

THE VOICES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

At Place2Be, we want all children and young people, including those with additional needs (SEND, ASN, ALN) to feel that their voices matter. It's therefore important that the ideas in our Children's Mental Health Week resources are made meaningful and accessible by adults who know their students best.

We want all children and young people to be supported to fully engage in the activities so they are enabled and empowered to express their thoughts, feelings and views. Please use our resources flexibly and give students opportunities to engage in a variety of ways, according to individual needs and preferences.

For example, when using the resources you may wish to:

- provide visual clues, objects of reference, photographs, pictures and symbols so that pupils are supported to express their views
- use peer support to help students express their views
- use different coloured post-it notes for obtaining information about what the children "like" and "don't like" or use a thumbs up/thumbs down
- use pictures and statements and ask students to rank them in order from what is the most important to the least important to them
- use picture cards together with a range of emotions cards. Ask students to match the pictures to the emotions to enable them to express how they feel about what is depicted in the picture.
- use Makaton (or SSE or BSL) as appropriate to ensure students understand the activities and can respond in a way that is meaningful to them.

Adults may have to be explicit in telling children with additional needs

- '_____, I am listening to you'
- '_____, I have listened to you'
- '_____, I've heard what you said, and I am going to do X'
- '_____, your views matter to me'
- '_____, I care about what you think'
- '_____, when you talk about how you feel, I can listen and help you'

Or go one step further and reflect a key part so the child knows you got it!

- 'I heard you say "xyz" did I get that right?'
- 'It seems like X was the most important thing you wanted me to hear, is that right?'

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. Children will express their views in many ways, not just using words. We can all show that every voice matters by watching out for communication in the form of smiles, relaxation, eye contact and more. You and the families you work with will know the child best.

We hope the Children's Mental Health Week resources help all children and young people in your school share their voice and know it matters.