



# Tools for gathering the views of children and young people

Highland Council Psychological Service



Works for Positive Change

November 2022

[www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk)



## Does this heading look familiar?

### Child/Young person's views (must be completed)

It's that tricky section in the Child's Plan which for some children/young people with complex needs can seem a difficult if not impossible task to complete. More and more we are being encouraged to gather the views of children/young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN) around their likes and dislikes, emotions and feelings, friendships and things that matter to them.

This document includes some tools and strategies which might help to ensure that we are gathering the child/young person's views and giving them a voice not only during the Highland Practice Model process but thinking beyond the Child's Plan.

Here is a selection of ideas which may be useful, but it is by no means an exhaustive list. Ensure to match the strategy to the child/young person's strengths, interests and communication and developmental level.

**\*Disclaimer:** Some commercial tools are included within this document. These are tools that are used from time to time by colleagues. Their inclusion does not constitute a recommendation to purchase these tools.

## What does legislation say about this?

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (**UNCRC**) all children, including those with ASN and disabilities, have the right to have their views sought and expressed.

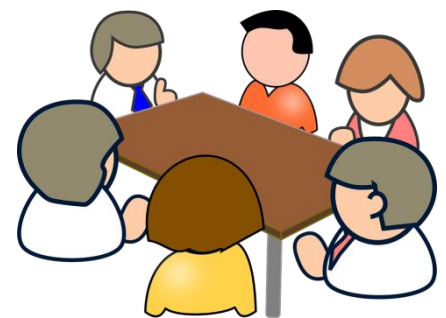
UNCRC Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) - Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.

UNCRC Article 13 (freedom of expression) - Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

This can be challenging particularly for very young children as well as for children/young people with barriers to communication - hopefully some of the following tools will help.

## Involving children/young people in meetings

This can be a positive experience for the child/young person and family, but it can also be a tricky one to manage, depending on their needs. We shouldn't assume that the child/young person can or can't attend and it may be just for part of the meeting but think carefully about how they might react and the difficulties for parents trying to focus. Discuss and agree the best approach with the parents and child/young person, where appropriate, as part of preparing them for the meeting.



## Alternatively...

At a meeting share photos/video of the child/young person:

- coming into the setting/class, in the setting doing something they enjoy or in their safe space;
- working on one of their targets and include a comment beside it in their voice;
- extracts, photos and comments from their Profile or class work; and
- engaged in out of school activities.

## Solution focused meetings

A multi-agency group meets to consider how best to support the needs of specific pupils. The solution focused meeting will focus on solutions and include parents' and children/young people's views.

### Solution Focused Meeting Information Leaflet

## What can you do?

Become familiar with the various methods and tools mentioned below. Discuss with parents, carers and professionals which might be the most suitable to match to the child/young person's strengths. Some of the approaches require an investment of time but you may get better results each time you use them. Start small, try one out and see what works best.

## Use familiar adults to help gather this information

Talk to parents/carers, school staff and other professionals involved about what works well for the child/young person and what they feel they enjoy doing best. This information can be used to feed into the wider picture of a child/young person's life. Familiar adults can be particularly useful for gathering information about children and young people with complex needs and can be used to complete the "child/young person's view" section of the plan.

### Things to consider:

How do children/young people respond to different experiences and environments?

How do people know this?

What do they enjoy?

Is there an impact on their stress or alertness levels and in which situations?

Within the education setting you could comment on how children/young people respond when:

- they put on their uniform/sweatshirt;
- parents/carers pick up their "back pack" or "snack box";
- they see the building, their friends or staff as they arrive;
- they are with their friends;
- they are in class and with staff; and
- during break times.

Outside the education setting you could comment on how children/young people respond to:

- play activities, interests, hobbies, being alone or with friends;
- activities and environments outside the home;
- achievements have they made; and
- socialising with their family and the social circle beyond.



## Observations

Observations\* can be used to notice children and young people's behaviours and reactions to certain situations, activities or events. Observations can help to provide information on:

- what they like or dislike;
- how they express their feelings;
- what soothes or settles them;
- what upsets, stresses or overexcites them;
- whether they look to an adult for a safe base;
- how they look when near staff or other children/young people e.g. relaxed, fidgety, uncomfortable;
- their primary response to stressful situations (fight, flight or freeze);
- engagement/disengagement with certain tasks/subjects;
- peer relationships; and
- strategies that children/young people use to help themselves.

Observations are best carried out over multiple sessions, at different times of the day and week, as any number of factors may be impacting on how a child or young person may present at a certain time. Any assumptions made about how they might feel should be checked out with them as much as possible. For pupils who may find it difficult to answer questions verbally, assumptions could also be checked out by using some of the other techniques suggested in this document (e.g. Faces - Likert Scale; Blob Trees; Traffic Lights).

**\*Please note, ethical questions will arise when observing a child/young person, and these should be fully considered before proceeding.**

## Using an “Intensive Interaction” type approach

“Intensive Interaction” type strategies used in play promote positive relationships by focusing on the foundations of early interactions: being attentive, showing interest, anticipating, sharing, turn taking, trust and respect. This practical approach can be particularly useful in building up a relationship leading to a greater awareness of what matters most to the child/young person – their voice.

For more information see:

**SELFIE Steps**

**Responsive Communication**

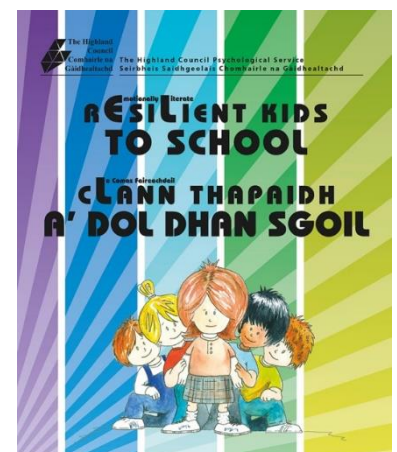
**EASEYS for ASN Intensive Interaction**



## Using puppets

A child/young person who may have difficulty with face to face conversation with an adult might relate better to a puppet. They may follow the puppet's instructions or talk back to it or just feel more comfortable with the puppet there.

See **Resilient Kids** to School for some ideas on using puppets to support activities around emotional literacy and resilience.



## Pen portraits

### “Ways YOU can help ME”

A “Ways YOU can help ME” sheet, written in the child/young person’s voice, can provide an easily accessible way of sharing information within the setting on the targets and practical strategies which help support them.

### “Know Me Support Me” booklets and personal communication passports

For some children/young people more information is needed due to the complexity of their ASN. The main reason for creating these types of booklets is to gather complex information together and present it in an easy to read format. This ensures that all relevant information is easily accessible and in one place for those who need to read it. It is a way of sharing the child/young person’s voice for those who cannot easily speak for themselves. The booklet should be person-centred, written in their voice, and tailored to their unique profile. They can be used to support transitions into Early Learning and Childcare settings, school, between classes and settings and towards post school destinations.

Reference to these documents could be made in the “Child/Young Person’s views” section of the Child’s Plan. For more information see [EASEYS for ASN Vertical Transitions](#) or [CALL Scotland Personal Communication Passports](#)

## Drawing pictures/taking photographs/using symbols

Children/young people can be supported to draw pictures, take photographs or choose symbols as a way of sharing their views. They could be asked to draw/photograph their favourite things; favourite places within school; dislikes; things they would like, etc. Verbal comments made about pictures/photographs/ symbols of activities can be annotated by the child/young person or an adult by adding text or speech bubbles. If they enjoy drawing activities, they may feel relaxed and more able to chat, in which case it may be about just seeing where the conversation goes and noting comments the child/young person makes. There are also more structured drawing techniques that can be used with them to gather views:



“**Drawing the Ideal Self**” allows a child or young person to explore their view of themselves.

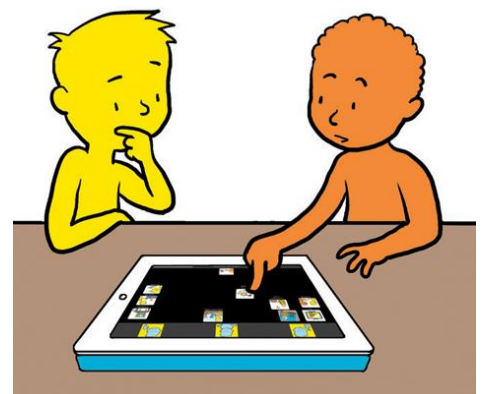
Drawing the Ideal School asks a child or young person to draw their non-ideal school, followed by their ideal school. This allows for discussions about what things might make their current placement better for them. This [prompt sheet](#) offers guidance on using the technique.



## Talking mats

This communication tool is based on extensive research and was designed by Speech and Language Therapists. It is designed to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties by increasing their capacity to communicate effectively about things that matter to them. One example of using this approach could be to use a photograph of a child/young person’s “Talking Mat” to support the Child/Young Person’s Views section of a Child’s Plan. For more information speak to your link Speech and Language Therapist.

**Talking Mats\*** is available in low-tech and digital versions.



\*The symbols are designed and © to Adam Murphy 2015 and assigned to Talking Mats Ltd in perpetuity.

## Using assistive technology and apps

When using non-paper-based methods and materials, the key issue to consider is how you store, present or make these available to parents or other professionals, in line with Data Protection and storage protocols.

There are many tools available, some of which require more adult-led involvement on a sliding scale depending on the capability of the child/young person and the App chosen.

**\*Please note, ethical questions (such as consent) will arise when thinking about videoing a child/young person, and these should be fully considered before proceeding.**

## Using audio/video to record the child/young person's "voice"

Audio recording or video clips are the most obvious ways of capturing what's being said, demonstrated or signed. If a child/young person is already using technology to support their communication, consider using the familiar method at a meeting e.g. record their voice on a BIGmack switch or other voice output device to play at a meeting. You could write what was recorded in the "Child/Young Person's views" section of a Child's Plan.

## Voice recording apps

**iPad:** There are lots of simple free voice recording apps. **Voice Record Pro** is one often used as it allows sharing to a number of different destinations.

**Chrome:** **Mic Note, Cloud Audio Recorder, Kaizena** (add-on).

**PC:** **Mic Note** (built in).

## Video

Video could be used to film a child/young person and then be watched back with them to check out assumptions. For example, a video of them doing an activity which they appear to enjoy could be taken and then watched together. Questions could be asked, such as, "I think you are enjoying this activity because I can see you are smiling and laughing – is that right?"

## Video recording apps

**iPad:** There are lots of simple free video recording apps but the built-in camera recorder is easy to use.

**Chrome:** There are a number of free apps but the built-in camera can be switched from picture to webcam video recording.

**PC:** My Movie – Movie Maker is built in and requires a webcam to be present.

## "Into software/apps"

Use "Book Creator" or "Story Creator" or simply store as digital voice or video files. Saving and storing such files would be best as they can be stored online (Google Drive or OneDrive) and easily shared via email (size limitations might apply).



**Book Creator** (all platforms) allows voice and video capture. These can be associated with text or images.

**Story Creator** (iPad) similar to Book Creator.

**Kaizena** an add-on for Google Docs. Voice comments can be added so recordings can be attached to text or pictures in documents. (Mic-Note for PC/Chrome also allows text association with recorded comments).

**Seesaw** portfolio software allowing easy voice or video capture/storage/sharing opportunities.



# Are we making assumptions when gathering the child/young person's voice?

The two approaches listed below are about being reflective and analysing more accurately what we perceive when we are observing children/young people with a view to gathering their voices.

## Leuven (smiling scale)

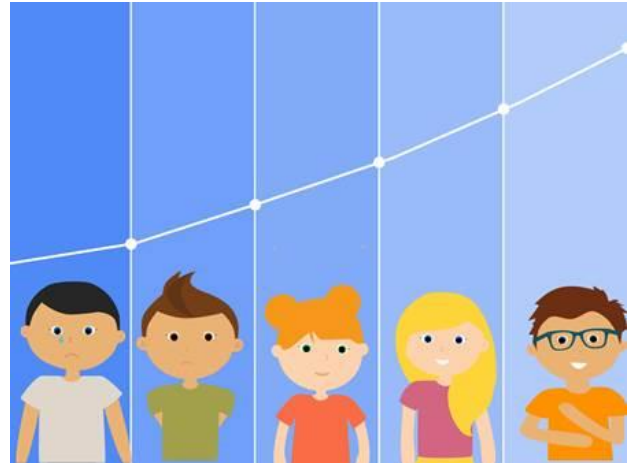
Using the Leuven scale is a method which may prevent us from making assumptions when watching children in play.

Can we assume that their active involvement equates with wellbeing and enjoyment?

According to Ferre Laevers, high levels of both wellbeing and involvement allow children to experience deeper learning. A happy child who is also engaged in play can learn better from those play experiences.

“So many times people say “He’s really involved” and actually he’s not, he’s just doing it,” Sue explains.

“Children are very biddable and so if you give them a task to do then they’ll do it for you and they’ll smile. But that doesn’t mean they’re involved in it.”



Leuven Scales on the [family.co/blog](http://family.co/blog)

### For further information:

Ferre Laevers [Keynote Speech](#), Early Years Scotland 2016.

## The Mosaic approach to listening to young children's perspectives

The Mosaic approach brings together a range of hands-on, experiential methods for listening to young children about their lives. Some methods are already included within this document but for further reading: [Ways of seeing: using the Mosaic approach to listen to young children's perspectives](#).

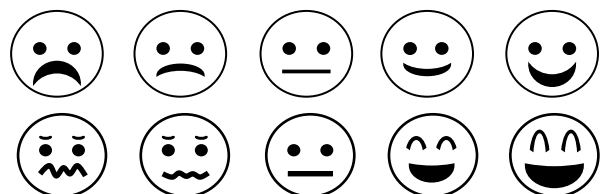
## Feelings ladder

The Feelings Ladder (taken from [Resilient Kids](#)) can be used for children and young people to identify where they are on a feelings scale. This can be done in a group to highlight that we all may feel differently. Questions may be asked to gather views on why a child/young person placed their feeling where they did, and what might make them move up/down the ladder.



## Faces - Likert scale

Faces may be used in the form of a Likert Scale to allow children and young people to identify how something makes them feel. Scales could be 1-3, 1-5 or 1-10; faces could be preferred cartoons, photographs, basic line images, or drawn by the child/young person themselves.



Scales could be sad-happy; calm-angry; worried-confident; nervous-at ease, etc.

**\*If using this technique, it is important to ensure that the child/young person understands the concept of scaling. This could be done by practising scaling using concrete activities or concepts, before moving on to more abstract concepts.**

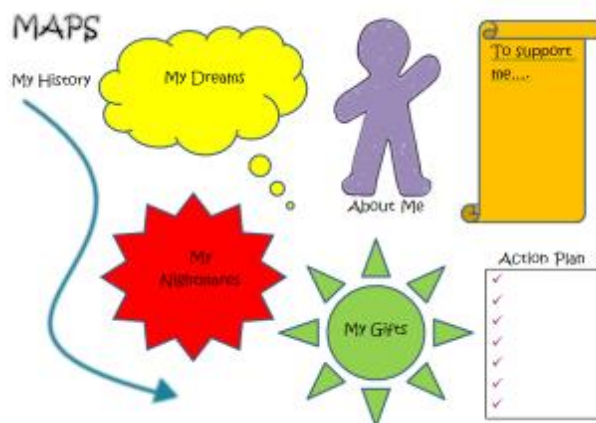
## Person-centred planning tools

Person-centred planning is a way of helping someone to plan their life and support they may need, focusing on what's important to them. A range of tools can be used to plan, e.g. MAPS\* and PATHS\*.

For more information, please visit:

[Person Centred Planning](#)

\*Please contact your link Educational Psychologist for support in using these tools.



## Blob trees

Blob Trees can be used to explore issues and difficulties by looking at different feelings. “Blobs” with different feelings are shown on a tree and can be interpreted in hundreds of different ways.

For more information and resources, see [Blob Tree](#).



## Blob cards

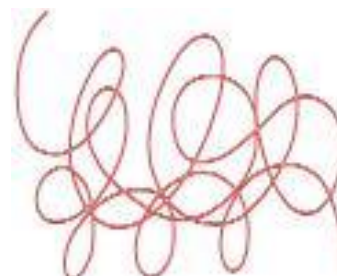
“Blobs” are shown on individual cards and can be used to enable discussion around different emotions, feelings, issues and difficulties. These can be used in a variety of situations.

For more information see [Blob Cards](#).



## Graffiti boards

Graffiti boards are a useful way to gather the views of a group of children/young people. Different questions or statements can be written on big paper, placed in different parts of the room, and small groups can write or draw their answers and ideas onto the paper, adding to those already suggested by previous groups. Either the paper or the groups can move around the classroom.



## Traffic lights

Traffic lights can be used as a form of scale to gather views about a variety of topics (green – positive, amber – neutral, red – negative). This technique can be particularly useful for pupils to self-reflect on how they have found a task, as well as their feelings about things. This can be drawn on work tasks for pupils to colour the relevant “light” afterwards, or it can be done as a separate activity.



## Careful questioning

When asking a child or young person questions, it is important to think about where they are at developmentally and adapt your language accordingly. Think about “which”, “who”, “when”, “where”, “what”, “how”, “why”, and yes/no questions.

For more information, please see Highland Literacy: [Asking the Right Questions at the Right Time](#)

## Can of worms

This can be used as a tool to discuss a variety of issues, particularly where there may be controversy or differing views. A can of worms (pipe cleaners) is presented with statements attached to each worm. Each statement is then discussed. Statements can be discussed openly, one at a time. Alternatively, each child/young person can choose a worm and then move around to find someone who will agree with the statement and someone who will disagree. They should take note of these arguments, then these can be taken back and discussed with the wider group.



## Card sorting activities e.g. strength cards

Strength cards can be used as a tool to encourage children and young people to explore their own strengths. Cards usually consist of a variety of strengths (e.g. kind; funny; caring; brave; friendly; independent, etc.) and children/young people can be asked to identify which cards they feel describe them; which card a friend would choose for them, etc. Strengths cards can be purchased or created (with children/young people, if appropriate). You can make your own or use photos and pictures cut out of magazines, alongside comments.

### Strength cards

### Strength Cards for Kids

**Incentive Plus** UK distributor



## Myself as a learner scale (MALS)

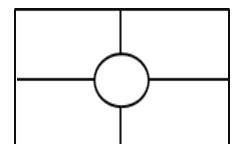
An easy to administer self-perception scale which taps into a child/young person's views of themselves as a learner.

For information please see [MALS](#).



## Gifts poster

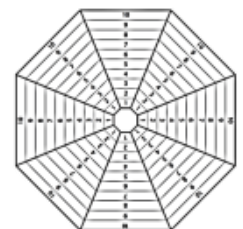
A gifts poster contains 5 sections: roles; gifts; likes and skills, with a self-portrait or photo in the middle. These are completed by the individual, with support from an adult and peers, to allow children/young people to share what is important to them and what they are good at.



## Wellbeing web

The Wellbeing Web is a solution focused tool designed by Angus Council, based on the eight wellbeing indicators. Supported by an adult, children and young people can rate how they feel within each of the eight areas on a 10-point scale. This can help them to create goals, and scales can be revisited to measure progress.

For further information, please see [Wellbeing Web](#)



## Coaching

Coaching\* is a technique that uses questions to challenge thinking and promote reflection. Coaching leads children and young people to identify their problems and create their own solutions.

\*Please contact the Psychological Service for training in use of these tools.



## Emotional check-ins

Emotional check-ins can be used throughout the day to allow children/young people to share how they are feeling at that time. Generally, they tend to be supported by use of visuals (emojis, characters, smiley faces, symbols) displaying different feelings, although this could be done verbally if a youngster has full understanding around different feelings and is able to discuss this. Emotional check-ins can be used as an opportunity to explore children/young people's understanding of different feelings, as well as exploring which strategies might help to support them (e.g. if they are feeling sad or angry, what might make them feel better?).

## Solution focused questions

A variety of solution focused questions\* can be used to gather the views of children/young people on a number of topics. Techniques such as scaling questions, miracle questions, exception questions and strengths-based profiling can be used to explore strengths, pressures, and encourage children/young people to come up with solutions that they feel will help them.

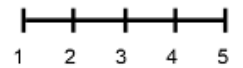


\*Please contact the Educational Psychology Service for training in use of these tools.

## Scaling questions

This solution focused technique helps children/young people to notice what is going right; to make them aware of progress; and to explore preferred futures by thinking about what the situation could look like further up the scale. When using scaling, it is important to start by defining what the numbers at each of the scale mean. Children/young people are asked questions such as:

- What number would you place your situation at right now? What number would you be happy with?
- What is making it that number and not the number below?
- How will you know when you move up a number on the scale? What will be different?
- What would it look like if you were at number 10?



\*Please also see Scaling Questions in the Resilient Kids and Resilience 4 Life folders.

## The wizard

The Wizard is a solution focused technique to encourage children and young people to share their views about where they are now, and their hopes and dreams for the future. A picture of a wizard can be presented, or children/young people can draw one. They are first asked to record the things they are good at in the top part of the wizard. Next, they are asked to record the pressures (things that are currently making them unhappy/causing problems for them) in the bottom part of the wizard. Finally, they are then asked to imagine that a wizard has cast a spell overnight and, when they wake up, all of their hopes and dreams have come true, and all of the things causing them difficulties have disappeared.

Children/young people are asked questions such as:

- What would be the first thing you noticed that made you realise the wizard had cast a spell while you were asleep?
- What would be different?
- What would you be doing?
- What would other people notice?
- What would they say?

Responses can be written down around the wizard.



## Hot air balloon

The Hot Air Balloon is a solution focused planning tool to encourage children and young people to consider a plan, what they will need and what they might need support with. A visual of a hot air balloon is used (this can be provided to the child/young person, or they may choose to create this themselves). Questions are asked to support planning, such as:

- Where are you going?
- What makes the fabric of your plan?
- Who do you want in the basket with you?
- What might blow you off course?
- What might stop your plan taking off?
- What do you need to keep in balance to make it work?

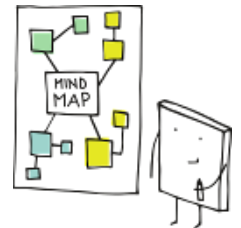
Responses can be written on or around the hot air balloon.



## Mind mapping

This well-known study aid can be used with individuals or groups to help structure the gathering of information around a specific topic.

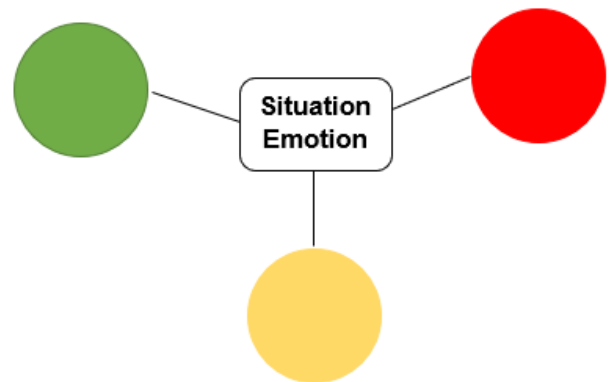
For more information see [Mind Maps for Kids](#)



## Option mapping

Option mapping is a visual system that supports children and young people to reflect on their own behaviour. It is based on a traffic light system and allows individuals to explore and colour code their actions/emotions and the impact they have. It also supports them to reflect on challenging situations and may support them to do something differently in a similar situation in the future.

The situation or emotion is placed in the middle of the map, then each coloured branch is discussed with the child/young person using the code below, encouraging them to think about things they may do in this situation or when they feel this emotion.



**Red – may hurt someone or break something**

**Yellow – doesn't help/make a difference**

**Green – helps/makes a difference**

## Resiliency scales for children and adolescents

This tool identifies personal strengths, as well as vulnerability, under three scales:

- Sense of Mastery
- Sense of Relatedness
- Emotional Reactivity

For more information please see [Resiliency Scales](#)

## Surveys and questionnaires

Surveys and questionnaires can be devised to suit a wide range of purposes, using different media: online; paper; social media; focus group discussion.

You could ask young people to construct their own surveys.

## Focus groups

This is a face to face survey, with a facilitator using a set of questions to structure a group discussion.

A suggestion box could provide an opportunity for anonymous responses to a single question.

## Character strengths

This profiling system comes from positive psychology and can be used with individuals and groups. For more information please see [The Positivity Project - Character Strengths](#).

## Strengths and difficulties questionnaire

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire about 3-16-year olds. It exists in several versions to meet the needs of researchers, clinicians and educationalists.

Please see the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires [here](#).

## Memory box

A useful idea for supporting bereaved children and young people; creating memory boxes with things like photos, objects, materials, drawings, letters, etc.

Please see Winston's Wish [Memory Boxes](#)



## Mapping relationships

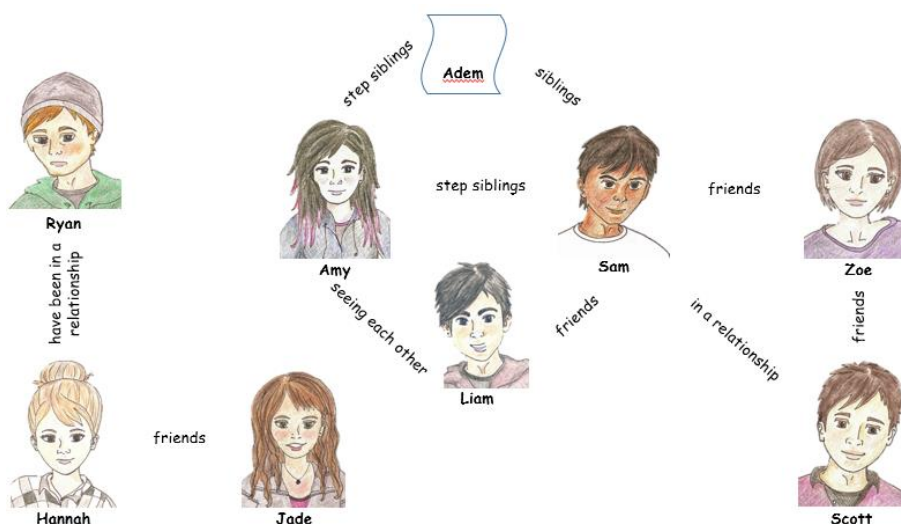
E.g. Circles of Friends

[What is a circle of friends? - Inclusive Solutions](#)

Sociograms

A sociogram is a pictorial representation built up of social links that a child/young person has around them.

[How to use sociograms to support children struggling to make friends](#)



# Pupil attitudes to self and school (PASS)

An online self-evaluation survey to help gain an insight into pupil attitudes linked to wellbeing and learning.

## Pupil attitudes to self and school (PASS)

### Challenge questions

Using the quality indicators and some challenge questions from “How good is our early learning and childcare?” (HGIOELC) consider the following questions:

- What methods of gathering the child’s views and preferences do you use to inform your planning and to help children make choices?
- How well do you recognise and support children who are less confident or less able to express their views and preferences? What strategies could you use?
- “We listen effectively to children and they know their views are respected and acted upon.” Can you show how their views inform change and improvement in your setting? Have you considered using a Mosaic approach to check your assumptions?
- “We listen to and act upon the views of parents/carers and children when planning and evaluating transitions.” What processes do you already use to support key transitions e.g. moving into primary 1? What else might you consider?
- “Learning conversations give opportunities to children to share their thoughts and views on experiences and activities in conversation with an adult or peer.” Think about how you could differentiate to make your practice inclusive for children in your setting with ASN.



### How good is OUR school?

A resource to support learner participation in self-evaluation and school improvement.

Part 1 Education Scotland guidance: **HGIOURS part 1**

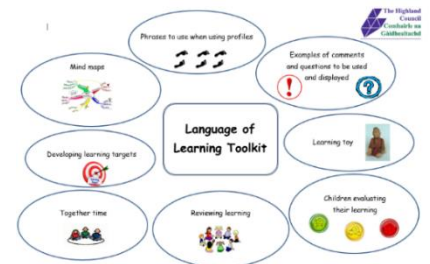
Part 2 A self-evaluation framework for use by children and young people: **HGIOURS part 2**



### The language of learning toolkit

The Language of Learning Toolkit provides practical advice and examples to support quality learning conversations with children/young people.

Language of Learning Toolkit (download)



### “Getting the views of children and young people”

This NHS Highland Leaflet, created by the Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) Department provides a brief guide to some of the methods of supporting Children and Young People in sharing their views.

For any queries please contact the SLT department on: 01463 705424



## Supporting policies

As well as the **UNCRC**, there is further key legislation which promotes seeking the views and voices of children:

- **The Children (Scotland) Act (1995)** has a requirement to “listen to children and take into account their views.”
- **The Education (Scotland) Act (2016)** has given a right to children and young people aged 12+ to be involved in decisions around their education and support.
- **The Highland Practice Model (2016)** expects that children and young people’s views are actively sought and included as part of the planning process.
- **The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** - “Scottish Ministers must take such account as they consider appropriate of any relevant views of children of which the Scottish Ministers are aware.” (The Ministerial duty is supplemented by a Scottish Government expectation that, where children and young people’s views are not known on a matter that is likely to have an impact on them, steps should be taken to obtain their views).
- **Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)** - “Works with children, young people and their families on ways to improve wellbeing and advocates preventative work and early intervention to support children and young people.”
- **Learner Participation in Educational Settings (3-18) Education Scotland (2018)** - “Children should be enabled to participate through a variety of ways of expressing their views.”

