

Putting children and young people at the centre of your planning



**No Pens Day
Wednesday**

Why?

The new special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice places much more emphasis on the importance of involving children, young people and their families in shaping the support that they need. This is a useful principle to consider not only for children with SEND, but for all children when planning targets and evaluating outcomes, however it can be a challenge. This document aims to help you think about how you can place children and young people at the centre of your planning.

Who?

To ensure effective person centred planning, it's important to gather views from:

- The child or young person – placing children and young people at the centre of your planning will ensure that you are planning **with** them and not for them.
- The child or young person's family - they may have different aspirations for their child that don't necessarily focus on educational attainment. Parents of children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) often place great importance on their children developing independence, making friends and fitting in socially. Short term targets should link with these long term hopes. Family members may also have a different viewpoint of their child's strengths and weaknesses at home. This is a key perspective to consider in ensuring that you're gaining a full picture of a child's skills and can plan their targets accordingly.
- The professional team around the child – this might even be chosen by the child or young person themselves; who do they see as being important to them in helping to achieve their goals?

- Getting the 'who' right means that discussions and planning meetings can take in to account the long term ambitions of everyone who knows the child or young person best. The aim is to work collaboratively to achieve a consensus that allows everyone's future aspirations for the child or young person to be translated into relevant, functional shorter term targets that are regularly reviewed.

How?

The way in which you gather the views and aspirations of the children and young people you work with will differ according to a number of variables, such as age, communication skills, interests, strengths and weaknesses.

Some ideas for how you can include children and young people's views are:

- It can be useful to develop **communication passports** with pupils who have SLCN - www.communicationpassports.org.uk. They allow children and young people with communication difficulties to let others know about important elements of their life and what's important to them.
- For those children and young people with more significant communication difficulties, a **choice making** activity such as talking mats, www.talkingmats.com, is a useful way to gather views. This uses pictures to make a choice based on the child's views.
- Conducting **observations** can also be a useful way to gather information. Observations are a way of learning about a child or young person's preferences and interests, as well as identifying where they are able to be independent or need additional support.
- Using other activities such as play, art or drama can be a good way to get views without children feeling under pressure to give specific answers they think adults might be looking for. Just having a chat whilst creating something else can be a really good way to hear children's views.

Those pupils who are more able communicators will benefit from **thinking and talking about their aspirations**, which can then feed into shorter term targets. Thinking about the future can be an abstract concept for all children, especially those with SEN/SLCN. Try starting with:

- What's good already?
- What could be better now?
- What could be better in the future?

Some pupils might benefit from making these questions really concrete – e.g. “Tell me about a teacher/lesson you really like...what makes it so good?” “What would you/your teacher need to do to make it even better?”

These questions are likely to be easier with older students and you may need the support of younger pupil's families in thinking about future aspirations. Try to identify what things might be better or different for them in the future by using ideas like thought bubbles for future dreams, comic strip conversations to help tell the story (developed by Carol Gray, 1994), talking about role models and what it is about them that they aspire to be like. Or you could talk about using a 'magic wand' that will allow them to achieve whatever they would like - these can all help children and young people to think about their future ambitions.

Then what?

Children and young people should be supported to not only input in to targets, but also to be considered throughout the entire 'assess – plan – do – review' cycle as part of the graduated approach set out in the new SEND code of practice.

Gathering pupil's views about the progress they have made and how they can be further supported is essential to ensure that children and young people are central to the whole process; from assessing to reviewing. Ideas could include:

- Using rating scales based on progress towards targets – what point on the scale were they at before and then after an intervention? Use visual smiley faces for children who might struggle to understand a number line or comparative descriptions.
- Re-assessing using the same assessment model to see what's changed – complete another observation, conduct another talking mats session, ask again about what's going well now...
- Using video as a reflection tool – can the child or young person see what they've got better at? For example, you could use a video to show them how they've developed their skills in a particular area, like joining in a conversation with peers.
- Asking the right questions – outcomes need to focus on the positive, so questions like 'what's going well now?' and 'what's different now?' are

useful questions to elicit what specific achievements have resulted from an intervention or model of support.

The following websites have further information about how to place children and young people at the centre of your planning:

www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk – The Autism Education Trust have created a person centred planning toolkit, which aims to help professionals to include the views and aspirations of children and young people on the autism spectrum in their decision making.

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/childrensconsultation – The Communication Trust has spoken with a number of children and young people to discover their views on how adults can support their communication.

