

Young Children's Voices

Key Messages

Listening to young children's voice is critical for realising their right to be heard and input into matters affecting them.

All children, from birth, have experiences and views and are capable of expressing them. Adults need to be intentionally attuned and creative to elicit these experiences from babies and younger children who do not communicate verbally, but that does not mean their views are less valid.

Listening to babies and young children is highly important for all practitioners across a broad range of professions. Crucially, Parents' and carers' relationships with their children can also be strengthened through adapting listening practices in everyday interactions. More support is needed for families to gain knowledge, skills and confidence in listening to and facilitating the voice of their babies and young children.

While babies and young children are often left out of debates that concern them, young children living in poverty, those with additional support needs or from underrepresented backgrounds are even more marginalised. Particular attention needs to be paid to eliciting and duly considering their voices.

Safeguarding, while integral in all forms of participation, is especially crucial when working with babies and young children. The inherent power dynamic with adults can never be completely eliminated, but there are ways to minimise it.

Finally, there needs to be an urgency around listening to babies and young children because there are significant consequences when their voices are not heard. The early years are the most critical time for development, and if babies and young children do not have a voice during this period it can put their health and wellbeing at risk and set them back in realising their full potential for years to come.

