

# INFANT VIEWS VOICE EXPERIENCE (IVVE) AND INFLUENCE: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## POSITION STATEMENT



## INTRODUCTION

This position statement sets out the rights of infants, and the responsibilities of partners to effectively promote, protect and respond to Infant Views Voice and Experience, enabling babies, toddlers, and young children to influence the decisions made by adults which effect their lives.

Babies are born pro-social; they are effective communicators, primed to seek connection with their carers and curious about the world around them. Babies, toddlers, and young children have the right to be seen, heard and responded too from birth and these rights are enshrined within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989).

All children have the right to expression, to be taken seriously and for their needs and experiences to be considered with care. Very young infants and children must be enabled to enact and fully realise their rights; they must be seen, heard, considered and responded to by adults who recognise their responsibilities as listeners, first teachers and advocates. Yet current evidence highlights that the views, voices and experiences of infants are less visible within practice than those of older children, leaving babies at increased risk of harm.

If adults do not understand infants' views and voices then the care, support and protection they are offered will be limited.

## A RESPONSIBILITY TO LISTEN: INFANTS' RIGHTS AND ADULTS' RESPONSIBILITIES.

Infants develop their communication skills rapidly from birth with help from supportive adults. Adults also need to learn rapidly how to listen and respond to the many ways in which individual infants communicate

All babies, toddlers, and young children have the right to have their communications attended to and responded to. Adults have a responsibility to promote infants' right to express their feelings, needs, and experiences. (UNCRC Article 5).

## WHAT IS THE VOICE OF THE INFANT?

The term 'voice' does not adequately reflect the ways in which infants communicate their views, experiences, feelings and preferences. Infants communicate during their early development through their body movements and facial expressions, and by using their voices to make sounds. All these sounds, movements, expressions and behaviours represent infant communication or 'voice'. As they learn and grow, most infants develop increasingly effective verbal communication. For infant's communication to be effective they need adults who are available, attentive, and responsive. An audience who the infant can influence, to be heard and get their needs met.



## PRINCIPLES

1. Every baby has a voice and the right to be seen and heard (UNCRC, 1989)
2. Infant Views, Voice and Experiences are present even when words are not.
3. Observation is a valid and essential form of listening to infants.
4. Infant Views, Voices and Experiences must be present and considered within decision making by all agencies, for children of all ages including unborn babies, babies, and toddlers.
5. Families are key partners in interpreting Infant communication.
6. Infant Views, Voice and Experience should inform decisions, plans, assessments, and reviews.
7. Absence of Infant Views, Voice and Experience is a risk factor. High support and challenge are needed to continuously improve practice.
8. Professionals should be competent and responsive listeners.
9. Recording must be simple, practical, and aligned across agencies.
10. Infant Views, Voices and Experiences must be visible in governance structures with evidence of influence and impact (i.e. MASA, subgroups, and audits).

## EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY, A MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH

Sharing understanding, listening skills and knowledge is key. Many attentive listeners who enact their responsibilities to see, hear, consider, record and respond to Infant Views Voice and Experience creates a support and safety network in which infants can influence decision making and thrive.

## OBSERVING, LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING IVVE

Each adult who offers care and support for the infant has the opportunity and responsibility to see, hear and develop an understanding of the infant's experiences. This will be based on what they see, hear and understand about the baby within the context of their life and ecosystem.

What we bring as a 'listener' also influences our understanding. It is important to reflect what is seen and heard by multiple adults, multiple times to developing an understanding of 'what life is like' for each infant within their unique life.

## HOW TO RECORD

Infant voice should be visible whenever a baby is seen by a professional.

Recording should be:

### **Descriptive: I observed...**

What did you see? What was the infant doing? Who were they communicating with? Where were they? What expressions, sounds and behaviour did you see? What 'state/s' did you observe i.e. asleep, awake, distressed, fussing, alert, engaged.

### **Attentive: I/We considered...**

What were their needs? Were they responded to?

**Analytical: I/We understood this to mean...** (a working hypothesis). What did you and their carer understand from their communication? If baby could talk, what would they say? What do you think baby is feeling? What do they need?

## RELEVANT READING

[NSPCC \(2026\) What is safeguarding in the early years](#)

[United Nations \(1989\) Convention on the Rights of the Child. Treaty no. 27531](#)

[Hingorani, M. \(2025\) See us – hear us. Listening to babies: learning from Start for Life and family hubs transformation. London: Anna Freud](#)

[The Lundy Model Explained](#)