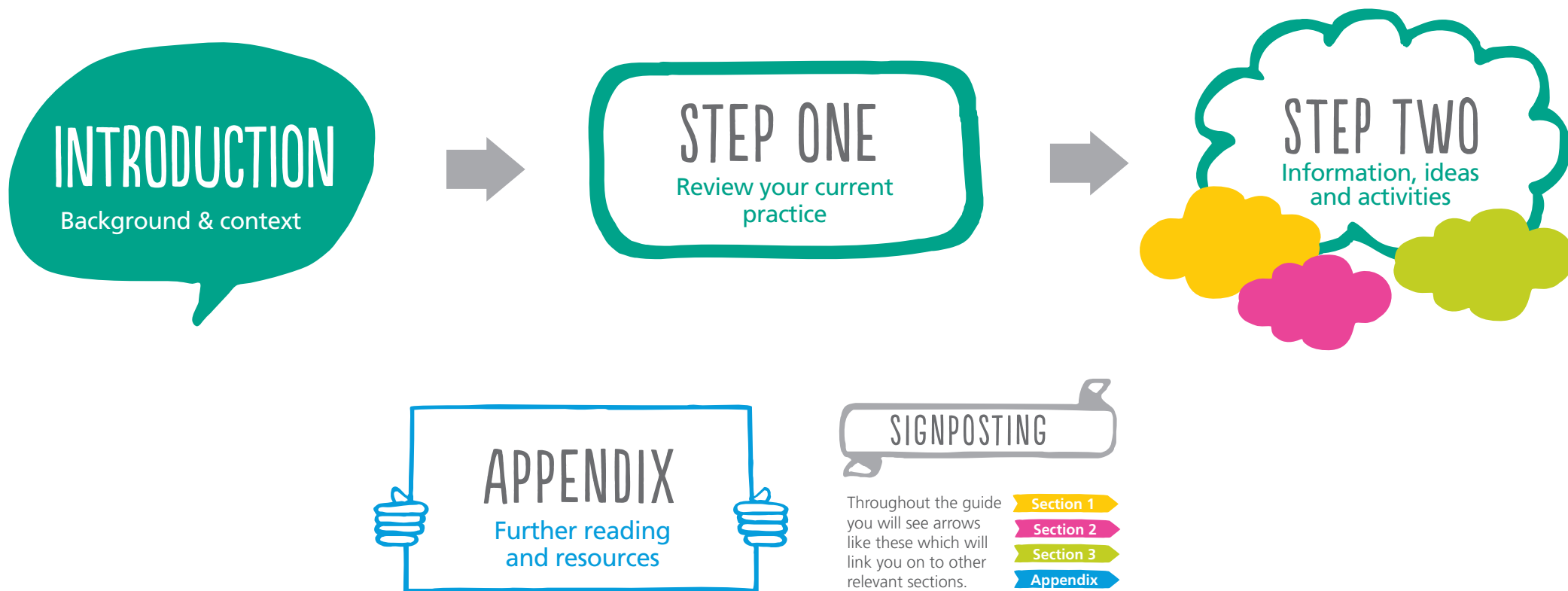
- A** > We're able to develop relevant outcomes which are meaningful to children and young people p95
- B** > We aim for a shared understanding of a child or young person and how to support them best p104

Appendix

Appendix - Where to go for further reading and more information

- > Guidance produced for the reformed SEND system p112
- > Guidance predating the reformed SEND system p113
- > More particularly for practitioners and families involved with children and young people with SLCN and also complex needs p114

How to use this toolkit



INTRODUCTION



Background and context

The children's workforce, as part of the 2014 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms, now has a statutory duty to find out from children and young people with SEND:

- what are their views, wishes, feelings, interests and aspirations
- what outcomes or goals they want to achieve
- what support they need to do this.

This new emphasis on participation represents a cultural, as well as practical shift, and poses some particular challenges for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). This toolkit aims to support and further develop practice in this crucial area for children and young people with SLCN.

SLCN is an umbrella term; it applies to children or young people who have difficulty with one or more aspects of speech, language and communication. These difficulties could be:

- as a primary need (a Specific Language Impairment/Language Learning Impairment (SLI/LLI)) in the absence of any other difficulties
- as part of another condition such as autism, learning difficulties, deafness or cerebral palsy.

Some SLCN will be long-term and persistent; others may be less so. It is estimated that around 10% of children have long-term, persistent SLCN; many more children have delayed speech, language and communication development.

In 2015, The Communication Trust developed '[Communicating the Code](#)' which set out a number of key issues, strategies and useful sources of further information in relation to the 2014 SEND reforms for people working with children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). This is a useful starting point for considering SLCN in relation to the Code of Practice.

This toolkit builds on [Communicating the Code](#) and offers additional practical ideas and resources, specifically around supporting the effective participation of children and young people with SLCN.

Participation and the Code of Practice

- **It has now become law:**

“that local authorities, in carrying out their functions under the Act in relation to disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs (SEN), **must** have regard to:

- the views , wishes and feelings of the child or young person and the child’s parents
- the importance of the child or young person, and the child’s parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in these decisions.”¹

- Local authorities (and therefore schools, nurseries and colleges) must provide accessible information on choices and rights to children and young people.²
- However a young person with SEND receives their support (with or without an Education and Health Care plan in place), **they must be closely involved in deciding what support they need and the outcomes or goals they want to achieve.** Post 16 years, the young person can make their own decisions independent of the family if they so wish.
- From 0-25 years, **the child’s or young person’s interests, strengths and motivations should form the basis for setting meaningful targets and outcomes with them.** Settings should focus on the goals the young person wants to achieve, and look at supporting them to reach these goals.

In practice, there can be challenges for practitioners:

- How do we ensure that we hear what children and young people with SLCN have to say?
- How can we ensure children and young people with SLCN know what their choices are?
- How do we find out what their aspirations are, in order to help them to achieve these?

1. SEND Code of Practice section 8:17

2. SEND Code of Practice Section 1:9

What does this toolkit aim to do?

This toolkit aims to provide practitioners with:

- practical ideas, resources and strategies to support effective involvement of children and young people with SLCN, as set out in the Code of Practice
- insight into the wider context: looking at whole setting structures, systems and approaches to support effective involvement
- further signposting to a wide range of resources and information to support participation and involvement.

This toolkit is relevant for practitioners working with children and young people who require SEN support or who have education and health care (EHC) plans:

- who have SLCN as their primary need
- whose SLCN may be part of, or sit alongside, other SEND.

This toolkit is best used as an interactive online resource.

You can use the checklist in this toolkit to review your practice and work out which information would be most useful for you or your setting. The links within the review checklist, and the rest of the toolkit, allow you to click straight to the section containing the information you need.

You can print out the information you need and the handy A3 version of the review checklist, to allow you to review your practice at various points in time to see how practice is changing in your setting.

It is important to regularly evaluate your practice to be able to identify the positive impacts of your approaches to improving participation, and also any areas which would benefit from further development.

Achieving participation

The Code of Practice is clear. Effective participation happens when:

- it is recognised, valued, planned and resourced
- it is evident at all stages in the planning, delivery and monitoring of services
- there are clearly described roles for children and young people, and parents
- there are strong feedback mechanisms to ensure that children and young people, and parents understand the impact their participation is making.³

Therefore, participation should be part of ongoing conversations. To be truly meaningful, and inclusive, it needs to become embedded in an organisation's structure. This means challenging attitudinal barriers ("he can't tell us what he wants, so there's no point asking"), building in processes and really reflecting on how we enable all children and young people to participate in saying what is important to them.

It also means acting upon what they say, and using their views as a strong vehicle for change. In this way, the Code of Practice is very clear that finding out children and young people's views needs to go beyond personal goal-setting and go towards:

- exploring experiences of school and/or services
- developing ideas for improvements
- monitoring standards
- evaluating results and assessing the impact of services.⁴

So, as well as specific strategies in working with children and young people with SLCN, this resource has a focus on the setting itself and what it can do to enable more effective participation.

3. SEND Code of Practice Section 1:12

4. Roulstone, S. (2015). *Seeking children's perspectives: Responding to the SEND challenge*, NAPLIC Conference & AGM

What does participation look like?

Effective participation requires us to listen to children and young people.

Listening means paying attention in order to hear what is said. It means supporting children and young people to express themselves through a variety of situations and activities within which they are comfortable and at ease. It involves extracting meaning from the exchange that accurately reflects the child or young person's views. It means being non-judgemental and open-minded. It does not necessarily lead to action however.

Consultation goes one step further. It is listening with a particular purpose, looking for ways of "seeking the views of children as a guide to action."⁵

Participation goes one step further still: it "means giving children a say in their education, listening to them and involving them as much as possible in school life. It means valuing their opinions and ideas and giving them control of their learning."⁶ In this way "Participation is a process not an event" and empowerment is the outcome.⁷

EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION



5. Borland et al (2001). *Improving consultation with children in Relevant Aspects of Policy Making and Legislation in Scotland*. Edinburgh, Scottish Parliament

6. Participation works: <http://www.participationworks.org.uk/topics/education/>

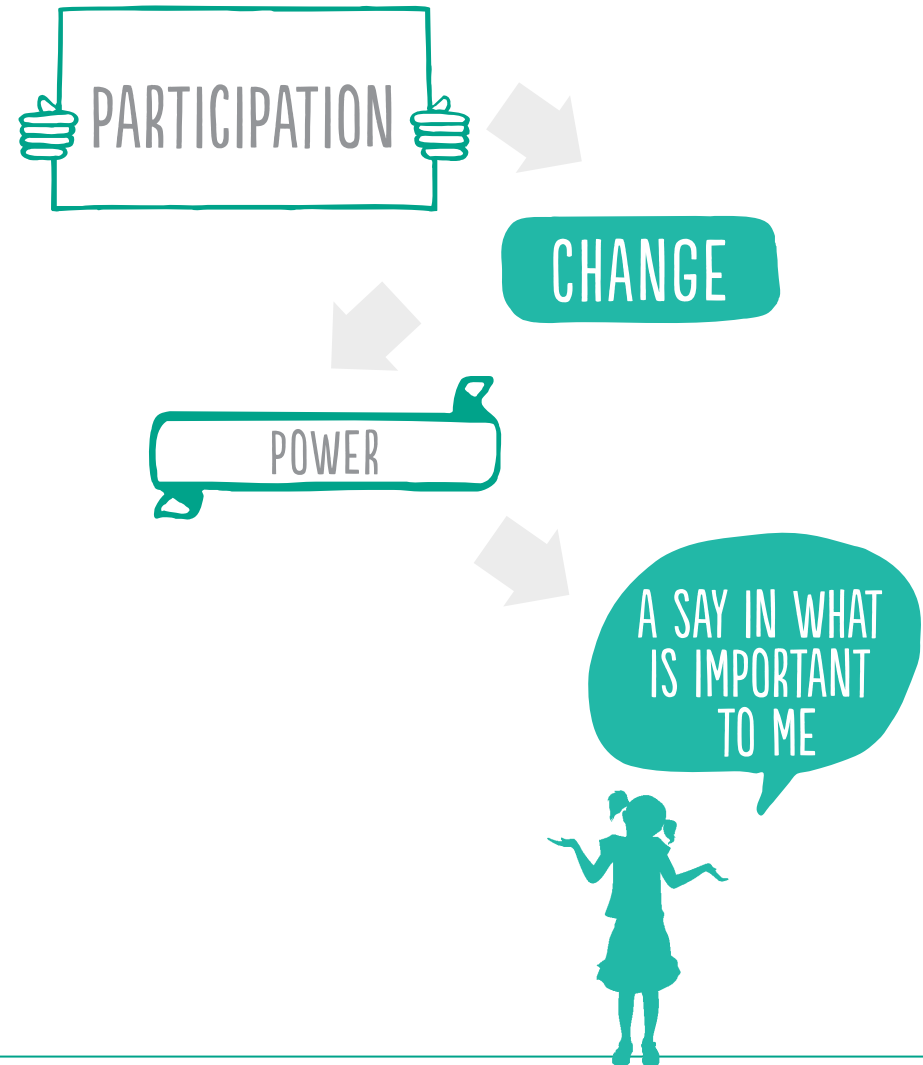
7. Save the Children: [https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Putting_Children_at_the_Centre_final_\(2\)_1.pdf](https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Putting_Children_at_the_Centre_final_(2)_1.pdf)

What does participation look like?

Participation is about **change** – and so can be threatening to systems and institutions. It is about sharing power with children and young people to give them more control and say about what is important in their lives.

Consultation and participation are about being child-centred and listening actively to what children and young people say. Of course – this does not mean they will always get what they want, but it does mean your organisation is taking its statutory responsibilities seriously to listen to what is said, take on board issues raised, and be responsive to their needs, interests and wishes. It is also important to listen to what children and young people *don't* say – that can also tell us a lot.

Working in this way also gives young people the opportunity to explore value systems and learn things from others' viewpoints. It demonstrates their right to be included, and helps young people to see themselves as part of a community.



Levels of participation

There are levels of participation depending on the decision to be made and how much of a say children and young people actually do have at the time.⁸



So participation will vary and should vary from activity to activity. It should also be noted that individuals vary in preferences for different levels of involvement: not every child is keen to be on the school council, or to attend the annual review. Past experience also plays a part⁹: asking opinions and then not acting upon them in any way is tokenism and ultimately disempowering, and may discourage future decision-making.

8. Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from tokenism to citizenship [online]*, Unicef, p8. Retrieved 19 February 2016, from: http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf

9. Roulstone, S et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

Challenges associated with ensuring children and young people with SLCN can participate effectively

Listening to the views of children with SLCN can be a very complex process, since the very nature of their difficulties makes it harder for them to express their views. In fact, communication difficulties are frequently given as the reason why disabled children are not consulted.¹⁰

However challenging, though *“the question is not whether disabled children or young people can participate, but rather how we as professionals ensure that it happens.”*¹¹

[Communicating the Code](#) considers in more detail the issues and challenges for children and young people with SLCN, and we would recommend looking at this resource for useful information.

As a school or a setting, it's important to consider how children and young people are enabled to participate as part of the wider school context. Participation needs to be embedded in whole school systems, and to benefit all pupils, not just those identified as having SLCN. Elements to support this include:

- Whole school commitment to participation, with key elements of decision-making embedded in everyday practice – how is the pupil voice considered and reflected across the whole school?
- A planned approach – what processes and systems are in place to ensure that pupils are encouraged to participate?

- Ensuring staff are able to develop an understanding and practice to support participation; that staff have positive attitudes towards participation – how is professional development supported to allow staff to enable pupils to participate? How do staff attitudes ensure that pupils are empowered to participate?
- There is time available – is participation valued highly enough, with adequate time allocated to allow it to happen effectively?
- Understanding the role of the family in participation and decision-making – how are the views of the pupils' families included, listened to and reflected in decision-making?

¹⁰ Participation Works: www.participationworks.org.uk

¹¹ Dickins, M. (2011). *Listening to Young Disabled Children* [a PDF]. Retrieved 19 February, from: http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/74024/listening_to_young_disabled_children.pdf

STEP ONE

How to enable participation in your setting:

A checklist related to the Code of Practice to help you review current practice



Enabling all children and young people to be involved in decision-making

For participation to work on an individual level, all pupils need to understand about participation; their right to express a view and be heard, and the right for others to be listened to as well. It is only when pupils have these expectations that participation will work.

All children and young people are individuals so there is no one way to go about achieving effective participation. The approach should vary according to the child or young person's age, developmental level, culture, level of understanding, experience and their ways of telling us about things.

A useful starting point is to reflect on how children and young people are involved in decision-making. You may find it useful to review your current practice and rate it in terms of **Red**, **Amber** and **Green** to identify key areas of good practice and areas for development. We have suggested some key areas to consider, based on the requirements of the Code of Practice.

Using this structure, you can then find ideas, resources and activities which should support your practice further.

Each key area signposts directly to further information, ideas and activities. Just follow the links on the review checklist to information which should support your practice further.

What does the Code of Practice say?

Section 1: We gain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

What might this include?		What do we already do?	RAG rate			Find out more – what would help us to do this?
			Red	Yellow	Green	
A	We actively seek the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people					Read Section 1 > A
B	We (i) look at what the child or young person understands and how they communicate					Read Section 1 > B (i)
	and (ii) use this to inform our approach					Read Section 1 > B (ii)
C	We use strategies and approaches that are (i) appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs					Read Section 1 > C (i) / 2 > E
	and (ii) relevant for the purpose of consultation					Read Section 1 > C (ii)



What does the Code of Practice say?

Section 2: We enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making

What might this include?	What do we already do?	RAG rate			Find out more – what would help us to do this?
		Red	Yellow	Green	
A We embed choice and decision-making within the child or young person’s daily experience					Read Section 2 > A
B We help children and young people to understand their role in decision-making					Read Section 2 > B
C We plan and make time to ensure we support effective participation					Read Section 2 > C
D We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people					Read Section 2 > D
E We use strategies and approaches appropriate to the child or young person’s strengths and needs					Read Section 1 > C (i) / 2 > E
F We review our approaches to participation, check the level of participation we’re achieving and gain feedback from children and young people on how well they feel it works					Read Section 2 > F
G We actively involve children and young people in transition planning					Read Section 2 > G

What does the Code of Practice say?

Section 3: We help a child or young person achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes

What might this include?		What do we already do?	RAG rate			Find out more – what would help us to do this?
			Red	Yellow	Green	
A	We're able to develop relevant outcomes which are meaningful to children and young people					 Read Section 3 > A
B	We aim for a shared understanding of a child or young person and how to support them best					 Read Section 3 > B

This A3 version of the checklist can be printed out and filled in. You could put a copy up around your office to remind you about participation practice, or complete the checklist at various points in time to see how your practice is changing.

What does the Code of Practice say?

Section 1: We gain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

What might this include?	What do we already do?	RAG rate			Find out more – what would help us to do this?
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Section 2: We enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making

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D We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people					Read Section 2 > D
E We use strategies and approaches appropriate to the child or young person's strengths and needs					Read Section 1 > C (i) / 2 > E
F We review our approaches to participation, check the level of participation we're achieving and gain feedback from children and young people on how well they feel it works					Read Section 2 > F
G We actively involve children and young people in transition planning					Read Section 2 > G

Section 3: We help a child or young person achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes

What might this include?	What do we already do?	RAG rate			Find out more – what would help us to do this?
		Red	Yellow	Green	
A We're able to develop relevant outcomes which are meaningful to children and young people					Read Section 3 > A
B We aim for a shared understanding of a child or young person and how to support them best					Read Section 3 > B

STEP TWO

Information, ideas and activities
for enabling participation



STEP TWO

Section 1

How do we gain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people?



STEP TWO

Section 1A

How do we gain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people?

We actively seek the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

1A We actively seek the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

The Code of Practice is clear on the requirement to gain the **views, wishes and feelings** of children and young people.

Consultation and participation are about being child-centred and listening actively to what children and young people say. Of course, this does not mean they will always get what they want, but it is essential that they are actively involved. This requires first and foremost the assumption from adults that participation is possible for all children and young people, and is necessary.

However, there may be challenges in gaining the views and hearing the wishes and feelings of children and young people with SLCN, and it is likely to require us to adapt what we do. There is more information about these challenges in [Communicating the Code](#).

For all children and young people with SLCN, there are some useful principles, whatever their level of need.

It is important to:

- know the child well
- consider what, and how best, they understand
- think about how the child communicates
- consider what behaviours may also be ways of showing views, wishes and feelings.

It's useful to reflect on what you are already doing to gain the views of children and young people.

For example

- what systems do you already have in place?
- how well do these work?
- are there other ideas you could introduce?
- what mechanisms are there for children to be able to make complaints or raise concerns?

There are a number of strategies and approaches we can use to gain the views of children; see **Section 1C(i)** for more information.

We actively seek the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people

Do you have whole school systems already in place? Are there any other ideas you could introduce? Are the children and young people you work with able to make complaints or raise concerns?

For example, school councils are used as a mechanism by many schools to ascertain pupils' views. Research findings¹ however point to children and young people with SLCN often choosing not to become involved in such activities, or not being chosen to take part. So when looking at what your setting is currently doing to ask children and young people their views, it would be worthwhile mapping out which pupils have been involved in decision-making, and which have so far played no part.

From this you could consider how to more effectively engage with the latter group. Choosing activities over meetings is often more enticing to pupils with SLCN. It is also important to build up skills in decision-making through ongoing everyday involvement. See [Section 2A](#)

It is also likely that there are specific times in the school year when the views of children and young people with SLCN are particularly sought, for example in the run up to annual reviews. It would be a useful exercise to identify the range of decisions of relevance for children and young people with SLCN in your setting across the school year.

This should not be only in relation to SEND processes; decisions of relevance might also relate to their input in designing accessible materials and resources, for example. Once you consider what decisions are particularly pertinent to this population, you are in a good position to plan how to involve them.

It is good practice to inform children and young people at the start of any participation process what their impact is likely to be, so that their expectations of change are realistic. It is also important to gather their views following any changes made, to see if they found these effective. See [Section 2F](#) for information on doing this.

1. Roulstone, S. et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

STEP TWO

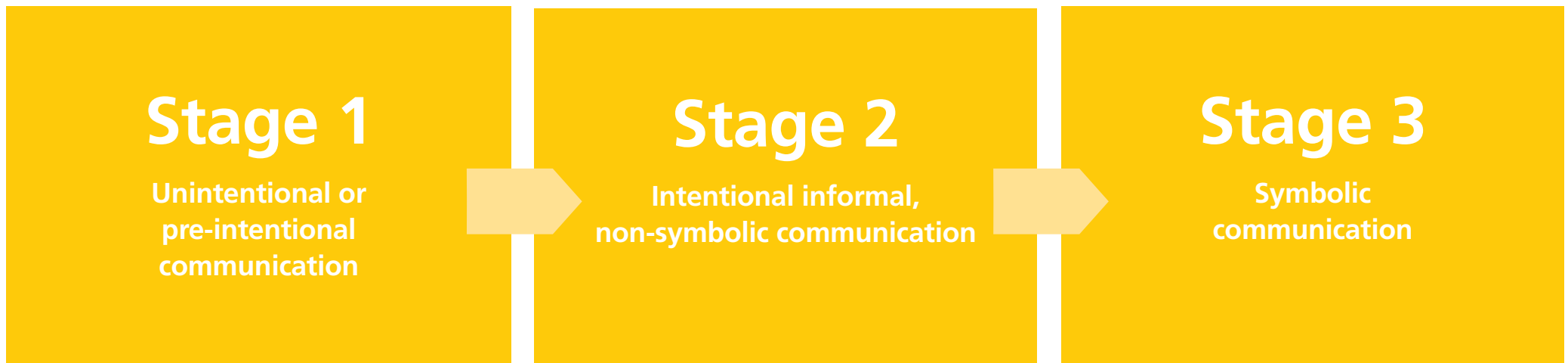
Section 1B(i)

How do we gain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people?

We look at what the child or young person understands and how they communicate

1B(i) We look at what the child or young person understands and how they communicate

We can think about the development of communication as a continuum. Ways of engaging with the child or young person will be different according to where on this continuum they currently are¹:



1. Bates et al. (1976). *From gesture to first word*. in: Lewis, M. & Rosenblum, L. *Origins of Behavior*. New York: Wiley. 1976.

Stage 1

Unintentional or
pre-intentional
communication



This could also be thought of as **“I’m not meaning to tell you”** and describes early, mostly reflexive behaviour.

The child or young person responds to something within or outside of their body, using their body and/or voice.

The adults interpret these responses as meaningful and respond appropriately, e.g. a child cries, and her carer says “oh you’re hungry”.

The child or young person at this stage is not aware that their behaviours act as signals for others.

Stage 2

Intentional informal,
non-symbolic communication



This could also be thought of as **“I am meaning to tell you but I don’t have a system yet”**.

It describes a slightly later stage developmentally when the child or young person realises that certain behaviours direct the attention and actions of others.

They now intentionally use non-verbal means (such as gestures, sounds, pointing) for others’ attention and to request things they can see.

At this stage, the child or young person may also be interested in visual symbols, like photos and pictures.

For example:

- I point at my drink and look at you, and say “uh...uh...uh”.
- I wave bye every day as I leave the classroom.
- I look at you and smile.
- I reach for the object I want to play with or explore.
- I like knocking things down so that you go and get them!
- I go and get my favourite book for you to look at with me.

Stage 3

Symbolic communication



This could be thought of as **“I have a system to communicate”**.

This is the stage when conventional, symbolic forms emerge – so the child or young person starts to use words in speech, or to use other alternative systems such as signing, or symbols to communicate - and from this point language starts to develop in complexity, in terms of words used and grammatical rules applied.

Once you have identified the stage your child or young person is at, see [Section 1B\(ii\)](#) for ideas on how this will inform your approach.

Stage 3 applies to all the following:

- I use my symbol book to show you the symbol for “drink” (I’m asking for one.)
- I sign “more” to ask you to sing that again.
- I am putting more and more words together, but not always in the right order, e.g. “I want going now”, “broke glasses, fall down”.
- I can say long sentences, but sometimes can’t find the word I want: “so he went to the thingy, and found bought a, what do you call it? For fishing, long thing.”.
- I have good language skills but sometimes my words get stuck coming out, especially if I’m feeling worried or under pressure.

STEP TWO

Section 1 B(ii)

How do we gain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people?

We use our knowledge to inform our approach

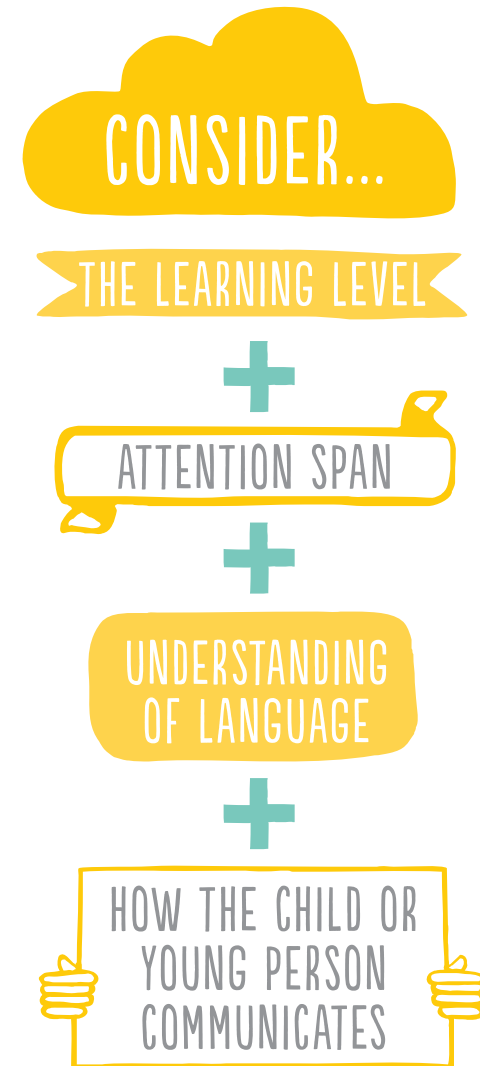
1B(ii) We use our knowledge to inform our approach

Children and young people can only be meaningfully involved if they understand what is being asked and have a means of expression that others understand.

This means for children and young people with SLCN we need to tailor our approach to the individual. We need to consider the learning level, attention span, understanding of language and how the child or young person communicates their message. This is likely to lead to creative and less formalised approaches.

Here we have divided up the information depending on the stage of communication the child or young person is at.

For more information on the stages of communication see [Section 1B\(i\)](#)



Gaining the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people communicating at: **Stage 1 - "I'm not meaning to tell you"**

"There needs to be a presumption that every human being is communicating all the time and that this communication will include preferences. Preferences can be built up into expressions of choice and these into formal decisions. So what is important is the amount and type of support...to build preferences into choices."¹



In working with children and young people who are communicating at this level, some basic assumptions are essential:

- That all human beings communicate all the time.
- Everyone responds to experiences. These responses can become clear preferences with support.
- These choices and preferences are the foundation of decision-making.
- Every person uses support networks in making decisions that are difficult for them.
- If a child or young person's choices or preferences lead to action, this means they have some control over their own life.²

So, for children and young people without any formal communication system as yet, it is important to build up a clear idea over time of what motivates them, and what their preferences are.

1. Beamer, S. (2001). *Making decision – best practice and new ideas for supporting people with high support needs to make decisions*, Values into Action, London

2. Watson, J. (2005). *A supported model of decision-making*, Scope, p4

Gaining their views (Stage 1)



Observe the child or young person in different settings, with different people, presented with different experiences and look at their reactions. It might be that the child remains very still when a familiar song is playing; or looks towards one object when two are presented.

Document the behaviour you observe, then consider how you interpret this. Is it a preference? Is it a new experience that the child is still unsure of? If the child pushes something away, is this to reject it, or because it's unknown?

Reflect individually, as a staff team and with parents to see if you are all interpreting behaviours in the same way.

Gaining their views (Stage 1)

Ongoing discussions are good practice, and should involve all the people who know the child or young person really well.

Think about the pupil's "story" when you're looking to understand their responses: we all make choices based on past experience, how we felt and how we interpreted what happened (e.g. I felt ill after eating a sausage roll, so I won't eat them again).

So, in considering what children and young people like and dislike as a means to develop their ability to make choices, it is important to know any background or history which may influence how they respond.

You could use this information towards compiling a "communication passport" or "all about me" booklet. See [Section 1C\(i\)](#) and [Section 3B](#) for more information on how to develop these resources.


Name	Photo
The things people like and admire about me: <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ I am polite★ I am good at dancing★ I make people laugh★ I work very hard	What makes me happy <ul style="list-style-type: none">Telling jokesDrawing and paintingDancingWatching Frozen 
How I like to be supported <ul style="list-style-type: none">I like to know that I am doing wellTell me clearly what I need to do and check I understandHelp me to learn new words	

Figure 1. Example of a communication passport

Gaining the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people communicating at: **Stage 2 - “I am meaning to tell you but I don’t have a system yet”**

At this stage, the child or young person has learnt that what he or she does creates a response in the environment, so when they point at the cup, they get a drink; if they throw an object, something happens (it could be shouting or someone moving to get the item).

This can be a transition stage to a more formal system of communication, but it is a layer that underpins later skills and one that many children and young people may revert to if anxious or emotionally overwhelmed, such as the child who pushes others out of frustration or for a predictable response.

For children communicating at stage 2:

- Communication is intentional.
- Some simple spoken language is understood.
- Line drawings and symbols that look like what they represent may be understood.



Gaining their views (Stage 2)

It's important to know me well.

How do I communicate?

It is likely to be in lots of different ways. I may:

- pull you to what I want
- point
- push things away
- shake/nod my head, wave
- look at what I want
- reach out for things I want
- show that I recognise familiar people
- initiate games we both know/songs we sing
- use sounds that are recognisable as words in context, such as "b..b.." when we are playing with a ball.

Record what you see. You could fill in a simple table, like the one on the next page, as a staff team and with parents. This will enable a shared understanding of a child or young person, and show if everyone is interpreting behaviour in the same way.

What do I understand?

- I'm likely to be learning language through familiar routines, but I may not understand the words at other times.
- I may understand pictures, so long as they are of things (such as everyday objects) or people I recognise.
- I will need teaching in a meaningful context to understand more abstract pictures such as a picture for "more", or "stop".
- I may appear to understand far more words than I actually do because I am using everything around me to understand. So I may figure out what you are saying because you always say "dinner" when the food appears.
- I watch where you are looking and what everyone is doing, to help me to understand.

Detailed observation is needed here to help establish what a child or young person is understanding.

What does my behaviour tell you?

We need to look at the whole child or young person and see behaviour as meaningful:

- It's important to draw deductions from the behaviour you see.
- Always check that others, including parents and colleagues, agree with your interpretation of a pupil's behaviour. If there's disagreement, try and resolve this through observing the child, making notes and discussing with others.
- Remember, even if a child is not talking, their behaviour can tell us a lot, or be a starting-point for discussion and reflection about what it could mean.

How I communicate	This is what I do
When I want something out of reach I...	(E.g. point/ take you to it)
When I don't want something I...	(E.g. push it away/ turn away)
When I see my friend or family I...	(E.g. smile, wave, run over)
When something is taken away from me I...	(E.g. scream, cry, drop to the floor)
When I want more of something I...	(E.g. say "uh uh"/ point at it and look)



Sue is 15 years old, has autism and is non-verbal. Recently she has been trying to escape school whenever there is any opportunity, which is clearly problematic for the school. She has a new key worker.

What could her actions be telling the school?

Could there be other conclusions?



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Max is 5 years old and has Down's syndrome. He attends his local primary school 2 days a week, and a special school (1 hour away by bus) 3 days a week.

Every day he rushes to put on the jumper for his local primary school, and resists putting on the jumper for the other school on those days.

At his annual review, the head teacher of the special school says that Max is unable to express his preference for whether he would like to continue with his local primary school for another year.

What do you think?



Gaining the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people communicating at: **Stage 3 - "I have a communication system"**

By this stage more formal systems of communication are being used by the child or young person, whether it is through speech, symbol systems (communication aid or book) or signing. This means they may be able to talk about things outside of the here and now.

This stage covers a huge range of communication ability, and it is at this stage that children and young people are able to actively participate (with the right support) in individual or group consultations towards outcome setting or deciding on the support they require.



Gaining their views (Stage 3)

Ensure you know:

How do I communicate?

This may be in lots of different ways. I may:

- use speech
- use sign
- use gesture (e.g. pointing, using my hands to act out messages)
- use picture-based systems (a book/board/symbols)
- use a communication aid.

And I may well use a mixture of the above!

When gaining the views of children and young people at this stage, it is important to know how they communicate and to ensure this method is always available to them.

What do I understand?

- This may vary from understanding simple everyday language through to understanding very complex sentences and instructions.

If available, use speech and language therapy reports to help identify what the child can understand, so that you know where to pitch your language.

Gather information about any gaps in understanding currently. For example, negatives can be hard for some children to understand, and could therefore make it difficult for a child to identify what they “don’t” like, if this is something you are exploring with them.

Participation activities often involve asking questions of children and young people, and trying to find out their views, wishes and feelings; be aware of questions that may be too complex for the child or young person to understand.



Sam is 15 and has autism. He can understand well and use complex sentences. When he feels anxious though, he finds it more difficult to understand others and to remember information. Writing key points down for him at these times really helps.



Sophie is 12. At the moment she uses her communication book to set the context with whoever she is talking to (e.g. she points at the picture “Christmas”) and then uses speech and Makaton/gesture to give more information (she says and signs “dad” and “house” to talk about what will happen on Christmas day).



Gaining their views (Stage 3)

The understanding of question words follows a developmental sequence in line with the development of language and thinking skills.

The table on the next page may be useful in thinking about what a child or young person whose language development is below 5 years may be able to understand.

This is a very basic summary of language development, and simplifies the complex language profile with which children with SLCN often present.

It does illustrate however, how different question types are understood at different ages and how abstract thinking develops alongside and is supported by language skills.

Therefore, for children and young people with difficulty understanding and using language, there will be knock-on effects with the development of more abstract thinking and this may be problematic when we want to capture their future aspirations.

Use the information to inform your thinking about what stage the child or young person is functioning at developmentally. This gives an idea of what level to pitch your language, and also the types of activities that may be suitable.

Recent research with children and young people with SLCN emphasises their preference to engage in dynamic activities as a way of finding out their views.³ Go to [Section 1C\(i\)](#) for ideas on methods you could use.

3. Roulstone et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

Developmental Age	Understanding	Speaking	Content of language possible/play
2 years	<p>Able to understand simple questions and instructions, e.g. "where's baby?", "go get your coat".</p> <p>Can understand between 200 and 500 words.</p>	<p>Using 50 or more single words, e.g. "juice", "biscuit" and starting to put simple sentences together, e.g. "who that?".</p> <p>Speech sounds developing but not all in place until approximately a developmental age of 5 years.</p>	<p>Can talk about here and now. Likely to find it difficult to be directed by an adult.</p> <p>Enjoy pretend play with toys, e.g. feeding dolly or pretending to drive a car.</p>
3 years	<p>Can understand longer instructions, e.g. "put on your coat and get your bag".</p> <p>Understands simple "who?", "what?", "where?" questions.</p>	<p>Now using simple sentences of up to 4 or 5 words.</p> <p>Can use up to 300 words.</p> <p>Can refer to something that has happened in the past.</p> <p>Can ask lots of questions.</p> <p>Able to have a proper conversation, although may be difficult to follow a train of thought.</p>	<p>Still very much a concrete thinker – here and now.</p> <p>Not yet able to use language to reason or predict.</p> <p>Playing more complex imaginative games.</p>
4 years	<p>Understands simple "why?" questions, e.g. "why is the boy sad?".</p> <p>Understanding longer sentences, and more of what people say.</p>	<p>Using more complex sentences and past tense, e.g. "I hurt myself", linking sentences together "I had pizza for tea and then I played in the garden."</p>	<p>Beginning to use language to plan and organise themselves, e.g. "you be the mummy, I'm the daddy".</p> <p>Can describe events that have already happened.</p> <p>Interested in make believe play – imaginations are developing.</p>
5 years	<p>Understands "how?" and "why?" questions, e.g. "how did your coat get so muddy?".</p> <p>Understanding more complex and abstract language such as "first", "last", "might", "maybe".</p> <p>Beginning to understand the idea of time.</p> <p>Can listen whilst doing something else.</p>	<p>Using talk now to help in working out problems, and to organise thinking and activities.</p> <p>Able to talk about near future plans, e.g. "I'm going to grandma's house today".</p> <p>Can answer questions requiring some reasoning.</p>	<p>Beginning of more abstract thinking – e.g. being able to use language to support thinking beyond what they can directly perceive, and to make basic predictions. This process continues throughout primary and secondary years.</p> <p>Use talk to take on different roles in imaginative play, to interact and negotiate with others.</p>

Gaining the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people communicating at: **Stage 3 - Considering specific needs**

A child or young person who signs or uses alternative or augmentative communication (AAC)

- It demonstrates to the child or young person that you value their communication system if you use it too. So if a child uses sign, you should also use sign when talking with them, and be familiar with the signs they use.
- If a child uses symbols, then ensure they have their communication system available, and that you have symbols to support what you are saying too.
- If a child uses a high-tech communication aid (sometimes called a voice-output communication aid or VOCA) make sure they have the vocabulary available for different options. It's important they know how to access this and how to use it. You may need to teach the child or young person firstly what the vocabulary means, where it is stored on a device or system and practise using it many times before having conversations that feed into outcome-setting.



Gaining the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people communicating at: **Stage 3 - Considering specific needs**

A child or young person with autism

It is important to take into account whether the child or young person has associated learning difficulties, but in addition to thinking about this, consider:

- **Personal space** – what is comfortable for the child or young person? It may be that you need to maintain more space between you.
- **Eye-contact** – direct eye-contact may feel very uncomfortable for the child or young person.
- **Tone of voice** – try to talk gently and calmly.
- **Use literal language** – avoid sarcasm or turns of phrase.
- **Give processing time** – count to 10 in your head and don't fill silences.
- Use **visual supports** – even if the child or young person is verbal.
- Find out about **sensory needs** – you may need to reduce background noise/bright lights/distractions (such as displays or objects).
- **Structure** – the child or young person may find it easier to participate if the session has a structure with defined activities, and a clear beginning and end (perhaps using a clock, sand timer or countdown).
- Children and young people with autism often need help in **generalising skills**, and so should have practice making choices and decisions in a range of settings and situations in order to be included meaningfully.
- A “**communication passport**” or profile is often very useful in letting others know about any anxieties or situations that can be difficult, and also what motivates the child and what calming strategies they have. For more information about “communication passports” see [Section 1C\(i\)](#) and [Section 3B](#)

Gaining the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people communicating at: **Stage 3 - Considering specific needs**

A child or young person with unclear speech

If you are unsure what the child or young person is saying, let them know it's alright and you will try and work it out together:

- Try to keep the context known to both of you.
- Talk around an activity you are doing there and then.
- Try to narrow down what it is the child or young person might be talking about and therefore make it easier to work out.
- Ask them to say it again.
- Apologise – “sorry, I didn’t hear” .
- Give them other strategies – “can you use another word”/“can you show me” / “can you draw me a picture” .
- Use pictures or symbols to support what is said.
- If all fails, don’t pretend you have understood if you haven’t – apologise and move on - “Sorry, I can’t understand that word, tell me about X instead.” .
- Make sure though, that you give them lots of time to answer.

STEP TWO

Section 1 C (i)

How do we gain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people?

We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

1C(i) We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

What works for one child or young person, won't necessarily work for another. Additionally, even an approach which has previously been useful for a child or young person may no longer be appropriate or fit the purpose for your consultation.

It's important therefore to use different approaches and materials to capture what the child or young person has to say. This may need some creativity, and should be accessible and enjoyable.

All children are different and will respond to opportunities for talking in different ways. Some like structure; others will find more play or activity centred approaches easier.



We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Overview

- It's often a good idea to **tell the child or young person before you meet what you will be talking about**, so that they have time to think about what they want to say.
- **Tailor your activity or approach** if you're consulting for a specific purpose to find out specific information.
- It is a good idea to use **photos** or **prompts** that the child or young person would recognise to cue them in to what you are talking about. So if you are talking about their targets then bring their workbook with them in; if you are talking about the classroom, take photos beforehand, or talk to them at a quiet time in the classroom.
- You could **frame conversations around an activity** as a way to take the pressure off the child or young person for example, drawing, playing, or doing jigsaws – preferably something well within their ability so that it doesn't demand too much from them.
- **Think ahead** around what may come up in terms of vocabulary items, pre-teach vocabulary and choose symbols and pictures to support their understanding. It can be difficult for a child or young person with language and learning difficulties to come up with ideas by themselves. This requires imagination, experiences and also a good vocabulary, and so considering potential vocabulary beforehand is very helpful.
- **Let children and young people lead the process** as much as possible, and decide what is important to them. This makes it a more equal relationship between adults and children.
- **Be ready to adapt or add to resources** as you go along, as you can't predict what may come up. For example, if you are using pictures, then take more paper and pens along so that you can draw other ideas that come up. Keep it flexible.
- **Try to have a permanent record** of what was said - take a photo of the end product for example.
- **Rehearsal may be a good strategy for some pupils** – so do the activity a few times over.
- **Be aware of the group** if you are looking to find out individual views. Often children and young people will go along with what the others have said in a group situation.

We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Art based methods

These are very often effective with children and young people with SLCN. They are fun and non-threatening and work well because they rely less on written and spoken language and more on visual techniques. Involving children and young people in this way can help them retain what has been said for much longer than a more discussion-based task too.

Storyboards and mind maps

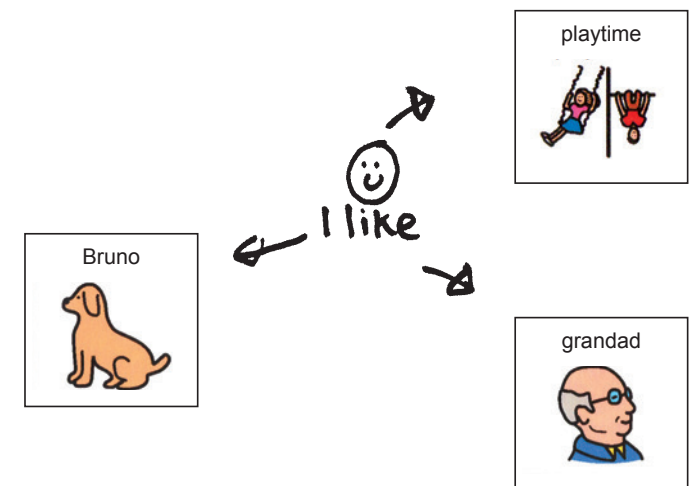
Using large sheets of paper explore the child or young person's **typical day**, using writing, drawing and/or symbols. This can lead into talking about a **good versus a bad day**. You could explore different aspects of the day perhaps using smiley faces, "I like" symbols or putting feeling symbols alongside.

You could look at **what would turn a bad day into a good one** to identify possible strategies or changes from the child or young person's perspective. Another similar theme could be **"what is good about school?"** as a topic to explore.

Use a copy of the pupil's timetable as a way of exploring what they do and don't like at school, or draw with them their weekly plan. It may help if you could have a cut-up version too, so that the pupil can arrange their favourite activities from least favourite.

You could use this as a way to discuss what is good about the favourite lessons, and what would make the less favourite lessons better for them.

You could explore a theme with the child or young person, and together write or draw any ideas that come up about it. This could be about something that interests them or an event that has happened to them, or thoughts more specifically about school or college life. Go through examples beforehand, or do one of your own to show first. See the case study on the next page as an example.



CASE STUDY

Co-construction of a small story that is within the child or young person's experience can be a useful way of finding out views. Roulstone et al.,¹ as part of a research project with children and young people with SLCN used a structured story task and focused on the school day and what happens.

They asked the children to think about a new pupil at the school and what the pupil needed to know about the school.

There were 6 main sections as follows, and some example questions:

Choose a character – the pupils thought about the new pupil and gave them a name (Sarah in the example). They are told that sometimes she finds talking difficult.

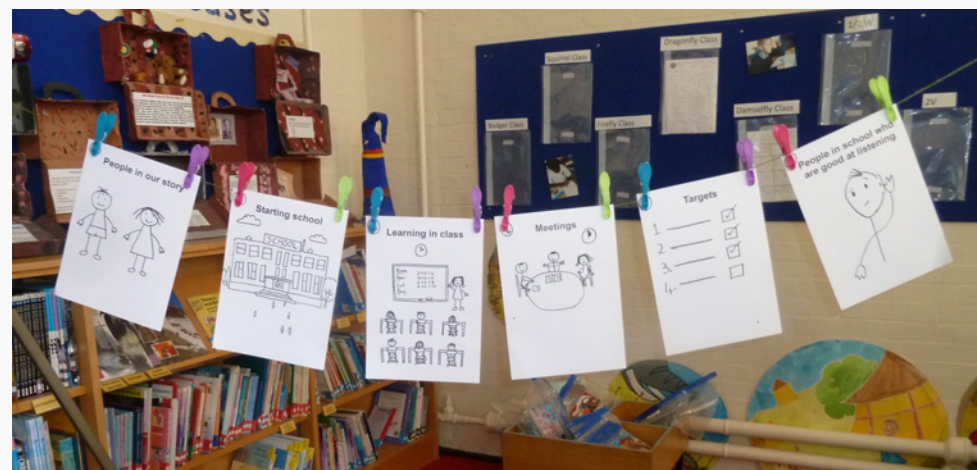
Starting school – what does Sarah need to know?

Learning in class – what helps her and who helps her? What choices are there for her? What would make school better for her?

Meetings – what happens in meetings? Are they good? What could be better?

Targets – what kind of targets may she have? Do you have targets? (Show their target sheet to cue in)

People in school who are good at listening – who will help her the most? Do you think she will enjoy school?



This proved very effective as a means of eliciting the pupils' views, and probing their thoughts about a range of aspects of school life, and also how involved the children and young people felt in making decisions at school.

The research team also found that using school resources and visual prompts alongside what they were asking the children supported understanding of the task, e.g. target sheets, workbooks and photos of the classroom etc. The children accompanied what they were saying with drawings or notes.

[Read more](#) about this approach and findings.

¹ . Roulstone et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

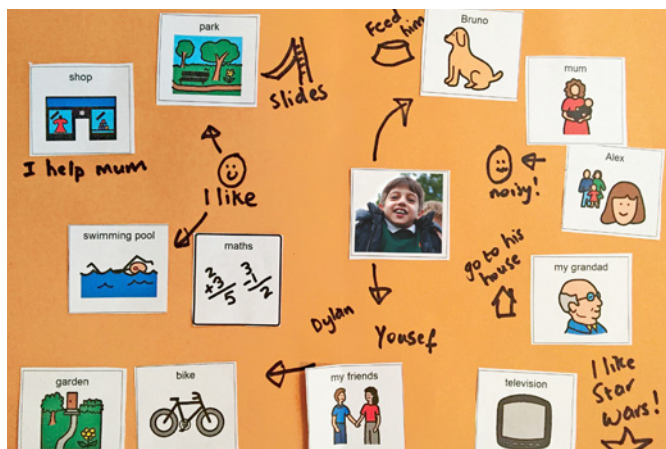
We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Art based methods

About Me picture

Put a photo of the child or young person in the centre, and using photos and symbols alongside, make notes and encourage them to draw pictures about people in their life/their interests/what they like/don't like.

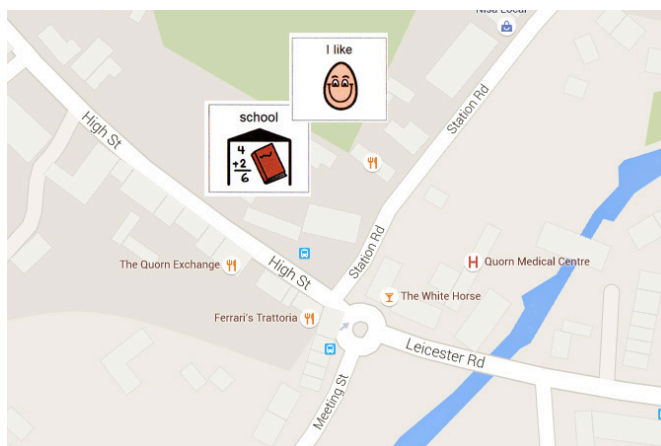
This could be focused purely on the people in their life (you could call it "Who matters?", for example), and arranged in concentric circles with the most important people closest to the child or young person. This is helpful in exploring social networks, and could be used to think later how different people help, and what other support they could offer the child.



Maps

Use a map available of where the child or young person lives and put landmarks on with them (e.g. school, home, youth group, the park). Or, create one together with key information on for the child or young person: their house, their school, where they like to play etc.

This can be a stimulus for further discussion: what they like, who they like to spend time with, what they would like to do more of, what they find difficult. The child or young person could put smiley/sad faces on places they like/dislike.



Dream classroom

Ask the child or young person to draw their classroom, as it is today, and then how a "dream classroom" could be, what should be in it, and where these items should be placed (this requires imagination). This could begin a discussion around "what is good about school?", then "what could be better?".

You could think about aspects such as where the child sits, what disturbs them (lighting, noise etc) and what makes them feel comfortable. This could also be adapted to include other areas, or the whole school; or include a visual timeline to help think about the school routine, which bits they find hard (rush to the cloakroom in the morning, for example), and what they like. It provides a visual, non-threatening way to consider solutions together for areas that are currently tricky.



We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Sorting tasks

So that the task is understood, you may need to practise sorting pictures or objects with the child or young person at other times first: so you could sort different categories of pictures (transport versus animals, for example), or sort clothes from toys and so on.



Talking Mats

If you have attended **Talking Mats** training and are familiar with using this approach, you may find it useful in capturing what a child or young person thinks about a given topic.

For more information about Talking Mats and other symbol support systems please see [Appendix](#)

For this approach you need a physical mat (or the Talking Mats app on a digital device). Choose a topic, options for this and a top scale (e.g. like/ not sure/dislike) using symbols, so that the child or young person can explore their feelings around a topic, and display these on the "mat".

Topics can be personalised according to what you want to find out, or the mat can be used as a way to get to know the child or young person.

You could also show the child or young person a mat you have already completed for yourself, so that they can get to know you. Make sure you take a photo of the result for your records, or save if it is done digitally.

The results from one mat can also be explored in future sessions, using another mat. For example, if the child or young person indicates that they like the cookery lesson best at school, you could explore next time with them what it is that they like about this lesson in particular in more detail.



We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Sorting tasks

Pictures and Symbols

You can use pictures and symbols for a **sorting activity**. Again choose a topic and plan beforehand as many options as you can. Potential topics may be:

- "where I live"
- "what I like to do"
- "what is going well at school"
- "how I feel about playtime"
- "what is good about me" or
- "what is important to me".

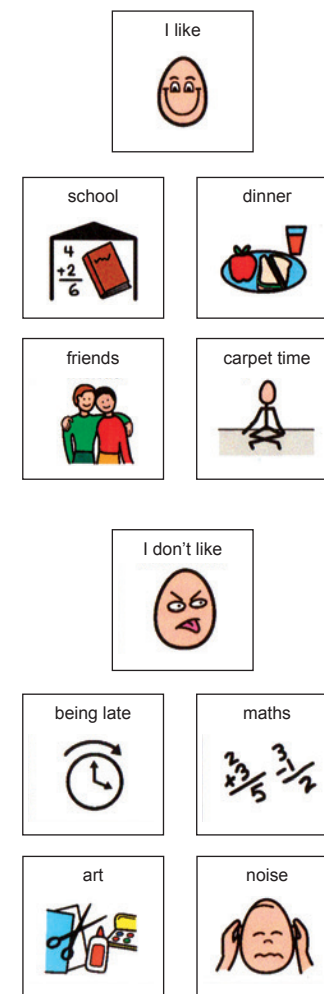
Consider what is meaningful to the child or young person, and prepare symbols and photos in advance. However, also have post-it notes to hand when you meet, so that you can add items that you have forgotten or the child or young person brings up.

You may be looking to sort symbols/photos/statements into categories such as:

- "what I like" / "what I don't like"
- "what is good / what is ok / what is bad"
- "easy / hard" etc.

Then give the child or young person the different options in symbol form one at a time to place under the relevant headings. Or, try a group activity with different parts of the room labelled "like", "don't like", "not sure", for example. Hold an option up (e.g. "homework/school dinner..."), and ask the children or young people to move to their preferred option.

To do this task well, you clearly need to prepare beforehand and also to have checked understanding for the task (does the child or young person understand "like/dislike"?).



We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Sorting tasks

Written statements

You could use written statements (if this is accessible for the child or young person) or symbols for them to sort into boxes or bags labelled with: true/maybe/false; yes/not sure/no; happy/not sure/sad; or always/sometimes/never.

Set a theme to explore such as:

"What makes me happy" and have a personalised list of statements/pictures/photos or objects for the child to sort through into the different containers.

For any theme remember some red herrings too, and items the child is unlikely to like, e.g. a potential list could be: teasing, mum, sister, park, guinea pig, football, computer, dinosaurs, being late, washing up, shouting etc.

You could use this to sort statements around:

- **"What is important to me"** (e.g. my family, school, getting a job, my friends, my clothes, basketball, painting...)
- **"I learn best when my teacher..."** (e.g. waits, shouts, talks fast, makes me laugh...)
- **"What is good about school"** (e.g. dinnertime, playtime, seeing friends, maths, my chair, my bag, going home...)



Visual scales

Using a picture of a ladder or bulls-eye can help children to visually see the scale. So you could have "like very much" at the top of the ladder, or the centre of the bulls-eye, through to "really don't like" at the bottom of the ladder or periphery of the bulls-eye. Then give symbols or statements for children or young people to place one at a time on the scale.

This kind of activity would also work well in pairs or small groups, but you would need to keep notes on what the child or young person selects for future reference.



We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Using camera/video

Using a video camera or taking photos can be very powerful in capturing how the child or young person sees the world.

You could give the child or young person a camera to record some aspect of their lives. Potential themes could be:

- favourite activities
- what I would like to change
- where I live
- play
- my family
- what makes me happy;

over the course of a day, a week or longer.

For a child or young person with complex needs you could take pictures of what they were looking at or engaged with immediately afterwards, and in this way build up a profile of what captures their attention, their interests and preferences.

You may just want to give the pupil a camera for the morning to see what they take photos of, and this in itself should provide valuable information on what they are drawn to.

You could also explore using a camera to take pictures of places or activities that evoke different feelings for the child or young person in a school or college, e.g. fun, scary, safe, boring, and use this then as a vehicle for considering what is good and what could be better. Or, the child or young person could take photos of things they are proud of, or their achievements.

You could make a **photo diary** or "**learning journey**" with photos in of the child or young person over time, and also maybe link this to their achievements (such as learning to pedal a bike; or pour drinks and so on). Time is very abstract and so often difficult for children with SLCN to grasp.

This kind of timeline can be useful as a personalised way of demonstrating time in order to build up concepts of the past and future. It could then be used going forwards as a way to explain transitions to new places, and as a basis for making decisions about the future together.



One school took the following approach as part of an inset day at the start of the academic year:

"We watched a film of our new pupils who all have special educational needs (shot at the end of the last term) talk about who they were, what they like and don't like, what they find difficult, how they like to learn. The importance of this approach was that right from the word go we understood more about their individuality, their needs and the power of our child-centred approach."



We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Communication passports/One-page profiles

Develop a “communication passport” with the child or young person. These may also be called a “one page profile”, “pen pictures” or “all about me” booklet.

There is lots of advice available about making these. It could be one page or a booklet, made about the child or young person, ideally involving them and their family in its construction.

It is written in the child or young person's voice, and contains key information that anyone who meets them needs to know, such as how they say “yes” and “no”, and how to communicate with them.

These can be invaluable in making sure everyone pays attention to what works for the child or young person, and uses consistent approaches. Sections or headings could be:

- what I like to do
- how you can help me
- what makes me happy
- what keeps me calm

See the following section links for more information

[Section 1B\(i\)](#)

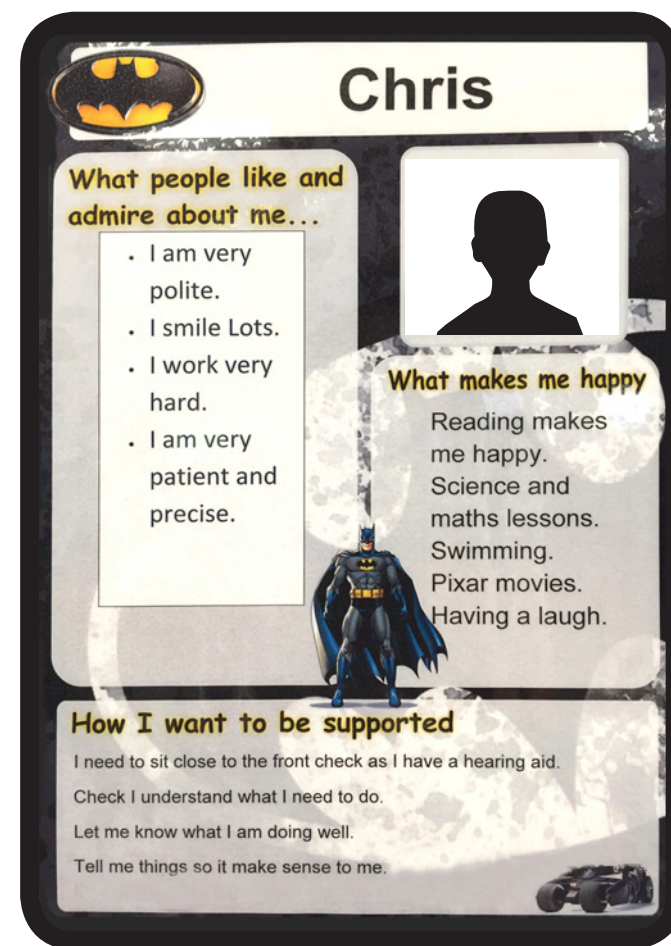
[Section 1B\(ii\)](#)

[Section 3B](#)

There should be copies of the profile available to all staff involved with the pupils, and of course for the pupil and their family. It should be seen as a working document and so updated regularly with the pupil, as far as possible.

The profile should also be used with other agencies and taken to doctor's appointments, hospital visits and so on, so that professionals know approaches that work. It should also inform target setting and meaningful outcomes.

In forging a trusting and two-way relationship, it may be a good idea for the adult to make their own one-page profile or pen picture too as a way of introducing themselves to the child or young person.



We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Other methods

Interviews

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews with a child or young person may be useful. These might be ongoing conversations rather than a formalised process, but you will still need some means of recording the child or young person's views, so that it can be used for target setting. Bear in mind though, that children tend to recall what has been talked about far more if it is part of an activity (with them moving around or using drawings or making something) and enjoy the process more than direct conversations.



Using play

- With primary aged children in particular, play can be a way in and give you useful information about their interests. Put out a range of toys and see which ones they choose. Play also gives information on the learning level of the child and their understanding of the world.

For example, if a child is not sequencing ideas in play (e.g. putting a pan on the cooker and pretending to cook food) then it is unlikely that they can yet sequence ideas through talking.

See [Section 1B\(ii\)](#) for information on the development of language and play.

Role-play, drama and song

For some children, these approaches may be easier than a direct interview in sharing their views. It's important however that children have practised and understood these techniques in other situations, for example class mime.

Improvising is often very helpful, as it enables the child to take the lead, however these approaches may require pre-planning to be most effective. Children could role play particular events, such as changing classes. Acting using puppets is another approach to explore children's feelings well.

Building in story-telling as part of your setting's approach would help pupils to structure their views in this way; care is required though to ensure that the child is not simply repeating songs or stories seen elsewhere.

We use strategies and approaches that are appropriate for the child or young person's strengths and needs

Other methods

Feelings

Children and young people with SLCN are often very aware of how others make them feel. Anger and frustration are recurrent themes, and also other people causing distress or frustration tend to be more of a focus than their own difficulties causing problems. Often children and young people with SLCN see difficulties with talking as a shared problem: they find it hard to say what they want, and adults find it hard to listen.²

Sorting symbols or statements around feelings can be a good approach for capturing how children and young people are feeling about different things. Feelings are also abstract, so before using symbols or written lists or talking about feelings, check that the vocabulary is understood. You could use photos of people displaying different emotions, and see if the pupil can select the corresponding symbol, for example.

Also bear in mind that children and young people can be wary of expressing negative feelings to adults. They may not want to disappoint you or get it "wrong". The best way to counteract this is to ensure you have a culture of openness and trust, in which negative feelings such as anger and sadness are seen as valid, and that it is ok to not always be "happy".

Recent research has highlighted that children and young people may talk about activities or work they don't like as being "boring" very often³. If you are finding this response, it would be worth exploring this further.

You could provide a short list of statements in written or symbol form for them to agree or disagree with, e.g. "I find the work hard", "I find the lesson too long", "I like the lesson when we..." or role-play why it is boring, as a means to find out where the process is going wrong for them.

Recording systems

Again, these may differ from more conventional means of recording because of the methods used, and the need for documentation to ideally be understandable to the child or young person. So, photos, transcripts of conversations and video clips are all valid as a means of recording what was said. It would be useful to build up a file over time with an individual, so there is a clear way of looking back and seeing the progress and how priorities change.

It is also important to record how much support was given to the child or young person. Many young people will always require support in order to participate, and that is fine. Be mindful though of leading questions, and always check back that you understood correctly.

At the end of a session make sure you tell the child or young person what you will do with the information, and when you will feedback to them.

² . Roulstone et al.. (2012). *The perspectives of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their parents*, Better Communication Research Programme. London: DfE. (43pp)

³ . Roulstone et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

General strategies when involving children and young people with speech, language and communication needs

Here are some general pointers that will help all children and young people with SLCN become involved. Use these strategies in your daily practice and focus on ongoing conversations rather than one-off consultations:

- **Really know me...**The person talking to the child or young person should be familiar and trusted. He or she should know how the pupil communicates and how to support this effectively.
- **Record how I communicate...** And keep adding to this over time. Make sure all staff know where to find this information.
- **Talk to me in a way I understand...** Bear in mind that some children and young people with good spoken language can still have difficulties understanding language, try to gather information about any gaps in a child or young person's understanding.
- **Make sure all information is accessible...** Use symbols and photos if appropriate, or sign if required to support understanding and accessibility.
- **Let me use what I need to communicate...** Make sure there is access to any method the child or young person needs to communicate to the best of their ability.
- **Pitch your language at the right level...** Think about the child or young person's learning level and then pitch your language at this level. It is always good to:
 - use simple language, don't use jargon, use easy to understand words
 - use short and simple sentences to help them understand
 - build in pauses, to give time for processing and responding - don't speak too quickly
 - make sure the child or young person has a way to let you know if they have not understood ("say that again?").

STEP TWO

Section 1 C(ii)

How do we gain the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people?

We use strategies and approaches that are relevant for the purpose of consultation

1C(ii) We use strategies and approaches that are relevant for the purpose of the consultation

It is worth noting that children and young people with communication difficulties often don't generally see speech, language and communication needs as part of their identity, so they may have little interest in thinking about difficulties with talking.¹

Think about where you talk to me...

Make sure it's somewhere familiar that feels safe and comfortable. Reduce distractions (other people coming in/noise/lighting too bright etc.)

Keep it flexible...

Use methods that are accessible and that are fun. There are lots of ways for children and young people to express themselves besides speech, such as art, drama, photography, music or role-play. These are just as valid and meaningful as what is said. In fact children and young people are far more likely to remember what has been said and their involvement if it takes place around an activity rather than merely a discussion. Have a look at [Section 1C\(i\)](#) for more ideas.

Give me practice...

Many children and young people with SLCN lack experience in making decisions, so bear this in mind. Give time for them to prepare for meetings beforehand and always check you have understood correctly.

Make time...

...to think about the best approach, to prepare materials, to meet with the child or young person and then to turn what comes from that into meaningful outcomes. You may need to negotiate for the time you require.

Also, check: Is there a particular time of day that is best? What is a good time span? Agree beforehand how long the session will last. Can it be done over more than one session?

Often it is hard to say what I dislike...

Pupils may need lots of practice at expressing what they don't like. This could be because they don't understand the language, or because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing.

Ask me how I want you to support me...

Maybe the child or young person wants to look at the information first before they go through it. Maybe they want to do a bit at a time. Maybe they want to do it with a friend too.

1. Roulstone, S. & Lindsay, G. (2012). *The perspectives of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their parents*, Better Communication Research Programme. London: DfE. (43pp)

We use strategies and approaches that are relevant for the purpose of the consultation

Talk about *now* rather than the future...

Thinking and talking about the future is hard for any of us. It relies on experience, language skills and the ability for abstract thought. Therefore, when thinking about outcomes and future aspirations with children and young people at stage 3 of communication, finding out what is important to them in the future is best achieved by: **asking them about now - what is going well and what could be better?**

For more information about the stages of communication see [Section 1B\(i\)](#) and [Section 1B\(ii\)](#) or for information on developing outcomes with children and young people see [Section 3A](#)

Check I understand the concepts you are asking about...

Remember that abstract concepts for children with SLCN such as “growing up”, “in the future” and “when you’re an adult” are often very difficult to understand. For more information and ideas about making concepts more real for pupils see [Section 1C\(i\)](#)

Vocabulary around feelings can also be hard to understand. If you want to know what makes a child or young person feel happy/angry/sad etc., check first that these words are understood; you could look at photos of people with different facial expressions or look at books together and see if the child or young person can identify how the person feels.

Language can also hold different meanings to different people: for example, something being “easy” may in fact be a negative, in that it’s not challenging at all. Check that key vocabulary you are using holds meaning – does the child or young person know that the meeting they have been in is called an “annual review”?

Think about the questions you ask...

“How?” and “why?” questions can be hard to understand for many pupils with SLCN; “what?”, “where?” and “who?” are easier. But try not to use too many questions – comment instead: “I hear you like football” and wait for them to agree or disagree. Try not to go through a list of questions – it doesn’t make for an equal relationship.

Pause after asking a question for at least 10 seconds (and longer if a child or young person is using a communication aid) to give them enough time to answer. Try not to ask questions you already know the answer to.

Using open questions or statements – “tell me about...”, “what do you like about...” is a good way to open up discussions. Often narrower questions can be easier to answer though, e.g.:

“What food do you like for breakfast?” can be easier than **“What food do you like?”**

Sometimes pupils get used to answering “yes” to everything (it’s generally the answer we expect!). So, for important information always check back with them.

We use strategies and approaches that are relevant for the purpose of the consultation

Use visual supports (objects, photos, symbols)...

Many children with SLCN have stronger visual skills or use visual supports to compensate for their difficulties with understanding and using language.

Using pictures can also help us to remember what we said to refer back to, and as a way of recording the conversation. So using visual supports can be very helpful, even if the child or young person does not have communication difficulties.

Work out what is most meaningful to them: it may be photos/symbols or written lists. Make sure the resources you use are familiar. You may need to pre-teach what the symbols refer to. For instance, does the pupil recognise the symbol for “college” if this is what you are planning to discuss? Does the pupil understand the symbol you are using for “like”?

A rule of thumb is to cover the word on the symbol and see if you and colleagues would guess its meaning. It could well be that you need to teach concepts or symbols explicitly with individuals before consulting with them.

It’s also a good idea to keep post-it notes and paper with you, so that you can draw pictures of ideas that come up as you talk together.

Follow my lead...

This shows that you are interested and enables children and young people to share what is most important to them. It is also useful if conversations are framed around children and young people’s interests.

Show me what we are going to do and how we’ll do it...

Demonstrating tasks and methods of involvement will help children and young people to contribute as fully as possible.

Start with the concrete...

Concrete and definite information is generally easier than information that is more abstract: “Who lives in your house?” can be easier than “Tell me about your family”. Time concepts are also particularly tricky. Children find it easier to talk about what they have just been doing, rather than what they did last week or at the weekend.

Don’t judge me...

Whilst we may disagree with what children and young people have to say, or find views challenging, it’s important to respond in the same way to negative as well as positive comments.

STEP TWO

Section 2

How do we enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making?



STEP TWO

Section 2A

How do we enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making?

We embed choice and decision-making within the child or young person's daily experiences

2A We embed choice and decision-making within the child or young person's daily experiences

To enable every child or young person to participate as fully as possible in school life, aim to put school structures in place which support this. There are lots of ways that pupils can be involved in making choices on a daily basis, and these will give ongoing practice in expressing preferences.

For example, as a whole setting:

- Use school council as a forum whereby pupils can share their ideas and be listened to. Using picture voting cards can take the emphasis off speaking too.
- Use specific opportunities as they arise to engage pupils in participation activities, e.g. canvassing ideas for the new playground, stalls for the school fair, the new cloakroom design.
- Use picture voting systems so that all pupils can vote on things they can have a say in, e.g. new playground equipment, school uniform choices, school council jobs, and so on. Display photos or pictures of the different options, and give pupils one sticker each to vote underneath each option.
- Try having a school writing or "graffiti" wall. Use a large sheet of paper on one wall with a theme, e.g. "I learn best when..." and pens by it. Give pupils a set time, such as a day or week to put down any thoughts in picture or written form to go with the theme.
- Get pupils used to evaluating how things are going for them using a "bullseye" or dart board. Ask them how good today was (or how much they liked a lesson/had fun etc.) and encourage them to place a dart or sticker either towards the middle ("it was great") or outwards ("less good").

We embed choice and decision-making within the child or young person's daily experiences

- Suggestion boxes are a good way for pupils to give ideas confidentially. Ensure your setting looks through these regularly though and feeds back changes to pupils.
- It is also important that you consider what methods you have in place currently for pupils to make complaints or to express concerns. A culture of openness will support them in feeling they have permission to do so. You may well need to adapt information so that all pupils with SLCN can also contribute.

For more information and ideas on how to consider and adapt information for pupils with SLCN see [Section 2D](#)

These approaches are good practice for involving all pupils within a setting. To ensure you are involving pupils with SLCN as much as possible, build in active ways for them to participate.

Many of the children with SLCN who took part in a recent research project were very clear that meetings were “boring”¹ (which would also include activities such as School Council) because they involve too much talk.

Instead engage them through interactive processes if you can. This could include art or photo competitions for the design of the new cloakroom; using picture voting systems; or asking the pupils to improvise a role-play or make a video of situations they would like to change.

1 . Roulstone, S. & Lindsay, G. (2012). *The perspectives of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their parents*, Better Communication Research Programme. London: DfE. (43pp)

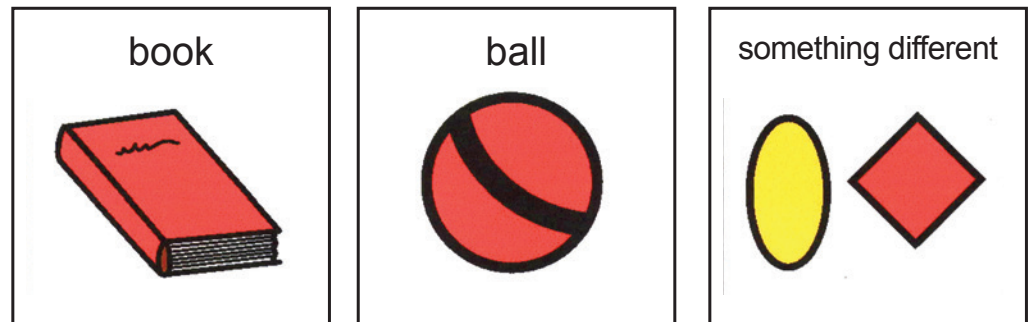
We embed choice and decision-making within the child or young person's daily experiences

Choices and choice-making

To be able to make any kind of decision about your life, you need ongoing experience in making choices.

We need:

- to experience different things, ideally within routines so that we experience things a number of times, e.g. different drinks; different activities
- to **reflect** on those experiences by thinking and talking about them
- **opportunities to make choices** of different experiences, e.g. staff giving 2 options to choose between
- a particular **means** to make a choice and communicate it to others – this might be through looking at what we want, or reaching towards it, it might require choices to be in picture form, or objects
- practice in **actual situations** of real choices, rather than talking about choices in the abstract
- a way of selecting **“something different”** because how can another person always know what I would like to **choose**?



Routines help: for example, always being offered a choice of shoes in the morning or sandwich toppings at lunchtime – because this also gives practice.

We embed choice and decision-making within the child or young person's daily experiences

Choices and choice-making

It may be useful to think of decisions and choice-making in terms of a hierarchy:²

1. Day-to-day living decisions

These are quite fail-safe, in that nothing bad will happen if the wrong choice is made, e.g. what to wear, what to have to drink; but it can still be very important to get these right.

2. Activities that entail a degree of risk

E.g. daily choices/decisions that involve uncertainty but are vital in order to develop independence and relationships, e.g. when to cross the road; going to the shop alone; making new friends.

3. Major life decisions

Such as where to live; which college to go to; how to spend significant amounts of money.

4. Major life decisions with legal implications

These could entail serious medical procedures such as having a gastrostomy fitted and financial decisions, such as selling a property.

We need significant experience at making day-to-day decisions and decisions that entail a degree of risk before being expected to make major life decisions and those with legal implications.

So, for example, it would be wrong to expect a young person to make life decisions about options post school at an annual review if the child or young person has no experience of choosing what food to eat, and who to spend time with, and so on.

Hence the importance of helping a child to make lots of small decisions everyday over time to prepare for making bigger decisions every day in the future.

Also, we do not make decisions in a vacuum. Everything we choose is related to our previous experience, memories, something good or bad that happened, and our interpretation of what we have seen or heard – in other words, our personal narrative.

We need to know the individual child or young person's narrative in order to offer the right choices and to understand the choices they are making. So, people who know the child or young person well need to be involved as much as possible, especially for pupils with complex communication difficulties, in sharing what they know.

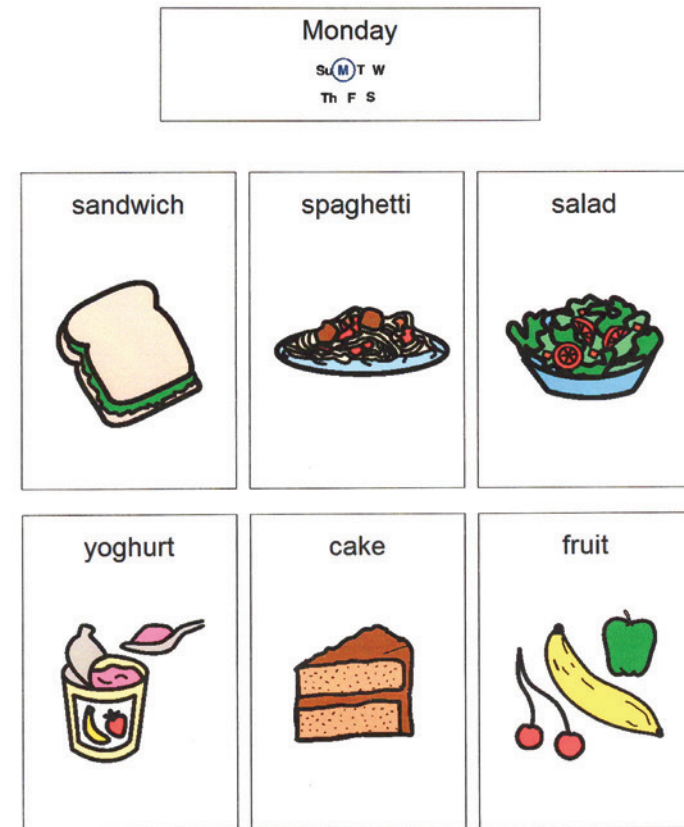
2. Ashton, G. & Ward, A. (1992). *Mental Handicap and the Law*, London: Sweet and Maxwell

We embed choice and decision-making within the child or young person's daily experiences

Choices and choice-making

Therefore, all settings can equip their pupils well for the future by embedding small choices everyday within the school day.

- **Choosing school dinner in the morning:** usually there is a menu choice. This could be shown in symbol or photo form, for the pupil to select beforehand.
- **Use snack times and offer drinks and snack choices,** rather than a "rolling snack time". Ensure pupils are given appropriate options, e.g. object choices/symbol choices/forced alternatives, rather than asking yes/no questions, e.g. "do you want milk or water?" (and holding up the jugs) rather than "do you want milk?".
- **Let pupils choose who to work with,** sit with, read a book with etc.
- **Could pupils choose the order of the work activity** occasionally? E.g. maths then writing...
- Being allowed to **choose reading books** that interest them.
- **Giving options for free time,** e.g. playground or hall; what equipment could come out at dinnertimes; lunch clubs to opt into; ways to spend free choice time in the classroom.



We embed choice and decision-making within the child or young person's daily experiences

Choices and choice-making

- **Using choice time as a reward.** In recent research³ children and young people asked were very clear about the high value they attached to "golden time" when they were able to select an activity of their choice after finishing work tasks.
- **Work with parents to present small choices throughout the day, everyday;** hold up items, photos, pictures or symbols for the child to point to or look at such as: what to wear; what CD to listen to in the car; which shoes; which place to sit at; which juice to choose. Try to add in "something different" too, so that the child isn't just left with the choices we have already decided upon, e.g. "do you want the book, the ball or something different?"
- **Give lots of experiences of any choices,** for example, if choosing whether to do horse-riding or music therapy, let the child or young person experience both, ideally a number of times. Then observe their reactions when going to and in the sessions as a way of determining a preference. This is going to be especially important at times of transition; from school to school; and when deciding on options post-school.
- **Try to follow through with choices made.** For instance even if you think the child hates milk, if they choose this, then give this, otherwise the choice has no meaning. Also ensure pupils do not feel there is a right or wrong choice or answer.

Some children, because of their learning level and/or through a lack of experience have difficulties with making choices. They will need you to work out what choices are motivating and understandable to them, and to build in lots of opportunities for them to make these choices throughout the day.



3. Roulstone et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

STEP TWO

Section 2B

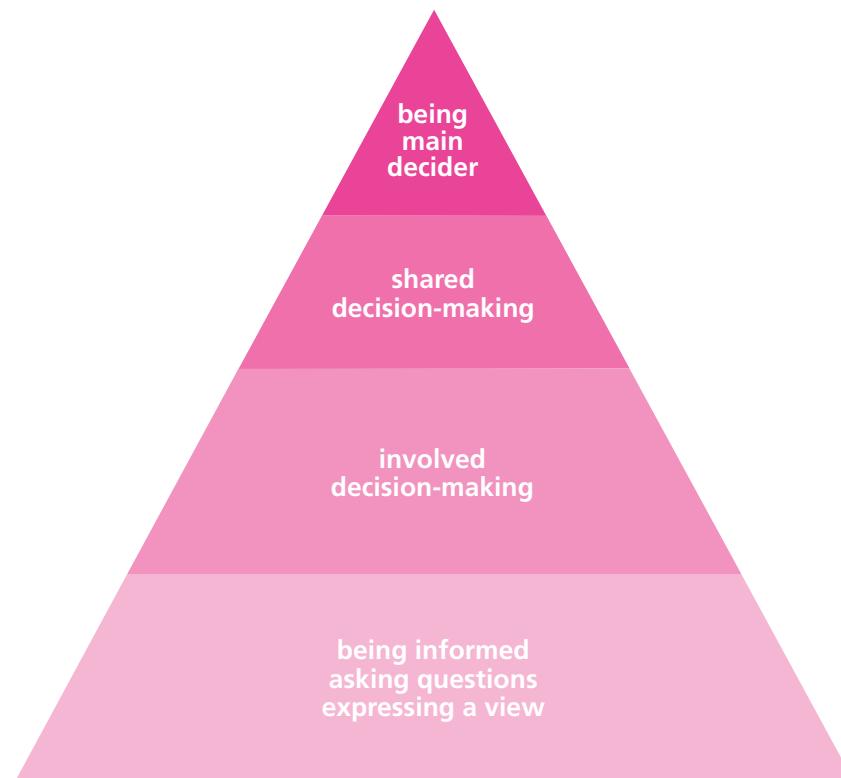
How do we enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making?

We help children and young people to understand their role in decision-making

2B We help children and young people to understand their role in decision-making

There are levels of participation, and the extent to which a child or young person will be involved in different decisions will vary according to the decision to be made, the age of the child or young person and their ability to understand the decision and its implications. It will also vary according to individual preference for different levels of involvement, and past experience of participation:

“Being involved does not necessarily mean that the child makes the decision alone or even as a shared decision. Being involved in the decision making process can mean being given access to information, having your values and preferences considered as part of the decision, being given a chance to ask questions and being informed about the outcomes of decisions.”¹



1. Roulstone et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

2. Coyne et al. (2006). *Giving Children a Voice, Investigation of Children's Experiences of participation in consultation and decision making in Irish hospitals*, Office of the Minister for Children, Dublin. Retrieved 19 February, from: http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/research/Giving_Children_a_Voice.pdf

We help children and young people to understand their role in decision-making

Major life decisions such as whether to have an operation, are unlikely to have the child or young person as the main decider. Instead, in that instance it may be more likely that the child or young person is involved through being informed and having opportunities to ask questions and express how they feel.

In choosing a new school to go to, parents are likely to involve the child in the decision through experiencing different settings, if appropriate, but up until the age of 16, the responsibility still rests with them. It is important to be clear with children and young people how much of a say they have in decisions which affect them, so that they don't feel their involvement is tokenistic.

Practitioners may also need to look at these different levels of involvement with parents. A recent research finding³ is that many parents with children with SLCN are unsure how their child can effectively participate in making decisions about their lives, or school outcomes.

This could be for a range of reasons, such as being unsure of approaches that could be used to find out their child's views. Demonstrating how this can be done, but also talking about how the level of involvement for different decisions will vary, may help with mutual understanding.

It will be necessary, at least initially in a decision-making process, to be clear with the child or young person about the possibilities there are for participation, and how they can be involved, otherwise this may not be clear to them. It is worth explaining as part of any consultation process how the information you find out can feed into their school targets for example.

Bear in mind that children and young people may choose not to be involved also. There is no one-size fits all, and recent research highlights that children and young people "will have different thresholds for participation in different activities and decisions"⁴, so it's important to avoid making assumptions. For some, being involved in meetings about them is very empowering. For others it can be excruciating, so levels of involvement are likely to require ongoing negotiation.

3. Roulstone et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

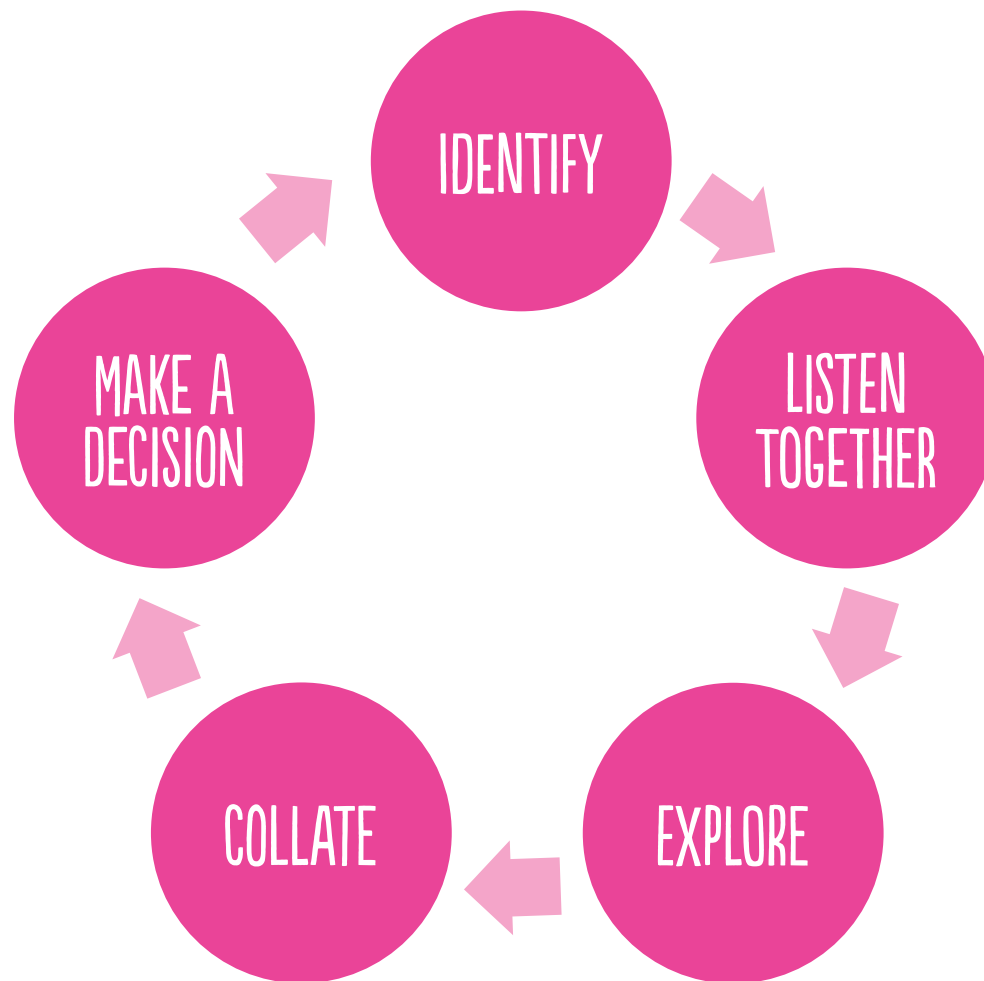
4. Roulstone et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

We help children and young people to understand their role in decision-making

Shared decision-making

We all use our support networks such as our friends and family when making decisions in our lives, and this is also of course true for children and young people communicating at stages 1 and 2 on our communication continuum; see [Section 1B\(i\)](#) and [Section 1B\(ii\)](#)

For children and young people at these stages this support network is vital in allowing a collaborative approach to decision-making.



We help children and young people to understand their role in decision-making

Shared decision-making

For any decision that needs to be made regarding the child or young person, the support circle could follow this process:

Identify the decision together:

What is the decision to be made?

Is the decision important to the child or young person now?

Is it a priority?

Does the child or young person need to be involved in the decision directly?

For example, in exploring potential college placements post school, it may be less confusing and upsetting if the support circle around the young person first of all visits potential placements and rule out those that are unsuitable. Then the young person can become involved at the next stage of choosing between appropriate settings.

Listen together:

Talk to each other and explore views.

If the child or young person needs to be directly involved, identify communication strategies that help. Think about where he or she communicates best, and anything you need to consider about the environment or sensory needs to assist this. What will help the individual to understand the choices?

Explore options together:

Has the child or young person got any previous understanding of the topic? Will they need to experience something first hand in order for you to interpret what they are “deciding”? For example, would he or she need to visit a new school a number of times?

Collate evidence and document together:

How will the child or young person communicate with you? How will you interpret and record their communication? This could be in creative ways such as video or photos or direct experience of the options.

Make a decision and act on it together:

Base the decision on all the evidence gathered.

We help children and young people to understand their role in decision-making

Shared decision-making

How can you be sure it is the child or young person's view? Who else have you involved in supporting them and interpreting their responses? If the support circle is unsure what the child or young person's preference is, then you may have to take a consensus approach and try out one of the options. It is important that you then document carefully how the person responds to the decision made, and regularly review whether you feel this was the right decision.

You may need to support a choice or decision that is not what you would have chosen. Every individual has the right to take risks however, and learn from these. Also, it may be that the child or young person has to experience the choices in order to know what they like.

This ongoing and consistent support puts the child or young person in the best position to develop more intentional communication skills, but also means that the individual has a strong support circle to assist with making bigger decisions.

This support network, and ideally involving family, friends, paid and unpaid helpers, enables a collaborative approach to decision-making. This in itself has been shown to help each group member see the individual's ability to participate in decision-making, and to think in a solution-focused way.⁵

For more information about supporting children and young people with decision making click on the arrows below.

[Section 1C\(i\)](#)

[Section 1C\(ii\)](#)

[Section 2A](#)

5. Watson, J. (2013). A Supported Model of Decision Making, Scope

STEP TWO

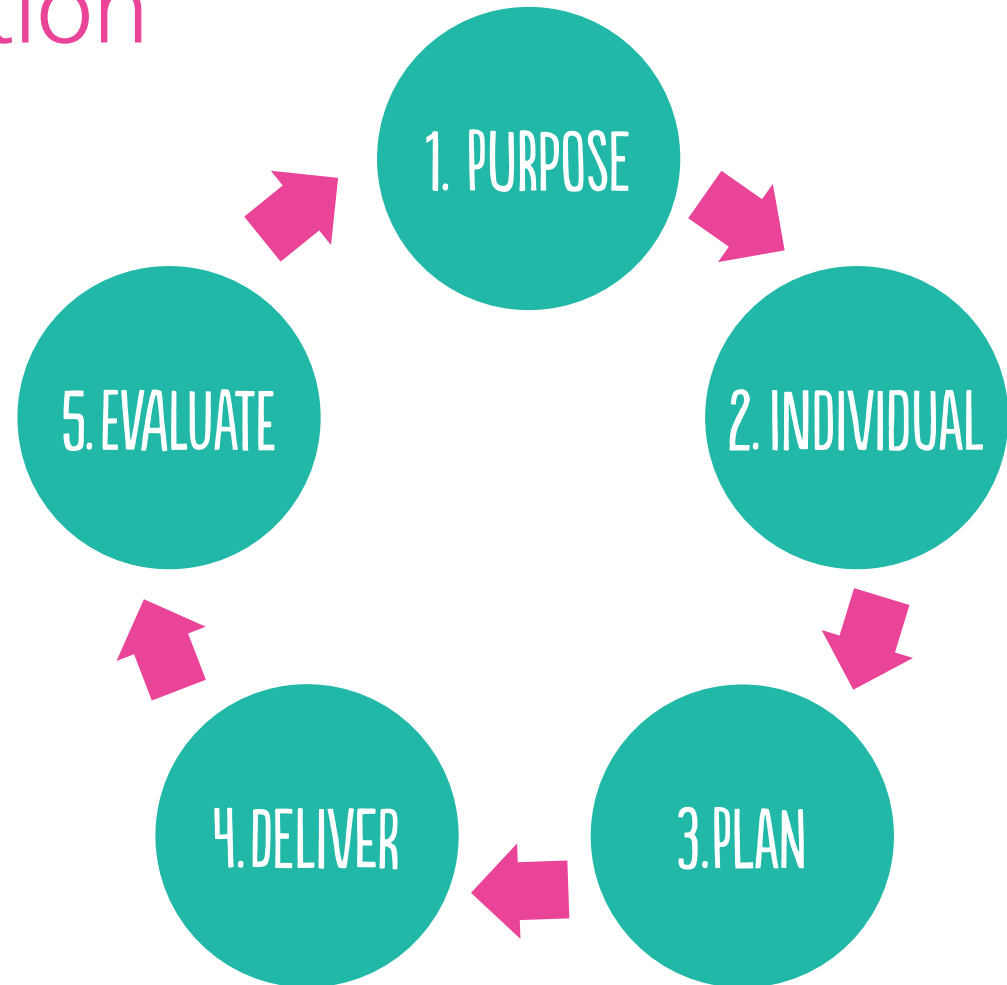
Section 2C

How do we enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making?

We plan, and make time to support effective consultation

2C We plan, and make time to support effective consultation

The stages to effective consultations can be thought of like a cycle:



1. Purpose →	2. Individual →	3. Plan →	4. Deliver →	5. Evaluate →
<p>Consider first of all what you are aiming to change for the child or young person as a result of the consultation.</p> <p>Do you have the necessary time, resources and support required right now?</p> <p>In order to evaluate impact, is there a baseline measure already that you could use?</p>	<p>What motivates this child or young person?</p> <p>What do they like doing, and can you use that in some way?</p> <p>What do you know about their understanding of language and how they express themselves?</p> <p>What useful information is available, e.g. from speech and language therapy reports?</p>	<p>How can you help the child or young person to communicate to the best of their ability?</p> <p>This is likely to require thinking about:</p> <p>Setting: choose a familiar place in which the child or young person feels comfortable and with minimal distractions.</p> <p>Visual supports: preparing these and if necessary preteaching vocabulary.</p> <p>Method: considering what would be fun and accessible.</p> <p>Time: one session or several?</p> <p>Differentiation: making sure all the ways that the child or young person communicates are available to them and that you know about any visual or hearing difficulties (and ways to compensate for these).</p> <p>It may also be appropriate to tell the child or young person about what you will be talking about beforehand so that they can think about what they want to say.</p>	<p>Ensure you use good communication strategies such as using simple language, allowing time for processing and responding.</p> <p>Be prepared to try a range of different approaches, and use these flexibly and creatively.</p> <p>It may be necessary to refocus the child or young person sometimes.</p> <p>Keep checking back that you have understood correctly.</p>	<p>For future consultations: what would you change next time? Was it pitched at the right level?</p> <p>It's a good idea to store and catalogue resources used so that they can be used again, and this will also reduce the time involved in the future.</p> <p>For the child or young person: tell them what you will do with the information, and give them a copy if possible.</p> <p>If the information is going towards outcomes, then these should be discussed with the child or young person if appropriate, to see if these are good outcomes to them.</p> <p>Your evaluation should then feed into step 1 again when future consultations take place.</p>

STEP TWO

Section 2D

How do we enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making?

We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people

2D We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people

In order to be effectively involved in decision-making, the child or young person must understand the options. Information is needed in order to make informed choices about whether they *want* to be involved and to what extent. They need information about school systems that they can contribute to, and to know that their involvement is possible and expected. To do this requires information to be accessible, and using pictures, photographs and simplified language can really help.

Of course you need to look first of all at what is understandable for the individual, and this will vary. You could ask them what helps or give options to choose between. It may be easy read format, pictures alongside text or even audio versions.

Providing information in a variety of different formats is likely to benefit all pupils. It's a good idea to have a whole setting strategy for this, so decide on what picture resources you are going to use as a setting so it's consistent. There are commercially available software symbol packages (for example 'Communicate in Print' or 'Boardmaker' - see **Appendix** which have thousands of words in symbol form.

If you are using symbols, decide as a setting what symbols will be used for regularly used items, e.g. home/dinner/school/teacher/classroom (there is often a choice available). Go for the most understandable – cover the word and see whether you would understand what the picture represents. Ensure the same symbols are in use throughout the school so pupils don't have to figure out different symbols that mean the same thing.

You could use photos or symbols to develop resources for your setting such as:

- A choice book of different activities on offer, for pupils to look through and choose between.
- An information sheet to introduce your setting with photos of staff and key places shown.

It is a good idea to also have a central place to store information which has been made accessible, both on a setting shared computer drive but also in hard copy format, so that quite quickly your setting has a library of such information for all staff to use.

Research snapshot:

A recent research project looking at the participation of children and young people with SLCN concluded that materials used need to be stimulating and fun.

The participants preferred active learning processes: "therefore interactive games, videos and role playing, art work, pop up books, stories and songs would be the kinds of materials that might appeal to children and young people with SLCN".¹

1. Roulstone et al. (2016). *Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision making - a research project*

We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people

Making information accessible for children and young people who communicate at stage 1

A strong use of routines is important in helping children and young people to predict and anticipate what will happen. Having clear and consistent routines when the children or young people arrive, when school begins, when it is dinnertime and so on is beneficial. Thinking this through as a staff group and planning it out can be very helpful, so that consistency is maintained as much as possible. Making this multi-sensory is good practice.

So for example:

- You could use object cues for pupils to feel at the start of lessons. Some ideas could be: ribbons representing dance for everyone to feel; a wooden spoon to represent cooking; a paintbrush for art; a towel for swimming.
- Sound cues at the start and end of lessons: perhaps the same piece of music playing at the start of the day, and a different piece of music to indicate home time; or singing a certain song to represent a certain activity.
- Staff should aim to consistently label what is happening too with single words, and the same words, e.g. "swimming"; "dinnertime"; "bathroom", "home time".

For more information about the stages of communication see [Section 1B\(i\)](#) and [Section 1B\(ii\)](#)

² See Nicola Grove, open story telling [<http://www.drnicolagrove.com/> - Retrieved 19 February 2016] and YouTube examples of this approach.

Some children and young people may recognise photos of people and objects, or be learning to, so show photos of who is in today (staff and pupils), and what activities are on offer before they happen, e.g. a photo of soft play, outside play area, the hall and so on. Make these photos at least A5 size and matt laminated so that they are easy to see.

Other interactive approaches include using video regularly, so you could film some of the class trip or activities such as swimming, then play back on a white board to gauge reactions but also as a way of building up a personal narrative.

You could also collect object cues related to things that have happened to the person (eg. train tickets, drink carton, bottle of shampoo that was bought, money for a trip to the shops) and use these when recounting the experience with them². This again helps with building up a sense of their story.



We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people

Making information accessible for children and young people who communicate at stage 2

The information for stage 1 remains relevant at stage 2 as well, and in addition:



- Use what you think the child or young person understands, and check this out. How do you know that a picture or symbol is understood? Can the child or young person match it to the corresponding object or photo? Keep using pictures alongside the objects, so that they can build up their understanding of what they represent.
- Keep your language simple (1-2 word sentences are often enough) and pause often.
- Use symbols in your activities to help the child or young person to learn what they mean.
- Talk about the here and now. At this stage of development talking about the future may not be understood. Question words may also not be understood at this stage.
- Tell the child or young person what to do, rather than what *not* to do, e.g. “put the cup down” rather than “don’t pick up the cup”.
- Use everyday objects in context throughout the day, for example:
 - if it is playtime show the child or young person a coat so that they know to go to their peg
 - show a cup or beaker when it is snack time
 - show them the book, then ask them to come for the story
 - show them the ball when it is time for PE.

We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people

Making information accessible for children and young people who communicate at stage 3

- Try to make the information stimulating and fun. Alongside written documents use interactive materials as much as possible, so using games, roleplay and video clips are great ways to engage children and young people with SLCN and to explain information to them.

For example, if you are trying to prepare the young person for the upcoming residential trip, then showing video footage of last year's trip would be very helpful.

- Using object cues also helps with understanding. For example, if you are explaining about their targets, then bring along the piece of paper with these written on, or their workbook. This helps greatly with setting the context.

Using worksheets and documents to give information

- For children and young people with SLCN using easy words and pictures can really help in making information accessible. Pictures make the information more appealing and much easier to understand (and also remember).
- Using easy words means leaving out all hard words or jargon (this includes professional words we might be used to using such as "inset" or "academic performance").
- Prioritise which documents and materials you need to make accessible because it takes time and effort. It will also be more useful if you keep it short.
- Good practice is to involve children and young people in designing documents. Let them tell you what works for them.

Top tips:

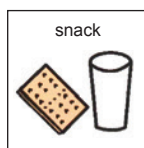
- Work out the key points of your document. This will require you to summarise.
- Chunk the information, so it is clear on the page.
- Use short sentences which are easy to read: aim for one idea per sentence.
- Say what to do or what is going to happen (not what *not* to do).
- Avoid abbreviations where possible.
- Use a clear easy to read font, at least 14pt. Arial is a good clear font. Fonts that look like handwriting are more difficult to read. Avoid writing in capitals – this makes it harder to read.

We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people

Making information accessible for children and young people who communicate at stage 3

Using pictures

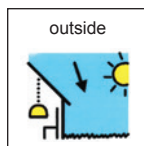
- Choose pictures carefully to support the text. This might mean symbols, or photos or other pictures.
 - Check: would you understand the picture? Does it relate to the words?
 - Most people find it easier if the pictures are to the left of the text. Make sure they are a good size.
 - Make sure it is clear which picture goes with which piece of text.
 - Try not to use abstract pictures – would you understand their meaning without the words?
 - Sometimes it is better to use a photo if showing a place or a person, but make sure the photo is not too busy or blurred.
 - Adding ticks and crosses can also help with adding meaning.
- Breaking down information into parts or a sequence is very useful, but always put the information into the order you would like it to be followed:
E.g. At playtime:



1. Choose a snack



2. Get your coat



3. Go outside

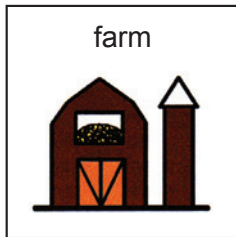
Read it through with the pupil, and preferably a number of times if it is to prepare for something that is going to happen (a school trip, for example).

If it is to prepare the pupil for an upcoming event, then send the information home too. An example can be found on the following page.

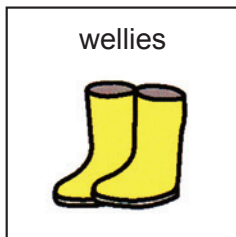
This example could of course be further simplified depending on what you think will be understood. The pictures you use should represent the key information you want the child or young person to understand.

Again, once you have made any resources, store these and use them again in the future. Following the tips above will enable most children and young people at stage 3 to be able to access the information they need.

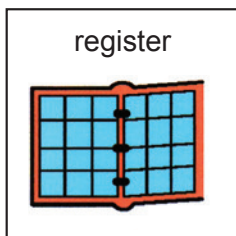
Example: Preparing for the school trip to the farm



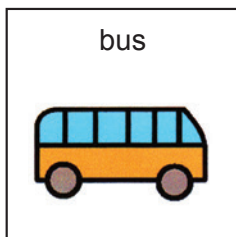
On Tuesday we are going to Farmer Keith's **farm**.



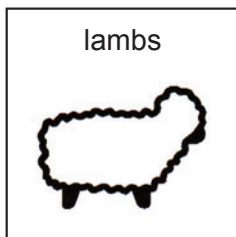
We will bring **wellies** and a **packed lunch** to school.



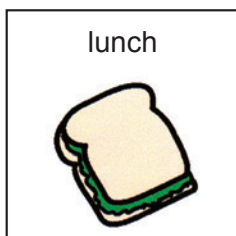
We will come into school and do the **register**.



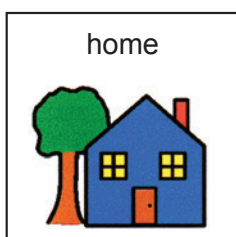
Then we will get on the **bus** to the farm.



At the farm we will see **lambs**.



We will eat our **lunch** at the farm.



We will come back to school on the bus **at home time**.

We provide clear and accessible information to children and young people

Making information accessible for children and young people who communicate at stage 3

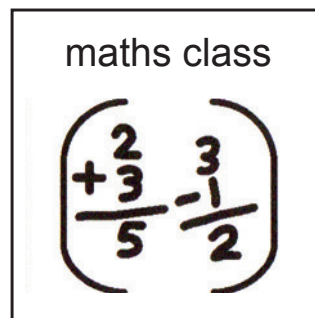
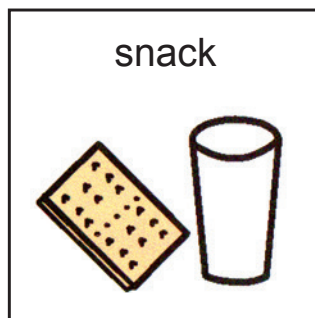
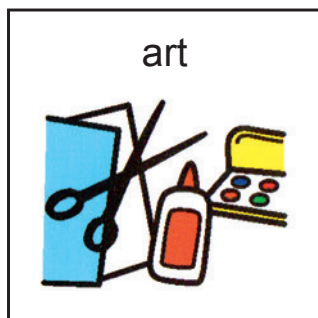
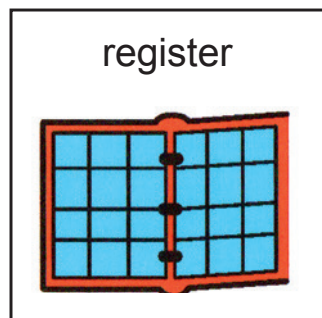
Visual schedules

These can be useful in showing children what is going to happen. Ideally there should be consistency across the setting in how these are set up. Usually symbols depicting activities run left to right.

So that the list is not overwhelming, it is often a good idea to put the schedule up for the morning (and refer back to it with the pupil), then at lunchtime put up the schedule for the afternoon.

This may require more personalisation, for example, for some children and young people with autism and/or learning difficulties just knowing what is happening "now" is enough. So having a symbol available helps them to focus.

Alternatively, it could be that what is happening "now" and what is happening "next" is sufficient. There are a number of different ways of displaying visual schedules, for example using an empty see-through plastic pencil case to attach symbols to.



CASE STUDY

For one pupil knowing where he is going next and who with is the most important information, and helps him to stay calm. So staff use this system to show him (and to take with him so that he has it to refer back to).



STEP TWO

Section 2F

How do we enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making?

We review our approaches to participation, check the level of participation we're achieving and gain feedback from children and young people on how well they think it works

2F We review our approaches to participation, check the level of participation we're achieving and gain feedback from children and young people on how well they think it works

"OK we hear you"

The Code of Practice calls for:

"...strong feedback mechanisms to ensure that the child or young person and parents understand the impact their participation is making."¹

The first step following consultation is to **ensure the child or young person feels heard**. Check back with them what you have understood, e.g. "I think that you don't like where you sit in class. You find it too noisy. Is that right?". Try to be realistic with the child or young person about what is in your power to actually change. It may be small things at first.

Then, if appropriate **tell the child or young person what action can be taken and a realistic timeframe**, e.g. "I will talk to your teacher tomorrow about other places you could sit in class."

The important thing for children, young people and their families is that they see action related to what they have said. It hasn't just been an exercise in asking them. Think how you are going to feed back to the pupil and family about changes they have helped to create.

With parents this might take the form of regular informal discussions, or termly conversations. It might be via e-mail, phone or face-to-face. With children and young people in the setting, it can be through ongoing conversations, and **being explicit with them about how what they have said has led to changes they can see**: "You said it was hard to concentrate sitting there, so this new place may be better."

If asking for feedback on changes you have made, with children and young people with SLCN, it is always best to ask for feedback as soon after an event as possible. Otherwise potential difficulties with memory and the ability to reflect upon experiences may mean that the individual has long forgotten the meeting you want to ask them about.

1. SEND Code of Practice section 1:12

We review our approaches to participation, check the level of participation we're achieving and gain feedback from children and young people on how well they think it works

There are lots of ways to gather feedback, but the approach you take should depend on what is most meaningful and understandable to the child or young person.

For example:

- For children and young people who are able to read, a questionnaire or survey could be used. This could also be online if appropriate.
- For those who are not able to read, or to gather quick feedback, a simple visual survey could be made. For example, simple questionnaires, using pictures or symbols could be used to gain feedback following sessions or meetings.

To gain longer-term feedback, it is beneficial to take some kind of baseline response from a pupil before it happens and then repeat at the end of a process. This would then give you a clear idea how pupils are feeling about their involvement over time and their views about any changes which have been introduced as part of the consultation process.

Settings should start to collate information from consultations with their children and young people. A named person (likely in schools to be the SENCO) should be responsible for collecting the information, and noticing any patterns within the setting.

This could then drive training needs for staff and others. It could influence teaching methods with a child or young person on an individual basis. For example, one child was able to identify through consultation that “pictures help me”, despite her relatively good verbal skills. From this, the school aimed to support her learning with visual supports throughout the school day.

STEP TWO

Section 2G

How do we enable children and young people to participate as fully as possible in decision-making?

We actively involve children and young people in transition planning

2G We actively involve children and young people in transition planning

Starting at a new setting (nursery, school or college) or moving between classes can be exciting but also daunting and worrying. Anxiety that a child or young person may be feeling can impact massively on their ability to learn, to take in new information, and to manage their behaviour and self-esteem.

Transition-planning is key – and systems should be in place to ensure the child or young person feels part of the process and as involved as possible in making decisions. Sometimes just asking the child or young person “what do you want your next school to know?” can be the best start in identifying what helps.

Managing transitions within the day

For some children and young people moving from activity to activity can be stressful. This could be from class to class; from outside to inside after break; or between activities in the classroom. Visual support systems can help with the transition. Some ideas are:

- Visual schedules.
- Using now/next cards.
- Using “traffic lights”: show the pupil a green card when the activity is “started”; then an amber card when the activity is “nearly finished”, and finally a red card when the activity is “finished”. You could keep these on a key ring for easy access.
- Sand timers can be used to show how long an activity will last. You can buy these for varying amounts of time to give you flexibility.

You may use a combination of systems. The important things to note are consistency – that all staff are using the same approach; and to keep checking that the system is meaningful and helpful to the child or young person.

For more information about visual schedules see

[Section 2D](#)



We actively involve children and young people in transition planning

Within a setting

Often within one day pupils move classes for different lessons, and certainly at the end of most academic years pupils will be moving to a different class. For children and young people with SLCN maintaining consistent approaches that work across the setting is key.

To do this:

- Identify with the child or young person the support they would like, and strategies that they find helpful. For example, one pupil with disordered speech was very adamant that he would only come out of his class to do speech work during French, the lesson he hated!
- Document what you have found out. One-page profiles can be useful for this and keep this document up-to-date by reviewing it regularly with the pupil as necessary.
- As well as involving children and young people within transition planning, it is important that systems are in place to ensure that there is a shared understanding of their needs and strategies which help. This may be through face to face meetings or written information, including appropriate sharing of reports from other agencies such as speech and language therapy.
- Parents should be involved in saying what works at home, and strategies and approaches that work being shared across home and school. Parents can also give information on motivators for children and young people, and feed information into one-page profiles.
- Consistency across settings in the use of symbol systems, strategies and approaches will support effective participation in transition planning as well as supporting the transition itself. So rather than the child or young person having to learn different symbols representing the same idea, have a school vocabulary set for often used items like classroom, teacher, dinner, help and so on.
- There may be a need for specific continuing professional development (CPD) in order for a child or young person to be effectively involved in transition planning. It will require forward-planning prior to the transition.

For more information about ways of finding out what support children or young people would like see [Section 2A](#)

For more information about one page profiles see

[Section 1C\(i\)](#)

[Section 1C\(ii\)](#)

[Section 3B](#)

We actively involve children and young people in transition planning

Setting to setting

Nursery into school

To actively involve children with SLCN, moving into school is likely to require:

- school staff to spend time with a child in the early years setting: to observe what they like/don't like, how they get their needs known, and to discuss approaches with the early years practitioners
- the child to experience the school setting prior to starting, and in this way to enable school to put into place any approaches or strategies that may help before the child begins
- admissions meetings - these are good practice, to enable parents to say what works at home, what their child likes, what calms their child and how they express needs and frustrations. This information could go towards a pen picture or one-page profile of the child. For more information about one page profiles follow these links:

[Section 1C\(i\)](#)

[Section 1C\(ii\)](#)

[Section 3B](#)

School onwards

All reviews from Year 9 onwards (if a pupil has an EHC plan) must include a focus on preparing for adulthood.

From aged 16 years upwards, the young person can make decisions independently of their family if they so wish. This has implications for supported decision-making.

For more information about decision-making see

[Section 2A](#)

[Section 2B](#)

To actively involve young people in transition planning:

- Remember the importance of lots of choice-making embedded from an early age.
- The young person needs to experience different options, potentially a number of times.
- Identify with them what they would like the next setting to know, and what support they would like. For methods that may help see [Section 1C\(i\)](#) [Section 1C\(ii\)](#)
- A phased transition is often very helpful so that some continuity is maintained for a while, and the young person has time to learn about and process their new environment.

STEP TWO

Section 3

How do we help a child or young person achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes?



STEP TWO

Section 3A

How do we help a child or young person achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes?

We are able to develop relevant and meaningful outcomes for children and young people

3A We are able to develop relevant and meaningful outcomes for children and young people

The 2014 SEND Code of Practice is clear that children and young people must be involved in thinking about what they want for the future, and outcomes should be set from this. These outcomes should be functional and meaningful to the child or young person.

See [Communicating the Code](#) for more information on what the Code of Practice says regarding outcomes.

This represents a big change in target setting: schools are used to setting “objectives”. Here is how they differ:

Objective	Outcome
<p>Example: Mark will improve his attention/hand-writing skills/listening skills in class.</p>	<p>Example: By the end of this year, I will be able to go to the shop by myself and buy what my mum needs.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem focused: “to improve...” - Not personalised - Focus on provision (e.g. speech and language therapy 3x week) - Short-term - Sometimes written by teacher, at other times a team approach - Academic focus, so often a focus on numeracy and literacy skills - Should be SMART (Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic and Timely) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aspirational, about possibilities - Unique to each child or young person - Focus on result - Looking to the future (then broken down into steps) - Team approach to writing - A more functional bias, may incorporate more independence skills - Must be SMART (Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic and Timely)

We are able to develop relevant and meaningful outcomes for children and young people

Examples of short-term outcomes (less than 12 months) for children and young people at stage 1 and 2:

- I will look at and reach for something I want
- I will tell you on my symbol board if I want "more" at mealtimes
- I will give you a cup to ask for a drink

Examples of long-term outcomes for children and young people at stage 1 and 2:

- I can choose by looking at something and then at you
- I can show I want a drink or something to eat
- I can show you "yes" and "no"

Active involvement in outcome setting is likely be very difficult for many children who are not communicating at stage 3. The consultation process requires careful planning: the process is as important as the content.

To help you with planning see [Section 2C](#)

NB: For children and young people at stages 1 and 2: outcome setting will generally be based on observation of preferences, discussion with others and a team approach to think about what is important for them now and in the future rather than individual consultations.

We are able to develop relevant and meaningful outcomes for children and young people

What to ask about when thinking about outcomes...

We know that topics children and young people are often keen to talk about fall into a few key themes (see table) and these are likely to be a good starting place to explore with them.

For more information about methods of developing outcomes for children and young people using topics they are keen to talk about see [Section 1C\(i\)](#)

What is good about me:		What could be better:	
<p>Who I am This could include: what I look like, what I like/dislike, things I have done, places I have been, "My story"</p>	<p>don't like</p> 	<p>Other people What they say, what they do, how I want help, what I don't want</p>	<p>too long</p> 
<p>The fun I have What makes me happy, what makes me laugh, what I like to do inside and outside of school</p>	<p>great</p> 	<p>My abilities What I want to improve, what I find hard, things that could help me</p>	<p>maths class</p> 
<p>The people around me Who makes me happy, who I am close to, my friends, my family, important people in my life</p>	<p>mum</p> 	<p>My feelings How I often feel, how I manage my feelings, how I express my feelings, what would help</p>	<p>I like</p> 

We are able to develop relevant and meaningful outcomes for children and young people

What to ask about when thinking about outcomes...

In addition, we also know that the following areas are ones that children and young people are often keen to be better.

These themes have emerged strongly from recent work looking at what is most important to children and young people, and so constitute key aspects to ask about when developing outcomes.

Friendships – making and managing these

Potential topics or issues to explore may be around: sharing, taking turns, what to talk about, rules of conversation, non-verbal communication, how to be a good friend, listening skills.

Understanding and managing emotions

Potential topics or issues may be: dealing with negative emotions, understanding how I am feeling, strategies to cope, how to express what I am feeling.

How other people talk to them and treat them

Potential topics or issues may be: how I want people to treat me, the support I want, what helps and what does not, what a good teacher is like, what a good friend is like.



We are able to develop relevant and meaningful outcomes for children and young people

Developing outcomes

The outcome is a change or action that is desirable to the individual. It is then up to the services involved to think how best to achieve this.

These shared outcomes should be powerful and motivating because they should capture what is most important for that child or young person.

From our consultations with the child or young person, we may use what we have found out:

- 1. To write outcomes that are motivating to the child or young person** and reflect their interests or concerns, e.g.
 - to get better at drawing
 - to go to college
 - to make new friends
 - to stay calm when I am cross.
- 2. To help us to think about how to work with the child or young person**, e.g. using their interests more: finding the books that most interest them; developing numeracy skills by working on paying for a weekly treat at the shop; using more visual supports; helping them to learn emotional vocabulary in order to manage their emotions more effectively and so on.
- 3. To highlight staff professional development needs in terms of understanding how best to communicate with the pupil**; how to create a supportive environment; and which are the most useful teaching methods.

Children and young people, and their parents, value outcomes relating to independence and social inclusion most.¹ Academic skills can be a route to greater independence but don't need to be the only focus for outcomes. Outcomes should be simple, clearly expressed and measurable.

Balancing the demands of the curriculum with targets driven by the child or young person is not an easy task, and clearly there will be certain preferences and interests from the child or young person that we cannot act upon (having chips everyday for lunch, for example). That said, using the interests of the child and so engaging them should be mutually beneficial.

For example, over a half-term, one boy's love of Arsenal football club was the vehicle for learning about geography (where the team played), for learning social language ("a rubbish game!") and for learning narrative skills, through telling the class about play at the weekend.

1. Roulstone et al.. (2012). *The perspectives of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their parents*, Better Communication Research Programme. London: DfE. (43pp)

We are able to develop relevant and meaningful outcomes for children and young people

A few examples of creative outcome setting:



Ryan is 8 years old and has a specific language disorder. He struggles to process spoken language and access the words that he wants to say.

During a play activity, he used his hands to drum on the table to indicate what he most likes to do. This was confirmed by his parents. He also likes to sing, and using a symbol choice board, indicated drums and singing as what he likes best.

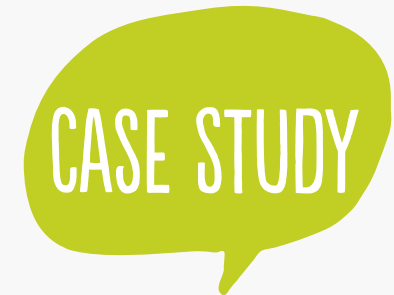
To develop these interests and increase his self-confidence, his teacher referred him for music therapy at school. A key outcome for him is to learn some songs. His teacher has therefore introduced more songs into the class routine as a means of increasing his vocabulary.



Ali is 14, has cerebral palsy, severe learning difficulties and is non-verbal.

Through using a Talking Mat he expressed his love of music beyond all else. He shows little interest in most curriculum subjects. His outcome is to help with music in school. Staff have thought with him about how to do this.

Ali is now responsible for the music for daily assemblies, and also involved in organising music for the school disco. He is developing skills in negotiating with others, and using his iPad to initiate more interaction with peers through showing them music clips in news time.



Sarah is 10 years old and has difficulty learning new vocabulary. This makes reading and remembering what she has read very difficult.

It also makes it hard for her to express herself without using lots of non-specific words like “that one” and “thingy”. Through talking to her and using pictures as a record of what was said, Sarah was able to say that pictures help her a lot. Staff have taken this on board and use these in setting class tasks for her.

A key outcome for her is to learn new words. Staff have identified useful strategies for remembering new words using a multi-sensory approach. She is receiving help with this which will be faded as she learns to do this independently.



We are able to develop relevant and meaningful outcomes for children and young people

Meaningful outcome setting requires innovation and ingenuity. Think about what is working well now to inform what will benefit the pupil most in the long-term:

Practitioners working with these children need to consider carefully how any short-term targets position a child on the road to eventual independence and social inclusion.²

This will mean considering the route from the underpinning communication skills to the functional outcome³. So if the pupil's main aspiration is to make friends as with the following example, it is then the practitioner's role to consider what linguistic and social skills can be targeted towards this goal.

Looking in this way is likely to mean expanding our vision, for example, outcomes could reflect the child's whole day, rather than being limited to lesson time. The biggest motivator for one pupil in a special school was food and dinnertime; her outcome was to set the table for her class at lunchtime. Once this was achieved, a new outcome was set to talk to her friends at lunchtime.

The outcomes should be known to the child or young person and their family – and ideally agreed and written with them. This could happen at the annual review or in a consultation. A long-term aspiration (over one year away) should be broken down into short-term (less than 12 months) targets or outcomes.

Reviewing outcomes should not be an annual event. Reviewing progress should be an ongoing process. Once the targets have been achieved, then through ongoing talking with the pupil, new outcomes and related short-term targets can be put in place.

Keeping visual records of decisions made over time that the child or young person can look back on, will be helpful for future decision-making, and as a learning journey.

Having these available to the child or young person would keep outcomes more tangible. If appropriate, outcomes chosen could be put up on the classroom or setting wall, or on their desk or other work place, for example.

Putting consultation documents and related target materials together in a file or workbook would help with reviewing what went well in collecting the child or young person's views, and how these were then addressed. If appropriate, it would be good if the child or young person could help with putting any file together, have access to it and monitor their own progress too.

A key principle in the new Code of Practice is the need for all those involved with a child or young person with SEND to work together in meeting the child or young person's needs. So targets should be shared with others who work with the child or young person as appropriate. For example, targets around making friendships are relevant for involved youth group workers to know about.

Also, consider any yearly transitions: how can you ensure that ongoing targets continue? In schools, the SENCO has a key role to play in ensuring that systems are in place to disseminate information (knowing what works for this child or young person) and to share ongoing targets.

2. Roulstone et al. (2012). *The preferred outcomes of children with speech, language and communication needs*, The Better Communication Research Programme, London: DfE (p43)

3. Roulstone, S. & Lindsay, G. (2012). *The perspectives of children and young people who have speech, language and communication needs, and their parents*. London: DfE.

CASE STUDY

Sarah's long-term outcome was to **"make friends"**. Her teacher then looked at how this could be broken down into different steps which each constitute short-term outcomes:

- Her teacher identified children Sarah would like to play with, and also current barriers. What is going wrong presently? Are there ways to make it easier?
- The teacher and staff also observed playtime. This showed that Sarah found it hard to find a way into games, and tended to wait on the sidelines for others to include her.
- This led to targets being set with Sarah around initiating contact with others, how to approach, what she could say, how to repair if it went wrong and role-playing this 1:1, then in a small group.
- It also led to some work on friendship skills as part of the PSHE curriculum with the wider class, in which the children thought about how to ensure everyone is involved who wants to be, and what you can do if you feel left out.
- For the setting itself, it was an opportunity to look at current systems, such as buddy systems, circle time, playground opportunities – and for staff to consider if there is there a way to increase opportunities for peer support and friendships (and benefit all pupils).
- Sarah's family were aware of her outcomes, and encouraged her to try out her strategies when visiting the park together at the weekends.



Once Sarah was experiencing more success during playtime, other short-term outcomes towards "making friends" were chosen which were to do with peer work in the classroom and listening to others.

Keeping visual records of decisions made over time that the child or young person can look back on will be helpful for future decision-making, and as a learning journey.

STEP TWO

Section 3B

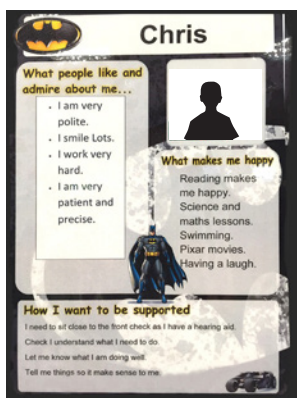
How do we help a child or young person achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes?

We aim for a shared understanding of a child or young person and how to support them best

3B We aim for a shared understanding of a child or young person and how to support them best

Documenting information about a child or young person that is gathered over time from a number of people, and then reviewing this information is the best way to ensure a shared understanding of the individual.

Parental views and professional reports need to feed into this too. From this information, and with the child or young person, if appropriate, profiles can be compiled of useful information and strategies to support:



One-page profiles:

These have received a lot of attention recently as a way of sharing key information quickly among people working with the child or young person. The individual should be as involved as possible in deciding what goes on the profile and retain ownership of it. There should be copies for home and school, and it should be seen as a working document that is regularly updated.

There are 3 key sections for a one-page profile:

- What other people like about me.
- What makes me happy and is important for me.
- How I like to be supported.

The information for the profiles can be drawn from the conversations you have had with the child or young person and also the important people in their life. For ideas on how to gather this information see

Section 1C(i)

Section 1C(ii)

In compiling your draft, you may need to guess some aspects, but you should then check with the individual, if appropriate, or main people in their lives. Put down as much detail as you can initially and this can then be edited down. Try to avoid non-specific language like “regularly” or “often” as it means different things to different people.

There are lots of examples of these and also free downloadable templates available at

www.sheffkids.co.uk

www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/ has more information about one-page profiles and how they can be used effectively. The site also contains useful information on person-centred planning and details on training on this approach.

Here is a very useful online video guide for developing one-page profiles.

We aim for a shared understanding of a child or young person and how to support them best

For many children and young people communicating at stages 1 or 2 more information may be required in order for others to fully understand their needs.

Therefore, a good way to help with this is to put together a **“communication passport”** or **“all about me”** booklet for your child or young person. Parents and staff can think together about how the child is processing their world, and what we can do to support them best.

For information about children and young people communicating at different stages see

[Section 1B\(i\)](#)

[Section 1B\(ii\)](#)

For more information about “communication passports” or “all about me” booklets see

[Section 1C\(i\)](#)

[Section 1C\(ii\)](#)

For example:

How do I tell you I am...	Do I make any sounds? Cry or vocalise?	What do I do with my body, my hands/feet/head/face..?
Hungry		
Thirsty		
Tired		
In pain		
Startled		
Liking something/someone		
Uncomfortable		

We aim for a shared understanding of a child or young person and how to support them best

Then this information can be translated into strategies for everyone to follow:

For example:

When I...	People think it means...	So you should...
Bang my head backwards	I am distressed. I am feeling overwhelmed	Give me space. Say less. Turn music off
Make sounds and kick my legs	I am feeling content and happy	I'd like to keep doing what I am doing. More please!
Start moaning, put my head down and maybe bite my hand	I may be hungry or uncomfortable	Please offer me some food and check my position and the straps on my chair
Look at you and clap my hands	I want to talk to you and for you to play with me	Please come and spend some time with me

We aim for a shared understanding of a child or young person and how to support them best

Of course this information can be presented in any way that you like. It would be very useful to include a section on “how best to involve me”, and this could give information such as:

For example:

What I like:	What I don't like:	How best to support me:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- chocolate buttons- noisy toys- my pet rabbit “Bill”- my hands being stroked- splashing water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- sudden noises- being taken away somewhere with no warning- very cold drinks	<p>I see best on my left side – please approach me from this side and offer me choices here.</p> <p>Give me lots of time to process who you are, new activities and any objects you offer.</p>

The key is to make sure the information is personalised, quickly accessible, useful and up-to-date. For children or young people with medical conditions it is likely that you would need to add in more information for others such as key information everyone should know.

Keep this information available in the setting, and make sure there are copies for home too (and respite provision). Again, keep it as a working document which you update as required.

This information is very useful to take along to any meetings about the child or young person, when thinking about their needs and the support they require.

The CALL centre, Scotland, has lots of information on making these and a variety of templates you could use www.callscotland.org.uk

We aim for a shared understanding of a child or young person and how to support them best

Children and young people whose communication is at stage 3

For children and young people with SLCN communicating at stage 3 it is also important that there is a shared understanding of their strengths and difficulties. Information about what they understand (or don't yet) is especially useful. It helps to filter apparently non-compliant behaviour from not understanding the instructions. You may be able to find out this information from assessments or speech and language therapy reports.

For some pupils, understanding of language appears better than it in fact is, because the child picks up on non-verbal cues and knows the class routines.

Writing a one-page profile with a pupil is a good exercise in finding out what is important

to them and seeing if they can identify what strategies help them. This profile should then be kept as a working document, accessible to all who work with the child or young person and updated at regular intervals with the pupil. See the example on the next page.

Also, talk with parents about how the child or young person presents at home, what they find difficult, and what approaches work, to build up a full picture of their strengths and difficulties. Sharing information and approaches will mean the child or young person receives consistent support.

Regular meetings within the school week can help with any updates – this could be a 10 minute slot in the weekly staff meeting around

“pupil news”, or a short time every week for the class team to come together and share observations or new information received.

For some children and young people, rehearsing with them strategies and approaches which they find useful as well as clear ways of describing what they find difficult may be useful, particularly in settings where they may come into contact with lots of different members of staff who may not always have ready access to profiles.

For ideas on cascading information if the pupil is moving between classes or settings see

Section 2G

Samira

The things people like and admire about me:

- ★ I am good at drawing
- ★ I am very funny!
- ★ I like making my friends laugh!
- ★ I am kind
- ★ I am great at dancing!



What makes me happy



Playing with my dog Lola.

Watching Strictly Come Dancing with my mum.

Drawing and painting. I like making cards for my friends.

How I like to be supported...

Help me to learn new words for school topics: talking about how words sound (long/short, rhymes with, begins with...) and what new words mean (what do they go with, draw them) really helps me.

I am practising saying "I don't understand, please say that again" when I need help (I may need reminding).

APPENDIX



Where to go for further reading and more information:

Guidance produced for the reformed SEND system:



[A strategy for the effective and meaningful participation of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities;](#)

Shortland Palmer Consultancy were commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Councils 'Support and Aspiration' Project Board to develop a strategy for the effective and meaningful participation of children and young people with SEND living in the area.

The recommendations from the report focus on building the capacity, confidence and skills of children and young people, their parents and carers, and professionals to engage children and young people in decision-making through sharing of resources and training.



[Exploring the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs and their families in decision-making;](#)

This research, led by The University of the West of England and Bristol Speech and Language Therapy Research Unit explores the involvement of children and young people with speech, language and communication needs, and their families, in decision-making within the context of the reformed SEND system.



The Council for Disabled Children's specialist network, **Making Ourselves Heard** have a toolkit called "[Your Rights, Your Future](#)". It is aimed at professionals working with young people. The toolkit offers a range of interactive activities for professionals to use with young people to support their understanding on the changes to their SEND support and how it affects them.

Where to go for further reading and more information

Guidance predating the reformed SEND system:



[The Communication Trust](#) is a coalition of over 50 not-for-profit organisations dedicated to supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication needs. We have a catalogue of resources and support offered by our members which you can access [here](#).



Department for Education

[The preferred outcomes of children and young people who have speech, language and communication - needs and their parents](#); A report from The Better Communication Research Programme which investigated the preferred outcomes valued by children and young people with SLCN and their parents. The findings are considered in terms of the implications for practitioners in both health and education.



[Speech, language and communication needs - User involvement and consultation](#); This tool from the Commissioning Support Programme is designed to provide information and guidance to commissioners of speech, language and communication services when considering their approach to involving children, young people and their parents or carers.

[How to - Involve children and young people with communication impairments in decision making](#);

This guide does not give in-depth information on the full range of communication impairments but rather gives a practical approach for how to overcome the barriers these children and young people face so they can fully participate in decisions and issues that affect them.



[A literature review on the participation of disabled children and young people in decision making](#);

This report provides an overview of available evidence concerning disabled children and young people's participation in strategic decision-making arenas.



Where to go for further reading and more information

More particularly for practitioners and families involved with children and young people with SLCN and also complex needs:



Involvement: Guidance from the Renton Foundation, Mencap and BILD (the British Institute of Learning Disabilities) about how to involve people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) in decision-making and consultation.



www.rettsyndrome.org.uk: This is particularly concerned with people with Retts syndrome but much of the advice regarding communication is pertinent when working with children and young people with learning difficulties generally.

See also www.pmldnetwork.org.uk which lists useful resources when working with this population.



Communication and people with the most complex needs: What works and why this is essential: A useful guide, written by Julie Goldbart and Sue Caton, which is available through Mencap.



Communication for Person Centred Planning: A helpful resource by Nicola Grove and Barbara McIntosh with the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities around person-centred planning and adults with learning disabilities. Much of the information is also applicable to children and young people.

Where to go for further reading and more information

Symbol support systems, visual resources and making information accessible:

Symbol software is available from:



Makaton www.makaton.org



Mayer-Johnson associates for Boardmaker symbols, www.mayer-johnson.co.uk



Communicate in Print symbols from www.widgit.com/inprint.

These sites also have examples of visual resources, as does www.visualaidforlearning.com

Information on the Talking Mats approach is available from:



www.talkingmats.com, as is information on training in using this approach.

www.speakingofspeech.com and www.boardmakershare.com have symbol resources that others have made for free download.

A comprehensive guide to making materials accessible can be found here:



[Am I Making Myself Clear? Mencap's guidelines to accessible writing](#)

