



# Encouraging Participation

The key to encouraging participation is to listen closely to the children in our care. Listening to children allows us to make sure that they can participate in all that we have to offer them. It also helps us to make sure that we are meeting the needs of any child who has SEN.

## Listening to children

Here 'listening' is used in its widest sense and involves tuning into children, seeing the world from their own points of view, offering them choices, consulting them on matters that are important to their lives and adjusting what we do in the light of their responses. In other words, the process of 'listening' should involve all our senses, as we take active steps to encourage each and every child's participation and belonging. Listening to children has been defined in *Listening as a way of life* by the National Children's Bureau as:

- An active process of receiving, interpreting and responding to communication. It includes all the senses and emotions and is not limited to the spoken word.
- A necessary stage in ensuring the participation of all children.
- An ongoing part of tuning in to all children as individuals in their everyday lives.
- Sometimes part of a specific consultation about a particular environment, choice, event or opportunity.

## ▲●■ Why listen to children?

Young children have a right to have their views taken into account when we plan and deliver our services:

- on equality of opportunity grounds because they are part of our community;
- on educational grounds so we can better match activity and learner;
- and on psychological grounds because we know that active involvement in play, care and learning increases success and well-being.

The Children's Act (2004) places a duty on us to work together to promote the well-being of children relating to five outcomes which were chosen in consultation with children:

- to be healthy;
- stay safe;
- enjoy and achieve;
- make a positive contribution to society;
- and achieve economic well-being.

Underpinning the *Every Child Matters* framework (DfES/1081/2004, downloadable from [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)) is the notion that children are integral stakeholders in their own learning, social and health

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