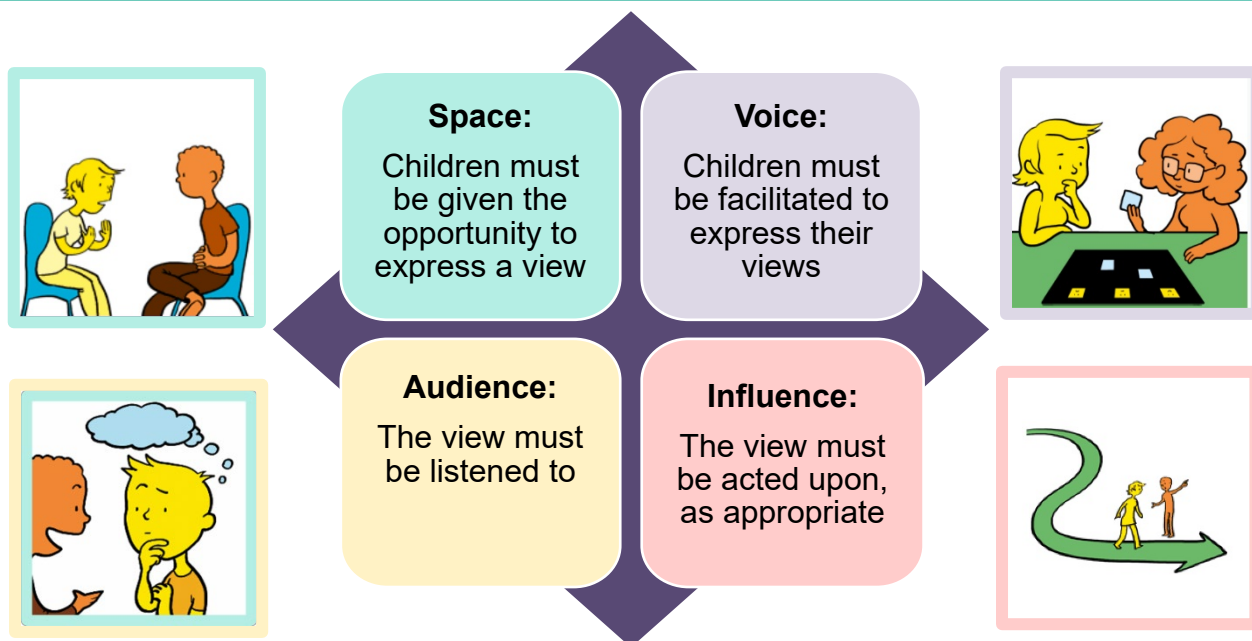


Talking Mats and Voice of the Child/Young Person

‘Talking Mats is the epitome of Rights-Based Participation’

Laura Lundy, Professor of International Children’s Rights, Queens University, Belfast



Adapted from: Lundy, L (2007) ‘Voice’ is not enough: conceptualizing Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. British Educational Research Journal, 33(6)

How can Talking Mats support Children and Young People to have a Voice?

Space

- Visual structure supports focus, understanding, and aids memory storage and recall.
- Provides time and space to process information and respond in their own time.
- Gives control to the thinker
- Topic is broken down into manageable chunks.
- Attention can be focused on understanding and thinking.

Audience

- Provides a visual record of the conversation that can be shared.
- Builds up a holistic picture of the thinker’s feelings/views and aspirations, so parents/carers and professionals have a clearer understanding of what these are, and plan accordingly.
- The process reinforces the need to focus on and understand the thinker’s feelings and views.

Voice

- Makes views visible and allows the thinker’s voice to be heard.
- Gives time to formulate thoughts and express these verbally or non-verbally
- Provides a balanced view including positive and negative, including things the thinker is not sure of.
- Allows time to reflect and change responses.

Influence

- Using Photos of the Mats, Children’s views can be shared, and implications discussed.
- Children, Parents/Carers and Professionals can work together to find solutions.
- Recognition and true understanding of children’s aspirations as part of e.g. the SEND process in England can lead to child-centred, meaningful target setting.
- Genuine participation supports learning/ positive outcomes; and enhances wellbeing.

