

Young Children's Voices

Benefits

Summary

Listening to babies and young children benefits both the child and the listening adults. There are direct and indirect benefits that impact on the child, on the parent and the parent-child relationship in the home, on early years settings and other services, as well as on policy and advocacy. This can create a culture of listening to babies and young children throughout the system around the child.

Listening to babies and young children benefits the child as well as the adults who are listening:

Impact on the child:

- Listening to babies' and young children's voice acknowledges and supports the realisation of their right to be listened to and their views to be considered on matters that directly affect them.



- Where babies' and young children's voice is sought and considered, children themselves will gain many essential skills. They will develop confidence in themselves and their capabilities, decision-making and problem-solving skills, while also increasing their own wellbeing and empathy for others.
- Babies and young children who grow up in an environment where they are listened to will be more likely to embark on a pathway to participation that they can continue to engage in throughout their lives.
- Babies and young children who are listened will grow to have a better understanding and awareness of the needs and views of others and are able to reflect on them.
- This in turn can have an indirect positive impact on general outcomes for children.

In the home:

- Listening to babies and young children can help parents/carers understand the children they care for better, help them understand how the baby or child sees and engages with the world around them, and support the development of secure attachment.
- It gives babies and young children more autonomy, voice and choice in their home: a child who has a sense of having choices and being listened to will feel safer, happier and understood.

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- It will help the parent/carer to better understand a baby's or child's interests and to better meet children's needs.
- Listening to babies and young children's voice can ultimately improve the relationship between a parent/carer and a child.

In settings:

- Incorporating babies' and children's views on services will ensure that they are more effective and tailored to their needs and interests.
- It can help settings to better support babies and children who experience disadvantage or marginalisation by understanding more about their experiences from their own perspectives.

In policy and advocacy:

- Where babies' and young children's voices are sought, their voices can inform and strengthen policy and advocacy work which influences decisions that impact on a child's life; such as funding decisions, service design and implementation, and local and national policy and government.
- It contributes to developing a culture where it is the norm to consistently consider the views and experiences of babies and young children throughout the system. This makes it more likely that babies and young children are kept in mind when decisions are made.
- This in turn may benefit all babies and young children by creating a mindset where children are considered capable citizens with a valued voice as a matter of course. Such systemic change links to Save the Children's place-based approach.

Ecological Systems Theory

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

