

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Top tips: Capturing the voices of children with SEND

Capturing the voice of all the children in your setting is crucial for ensuring they each feel valued and understood. Using a variety of communication methods helps to build a complete picture of each child's needs, preferences, and experiences.

Follow our top tips to foster a respectful, listening-centred community where every child's voice is heard and celebrated.

- **Observe non-verbal cues:** Pay close attention to body language, facial expressions, gestures, and behaviour, which can communicate a child's individual needs, preferences, likes and dislikes. Observe how they respond to different experiences
- **Gestures and sign language:** Use simple gestures, Makaton, or basic sign language to support communication and understanding
- **Visual aids:** Offer children choices throughout the day, supported by visual aids or objects, to help children express their preferences
- **Scaling tools:** Use tools like Leuven scale enable you to measure a child's emotional well-being and involvement across a range of activities
- **Emotional check-ins:** Incorporate the language of emotions and feelings across your provision. Use a faces feelings scale to enable children to express how they feel using images of facial expressions such as emojis
- **Use puppets:** Puppets can act as a 'third party', allowing children to communicate emotions and ideas they might find difficult to express directly. Encourage children to speak through the puppet, or use the puppet to ask questions and explore feelings, making the interaction less intimidating and more engaging



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- **Regular reflection:** Continuously assess and adapt communication strategies to meet each child's evolving needs. Reflect on what you do to ensure children's voices are being heard equally in the setting
- **Involve parents and carers:** Maintain regular communication with parents and carers to ensure a holistic understanding of children's needs and current interests.

NDNA products to support you with these tips

- [FREE: Introduction to supporting children with SEND - online course](#)
- [Supporting Children with SEND - online course](#)
- [SEND Awareness - online course.](#)

And more resources at www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna