



Speak out
Be heard
Know your rights

Involving Children & Young People in Child Protection Conferences

Why?



- Why do **you** need to facilitate the participation of Children and Young People in their Child Protection Conferences?.....

Simply.....



- **It is their Right**
- Domestic and International law:
 - Children Act 1989
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ❖ **The theme of children not being seen or heard is a feature of most studies of serious case reviews**

More Locally.....



- Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures state:
- 5.11.8 *For agencies in contact with the family, the reports should be shared **with the child** and parents before the conference, (**three** working days before an Initial Conference and **five** working days before a Review Conference) and where necessary, should be translated into the appropriate language or medium*

Furthermore....



- 5.11.21 **Children** and family members should be helped **in advance** to consider what they wish to convey to the conference, how they wish to do so and what help and support they will require e.g. they may choose to communicate in writing, by tape or with the help of an advocate.

What Children told us about attending



- "I wanted to know what people were doing about what was happening"
- "I wanted to know what was going on and what they had to say"
- "I think when they take our opinions into account things will turn out differently"

YAP findings from questionnaires completed by young people following their CP Conference:

- 62% felt that their views were taken into account, and 31% felt this was partly true
- 92% felt safer as a result of participating in their conference and 8% felt this was partly true.

Those who didn't attend..



- *"It wasn't to do with me, it was to do with my mum and stuff"*
- *"Don't know, I didn't know about it until my mum told me after the meeting"*

A more positive meeting & a better outcome?



- Conference Chair observes that she had never known a parent to respond negatively to views expressed by child in the conference.
- When positive information was shared, parents valued their strengths and achievements being recognised by professionals
- Decision making process more transparent, more interactive, more positive and less formal.
- Facilitates parental engagement, by helping parents to be calmer and more receptive in meetings
- Often parents don't recognise the effect of their behaviour on their children. Children's words are powerful and poignant.

RKBC (2013)

Advocacy



- *"They interpret your views to an adult in an adult way and tell me in a child's way"*
- *"My advocate sits next to me, speaks for me, and asks people questions for me"*
- *"She can challenge things, because she knows what should be happening and what I am entitled to"*
- *"I feel better, knowing I have someone on my side"*

Why do children young people need access to advocacy?



- **"Advocacy safeguards children and young people and protects them from abuse and poor practice"**

Jacqui Smith, Minister of State, Department of Health, 2002

- **"They also spoke very highly of the support provided by voluntary sector advocacy services which they describe as *critical in helping them to disclose abuse and harm.*"**

Eileen Munro, The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report – A child-centred system, May 2011

The Process



- Young People 12+ should be invited to their conference. Advocacy should be explained and offered, and consent from parents sought
- Advocate contacts young person, explains advocacy.
- SW prepares YP friendly report and goes through with YP
- Advocate visits and goes through the report, working with young person on their perspective, how they want to be involved in conference and what they have to contribute
- Advocate can attend with young person, or attend on their behalf, or send in a written statement.
- YP presents/hears reports and gives their view.
- SW to feedback outcome to child. Advocate visit to discuss outcome and feedback to SW if needed.

How do Advocates work?



- We are led by the views and wishes of children and young people, we work exclusively for them.
- We adhere to high levels of confidentiality.
- Operate an Open Information policy
- We champion the rights and needs of children and young people.
- We collate the views of the of children and young people in order to inform practice and policy in Children's services.
- Offer Non-Instructed Advocacy to children with disabilities.

Not just Social Workers

youth advocacy project

- All multi agency staff have a responsibility to ensure the maximum participation by children and young people
- Make sure your reports are accessible to young people.
- Be clear and direct about your concerns
- Share with young person before conference. No surprises at conference.

National Standards and Statutory Responsibility

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- National Standards for the Provision of Advocacy Services to Children and Young People DoH 2002
- Provision of an advocate is a legal requirement for Children in Need or Children in Care who wish to make a complaint or a representation to the Local Authority
- Until recently, the framework for ascertaining a child's wishes during the child protection process was provided by *Working Together (WT)* 2010
- Working Together 2013 advises SW's & their managers to help prepare the child if he/she is attending the conference or making representations through a third party.