

Young Children's Voices

Ethical Considerations

Engaging babies and young children in specific participation activities may often mean disrupting their typical routines. While they may gain benefits from these activities, it is worth considering what they might be losing out on in exchange for their participation. Embedding listening within their daily experiences as opposed to approaching it as a separate activity should be considered. Accumulating babies' and young children's voice over time versus during one or two discrete interventions can also be a less disruptive and more genuine and reliable way of listening.

Additionally, babies and young children may be better positioned to engage directly with themes that are directly experienced and relevant to them – such as their immediate learning environments or close personal relationships. Other topics, such as housing or poverty, may necessitate more indirect facilitation of babies and young children's voices. Observations, alongside conversations and observations of interactions with parents and caregivers, are valid methods of highlighting voice, particularly for very young children and sometimes the most effective. It is therefore best to use a range of methods and approaches to meaningfully capture babies' and young children's voices.



It is important to consider the question of who is most appropriate to conduct this work. Adults engaging in babies' and young children's voice work need to be known and trusted by the child and have an established relationship with them. This means that parents and carers of babies and young children who interact with them on a daily basis have a central role to play.

Children's needs need to be put first to ensure an ethical approach to sensitively and effectively listening to babies' and young children's voices. For this reason, prior to engaging in babies' and children's voice work, it is important to ensure an ethical approach including assessing and mitigating against risk. This will strengthen the approach and value of babies' and children's voice work and ensure that children are kept safe.

