

PRINCIPLE FIVE

CHILDREN ARE PROVIDED WITH INFORMATION
AND GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN
DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT AFFECT
THEIR LIVES



KEEP
ME IN
THE
LOOP



KEEP ME IN THE LOOP

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL FIND

- information about and tips for:
 - o keeping kids informed about what's going on
 - o why it's important to see kids, hear kids and act on what kids have to say
- a list of great resources for communicating with kids and getting them involved in decision-making
- a pulse check to see how you're going
- tools to help you connect to and communicate with kids about things that matter

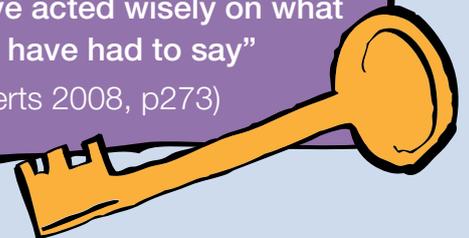


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Children and young people need information about what is happening to them and their families. They also require opportunities to share their views and needs in a safe environment. Involving children and young people in decision-making processes is both validating and empowering for them. It can also help services improve the quality and responsiveness of assistance that is provided to individuals and families as they are more aware of their needs and wishes. The way that children are engaged, the information that is provided to them and their involvement in decision making is shaped by their developmental needs, their wishes and their capacities.

“ It is clear that listening to children, hearing children and acting on what they say are three very different activities... There have always been people who have listened, sometimes been people who have heard, and perhaps less often those who have acted wisely on what children have had to say”

(Roberts 2008, p273)



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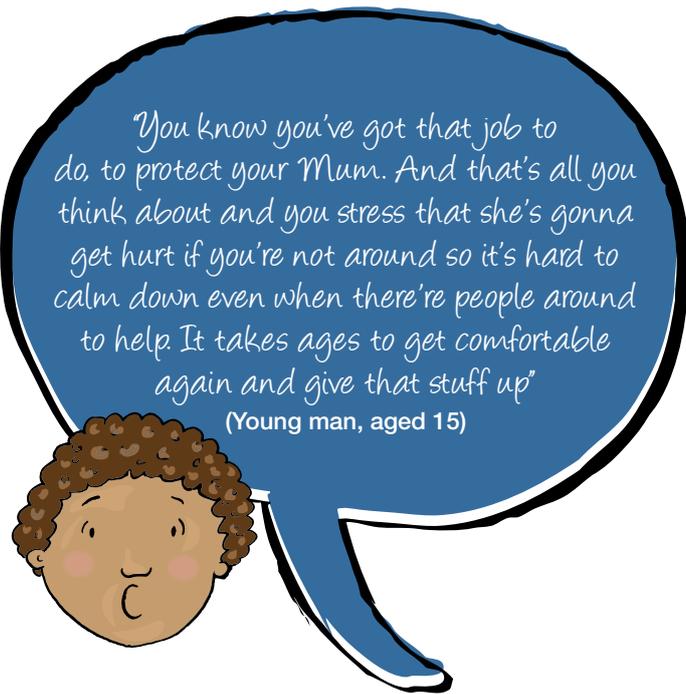


KEEPING KIDS INFORMED

Often when we talk about children's participation we jump straight into a discussion about how we involve children in decision making. This is not always helpful: because often kids tell us that the thing they need first and foremost is information.

If I was in the position to change things – that's what I'd change. Get people to talk to young people they can trust. Once a young person trusts you they'll really talk to you about what's really going on"

(Young man, aged 18)



You know you've got that job to do, to protect your Mum. And that's all you think about and you stress that she's gonna get hurt if you're not around so it's hard to calm down even when there're people around to help. It takes ages to get comfortable again and give that stuff up"

(Young man, aged 15)

IN FINDING THEIR WAY HOME, CHILDREN SAID THAT THEY OFTEN WANT AND NEED TO KNOW:

1. **That their family is safe** – kids said that during periods of homelessness they worried about themselves and their families and needed someone to reassure them that things were going to be OK. This was particularly the case for older children and children who felt responsible for protecting their parents and siblings

2. **That it is not their fault** – kids told us that they often believed that things had gone badly because of something they had done or not done.

"Until just the other year I thought we were homeless because I was naughty and because Mum didn't like me anymore. I used to cry and cry all the time because it was all my fault"

(Girl, aged 10)

3. **What is going to happen** – children told us that they wanted to know when plans were in place for them: where they were going to go or how long they were going to stay and who was going to help. Mostly they wanted to know that 'things were sorted'.

In addition to these three key messages, children also told us that sometimes they would like to know why they had become homeless, how issues (such as domestic violence, their parent's drug use or mental health problems) were being dealt with and why their families weren't in a stable situation – but they stressed that this was an individual thing. Some children said that to feel safe they needed this information, while others reported that they'd feel more anxious if they knew. As such, it's important to talk to children and find out what they do and don't want to know.

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LISTENING TO KIDS

Kids also shared that they wanted and needed adults to listen to them and hear how they felt, what they needed and how they wanted to be supported.

LISTEN WITH MORE THAN YOUR EARS:

The UK National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has an excellent resource called Listening to Children: Improving communication with your child (available online at www.nspcc.org.uk). The first thing it observes is that “children can’t always put their feelings into words, so listening to them includes paying attention to their actions and behaviour.”

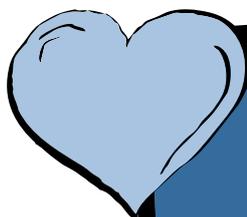
These behaviours may not suggest anything at all – but if a child is behaving this way over a period of time then it might be useful to suss them out.

Some of the behaviours that you might keep your eye out for:

- **With babies:** crying can often point to a difficulty. They might be hungry, feeling pain or discomfort or picking up on their parent’s stress, anxiety or concern. Offering to help parents (in a relaxed and non-threatening way) and engaging in a gentle conversation about how they are going can be a powerful way of responding to the baby and parent’s needs.
- **With young children:** kids who are feeling uncomfortable or worried may either become withdrawn or act out. Often when they most want to talk they seem most reluctant to do so. Provide them with gentle openings and float around their space allowing them to share when they’re ready.
- **Older children:** kids often will become quite clingy or exert behaviours that they hope will force an interaction (fighting, being cruel or otherwise acting out). Rather than responding to the behaviour, provide opportunities to talk: ‘I can see that you’re not happy about something – can we talk it through?’



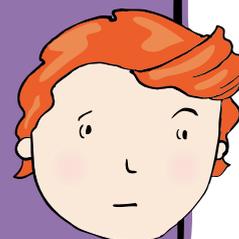
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“A wise old owl sat on an oak; The more he saw the less he spoke; The less he spoke the more he heard; Why aren't we like that wise old bird?”

SOME THINGS TO BE MINDFUL OF

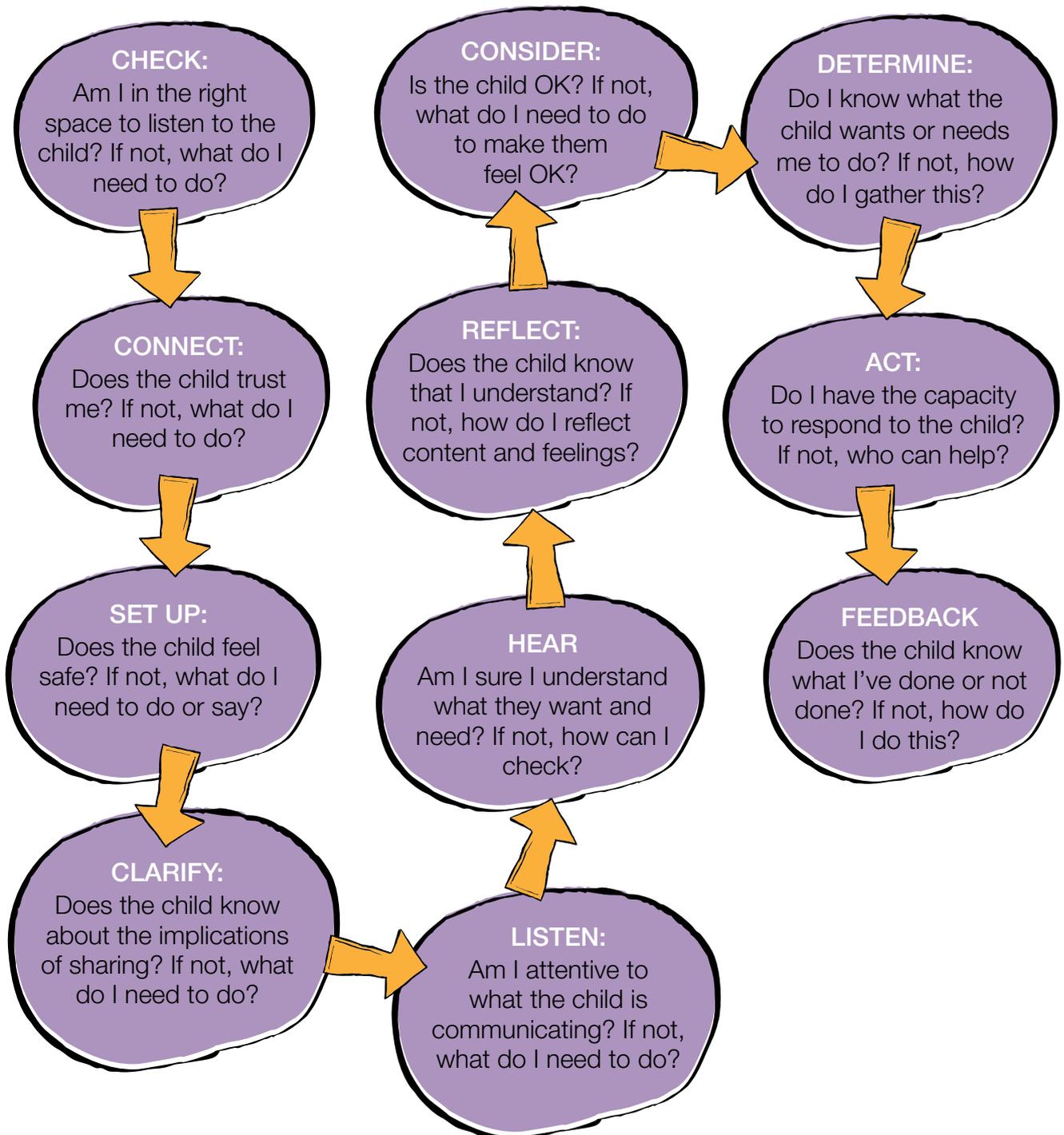
- Children and young people are often less verbal and more demonstrative than adults
- Use toys and play as a way of engaging with children letting them share their thoughts and feelings as stories rather than as a straight conversation
- Use the kids' favourite toys or pets to your advantage: 'Can you tell your Teddy about how you're feeling about your new home?' or 'Are there things that you and your dog Jasper might be worried about?'
- Kids are naturally curious: they'll often come to you in their own time to find out more about you and your role
- Children and young people share when they feel safe or when they are most worried
- Be prepared: be ready to have these important conversations and to respond to the child or young person's needs
- Be honest about your capacity to respond in the here and now – if you're not in the right headspace or don't have enough time link the child or young person up with someone who is and does
- Respond to the child: reflect and acknowledge their thoughts and feelings



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LISTENING, HEARING AND RESPONDING TO CHILDREN – A QUICK CHECKLIST



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SOME THOUGHTS ON CONNECTING WITH CHILDREN

Children have often told us they find it difficult talking to adults who they don't know or trust. They tell us that it is vital, then, for workers to invest time and energy into getting to know them, in proving that they are trustworthy and respectful and that they want to understand their situation.

PETS: Personal Engagement Tools are things that you can use to engage children and young people in a relaxed and informal way. Usually the PET is something that's attention grabbing and that will intrigue children and young people and get them to come to you. PETS might include things like musical instruments, a game or activity, some craft resources or even some tasty food or drink. Workers use the PETS as a way of inviting children and young people into a conversation or activity. Getting them out should be followed with a 'hey, come and join me!' The value of PETS are that they don't force children or young people into connecting: this can be good for those who are shy or apprehensive.

Workers can also send messages to children and young people that they're fun and child friendly by wearing clothes that are casual or 'in' (like a special pair of earrings, or a band or cartoon T-shirt) or by listening to music/watching youth-friendly TV shows with them.

QUICK CLICKS: Workers sometimes tell us that it's hard to engage with children and young people because they're often working with their parents and don't have the time or opportunities to make connections with kids. This implies that connections need to be formal and time intensive, but this is not the case. A quick smile, a thumbs up, a wave or a poked-out tongue can help you make a connection with a child or young person, and sends the message 'I can see you' and, hopefully, 'I'm here if you need me'. These little 'clicks' accumulate over time and can provide the basis for a stronger connection.

CAUTION: Children and young people are good at picking 'frauds' – workers who they believe are pretending to be 'cool' just to impress them or connect with them. As such, it's important to be honest: don't pretend to be something that you're not, because often that sends the wrong message to the child or young person.

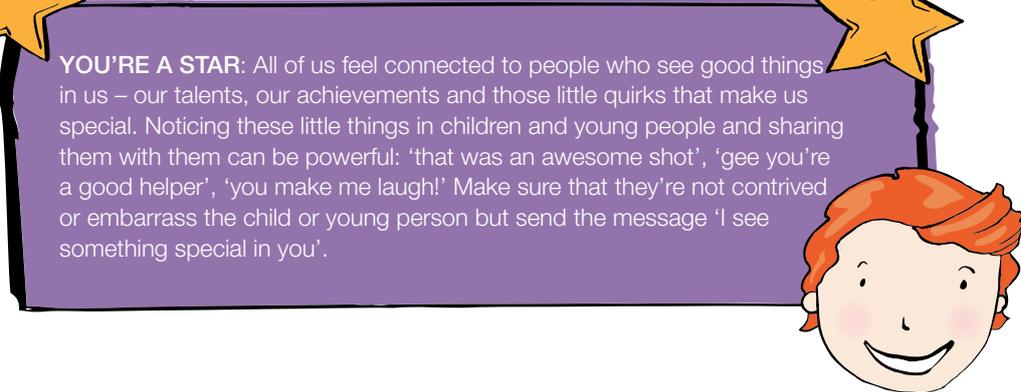


Tool 5A 'Talking cards' can be used to break the ice and get a picture of some of the child's interests and strengths

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ACTS OF KINDNESS: A great way to build a connection with a child and their family is through small kind gestures – bringing some food with you to a meeting, offering a lift to the shops, bringing a picture frame so that the family can put their photos up. Strengths-based approaches warn us against being over the top: buying kids expensive gifts can be problematic when parents can't match your generosity and can sometimes make kids wary of you: "are you trying to buy our friendship?" Be mindful too that sometimes children are sceptical about adults who give them gifts for no apparent reason; give them a reason for the gift and offer it in front of their parents.

SAME SAME: All of us connect with others who have similar interests, beliefs and likes. It's the same with children and young people. Finding things that you have in common with children and sharing that with them can be powerful in developing connections, be that a favourite sports team, a dislike for some new boy band or a love of art or craft. Often these similarities can be quickly identified: 'oh wow, I love your shirt – my favourite colour is red' or through a quick conversation 'you bought the new Kylie CD? Wow, I have some of her old stuff. Maybe we could listen to it together sometime'. Again, they're quick connections, but ones that send the message 'I see something about you that we have in common. We have a bond'.



YOU'RE A STAR: All of us feel connected to people who see good things in us – our talents, our achievements and those little quirks that make us special. Noticing these little things in children and young people and sharing them with them can be powerful: 'that was an awesome shot', 'gee you're a good helper', 'you make me laugh!' Make sure that they're not contrived or embarrass the child or young person but send the message 'I see something special in you'.



YOU'RE THE EXPERT: Children and young people often love it when adults see them as experts or as having skills and talents that are admired. Kids will connect to adults who are genuinely interested in them and want to know more: 'can you show me how to make those beads, they look great', 'you're an awesome skater, what do you call that trick?', 'what position do you play in netball? How's that different to the centre – I really have no idea!'

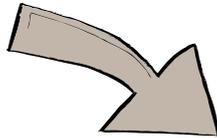
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QUICK ENGAGERS

Sometimes it's good to start an interaction with a quick game or activity that helps you connect with the child and minimise power imbalances, and sets the child at ease. These 'engagers' should be quick, fun and match the things that the child enjoys or is good at. Examples include taking a child outside for a kick of the soccer ball, having a silly dance competition in the dining room or playing a game of I Spy (or better yet Eye See You).

A FEW INSIDE ART-BASED ENGAGERS INCLUDE:



Catchup

Grab a piece of paper and two coloured textas or pencils. Start a line from one corner of the page and ask the child to follow your line and, if they can, to catch up. Change the direction of the line constantly so you end up with a squiggle made up of lots of shapes. Sit with the child and see if you can make anything of the picture: 'can you see any animals? or shapes? or people? or things?' Give some suggestions and maybe draw some extra bits in (eyes and whiskers to make a cat, a stick to make a circle into a lolly pop). If the child's engaged have another go – this time let them take the lead.

Mr Squiggle

Grab a piece of paper and two coloured textas or pencils. Start a line from one corner of the page and ask the child to follow your line and, if they can, to catch up. Change the direction of the line constantly so you end up with a squiggle made up of lots of shapes. Sit with the child and see if you can make anything of the picture: 'can you see any animals? or shapes? or people? or things?' Give some suggestions and maybe draw some extra bits in (eyes and whiskers to make a cat, a stick to make a circle into a lolly pop). If the child's engaged have another go – this time let them take the lead.

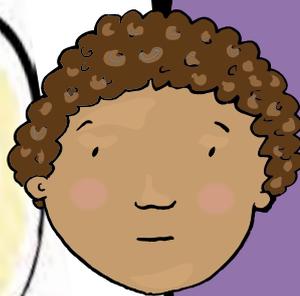
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LISTENING AND HEARING

TIPS FOR TALKING TO KIDS

- 1 Take time to hear a child out** – even when they're asking for something that you know you're not able to provide. This might give you some hints as to what the child really needs or wants and can help you come up with an alternative.
- 2 Put yourself in the child's position** – what types of responses would you like from an adult if you were in the same situation? Most of us wouldn't be keen for our ideas to be dismissed or understated ('surely it's not that bad' or 'well I'm sure that's not what they meant') so be mindful of your responses.
- 3 Let kids vent negative feelings** – children need to be able to express themselves without adults judging or minimising them. This can be hard when they are voicing their grievances. Rather than justifying yourself first, start with an acknowledgement 'It must have been hard to tell me that. Thank you' or 'Yeah, I can see that you're angry'.
- 4 Match their speed** – sometimes by just mirroring their tempo kids get the message that you have a handle on what's going on for them.
- 5 Reflect children's content and feelings** – check in with the child to make sure that you've understood what they were saying. 'So you were angry when I didn't come when I said I would' or 'You're feeling a bit anxious because you don't know who's looking after your cat' followed by 'am I right?'
- 6 Check your tone** – although adults spend some time thinking about what they're saying to children, often they don't consider how they're saying it. Ask yourself: is my tone warm and inviting or am I being patronising or dismissive?
- 7 Give them a chance** – sometimes kids will ask adults questions. Rather than jumping in and giving an answer to them straight away why not ask them what they think the answer is 'what have you heard?', 'what do you think's going on?'
- 8 Less is sometimes more** – don't over talk with kids: they can get bored and distracted easily. Make sure that both of you have had the opportunity to say what you need to say and that a resolution has been found. Then let it go – or better yet do something fun!



Get feedback

– ask kids how they think you're going in regards to communicating with them; this both sends the message 'I respect your opinion' and gives you some feedback and ideas for the future.



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LISTEN IN LOTS OF DIFFERENT WAYS

Lots of children find it difficult to talk, particularly about feelings or difficult situations. Some find it a lot easier to sing, rap, draw or write about their feelings because they don't have to directly talk about what's going on inside. Acting feelings out can be an easy way for them to express their emotions.

For some younger children who are uncomfortable sharing sad feelings, a stuffed animal or puppet may help. Some children are more likely to open up to a stuffed animal because they know they will be listened to and not judged harshly. Help children make sock puppets out of old socks and odds and ends – get them to add facial features using permanent markers or craft supplies such as googly eyes. After children feel comfortable sharing their feelings with their handmade sock puppets, encourage them to open up to you or to any other person they might feel comfortable with. Children may first share with you or another person through the puppet, and then, if they feel comfortable, talk directly to you or another person.

One tool that was used effectively in *Finding their way home* was a clay face made from a balloon filled with clay and then decorated with two googly eyes and coloured wool for hair. Children were asked to introduce themselves to 'Bluey' and to then mould his face to describe how he might feel when living in a refuge, when he gets to see his family, when he doesn't get to see his friends etc. Like with the sock puppets, children were able to talk about Bluey's feelings in ways that they weren't able when we directly asked them about their experiences.

Kids also told us that they liked to talk to their pets and that maybe adults should spend time with kids and animals talking about things that are important.

If you have an animal you can talk to the animal and they will always just listen and not say things like 'you're ugly' and stuff

(Boy, aged 11)



Tool 5B Some directions for making a Bluey of your own are attached 'Clay Faces'

St Luke's Anglicare has developed a number of resources to help kids talk.

These can be ordered online at www.nnovativeresources.org/ and include:

- Bear Cards
- A pocket full of stones
- The My Feelings Kit
- Story Catching



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A WORD ON POWER AND COMMUNICATION

It is important to recognise the power imbalance between adults and children. Children often have very little control over their lives and may find it very difficult to speak up for themselves, say no, or articulate and assert their needs – particularly when they have been in unsafe and highly vulnerable situations. Always be prepared to listen and pick up on non-verbal cues such as avoidance, withdrawal, inappropriate behaviour, tiredness, being distracted, stomach aches/headaches and other aches and pains or illness. These are clues that a child may be feeling stressed, avoiding something or unable to express their needs verbally. Children may also test you out with a small or trivial matter to see how you react before they will talk about an issue that is difficult for them. **Remember to see, listen to, hear and act** on what children communicate:

- Recognise the power imbalance between adults and children
- Children often have very little control over their lives
- It is challenging for children to say no to an adult, especially if they feel unsafe
- Even when asked or given a choice, children may not be able to express what they want
- Work in ways that give children 'pressure free' choices as much as possible

- Allow children space to change their minds
- Use every possible opportunity to empower children to contribute to decisions about their own lives, from choosing what to wear to having a say in where they live or go to school
- Minimise children's exposure to people, events and situations that make them feel unsafe

RESOURCES ON LISTENING TO KIDS

Listening to children: Improving communication with your child was developed by the UK Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and includes some useful tips and strategies for communicating with kids. It's available online at www.nspcc.org.uk

Kids Help Line has developed a website called 'Talk to your kids', which includes some strategies on how to talk to kids about a whole range of issues. It's available at www.talktoyourkids.com.au/



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TOOLS FOR TOUGH ISSUES

Some parents and families may be dealing with some very complex issues like:

- drug and alcohol misuse
- mental illness
- family violence
- suicide and self harm

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Some Australian tools designed for assessing safety issues when working with parents, which include questions about children's safety and children's needs are summarised and collected in **A framework for screening assessment and referrals in Family Relationship Centres** (2008). Some of the situations covered include:

- management of cases involving violence (p105)
- danger assessments (p108)
- examples of questions used to assess risk to self or others (p109)
- sample questions for assessing risk of suicide (p128)
- tips for de-escalating angry people (p141)
- debriefing tips and strategies for supervisors (p143, 145)



Child abuse, including bullying, thrives on secrecy. Communicating openly and honestly with children will assist them to speak up when something is worrying them. (ECPAT, 2001)



Remember, children who know they will be listened to and are empowered to make healthy choices for themselves, are more likely to be able to ask for help when they are in an unsafe situation.

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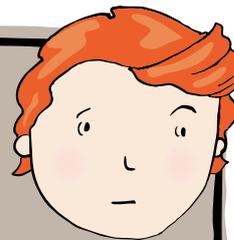
WHAT IS PARTICIPATION?

Participation means different things to different people. Generally, it's about the engagement of children and young people in decision making about their lives. This might be at a micro level – where children are recognised as having thoughts and feelings about themselves and how they are supported – through to a governance level – where children and young people have some influence over how programs are developed and provided.

Participation involves adults devolving a degree of power to children and young people so that they can have a share in decisions that affect them. (NSWCCYP)

Because there are a lot of different ways of understanding what participation is, it's important as an organisation to agree on (a) what you mean and (b) how much you are able to invest in participation to ensure that it is meaningful.

How an organisation sees participation will depend on:



The level of participation: how much power is shared between adults and children? How much involvement are children allowed? How influential are their wishes and contributions?

The focus of the participation: what aspects of their lives and your service are children and young people asked about? Is it mainly about how they'd like their space set up or are they involved in other things like how support is offered, the hiring of new staff, or giving feedback on service planning? Are they asked to comment on things that just affect them, or their families, or children more generally?

The nature of participation: is the child or young person's involvement a once-off activity (ie when they first come to your service) or is it ongoing (ie a reference group)?

The nature of the child or young person: does the child's age affect how they can be involved? Do they have any needs that might make participation difficult? How do they want to be involved? How do you meet the diversity of needs and wishes?

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WHY INVOLVE CHILDREN?

THEY HAVE A RIGHT

In 1989, countries around the world signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, one of the most important agreements related to children and young people ever developed. In addition to committing to ensuring that all children are given opportunities to access health, education and a range of social supports, signatories to the convention agreed to provide “the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child” (United Nations 1989). In addition, article 13 gives children the right to information.

IT'S GOOD FOR THEM

Children tell us that it's important for them to know about what's happening in their lives and those of their families because:

- They need adults to reassure them that their situation is not their fault, that they and their family are not alone and that things are going to get better
- They feel less worried when they know people understand their situation and are doing something about it
- Often their families have needed them to take on roles during periods of homelessness (for protecting parents or siblings in domestic violence situations; in supporting each other when feeling worried, anxious or afraid; in keeping hopeful and optimistic)

IT IS EMPOWERING

Children also tell us that having workers ask them questions and give them opportunities to make decisions is empowering. Too often during periods of homelessness children have no control over their lives and can feel overwhelmed. The extent of hopelessness a child feels will depend on their age, temperament and life experience.

IT CAN INCREASE CHILDREN'S SAFETY

The more opportunities that children are given to meaningfully talk about their lives the more opportunities they have to raise their fears, concerns and any safety issues that they might have. Giving kids opportunities to share these things increases the likelihood that workers can respond.

IT CAN BE SKILL-BUILDING

Children who are involved in decision making can learn and develop new skills such as negotiation, problem solving and communication.



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OUTCOMES ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE RESPONSIVE AND THEREFORE SUCCESSFUL

It's not surprising that when clients of services play a part in determining issues and challenges that assessments and supports provided are likely to be more responsive to their needs. This often leads to better outcomes and higher levels of engagement: clients are more likely to go along with plans if they feel part of the team that made them.

"Kids should be asked about stuff that's got to do with them... They can tell you stuff you'd never think of - cos you're not a kid..."

(Girl, aged 6)



Consulting with children enables services to be improved and adapted to meet changing needs that children can help define; participation gives them a level of influence and an element of choice about the provision offered and can help them understand their own wants and needs.

When children are involved in decision making, often both they and their families are more engaged. Children can feel empowered by the process, feel proud about being part of the solution and jump on board with new ideas on how things might work better.

We know too that parents often feel more engaged when the voices of their children are heard, particularly when they weren't fully aware of how their children were feeling and what they thought they needed. In fact some research tells us that hearing how their kids are feeling has led many to seek support, to make positive change in their lives and to overcome problems such as addictions – all when the sharing has been safe.

Parents have shared that being able to better understand what's going on for their children can also give them some relief as many are anxious about what their kids are experiencing, feel worried about whether they're doing right by them, and feel comforted when they hear that their children are often doing OK.

IT'S GOOD FOR WORKERS AND SERVICES

Workers who feel connected with clients and who have good outcomes feel more satisfied with their jobs and are more likely to stay around. Services that actively engage clients and are made up of happier workers are more likely to thrive and often are more attractive funding bodies!



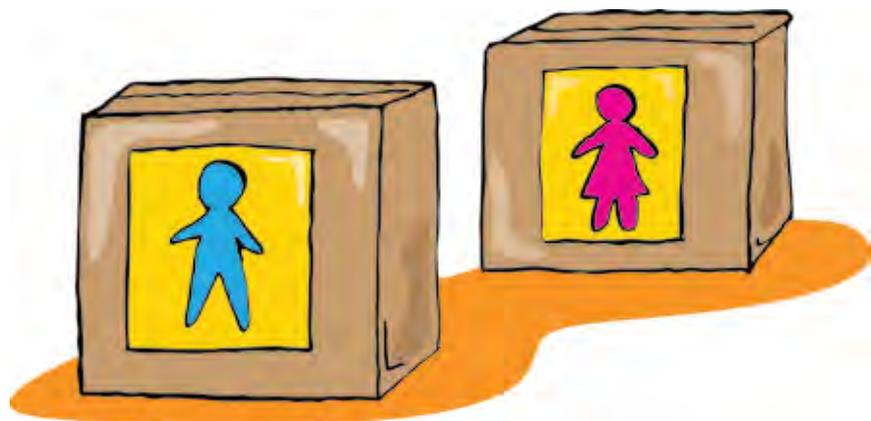
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LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

Opportunities to involve children and young people in decision making about their lives occurs at different times, in different ways and for different reasons. In the past, programs and services have often ticked the 'participation' box because they have engaged kids in reference groups or asked them for feedback on their services, but have forgotten to ask them about what they want for their families, or failed to give them some control over the space in which they live or enough information to understand their situation. Although the service system highly values high-level involvement of kids, children tell us that the things they want to know and do are often a lot more simple but important.

LEVEL	THINGS KIDS OFTEN WANT
SYSTEM	To have some input into how the service works with others: to give feedback on how services work together; on what the big issues are for kids and families like theirs (includes consultations and research activities)
SERVICE	To have some input into how services operate: what some of the program expectations are; who is employed; how feedback is taken and acted upon; evaluation of service (includes involving children in recruitment, service evaluations)
PROGRAM	To have some input into how kids are supported: in deciding what kind of help is provided and who provides it (includes involving children in service design, cofacilitating programs and evaluation)
CLIENT	To know what is going on for their families: that they're safe, that things are going to get better, where they're going to stay, to know that things weren't their fault (includes family conferences, providing child-friendly information)
	To be involved in decision making: about who they get info and help from; about some of the things that they'd like to see happen; in raising their issues and concerns (includes allowing children decisions about staff, case planning and decision making)



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CHARACTERISTICS

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People suggests in its resource *Sharing the Stage* that participation has five essential elements. In brief, they are:

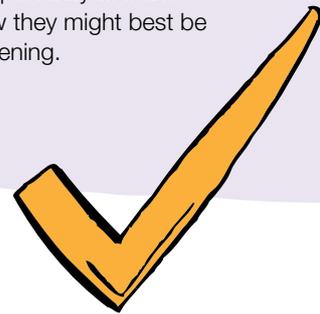
1 **Participation is part of the organisation's culture:** unless there is a shared commitment to children and young people's participation, a belief in its value, and explicit policies to ensure that children are meaningfully engaged it is going to be difficult to enact. By recruiting staff with the skills to actively work with, listen to and act on children's needs and wishes, and to provide ongoing supervision and support, participation can become a key characteristic of the service.

2 **Kids have a place in decision making:** children are informed about how they might participate and given a variety of opportunities to have their say about things that are important to them. They are actively invited to participate as either individuals or in groups.

3 **Adults adapt to kids' ways of working:** the way that we involve children and young people is shaped by their age, their interests and their wishes and involvement is enabled in a way that is child-centred. This is in contrast to inviting children to participate in adult-focused and adult-driven processes where they are seen as an add-on. Children have input into how they are involved and how adults fit into their agendas.

4 **Strong relationships with kids:** children and young people are given opportunities to connect with adults who can help them participate. These champions help kids have their say, keep other adults in line and help ensure that the child's needs and wishes remain central to discussions about their support.

5 **Participation rewards kids and the organisations:** participation should be beneficial for children, young people and services. If it is not why do it? Providing children opportunities to develop new skills, to take control and to share ideas can be a powerful experience, as can adults having the opportunity to learn from children about how they understand the world and how they might best be supported. Constantly check to see that these things are happening.



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PRINCIPLES:

Relationship is key: Kids tell us that to fully participate they need to have developed a relationship of trust with the adult who is helping them to get involved. This is particularly important when discussing things like what worries them, what they really think about services and what they need for their families.

Every child is different: As highlighted in *Guide 2: I'm one of a kind*, every child experiences the world in slightly different ways. They have different interests and wishes and want to be involved in different ways and for different reasons. Investing some time in determining what they want to have a say about, how they want to participate and any 'no-go zones' is essential.

Give multiple openings: Not all children will be enthusiastic about getting involved. That's OK. In fact, kids tell us that they often change their minds. This might be because their circumstances change, because they feel differently about their situation or their workers (and might feel more comfortable in having their say) or because they notice other kids getting something out of their participation. As such, it's important to keep providing kids with openings for involvement.

Take your time: It often takes time to engage with children and young people. When they're involved, time is also needed to ensure that they can process information and consider their own thoughts and feelings.

Make participation meaningful: Before inviting children to participate in decision making, it's important to ask yourself why you are doing so and what commitment you have to responding to the needs and wishes that they raise. If children feel as though their participation is only token their enthusiasm often wanes. If children have faith in the process but then discover that their involvement has had little effect they may feel disappointed, angry or let down. This can affect their level of trust and confidence in workers and the service.

Make participation beneficial: Participation should be a process that is valuable and provides the child, the worker and the service with opportunities to learn and benefit from the experience. Acknowledging this growth is important, as is rewarding children for their participation – it sends the message that you value their contribution.

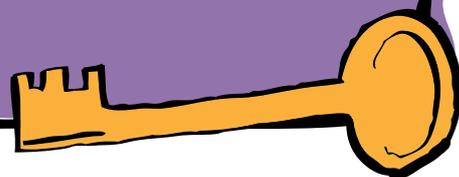
Feedback is key: Often we ask kids for their ideas and wishes but don't feed back to them how we've used the information. Kids tell us that this is disempowering and that they feel let down (even if you've taken their stuff on board but haven't shown them how). If you're not able to accommodate their needs and wishes, let them know why – they'll take this better than being kept in the dark.



SOME TOOLS TO HELP ENABLE PARTICIPATION:

We have developed, and included in this guide, a number of tools that you can use to get children's views about how they'd like to be involved and some plans to help you to meaningfully involve them. They include:

- Tool 5C What I want
- Tool 5D Responding to requests
- Tool 5H-L On target



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TALKING TIPS

In their resource *So you want to consult with children*, Save the Children promotes a number of key assets for effective facilitation. These include:

- be attentive at all times
- be adaptable
- if you don't know, say so
- trust the resources of the children and young people's group
- honour each child and young person
- tap children and young people's energy
- be yourself
- keep intervention to a minimum
- monitor the energy level
- don't be attached to your own interventions
- take everything that occurs as relevant
- improvise/be flexible/be creative



SOME BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

It is critical that adults have a good handle on some of the assumptions that children might have about adults and how and why they should talk to them. These assumptions can influence the answers that children will give. For example, children may expect that:

- the adult will be the expert
- the adult already knows the answers to questions
- every question must be answered
- they can't answer with 'I don't know'
- each question will have a right or wrong answer
- an arbitrary answer will be better than no answer
- if a question is repeated the previous answer must be wrong and a different or right answer is required.

Adults need to spend time helping children to understand that these assumptions do not apply. They will need help to seek clarification when they do not understand something and to realise that their views and feelings are important. It can be helpful to talk about a neutral topic of interest to the child initially to model that the child is expert within the exercise.

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP

Calder and Cope's review of the Prince's Trust (2004) found that 'hard to reach' young people valued the ability to make their own choices. However, agencies frequently sought to direct them rather than engage them.

McNeish (1999) identifies some of the factors that serve to magnify barriers to participation for these groups of young people:

- Young people who have had difficult life experiences are less likely to have the confidence and self-esteem to participate.
- If their views have not been taken into account in the past, they are less likely to be motivated to participate in the present.
- If their experiences have included mistreatment by adults, they are less likely to trust the current intentions of adults trying to engage their participation.
- Negative assumptions and stereotypes that can be applied to young people generally may be even stronger for certain groups of young people.
- Young people are likely to be put off participation if they have had previous problems communicating in groups.

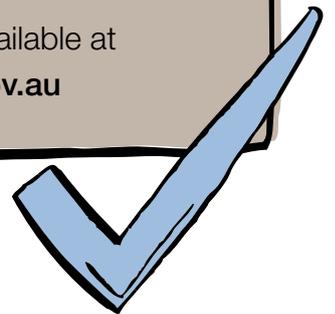


RESOURCES AVAILABLE ON ENGAGING KIDS IN DECISION MAKING

Participation: Meeting together deciding together: Kids participating in case-planning decisions that affect their lives

was developed by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People and includes some great tools for involving kids in case conferences and other decision-making processes. Although some of the information is NSW specific, there are some great ideas and resources for working with children and young people.

The resource is available at www.kids.nsw.gov.au



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INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SERVICE DESIGN AND EVALUATION

Over the past 20 years there has been an explosion of resources focusing on the whys and hows of engaging children in program- and service-level planning, delivery and evaluation. Instead of re-creating the wheel, we've included some resources at the end of this guide to help you get started.

PARTICIPATION: [Sharing the stage - A practical guide to helping children and young people take part in decision making](#) was developed by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People and includes some great ideas on how to actively involve children in decision making and some of the ways to overcome challenges one might encounter.

PARTICIPATION: [Checking the scoreboard - Coach's handbook](#) was also developed by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People and includes some tools for assessing the level of participation afforded to children and young people and some strategies for resolving them.

ARE YOU LISTENING? [A toolkit for evaluating Children's Fund services with children and young people](#) is published by Cambridgeshire Children's Fund and Save the Children. This guide includes some excellent resources for talking to kids about the services you provide and getting feedback on how they think you are doing.

SO YOU WANT TO CONSULT WITH CHILDREN? A toolkit of good practice was developed by Save the Children and includes good practice principles and strategies.

ARE YOU RECRUITING? [A step-by-step guide to involving children, aged 5-13, in the recruitment of staff](#) is also published by Cambridgeshire Children's Fund and includes some tips and strategies for helping kids participate in picking staff for programs. Rather than involving them in token processes, the guide encourages workers to involve children right from the start: in identifying what they want from workers, in planning the recruitment process and in conducting interviews.



KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



CASE STUDY: FOR CONSIDERATION

In Guide 1: Keep Me Safe we met the Watson family. (Louise (Mum) and her two children Kelly (9) and Marcus (11)). Louise had moved out of your service and back to an abusive environment.

It's three weeks later and the family have returned. While away, Louise was physically assaulted. Marcus was present for that altercation and a number of previous fights between Louise and her partner. When asked about it, Marcus said that he now sees it as his job to protect his Mum and to keep her safe, and observed, "I know you people couldn't stop her getting hurt, so now it's my job". Staff realise that Marcus has been exposed to some confronting scenes and have tried to protect him from reliving these scenes by talking to him about them. They have also tried to provide him and his sister with as much of a 'normal' experience as possible: making sure that they are at school and attending soccer practice and other activities. Marcus, however, has stayed home sick from school most days and told his soccer coach that he wants to quit the team. He does not appear to trust the staff of your service....



Questions to consider:

1. What do you think is going on for Marcus? What are some of his behaviours and what might they suggest?
2. What type of information do you think that Marcus might need? How might you give him this information?
3. How might Louise be involved in this process?
4. How might you find out from Marcus what his thoughts are about the way that you have supported his family and how might you mend his lack of trust if this is, indeed, an issue?

Marcus is obviously unhappy with some of the decisions that his Mum has made and tells you that he is upset because he doesn't think that she's protecting them from harm. He says that he needs for his Mum to know that he's scared and that he is angry and that he doesn't ever want to return to her partner's house. He doesn't feel comfortable raising it with Louise.

1. How might you help Marcus and Louise talk about these issues?
2. It must be quite threatening to hear these types of things from a worker: how might you best engage with Louise about Marcus' concerns in a way that is both respectful but also true to his wishes?
3. What might be some of the threats and potential risks that you need to be aware of and how might you prepare yourself and the family to resolve them?

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP

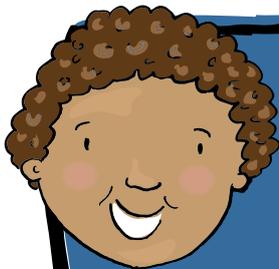


PULSE CHECK “KEEP ME IN THE LOOP”

PULSE CHECKS ARE HERE TO HELP ORGANISATIONS BY:

- promoting discussion;
- identifying strengths and any gaps that need action; and
- helping to set priorities

The pulse check can be used whether you have already developed child-safe policies and practices or are just starting out. It is not exhaustive - you will find that as you discuss it you may think of other areas that need attention in your organisation.



STEP 1: go through the indicators and list how your service acts on each one

STEP 2: each person rates how well the service does this

STEP 3: brainstorm things that could be done to improve how the service acts on each area



KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



PULSE CHECK

The Shier model of participation includes five different levels – degrees to which participation is integrated into the culture and practice of services and organisations. These levels include:

1. Children are listened to
2. Children are supported in expressing their views
3. Children's views are taken into account
4. Children are involved in decision making
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision making

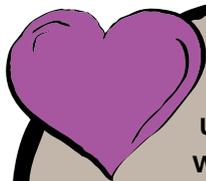
In this model, Shier suggests that at each of these levels an opening occurs as soon as the worker has a personal commitment or is supported by their organisation to work in a certain way. He suggests that it is only an opening at this stage because the opportunity to make it happen might not yet exist.

The second stage, then, is when the opportunity occurs: this requires there to be the resources (such as staff time), skills (including how to engage with children and young people in this way), knowledge and organisational capacity (such as policies and procedures) to operate at this level in practice.

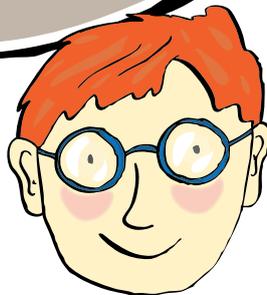
The final stage occurs when there is an obligation for workers and services to work in this way: when there are agreed policies and commitments of the organisation to enable the participation of children and young people. It requires participation to be built-in and obliges particular practices and approaches.

He suggests that openings are necessary to enable participation but that opportunities and obligations must be both enabled and taken advantage of for true participation to be possible.

Shier argues that organisations that endorse the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child should, at the minimum, listen to children, support them in expressing their views and take them into account when responding. Engaging children in decision making and sharing power and responsibility demonstrates a further commitment to children's participation.



Shier gives the advice: "The most useful discussion will probably occur when the answer to a question is 'no'. Then it can be asked, 'Should we be able to answer "yes"?', 'What do we need to do in order to answer "yes"?', 'Can we make these changes?' and 'Are we prepared for the consequences?' (p116)



KEEP ME IN THE LOOP

	LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION: Children are supported in expressing their views	INDICATORS	1 Never	2 Hardly Ever	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Almost Always	WHAT WE NEED TO DO
OPPORTUNITY	Are you ready to listen to children?	Workers have an expressed commitment to listening to children						
OPENING	Do you work in a way that enables you to listen to children?	Workers connect with children, develop trustworthy relationships and spend time with children						
OBLIGATION	Is it a policy requirement that children must be listened to?	The service has a policy that sets out its commitment to listening to children						

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP

		1 Never	2 Hardly Ever	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Almost Always	WHAT WE NEED TO DO
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION: Children are supported in expressing their views	INDICATORS						
OPPORTUNITY	Are you ready to support children in expressing their views?		Workers have an expressed commitment to listening to children about the things that are important to them, their worries and fears and the ways that they would like to be supported				
OPENING	Do you have a range of ideas and activities to help children express their views?		Workers have a range of tools available, the skills and training to actively engage children about things that are important to them and what they would like				
OBLIGATION	Is it a policy requirement that children are supported in expressing their views?		The service has a policy that articulates its commitment to engaging children and provides a clear procedure for why, when and how this is done				

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP

		1 Never	2 Hardly Ever	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Almost Always	WHAT WE NEED TO DO
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION: Children are supported in expressing their views	INDICATORS						
OPPORTUNITY	Are you ready to take children's views into account?						Workers value children's views and are committed to doing what they can to act on them
OPENING	Does your decision-making process enable you to take children's views into account?						Workers and the service have had discussions about how they might act on children's views, particularly in light of the family and service context. A plan for responding is developed
OBLIGATION	Is it a policy requirement that children's views must be given due weight in decision making?						The service has a policy about how children's views will be taken into account and how differing views and wishes might be managed if they are not the same

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP

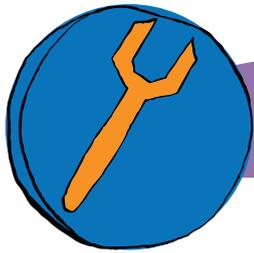
	LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION: Children are supported in expressing their views	INDICATORS	1 Never	2 Hardly Ever	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Almost Always	WHAT WE NEED TO DO
OPPORTUNITY	Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making process?	Workers are willing for children to be actively engaged in decision-making and have a commitment to promoting their involvement						
OPENING	Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decision making?	The service has identified a number of ways that children might be involved in decision making that is child friendly and responds to their needs and wishes						
OBLIGATION	Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decision making?	The service has minimum requirements in regards to children's involvement – processes do not go ahead without children's participation unless for specified reasons						

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP

		1 Never	2 Hardly Ever	3 Sometimes	4 Often	5 Almost Always	WHAT WE NEED TO DO
LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION: Children are supported in expressing their views	INDICATORS						
OPPORTUNITY Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?	Adults give kids opportunities to direct their practice and decisions about how they are supported						
OPENING Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?	The service has child-driven practices (such as plans for meetings, directions about how support is delivered and options for engagement)						
OBLIGATION Is it a policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility for decisions?	The service has a policy that clearly states how power and responsibility are shared in the service						

United Nations (1989) *Convention of the Rights of the Child* Retrieved 27 October 2005, from www.unicef.org/crc/fulltext.htm

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



TOOL 5A: TALKING CARDS

LINKED TO:

- This tool can be used in all situations where you might engage children directly
- Sections 1.2, 1.4, 5.2 & 5.3



WHY?

- To help break the ice and build rapport
- To break up discussions (giving people a breather)
- Good at:
 - Getting conversations started
 - Giving kids some control over the discussions
 - Modelling appropriate disclosure
 - Having fun
 - Making sure that everyone in a group has an opportunity to contribute



WHO WITH?

- Children 5+ through to adults
- Individuals, pairs or groups



TIME?

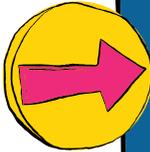
- A few to 30 minutes



YOU'LL NEED?

- Printed copies of the 'talking cards'

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



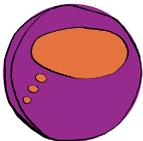
WHAT TO DO:

- Find a nice quiet space – somewhere you won't be interrupted
- Lay all the cards down on a flat surface – the floor's a great place to lay them out
- Ask the child(ren) to choose you a 'talking card' and get them to read you the question or help read it for them
- Answer the question
- Repeat – this time having someone else answering the question
- Affirm the response and, where possible, make some links among the group or between the two of you ("I love spaghetti too" or "who else likes soccer? Maybe you guys could go and kick it around after lunch")
- Continue until everyone has had a go



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- If working in a group, put the cards in a bowl and have each participant pull one card out at a time
- Use the 'Bingo' card: this means that everyone has to answer the next question
- Get kids to come up with their own questions on blank cards



TO THINK ABOUT:

- It's always best to start activities and conversations with some kind of ice breaker. Change these to keep the group dynamic and engaged. If you've used this activity a few times, maybe get kids to come up with their own questions / topics for discussion and try them out!



HAZARD ZONES:

- Find out whether the child(ren) can read before asking them to do so
- Don't drag the activity out too much if children are beginning to get restless
- Try to keep the conversations fairly relaxed – don't prod or probe just yet!
- Use the activity to draw connections rather than highlight differences ("oh really? Isn't a cheese pizza boring?")

Talking cards

**My favourite
colour is...**

**The thing I
like doing the
most is...**

**If I won a million
dollars I'd...**

**If I could have
any super power
I'd choose...**

**The food I love
the most is...**

**The person that
makes me laugh
the most is...**

Talking cards Continued

**The best holiday
I ever went on
was to...**

**My favourite TV
show is...**

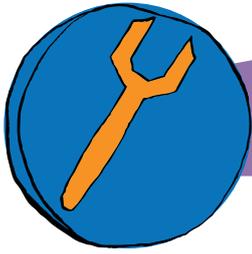
**My favourite
kind of
pizza is...**

**I couldn't live
without...**

**If my life was made
into a movie I'd like
to be played by...**

**The best thing that
happened to me
today was...**

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



TOOL 5B CLAY FACES

LINKED TO:

- Sections 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 & 5.4



WHY?

- Clay faces can be used to help kids talk about their feelings in a non-threatening and child-directed way
- Good for working with kids who find it difficult to directly talk about their feelings



WHO WITH?

- Children aged 6 to 12 years



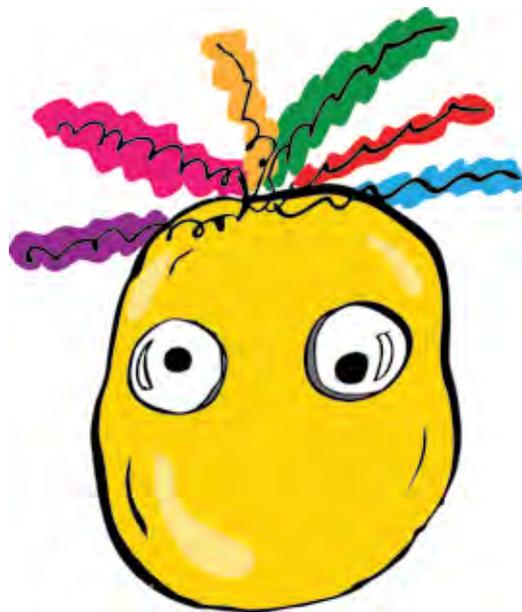
TIME?

- 20 mins to create the faces

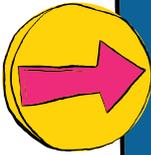


YOU'LL NEED?

- Mouldable clay (or play dough)
- 2-3 balloons per head
- Googly eyes
- Coloured wool
- Hot-glue gun



KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



WHAT TO DO:

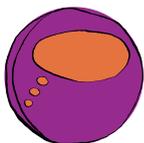
- Make play dough (use recipe in Guide 4: Make it fun) or break mouldable clay into pieces the size of a tennis ball
- Cut 2cm off the top of two normal sized balloons
- Stretch open one of the balloons and fill with the clay/dough
- Stretch open the second balloon and place the first balloon filled with clay inside so that the balloon spout of the first is pointing inwards
- Glue the opening of the second balloon together with a liberal amount of a strong adhesive (check to make sure that it can be used on rubber/latex)
- Tie some lengths of wool together at the middle of the lengths and glue to the top of the balloon head
- Adhere two googly eyes to the balloon head



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

Instead of making one clay face that can be moulded, maybe get kids to create a series of faces that demonstrate a range of emotions.

- Get a big clump of plain clay. Break it into 6-8 pieces and explain that you're going to make faces that show different feelings.
 - Workshop what these feelings might be. They could include: Happy, Sad, Angry, Bored, Frightened, Shy and Surprised
 - Give each child a piece of clay and an emotion. Ask them to begin to mould the clay into the shape of a head (you might show them one as an example). Slope the neck out so that it is flat on the bottom and supports the head when it is left sitting on a table.
 - Cut away parts of the clay using a knife until you can see a definite head shape.
- Use your excess clay to form ears, eyes, nose and mouth. Carefully smooth these feature into the face.
 - Put some clay into a garlic crusher and squeeze to create clay hair.
 - Set your face out to dry. You will know it is ready to paint when it becomes hard and no longer pliable.
 - Use paints to mark out a face with the allotted emotion. Encourage the kids to be creative and descriptive.
 - Put it in the sun or in a warm spot to let it dry out
 - Coat the faces with a clear glue and water solution, using a clean paintbrush to apply. This will protect your clay face and let you get a lot more use out of it.



TO THINK ABOUT:

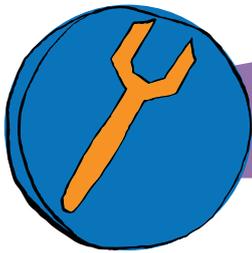
- These clay faces are a great tool. They are often available at craft shops or markets and are good to have ready for discussions with kids. Try them out with children before getting them to make their own.



HAZARD ZONES:

- Some glues can eat through the rubber/latex so make sure that you are using one that is balloon friendly
- Adults should always use the glue gun

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



TOOL 5C: WHAT I WANT

LINKED TO:

- Sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.11, 5.9, 5.13 & 6.9



WHY?

- To develop a quick understanding of a child's immediate needs
- Good for inviting children into a conversation about their needs and wishes



WHO WITH?

- Literate children aged 6 to 12 years



TIME?

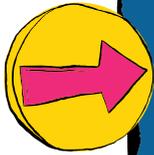
- 5-30 minutes depending on how involved you and the child get



YOU'LL NEED?

- Copies of the template
- Coloured textas/pens

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



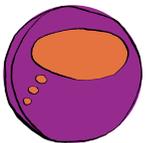
WHAT TO DO:

- Ask the child to fill out the proforma using either words or symbols to answer the questions. Some kids will prefer to complete the form themselves while others may want or need some prompting and gentle encouragement.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Kids might find it fun to answer the questions as an interview: explain that you're a reporter and are interviewing the world's expert on them. Run through the questions, probing a little as you go.



TO THINK ABOUT:

- This type of activity should be repeated so that you can have an up-to-date idea of how children are travelling. Repeating the exercise and drawing on past versions helps you and the child map growth and change and affirm that you have taken the child's wishes into account.



HAZARD ZONES:

- Kids may want to talk about pressing issues so make sure that you have the time and skills to be able to respond to any problems or concerns that may arise.
- If kids share things that you find difficult to work on, be honest with them and ask if it's OK that you talk to someone else on your team

What I want

My name is

If I'm worried about something I'd like to...

If I can't talk to my mum or dad I'm most likely to talk to...



If an adult wants to talk to me they should...



I don't want to talk about...

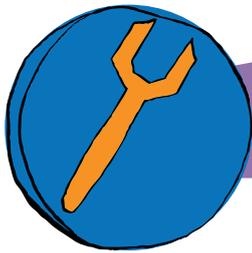


Something that I'd like to talk about is...



A place I like to be is...

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



TOOL 5D: RESPONDING TO KIDS' REQUESTS

LINKED TO:

- Sections 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.11, 5.1, 5.2 & 6.9



WHY?

- Because kids need to know that you are taking their needs and wishes seriously



WHO WITH?

- Kids of all ages



TIME?

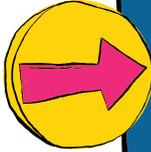
- 10 minutes



YOU'LL NEED?

- Copy of the template

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



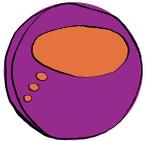
WHAT TO DO:

- This is a basic form that can be filled out either with the child during a session or afterwards. Start with the first two columns “What you heard” and “what you did in response”.
- What is key is that children see that you have heard and actioned their concerns. Giving them a copy of the completed form or showing them as part of the next session is suggested.
- After an agreed period of time, the form should be reviewed with the “what changed” and “how the kids think things have changed” columns completed with the child. Children can either choose to suggest further action or to review the form again at a later date. When they feel happy with how things have gone they can sign off by marking the final column.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Rather than using this proforma, workers might ask kids to draw or even act out the before and after – as long as the worker records it for review at another meeting.
- Tool # “Here and there” can also be used for this activity.



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Children’s wishes should be integrated into the family’s case planning process. Spend some time thinking about how this might be most appropriately done.



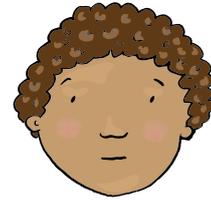
HAZARD ZONES:

- Children tell us that they feel betrayed when adults make promises that they don’t keep. Be clear with kids about how you are going to respond to the wishes that they have identified. If you can’t fulfill them completely: tell them. If you have taken them on-board but in a different way to that which the child proposes: explain it to them. Otherwise kids will often believe that you didn’t listen or care.

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



RESPONDING TO KIDS' REQUESTS



NAME OF CHILD/REN:

.....
.....

KEY WORKER'S NAME:

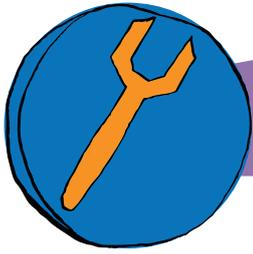
.....
.....

WHAT THE CHILD/REN SAID THEY'D LIKE / NEEDED:

.....
.....

What you heard	What you did in response	What changed	How the kids think things have changed	Would they like further action? Y/N	Child's signature / symbol

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



5E: WANTED POSTERS

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.11 & 5.13



WHY?

- To talk with children about the types of workers they would like and how they'd like to be supported
- This activity can be helpful when identifying which staff a particular child might like to work with OR when identifying what type of workers the service might recruit



WHO WITH?

- Children aged 6 to 12 years



TIME?

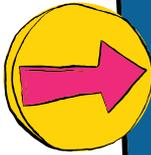
- 20-30 mins



YOU'LL NEED?

- Template
- Coloured textas, pencils or paint

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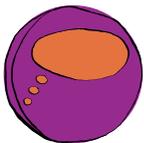
WHAT TO DO:

- Explain to the kids that this activity is about finding out what type of person they want to help them and their family (or them and other kids that might come to your service)
- Start by brainstorming some of the things that they would like to see in a worker: “what words might describe the type of worker would be best for working with kids?”, “what are some of the things you think that they should be able to do?”, “how do you think they should work with kids”, “are there things that they shouldn’t do?”
- Children are then asked to draw a picture of the type of worker they’d like for your service and to write or draw images around the character that describes the attributes they’re seeking.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Kids might cut out words or images from a newspaper or magazine or use stickers (such as those developed by St Lukes) to describe the worker they’d like



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Services might send photocopies of these wanted posters out with selection criteria and / or have them at interviews with prospective staff as a way of keeping children’s wishes in mind.



HAZARD ZONES:

- It’s important to make it clear to children how their wishes shape the induction process and the decision who to employ. Children can be disappointed if they believe that theirs are the only attributes that will be considered when recruiting new staff: so make it clear what else you will be looking for.



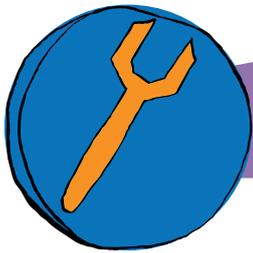
WANTED

to help me and my family



Reward

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



TOOL 5F: RIGHTS AND NOT-QUITE-RIGHTS

LINKED TO:

- Sections 4.6, 5.1 & 5.13



WHY?

- To help kids understand what their rights are in relation to talking to adults



WHO WITH?

- Kids aged 9 to 13 years



TIME?

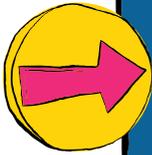
- This activity can be done reasonably quickly – but may take longer if kids want to further clarify the statements



YOU'LL NEED?

- Cut out copies of the “rights” and “not-quite-rights” and the “totally right”, “totally wrong” and “kinda right, kinda wrong” cards

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



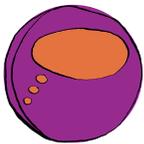
WHAT TO DO:

- The “totally right”, “kinda right, kinda wrong” and “totally wrong” cards are placed down on a table as a continuum.
- The worker tells the kid that they have a number of rights (things that they can expect) from the adults who are working with them and from the program more generally. The worker might want to ask the kids if they have any ideas of things that they think they should be able to expect and share a few if the kids are stumped.
- The worker tells the kids that they have a series of cards that state these rights but that there has been a mix-up – some of the cards have been tampered with and are no longer correct. The worker tells the kids that it’s their job to determine whether the cards are “totally right”, “totally wrong” or “kinda right, kinda wrong” by placing them on the continuum.
- Children are handed the cards one by one and are asked to place them on the continuum. If they find it difficult to read, the worker should read out the statements and help them choose where to put them.
- When completed, the worker should ask the child how the “kinda right, kinda wrong” and “totally wrong” cards might be fixed so that the correct message is communicated.
- The rights that children have in their interactions with adults should then be explained using the cards. The “rights page” might be used to illustrate the messages.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- This activity might be done standing: place the cards on opposite sides of a room and get kids to stand on a continuum to represent where they believe the statements should be placed.



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Kids will not necessarily share the same views as workers in regard to their rights and how they would like to be treated. This is OK. If there is a difference of opinion share with them how your service considers particular rights and what they might expect in particular situations.



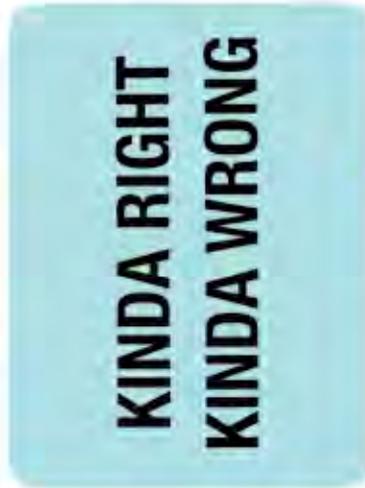
HAZARD ZONES:

- Make it clear that these are expectations that kids can have of you and your service. In the past, kids have had fights with their parents because parents might not have a similar opinion about what kids can and can’t do. (One child told his Mum that he had a right to decide what he would and wouldn’t do around the house and that he chose not to clean his bedroom!)

CARDS:

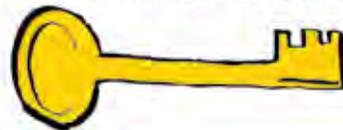
- Adults know what’s best for kids and should make all the decisions about them
- Sometimes it’s OK for kids to talk to their workers about stuff without their parents knowing
- Adults should never tell anyone things that kids tell them - it’s a secret
- Adults should respect kids and make sure they’re not being hurt.
- If a kid says they want to do something - they have to do it until the end - even if they change their mind.
- If kids don’t like what’s happening they should just put up with it and shut up.
- Sometimes kids say or do dumb things so it’s OK for adults to tell them that they’re dumb.
- Adults should sometimes hide things from kids so that they don’t worry
- Everything adults do with kids should be fun

Rights and not quite rights



Kids should always be asked about stuff to do with their lives.

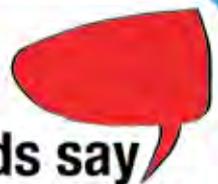
Adults should never tell anyone things kids tell them- it's a secret.



If a kid says they want to do something- they have to do it until the end-even if they change their mind.



Sometimes kids say dumb things so it's OK for adults to tell them that they're dumb.



Rights and not quite rights continued



Adults should make sure that kids understand what they're asking them to do.



Kids should be able to say whatever they like- even if it might hurt someone else's feelings.



Adults have spent a lot of time getting things ready- so kids shouldn't really try to change them.

Kids should be given presents because then they have to do what adults tell them.

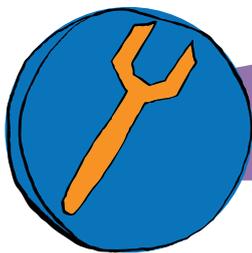


If kids don't like what's happening they should just put up with it and shut up.



Adults should respect kids and make sure they're not being hurt.

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



TOOL 5H-L: ON TARGET

LINKED TO:

- These scales can be used when measuring things that are going on in a child's life (ie how worried a child is, how much support they feel they're receiving, how far they've still got to go in solving a solution etc)
- 1.5, 2.11, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 4.12, 5.2, 5.11, & 6.9



WHY?

- Scaling can help children and families articulate their feelings, track their progress and plan for the future.
- It can help you understand how far a child or family has come and give you some ideas as to where else you might go



WHO WITH?

- Children of all ages and families



TIME?

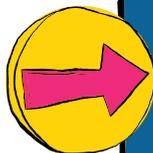
- 5mins – 30mins



YOU'LL NEED?

- Copies of the templates

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



WHAT TO DO:

The scales can be used in a whole range of different ways – be creative and play with them to help elicit stories.

- Ask the child to pick one of the six scales.

To get feedback on the depth of a feeling or issue

- Begin by asking the child to explain what they think is going on in the picture (the child is drinking a milkshake, hitting a ball, going on a journey)
- Explore the metaphor: “have you seen one of these strength machines before? You have to hit the button down here at the bottom with the hammer and the machine tells you how hard you hit it by bouncing up the scale.”
- “You just told me that you did pretty well in your maths quiz. If the bottom of the machine is ‘I feel pretty lousy’ and the top is ‘I feel on top of the world’ how happy are you feeling right now? Maybe draw a line for me and colour it in.”
- Explore: “what happens when you feel like this? What can you do? How do you feel? How can people tell how you’re feeling”.
- Explore: “when you’re not feeling as happy, like when you’re down here (point to a lower point on the scale) what happens? How can people tell you’re not happy?”
- Consider: “what are some things that we can do to help when you’re feeling low?”

To understand a child’s story:

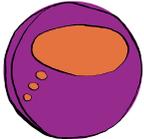
- Begin by asking the child to explain what they think is going on in the picture (the child is drinking a milkshake, hitting a ball, going on a journey)
- Present the metaphor inherent in the scale: “this girl seems to be going on a long journey, all the way to the top of the mountain. What do you think she might find there?”
- Link the metaphor with the issue that you are to explore “It seems as though you’ve been on a long journey too: from the time you first moved out of your house in Sydney until now”
- Explore the beginning and the end of the scale “what are you hoping might be at the end of your journey? What will be happening for you? What will you have finished?”
- Begin to ask scaling questions: “if where the girl is standing is the start of your journey, where do you think you are now? How about you draw yourself there, or maybe a seat where you can stop and take a break”
- Consider steps / legs of the journey “how far left have you got to go? Are there other points you can stop and rest? Are there things that we can do to help?”

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Use other metaphors that are things that interest the child or family that you're working with "how much petrol is in your tank?", "if you were a bird, how high are you flying right now", "if you were still running that race at your sports carnival: how far left might you have to go?"



- St Luke's has a Scaling Kit with other simple scales that you might use

TO THINK ABOUT:

- Scales can be used either as a once-off activity but also as a way of tracking progress. Keep photocopies of the scales for future reference: how much further along the track are you right now? You hit the ball ½ way out of the park last time, how far can you hit it now?



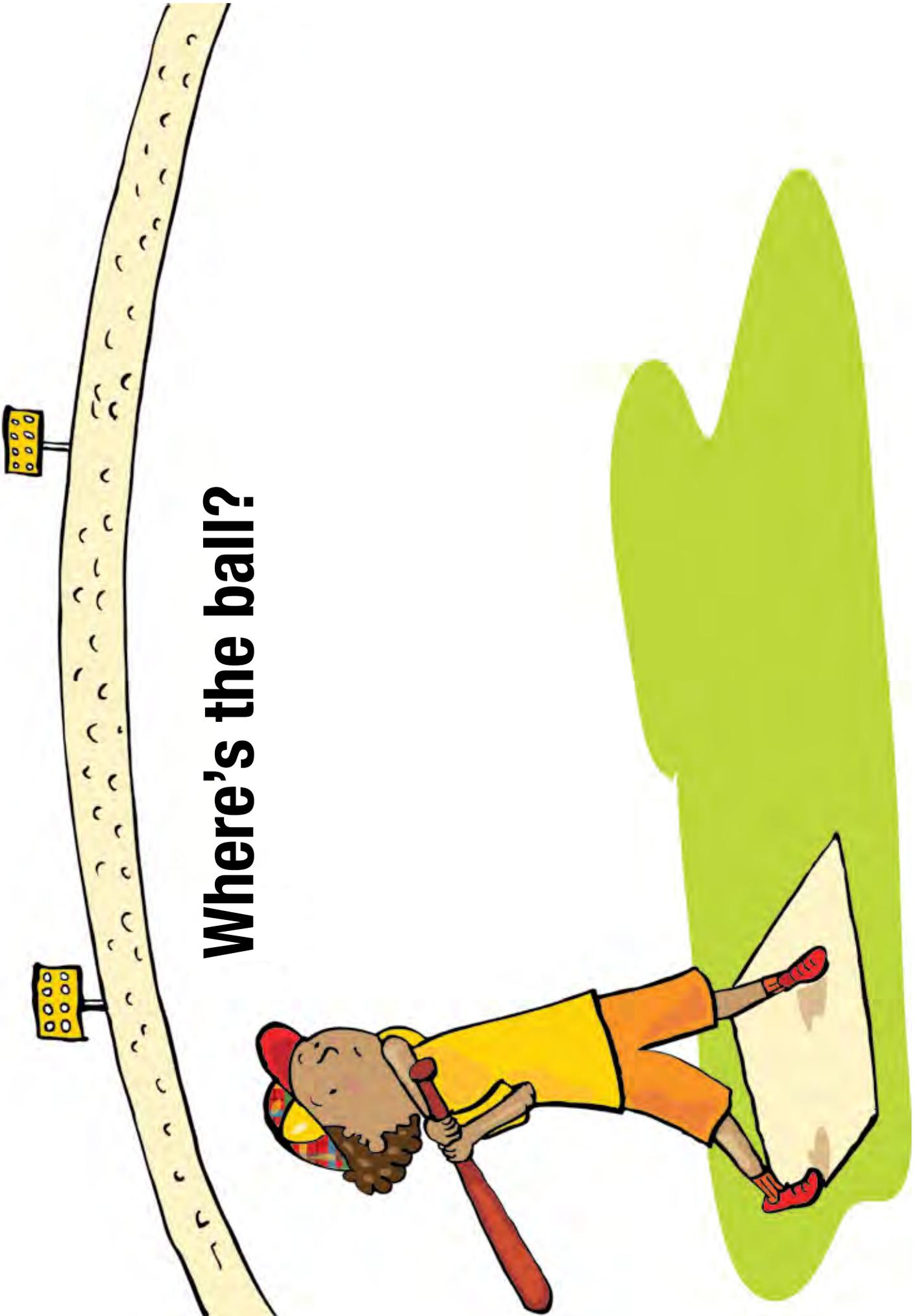
HAZARD ZONES:

- Make sure that you are clear on what you're trying to scale, particularly with younger children who might not always grasp your use of metaphor.
- These scales are best used to identify and quantify strengths – avoid using them in a way that focuses solely on deficits or highlights problems. If these arise, instil a sense of hope in the child or family and give them opportunities to consider possibilities.

**How much
milkshake?**



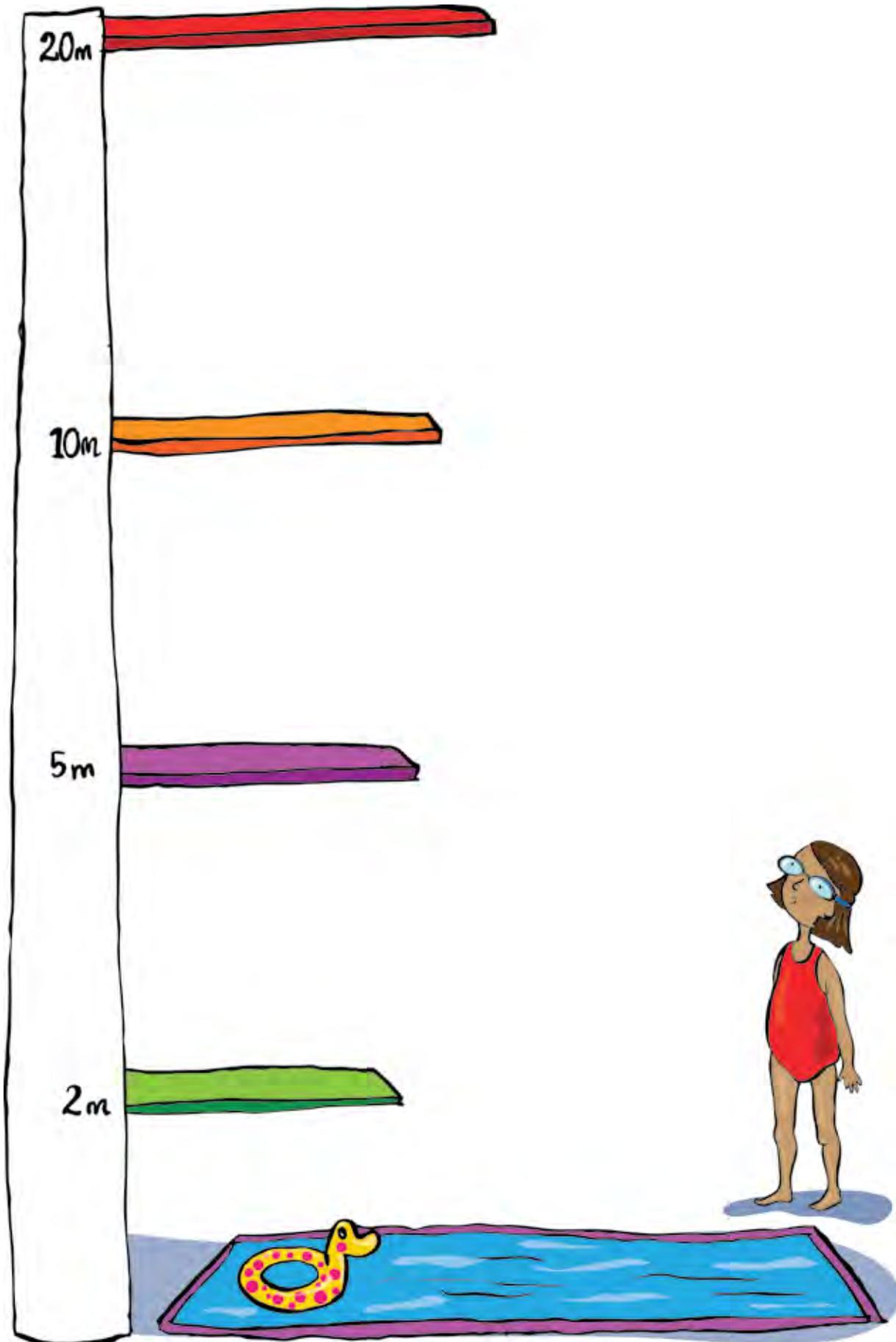
Where's the ball?



How far are you?



How high?



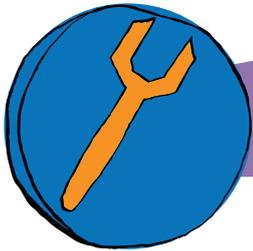
How deep is the water?



How high?



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OTHER TOOLS RELATED TO PRINCIPLE 5

LINKED TO:

Tool:	Relates to sections
1G	5.1
1I	5.13
2A	5.3, 5.4, 5.5
2D	5.13
2E	5.13
2F	5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6
2G	5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9
4C	5.13
4D	5.7, 5.13
4E	5.7, 5.13
4F	5.3
6F	5.1, 5.7

KEEP ME IN THE LOOP

SOME MORE REFERENCES

RELATED TO HOW TO TALK TO AND SUPPORT CHILDREN

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SOME MORE REFERENCES

RELATED TO CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Cashmore, J. (2002). Promoting the participation of children and young people in care. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 26, 837-847.

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