

Participation in Education (PIE)



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Project Aim: To explore approaches for including children aged 7-11 with little or no verbal communication in decision-making in education

Background factors:

- **Emphasis in policy publications on listening to the child's voice**
- **Strong interest and support from Bristol Local Authority**

Project Design

- **Phase 1: National survey of provision in England**
- **Phase 2: Intensive work with two groups of children attending special schools**
 - **Interviews with children, parents, teachers, Speech and Language Therapists, Teaching Assistants and Headteachers**
- **Visits to good-practice provision**
- **Development of a resource pack**

The Listening Partnership



The Listening Partnership

- **Guided the research at early stage**
- **Chose members to help with fieldwork**
- **Helped with observation sessions**
- **Helped with group session**

Research Advisory Group

- **Professionals** – SEN Partnership, Head Teacher, Disability Group, SLT, City Council Equalities Unit
- **Parent** – Has daughter aged 22 with multiple impairments
- **Academics** – Education lecturer, disability researcher

PIE Survey

- **Letters sent to all units and special schools in England offering provision for children with little or no verbal communication**
- **112 questionnaires analysed from special schools and units in mainstream schools (representing 46% of Local Authorities in England)**

Key Findings from the Survey

- **Generally positive self-ratings for the success of current approaches**
- **Relatively low levels of involvement of children in meetings that directly concern them**
- **Difficulties in involving children in class discussions and where abstract or complex decisions/choices need to be made**
- **Importance of one-to-one support and adequate time**
- **Need for training**
- **Lack of protocols/guidelines**



Peer interaction – early findings

1.Observation sessions

- 4 of the 11 children in study experienced instances of peer interaction
- 10 instances of peer interaction overall
- 2 sustained examples of interaction



Peer interaction – early findings

2a. Parents comments – the positives

- 'Happy to have them around'
- 'Since we've had the mighty-mo it's helped a lot....so she can tell her friends, who can ask what's she's done'
- '..very much into make-believe
- 'taken a couple of years but....ok I'll react to you'
- '..she's got such a good relationship..they laugh, they giggle'

Peer interaction – early findings

2b. Parents comments – the negatives

- ‘..keen to make friends but she hasn’t really got the skills’
- ‘Very much a loner... hasn’t got the ability to play’
- ‘..doesn’t get the role models’

Peer interaction – early findings

3. Teachers

‘The friendships are difficult for all of our children. But they do, they are there, there are friendships, but just not as we know it.’

Resource Pack

- **Easily accessible**
- **Short**
- **Messages from all participants**
- **Wider application**

