

Children at the Heart of Assessments

Communicating with children

Why bother?

- Children's Rights agenda
 - Accurate assessments
 - Empowers young people
- Government guidance
 - It works
 - understand wants / needs
 - effective case planning
 - better outcomes for children
- Consumer voice

What children have said that they do and they don't want

DON'T WANT

- 'robotic' procedure – led approach
- Fixed views
- Not listening
- Spreading things around
- No feedback

DO WANT

- Honesty
- Not judgemental or overly directive
- Really listening
- Available
- Trustworthy
- Clear explanations and feedback

Putting the basics in place

- Belief that children are competent
 - informed decisions, time, explanations
- Skill, creativity and confidence of workers
- Practical considerations
 - who, when, where, interpreters, use of new technologies
- Creating the right culture – trust, choice, feedback.

How do we represent children in assessments?

- Research, inspections and inquiries indicate that children's voices are absent or minimised during assessment.
- Focus on parents rather than the child
- Use of language in reports

Good practice in analysis

- Acknowledge what you don't know about the child – describe gaps and limitations
- Put the information you have got in context
 - child development, race and culture, recent events
- Consult widely
- Consider language

A checklist

(From NCB 'Putting Analysis into Assessment')

- How well do I know the child
- Which adults know the child best and what do they think
- How has the child defined the problems in their family life and the effect on them
- Under what circumstances did the child express their views or feelings. What has occurred and what did he/she want to happen

A checklist

(From NCB 'Putting Analysis into Assessment')

- What has been observed regarding the child's way of relating and responding to adults (consider attachment)
- What do you know about research in relation to the experiences the child has had
- What communication methods have you used
- How confident are you that you have been able to establish the child's views, wishes and feelings

The Developing World of the Child

(NSPCC / DfES)

A series of steps:

- Chronology and genogram
- The visit
- Reflecting on the meeting
- Analysing what you have seen and heard
- Planning

Child led assessments

- Start with what is important to the child
- Go at the child's pace – gradually build a picture of their needs
- Positives as well as negatives - build a holistic picture
- Forms / tick boxes / checklists don't work well for children – find out how they want to express themselves

Table Top Discussion

- How well do you think your team members incorporate the views of children and young people into assessments?
- What do you think are the barriers to getting them to do this better?
- What three things are you going to do to help your staff get better at this?