

# Help Sheet

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching & Support Service

## How to ‘hear’ the child’s voice.



### Why?

- All children need the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings about events, situations and experiences. Some children with SEND may not yet have the necessary skills to articulate their feelings to an adult, so visuals can be an effective tool to support this.
- Visuals are a concrete representation of situations or experiences. The experience itself may not be visible in the moment, such as a school trip or a visit to the hairdressers, but an object, picture, symbol or photograph gives the child a tangible concrete representation of this experience.
- Visuals can help when a child is pre verbal or just beginning to develop spoken words as they may not yet have the vocabulary to describe their feelings. Visuals also provide support when a child is a reluctant communicator.
- Sometimes adults can see a child is having difficulty with an aspect of the school day or routines. Using visuals can help to unpick what adults are seeing. Once you establish the child’s feelings about a situation you can then adapt and adjust to accommodate these.

### You will need:

- Visual resources – described below.
- One-to-one support from a practitioner.



### How?

- Create a picture bank. Use photographs, pictures or symbols. Provide a range of activities and situations, some of which are favoured or special interest ones.
- Make a baseboard with 3 categories. Label these categories in a way the child will understand. Some examples could be ‘big problem’, ‘little problem’ ‘no problem’, traffic light colours, happy face, unsure face and crying/sad face.

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- Support the child to sort a small number of pictures into the categories. Consider giving an example from your own experience. Don't 'second guess' the child's feelings. This approach is most impactful when the adult holds back and does not influence the child's response.
- Give processing time for the child to understand the visual and have sufficient time to decide their response.
- Notice the child's regulation throughout this activity. Be careful not to overwhelm them with too many pictures in one session - it is fine to return to it another time.
- Record the session. This will enable the adult to refer back to the child's voice and make adjustments accordingly. This could be done by taking a photograph of the completed baseboard or gluing the pictures onto the board as the activity is taking place.
- Further sessions can be developed to unpick something that the child placed in the 'big problem' category. This would require a new 'situation linked' bank of pictures. E.g. if a big problem was using the toilet at school, the bank of pictures need to relate to this routine, such as, the smell in the bathroom, the hand drier, washing hands, the noise of the flush etc.

### Things to note:

- It is important to use limited language and give the child processing time – don't rush.
- You want to gather the child's views and therefore there is no right or wrong answer. It is important that the child knows this.
- It is the child's views on that particular day and if you were to do it another day then their views may change. This is OK.
- This approach could be shared with parent / carers to use at home.

### Evidence base – informed by:

Talking Mats <https://www.talkingmats.com/>