



# Recording the Child's Voice and Lived Experience

## Language

It is critical when we make records on a child's file that the language we use should be carefully chosen.

Language is power, and we want children and young people to feel empowered in their experiences with our services. However, it is important to remember that it can offer a disguise for when we don't know, or we don't understand and defends us against an intolerable/unpleasant feeling.

Professional language can be a weapon but it can also be emotional armour.

Records must include a picture of what life is like for an individual child at a particular time.

It is important that our own narrative does not compromise a child's sense of self-worth and identity.

The child has lived/is living through the experience and so we should not underestimate their awareness of what is going on around them. There are ways of delivering this information in a way that still holds them in positive regard and respects their identity and belonging.

Always remember that any referrals you make will be held on the child's file for them to access. What would you want them to know about your work with them?

When we focus on the emotion behind the behaviour.....

*"You are very funny, bright and have a good sense of humour. You are good company to be around and lots of people care about you. You are a very talented artist and love to do your make up which you are also very good at. You like to have nice things and money is important to you. You love animals, in particular cats and can be very soft and caring.*

*You find it very hard to trust people and can make your mind up about a person very quickly. You respect people who are honest, straight talking and who listen to you."*

Written about a young person who had previously been deemed 'hard to engage'.



## Tips for better recording the child's voice and lived experience:

- Record what children say in 'direct quotes' (e.g. "I feel sad/happy/worried when..."). This has far more meaning than something interpreted, perhaps incorrectly, by a practitioner.
- Use **Bold** to draw attention to where you have recorded the child's voice or lived experience within your assessments.
- Describe a child's physical appearance; do they appear thin, pale, dark shadows under their eyes, listless, or do they appear curious, 'smiley', active – be descriptive.
- Describe the child's interactions with professionals – include what your hypothesis is about this behaviour.
- Encourage children to participate in plans drawn up about them
  - they can do this directly by attending meetings or contribute by putting something in writing or drawing a picture, or giving someone a 'message' from them.
- Record how rapport has been built with children and young people and the activities you have done together; show how the relationships matter.
- Record the child or young person's journey through your service.
- Gather feedback from children and young people throughout an intervention, and not just at the end of an intervention.