

Listening to Babies and Young Children

Listening to babies' and young children's voices is about using all of our senses to hear the message that they are conveying, it is not simply about hearing the spoken word. Listening to babies and young children empowers them to be involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of the services they use, leading to quality improvement.

Learning

The learning environment stretches beyond the early year's provision into the wider community.

The children benefit from their parents listening to them by:

- Being involved in decision making about issues and events that affect them.
- Having more opportunities to express themselves.
- Being empowered to become independent thinkers.
- Learning to negotiate and compromise.
- Learning to listen and take turns in conversation.
- Learning to reflect on issues and points of view.
- Developing a variety of two way communication skills through play interactions with peers and adults.
- Using a variety of expressive skills to communicate with their parents, carers and peers that will be understood.
- Building positive relationships.
- An improved quality of life.
- Knowing that what they say is acknowledged and valued.
- Developing a high self esteem and belief in themselves.
- Learning that some things can not be carried out how they want it and develop skills of negotiation.
- Informing parents of their interests, concerns and preferences.
- Informing parents of how they feel about themselves.
- Processing and understand events in their world.



Location

- The early year's environment to offer support and guidance to the parents/carers about listening.
- For the parents/carers- all environments shared with their child.

Resources

- Time - for the child care practitioner to talk with parents/carers and discuss the listening culture.
- Space - for parents/carers to talk to key persons in private.

- Space - to display guidelines and evidence of the listening culture. (Available in 'Listening as a way of life - Supporting Parents and Carers to Listen', available to download from the NCB website).
- Gloucestershire Early Years Team 'Listening to Young Children's Voices CD ROM'.

Adult's Role

- To work in partnership with parents.
- Provide opportunities for parents to contribute to 'observation, assessment and planning'.
- Develop simple guidelines to support parents understanding of the many ways they can listen to their child.
- Have regular discussions with ALL the parents about their views on their children's interests and developmental progress.
- To introduce "WOW" vouchers (or similar) to encourage parent to tune into and observe their child at home and in the wider environment.
- Support parents to be realistic about what their baby or young child is currently able to achieve.
- Support parents to take time to reflect on the messages their child conveys.

Reference

McLarnon, J. 2008 *Listening as a way of life; Supporting parents and carers to listen: A guide for practitioners*. NCB publishers. London. www.ncb.org.uk