PRACTICE TIPS – THE CHILDS VOICE – Jan 2019

This set of TIPS have been put together to assist SW in the daily WHAT and HOW of their work.

The aim being to provide a quick overview of a topic with signposts to links that may help if you are unsure.

This Document is in draft form, as the views and comments of practitioners is being sought prior to document finalisation.

These Documents will be reviewed in Feb 2019 and finalised in March 2019.

These documents set out some ideas for SG to consider in terms of Guidance for practitioners which will -

* standardise practice, - consistency and quality
* develop learning culture on what works and why
* Develop the ability to look at impact – better understanding of the childs experience
* Provide an evidence-based tool
* Enable decision making to be more timely
* Children’s outcomes to be more specific in terms of their experiences

What is the voice of the child?

The voice of the child quite simply is, what do/ would they say about their lives, their worries, wishes and how they think things should be different

The voice is also captured through observations of interaction, development and behaviour.

Anything that provides a clue to the Childs experience is their voice, their way of communicating and telling you something – this is particularly relevant for small non-verbal children or those who have communication difficulties

Why do we need to gather and hear the voice of the child?

The voice of the child is at the heart of everything we do. – it is enshrined in legislation.

It is their lives in which we are trying to make a difference, in order that their needs, welfare and future achievements are optimised from the outset

It is their life, their experience and it is for us to understand how this looks and feels, in order that we can work with the family in a constructive family.

It is the child’s narrative of their life and this may be the first time they have been given the opportunity to talk about it

Child participation and involvement promotes better outcomes and success of plans

Children need to be valued and appreciated if they are to develop a healthy view of themselves; - our role is to listen, value and respect them as individuals with rights and needs.

Musts

You must see children on their own wherever appropriate and possible

You must listen to the voice and actions of the child and not rely on the voice of the adult

Children often tell us no one listened – so you must listen

Children tell us no one told them – you must tell

Children tell us that no one gave them a choice – you must involve them in decisions about their life

In order to be understood You must use clear child friendly language

You must write it down so you can check you have got it right

You must work towards meaningful participation

 You must prioritise the child over the adults and their competing demands

You must inform the child what you will do with the information gathered

You must do what you say you will do

Top Tips

Get to know and spend time with a child / young person

Do not let them down or fail to follow up on what was agreed

Be genuine and interested – share something about yourself that is not personal or private

Value and respect their wishes and feelings, aspirations and dreams

Don’t talk about the same thing over and over again

Don’t make assumptions about how they feel or what they might say - check it out

Keep the child and their experience at the centre of everything that is done

Do not lose sight of the child amidst other family crisis, chaos or presenting needs

Be creative and use a range of mediums to communicate and engage

Check with other people that know the child/ young person

Reflect on strengths, age and stage of development

SCR highlight how the child’s voice was often missing from records

