

SAFEGUARDING VOICES LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Tool of the month

Young People Recruitment & Retention

What NOT to do:

- Bring young people in at the end for “tick box” approval
- Overwhelm with jargon or formal panels
- Assume that a £20 voucher alone is fair compensation
- Treat participation as optional or goodwill

What TO do:

- Use creative introductions (NHS CWP example): Candidates send profiles ahead of interviews, making panels more accessible.
- Co-design processes with Young Consultants
- Offer choice of involvement: online, in-person, creative methods
- Give proper recognition (voucher + food + reference + skills + development)
- Use clear, simple language
- Provide feedback every time

Remind professionals that listening is a legal duty (UNCRC)

Baby Voice

What's already working:

- Highly skilled practitioners using observation (reactions, noises, body language) as legitimate forms of “voice”
- Health visitors reflecting on what the baby's voice would have been if they could express it
- Family Hubs – strong parent engagement enables indirect baby voice
- SSCP briefings supporting professionals to observe developmental milestones & behaviours
- Restorative Practice examples – young children using drawing/colouring to express experiences
- Dip sampling & multi-agency audits identifying strengths/weaknesses in baby voice
- Agencies beginning to track baby voice structurally, e.g., Stockport reviewing common age banding

New ideas & useful resources added in the session:

- Starcatchers – Voice of the Baby: <https://starcatchers.org.uk/work/the-voice-of-the-baby/>
- Ask services working with babies: “What adult process do you have for capturing voice?”
- Build pre-school children's views directly into social care plans
- Capture voice as soon as they can talk
- Use multi-agency “voice risk indicators” to flag concerns early
- Share examples across agencies to normalise strong practice

What we did

1. Welcome, norms, and intros.
2. Thermometer check (-3 to +3): Where is voice/participation within your MASA today?
3. Live problem-solving circle (clarify → question → advise).
4. Tool of the Month: Young People's Recruitment & Retention Policy

The challenge

“How do we ensure baby and young children's voices are captured meaningfully across safeguarding partnerships — strengthening both single-agency and multi-agency practice?”

Suggestions

A. Strengthen workforce skill & confidence

- Specialist training for staff
- Case examples from across the region
- Observation-based voice training
- Short “on-the-go” tools for frontline practitioners

B. Create a North West Baby Voice Toolkit (co-produced in 2026)

Likely components:

- Observation prompts
- Baby/toddler communication cues
- Play-based tools
- Templates for recording voice consistently
- “Red flag” indicators
- Multi-agency dip-sampling approach
- Guidance for working with parents/carers as co-interpreters
- Video exemplars of good practice

C. Establish a shared regional definition of “Baby Voice”

- Clarity on what counts, what to record, and how to understand non-verbal communication.

D. Build a Multi-Agency Assurance Process

- Voice dashboards
- Quarterly dip samples
- Cross-agency reviews
- Escalation for when baby voice is unclear, missing, or unheard

E. Embed baby voice in service design

- Family hubs
- Early years teams
- Health visitors
- Social care
- Preparing for Adulthood pathways

This gives a clear and actionable pathway for 2026 work.