



## **Derby City and Neighbourhood Partnerships**

# **Special Educational Needs and Disability Participation Best Practice Guide**

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## 1. Introduction

The active participation of children, young people (CYP) and families in service planning and decision making is an accepted part of local authority and broader partnership working. The Children and Young People's Participation Network (CYPPN) have already a set of participation standards to enable effective participation of all CYP in decision making.

- 1.1 Children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) also have the right to be actively involved in decision making. This means any SEND CYP aged 0 to 25 years old.
- 1.2 In September 2014 the Government introduced the SEND Reform placing new duties on Local Authorities and their partners on how SEND CYP are assessed and supported, which included a code of practice (add in link here). Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 in relation to children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) must give regard to the:
  - views, wishes and feelings of the child, young person and parent/carer
  - importance of the child, young person and parent/carer participating as fully as possible in decisions, by being provided with the information and support necessary to enable them to participate in those decisions.
- 1.3 This code of practice has a clear focus on the participation of children, young people and parents/carers in decision making both at an individual and strategic level.
- 1.4 There are key principles that underpin this code of practice for example:
  - Considering whether some SEND CYP may require support in expressing their views
  - Not using parents/carers views as a proxy for their views
  - Have in place arrangements to engage with them directly
  - Have feedback mechanisms to ensure they understand the impact their participation is making
- 1.5 Derby's vision for SEND CYP is :

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Derby want to...

  - Be happy healthy and safe with good relationships
  - Be informed about the choices they have available
  - Feel involved in setting their own goals and types of support
  - Be able to access the right support at the right time
  - Live independently and achieve their full potential.
- 1.6 The Derby SEND priority linking to participation is...

Priority 3 **Quality of Service and Experience – part 1:** To enable children, young people and families to make informed choices and have control over the support

they receive and improve the engagement and involvement of children, young people and their families in the planning, delivery and monitoring of services.

## **2. Planning to engage SEND children and young people in decision making**

This is not an exhaustive guide and the key factors are looking at the individual needs of CYP, their preferred communication method and working with those that know them best.

The 8 steps to consider when engaging SEND CYP in decision making are:

1. **Inclusion** – provide all CYP the opportunity even if they do not have a physical voice. Be mindful of cognitive ability and emotional maturity. In order to be fully inclusive and offer the best support for all CYP consider which support staff will be needed, for example: BSL interpreter or with a particular skill set, or a worker that a CYP is familiar with.
2. **Personalisation** – Keep CYP at the centre when planning enabling them to have a voice and some level of control. Get to know the individual CYP, what their needs are and their key strengths.
3. **Preparation** – Inform CYP what's going to happen and where possible rehearse/practice this beforehand. Be prepared for and understand different behaviour to be able to respond and manage appropriately. Have everything ready so there is less risk of last minute change.
4. **Environment** – deciding with CYP on the most appropriate environment that is accessible, has low distraction, familiar and easy to adapt. Use appropriately small groups and offer individual space for those that need it.
5. **Communication** – understand the individual's communication needs, identify the right medium of communication/language and use accessible methods/formats.
6. **Time** – make the session an appropriate length of time that is manageable and flexible. There may be a need to set clear time limit and come back for additional session rather than go over the time.
7. **Feedback** – use evaluation tools to constantly improve practice. Let CYP know what difference they have made.
8. **Workforce** – ensure access to SEND training so there is an understanding, adaptability, flexibility. Allow time for reflective practice to challenge of some values and beliefs.

## **3. Engaging children and young people with Autism**

3.1. It is important to consider the following when working with CYP with Autism:

- **Maintaining a low distraction area with limited noise.** This will minimise disruption. CYP with autism are often hyper sensitive, therefore it is important to make the space as quiet as possible. The CYP need to feel safe both physically and emotionally. You may need to direct CYP to a chair and it may

be better to sit next to the CYP rather than face to face. It's important to ask if it's ok to sit next to them.

- **Working to time.** It can be frustrating to CYP with Autism when things run behind schedule, be punctual and have clear time boundaries on the agenda/plan. There may be a need to set clear time limit and come back for additional session rather than go over the time.
- **Allow time for processing.** It may take several minutes for certain information to sink in, be patient and make room for this time. Work to the 6 second rule (allow 6 seconds for processing) rather than repeating what has been said.
- **Be clear about the process and stick to it.**
- **Be direct and to the point.** Stick to one point at a time. Do not use sarcasm or inferential language which requires CYP to read between the lines.
- **Have everything prepared and set up.** Be thoroughly prepared by having documents, drinks and other equipment ready.
- **Work in small groups.** Large groups can be overwhelming for CYP with Autism, keep the group small and make sure the CYP attending are aware of how many people to expect beforehand. Sometimes even small groups may be too much.
- **Take in to consideration how many support staff are needed.** You don't want to feel out of your depth, each CYP needs to be properly supported. Think about how many staff you will need to do this effectively. The more people the more socially demanding the situation will be.
- **Give instructions in small chunks.** An overload of information can be confusing, give one instruction at a time. Use visual resources where appropriate.
- **Know your audience.** What are the particular needs of the CYP you are working with? Do your homework in advance. If there is more than 1 CYP within the group their needs may differ significantly.
- **Be prepared for different behaviour.** CYP with Autism may want to work in ways that surprise you (sitting on the floor, taking shoes off). Don't let this worry you but be clear about boundaries. Be consistent, if the rule one day is no feet on chairs, it has to be the same the next time.

#### **4. Engaging children and young people with a Learning Disability**

4.1. It is important to consider the following when working with CYP with a learning disability:

- Make sure you are working in a calm environment.
- Use clear simple language, without patronising.

- Have a clear process.
- Think about different methods of communication that may be needed. For example:
  - PECS helps people to communicate through the use of pictures; with time people may be able to move from simple requests to full sentences.
  - Makaton is a language programme designed to provide a means of communication to individuals who cannot communicate efficiently by speaking.
  - Visual Resources may be helpful for CYP with high levels of language/ability
- Keep the groups small. Sometimes even small groups may be too much.

## **5. Engaging children and young people with a hearing impairment**

5.1. It is important to consider the following when working with CYP a hearing impairment:

- Establish the type and extent of the hearing loss and match communication to the individual child as there are varying types and degrees of hearing loss from mild to profound.
- Communication may be through speaking and listening alone or supplemented by visual communication.
- Visual communication includes written prompts, sign support, BSL\*1 (British Sign Language) or Makaton
- It is important to have information on handouts because it is difficult to write and watch for visual clues simultaneously
- Always remember the following Golden Rules for Communication:
  - Don't Shout
  - Face the Light
  - Speak Clearly
  - Be Patient
- BSL\*1 – If a child is a BSL user, you will need to book a qualified BSL interpreter

## **6. Engaging children and young people with a visual impairment**

6.1 It is important to consider the following when working with CYP with a visual impairment:

- **Think about the font you are using.** Some fonts can be easier/ more difficult to read for visually impaired people. Speak with the young person or their carer beforehand about what font would work best for them and what size they will need it in. Plus how materials are laid out for example colour contrast.
- **Visual aids.** CYP may use Low Vision Aids such as a magnifier or assistive technology to access printed material or they may use Braille instead of print. Some CYP may use assisted technology on laptops or tablets in order to read documents so where possible email information in advance.
- **Talk everything through.** But remember that many CYP with visual impairment sometimes have minimal social skills and don't see / understand non-verbal communication.
- **Engage the senses.** If you are consulting with a young person about a specific topic, use objects that they can feel to represent certain words that otherwise would be written down.
- **Things to consider:**
  - How competent is the young person in moving around the room independently? Remember that this will improve with familiarity and that lighting is key – find out from the CYP if they are better with bright or low light
  - How much sight, if any, does the young person have and how useful is it? Remember there is a wide range, don't think that all visually impaired CYP are blind or nearly blind
  - How competent is the young person with Braille and tactile skills? Only applicable to a very small proportion of visual impaired CYP.

## **7. Engaging children and young people with mental health issues**

7.1 It is important to consider the following when working with CYP with mental health issues:

- **Follow ethical practice** stick to the topic do not take on the role of a therapist by going in to the young person's personal issues
- **Be aware of the individuals particular mental health needs.** For example...
- **Be aware of cognitive processes** - CYP struggling with depression, anxiety or trauma may have difficulty with short/ long term memory. It is important to be patient and work at the pace of the child or young person.
- **CYP with anxiety may display by shutting down or avoiding eye contact** – it is important to maintain eye contact with the child or young person. Unless this is a CYP with Autism as maintaining eye contact may cause more anxiety.

- Create an environment which is safe, non-judgemental but with clear boundaries. For example
- Have a clear process. Have clarity and set outcomes with realistic goals – create a purpose and meaning to encourage participation and engagement.
- Think about different methods of communication that may be needed. For example:
  - PECS helps people to communicate through the use of pictures; with time people may be able to move from simple requests to full sentences.
- Keep the groups small – Large groups can be overwhelming to some with emotional, health and well-being issues, keep them to a manageable size or one to one.
- Flexibility with regards to location, time and member of staff – For young people that have dealt with trauma, you may need to consider a gender specific member of staff. With regard to location, some CYP may have certain places they are more comfortable with. It is important to be consistent with location, time and staff.
- Give plenty of notice – Some CYP need time to process and prepare. However for other young people, plans made on the day can be more effective. This should be discussed with primary carers.
- Things to consider:
  - Are there sensory issues to take in to account? For example, for a young person with anxiety
  - How verbal is the young person?
  - What are the young person's triggers?
  - Are there risk issues to consider

## **8 Engaging children and young people with attachment difficulties.**

8.1 It is important to consider the following when trying to engage CYP who are adopted or who have attachment and trauma based needs:

- Be informed where possible about any losses, attachment needs and trauma experiences prior to working with the child/young person.
- Have realistic expectations – Focus on making small steps forward and celebrate every sign of success.
- Patience is essential – The process may not move as quickly as you would like. Being patient creates an atmosphere of safety for the child/young person and more will likely be achieved.

- **Stay positive and hopeful** – Be sensitive to the fact that children pick up on feelings. If they sense you're discouraged, it will be discouraging to them.
- **Create an environment which is safe, non-judgemental but with clear boundaries.**
- **Have a clear process** – Have clarity and set outcomes with realistic goals, create a purpose and meaning as to encourage participation and engagement.
- **Keep the groups small** – Large groups can be overwhelming to some young people , keep them to a manageable size
- **Flexibility with regards to location, time and member of staff** – For young people that have dealt with trauma a familiar adult may be essential. Parents may need to be involved and to remain with the child/young person. With regard to location, some CYP may have certain places they are more comfortable with. It is important to be consistent with location, time and staff.
- **Be mindful of the language used in terms of family.**

## Appendix 1

### Resources

- The 15 Steps Challenge for children and young people's inpatient services



15-Steps-Challenge-f  
or-children-and-young

- Tools for Engaging Young People with SEND  
<http://www.sheffkids.co.uk/adultsite/pages/resources.html>
- For Person-centred thinking tools-  
<http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/person-centred-approaches-recovery-making-work/>
- Teaching resource for Autism <http://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/the-big-a-me-myself-and-autism-6003187>
- Autism Spectrum Disorder Training



ASD Training  
Flyer.docx\_v1.docx

- Tool to adapt text into images <https://www.widgit.com/products/widgit-online/>
- The National Deaf children's society website includes communication tips for communicating with deaf children <http://www.ndcs.org.uk/>



Are You a Deaf  
Friendly Teacher (Pri

- Things to consider for Deaf Children
- Communication Unlimited to book a BSL Interpreter - [bookings@cu-bsl.co.uk](mailto:bookings@cu-bsl.co.uk)
- To convert information for Visual Impairment – Adrian Farnsworth  
[Adrian.farnsworth@derby.gov.uk](mailto:Adrian.farnsworth@derby.gov.uk)