

SCIL (Social, Communication, Interaction and Learning) Team

Help Sheet

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching And Support Service

How to use a Child Voice Mat.

Why?

- A child voice mat is a visual communication strategy that can be used to help a child to express their feelings and views about the world around them.
- Once you understand the child's feelings and views about a situation then adaptations can be made to support them.
- "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 12
- The 2015 Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice mandates that pupils' views on their educational experience should be sought and used to inform practice.



Why visuals?

- They reduce the need for spoken language and allow the child to express themselves in a way they feel comfortable.
- When a child is pre-verbal or just beginning to develop spoken words visuals can support them as they may simply not yet have the vocabulary to describe their feelings.
- When a child is a reluctant communicator, it could be challenging to verbally express their feelings, even to a familiar adult.

You will need:

- A small door mat or small piece of carpet or a large piece of paper. Even a tabletop!
- Visuals to represent your chosen headings.
- Visuals for the chosen topic to be explored.
- Blank cards to be drawn on as needed.
- A quiet space where the child/young person feels comfortable.

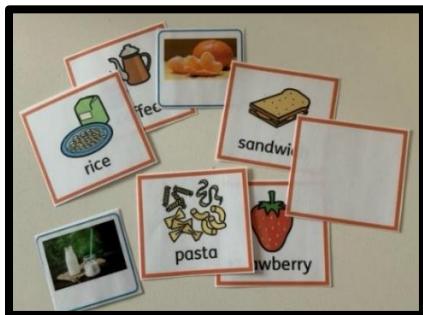
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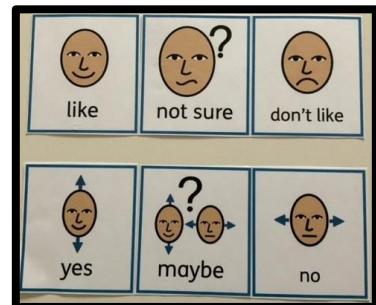
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How?

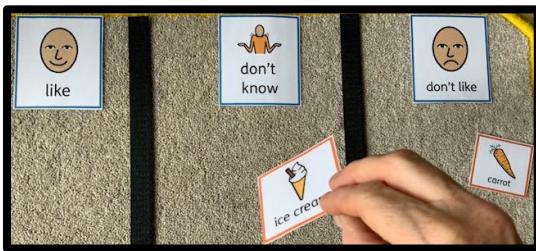
Select a topic and prepare the visuals.



Choose a top scale/headings.



Model how to use the mat then support the child to express their feelings / needs.



Record the child's preferences.



Reference / Evidence base – informed by:

Cameron, L and Murphy, J Talking Mats, A Resource to Enhance Communication. AAC Research Team, University of Stirling. www.talkingmats.com

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2003), Convention on the Rights of the Child. Geneva, Switzerland

DfES Department for Education and Skills- Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. London: DfES