

# Component 4: What I Think

## Gathering the views of children in the early years A Guidance Note for practitioners

An underpinning principle of *Getting it right for every child* is the central role of the voice of children and young people in contributing to the assessment of and planning to support their additional needs.

The “What I Think” early years tool aims to help early years staff capture the views and/or experiences of children up to the age of 8 years old. Using the wellbeing indicators it provides a framework for staff to explore with the child the aspects of their life which contribute to their healthy physical and emotional development. This complements the single agency assessment which represents the views of staff and other professionals. Parents/carers views are represented as part of this process.

The tool provides guide questions within each of the eight wellbeing indicators and details resources and opportunities within the nursery/classroom which may facilitate discussion around these areas.

Opportunities for discussion with children can occur at any time during their day and staff are skilled in using children’s play and every day conversations to extend and explore their experiences. The tool should provide a recording framework for the information gathered during such times and should be used flexibly over a period of time.

As a number of staff will interact with children it is recommended that a key person is identified to oversee the completion of the tool.

### Children under two or with additional support needs

Some children, because of their stage of development or additional support needs, may not be able to contribute directly to the information being gathered. For these children staff observations of behaviours and relationships will form the basis of the information gathered.

Other children may be more dependent on visual aids or other communication supports and their individual needs should be taken into account when completing the tool.

### What information could be gathered?

Information can come from a number of sources including conversations, drawings, recordings and observations and discussions with parents/carers. The tool is designed to allow insertion of children’s own materials e.g. drawings, photographs, mindmaps, as a record of their views.

Entries into the tool should include a note of the date the information was gathered and the context.



### Active:

Children enjoy spending time doing something fun or interesting

### Healthy:

We all like to be as healthy as we can be.

### Achieving:

Every child should have opportunities to learn and people to encourage them to do their best

### Nurtured:

All children need a place where they can feel comfortable and safe and where people really care about them.

### Safe:

It is important that everyone feels safe. We all need someone who helps us to feel safe and protected from harm.

### Respected:

It is important that children are involved in decisions that affect them.

### Responsible:

Growing up involves learning to take good decisions and make sensible choices

### Included:

Every child should feel accepted by the group of people around them

For example (16.02.11)

During snack time we spoke about making food at home and Connor could tell me that his mum and his big brother both made meals for him. He said he especially liked curry and that sometimes after swimming his mum helped him choose what they would have for lunch.

Connor also told me that he had got his “tadpoles” swimming badge.

This conversation during snack time has provided information covering a number of indicators:

**Active-** swimming

**Responsible –** choosing lunch

**Nurtured –** both mum and big brother provide meals

**Achieving-** swimming badge

Most information will be best gathered during a guided, open, flexible and natural conversation or play activity where children should not feel targeted. A degree of judgement is required to identify both the best time to do this and the person to carry this out. Whatever the circumstances, staff should use pre existing good relationships, knowledge and already available resources to ensure that the child is comfortable, consenting and supported at all times.

As some of the topics covered explore the safety and nurture of children, staff should also be familiar and comfortable with child protection/care and welfare guidelines and procedures.

Some useful resources and materials:

- Floorbooks
- Little/Big learning books
- Puppets
- PAtHS (early years)
- My feelings toolkit
- Small world materials
- Songs & rhymes
- Homelink materials (e.g: Barney bear, Jimmy the Dog)
- “All About me” Booklet
- Circle Time
- Personal dolls, cars, animals, figures, dinosaurs etc
- Talking tubs
- Celebrations e.g: birthdays, achievements, stickers
- Multicultural resources
- Imaginative/ symbolic play e.g: “did teddy enjoy being in your house?” (taking another’s perspective)



What I Think: The child/young person’s views (exemplar)			
	What I THINK?	Supporting evidence (Nursery / School, Home / Community)	
<b>Active</b>	<p>Children enjoy spending time doing something fun or interesting</p> <p>Do you have hobbies and interests?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Do you have a favourite toy, game or thing to do?</li> <li>» Who takes you to fun places?</li> <li>» Who encourages your interests or hobbies?</li> </ul>	<p>J was outdoors and noticed bowling pins. He asked if he could bowl as he had been bowling with his gran and papa and big sister the previous night.</p> <p>“Granny cuddles me when I won then as a special treat we went to McDonald’s then we stayed at gran’s house. Younger brother didn’t come he’s too wee. I love my gran. I didn’t miss my mum. My gran kisses me night-night and reads stories to me.</p>	
<b>Healthy</b>	<p>We all like to be as healthy as we can be. How do you do this?</p> <p>Do you have people who help you to be healthy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Someone who looks after you if you are sick or hurt?</li> <li>» Someone who gives you healthy food to eat?</li> <li>» Someone who helps you to be clean?</li> <li>» Someone who talks to you about your feelings?</li> </ul>	<p>“When I burst my lip at the park I was by myself. I was crying and a lady told me to go home and I was crying. I went home and my daddy shouted at me. He says I’m a big boy and I shouldn’t cry like a big baby. I am a big boy, ain’t I?” “member I fell off the climbing frame and you cuddled me and put a cold one on it. I sat on your knee and and sooked my thumb ‘til I felt better”.</p>	
<b>Achieving</b>	<p>Every child should have opportunities to learn and people to encourage them to do their best</p> <p>Do you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Someone who helps you to learn new things?</li> <li>» Someone who says ‘well done’ when you try your best?</li> <li>» Someone who helps you to try things on your own?</li> </ul>	<p>At the end of session time the red group were drawing and discussing best friends at nursery. All the children chose 1 or 2 peers. J chose his keyworker. “I love you best. You’re my best pal. You help me be good and give me stickers and learn about big and small”.</p>	
<b>Nurtured</b>	<p>All children need a place where they can feel comfortable and safe and where people really care about them.</p> <p>Who are the people who care about you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Who looks after you at home? (e.g. care routines, getting dressed, mealtime, bedtime)</li> <li>» Who are the people you care about?</li> </ul> <p>Much of the information for this indicator will be gathered through observation, e.g. how child comes in and leaves in relation to the caregiver, child’s interactions with caregiver</p>	<p>“I feel scared in my room sometimes. My mum lets me keep the hall light on sometimes, but if I’m not good she puts it off. I look after my wee brother when he’s scared.”</p> <p>J recently moved house and consequently had to spend less time with gran who had previously delivered and collected J from nursery. This had an impact on Js’ behaviour and wellbeing. Gran has become more involved again recently and his behaviour has improved again. Sister was staying at gran’s and has now returned home.</p>	

### What I Think: The child/young person's views (exemplar)

	What I THINK?	Supporting evidence (Nursery / School, Home / Community)	
<b>Safe</b>	<p>It is important that everyone feels safe. We all need someone who helps us to feel safe and protected from harm.</p> <p>Do you have people who keep you safe?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» What places do you have where you feel safe?</li> <li>» Who do you feel safe with?</li> <li>» Someone who protects you from danger?</li> <li>» Someone you can tell if you are frightened or sad?</li> <li>» Who would know if you were sad?</li> </ul>	<p>"I tell keyworker when I'm sad and she sorts it out!"</p> <p>Mum arrived for J one day and he was heard telling her he felt sad. Mum responded that she was in a hurry as a taxi was waiting. I like being at my gran's house. She cuddles me and reads stories to wee brother and me and she's got a quiet voice. She gets angry with dad if he smacks me.</p>	
<b>Respected</b>	<p>It is important that children are involved in decisions that affect them.</p> <p>Do you have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Someone who asks you about your day?</li> <li>» Someone who listens to you when you have something to say?</li> <li>» Someone who thinks you are special?</li> </ul>	<p>"My gran gives me treats and takes me special treats. She calls me her special big boy and asks if I'm all right".</p> <p>"Keyworker asks me what I learned and she writes in the big learning book. We listen to each other and learn about each other. I get a sticker when I'm my keyworkers special boy."</p>	
<b>Responsible</b>	<p>Growing up involves learning to take good decisions and make sensible choices</p> <p>Do you have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Someone who knows when you are behaving well?</li> <li>» Someone who helps you when you get things wrong?</li> <li>» What helpful things do you do for others?</li> </ul> <p>Please comment on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Understanding right from wrong and consequences</li> <li>» Understanding of nursery/school rules</li> <li>» Developing awareness of social rules</li> </ul>	<p>"Sometimes I go to the kitchen cos I say swearing word like f—. I was very angry and pulled your scarf. You were sad. You don't like me when I'm bad. You only love me when I'm being good."</p> <p>J has been involved in a lot of discussion regarding emotions and behaviour and has been assured on many occasions of my feelings towards him are always of fondness although I do at times dislike his behaviour. He seems unable to disregard the thoughts that people 'hate' him when he is behaving negatively.</p> <p>J is well aware of right and wrong and knows society rules but at times chooses not to follow them.</p>	
<b>Included</b>	<p>Every child should feel accepted by the group of people around them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Do you have friends to play with?</li> <li>» Who are your friends?</li> <li>» What do you like to do with your friends?</li> </ul>	<p>"I don't have any friends in nursery cos I'm a big five and I'm going to school. All my friends are at school cos I'm 5".</p> <p>J will play with a variety of children throughout the session. He is not particularly close to any child. He is over familiar with any adult, familiar or not, and will sit on their knee and cuddle or play with their hair.</p>	

### Early Years 'What I think tool' form

<b>Child's Name:</b>	
<b>D.O.B:</b>	
<b>Nursery/Primary:</b>	
<b>Name of Early Years Worker/Class Teacher:</b>	
<b>Comments from Head of Establishment:</b>	

## Early Years 'What I think tool' form

Children enjoy spending time doing something fun or interesting

Do you have hobbies and interests?

- » Do you have a favourite toy, game or thing to do?
- » Who takes you to fun places?
- » Who encourages your interests or hobbies?



Active

## Early Years 'What I think tool' form

We all like to be as healthy as we can be.

How do you do this?

- Do you have people who help you to be healthy?
- » Someone who looks after you if you are sick or hurt?
  - » Someone who gives you healthy food to eat?
  - » Someone who helps you to be clean?
  - » Someone who talks to you about your feelings?



Healthy

## Early Years 'What I think tool' form

Every child should have opportunities to learn and people to encourage them to do their best

Do you have:

- » Someone who helps you to learn new things?
- » Someone who says 'well done' when you try your best?
- » Someone who helps you to try things on your own?



Achieving

## Early Years 'What I think tool' form

All children need a place where they can feel comfortable and safe and where people really care about them.

Who are the people who care about you?

- » Who looks after you at home? (e.g. care routines, getting dressed, mealtime, bedtime)
- » Who are the people you care about?

Much of the information for this indicator will be gathered through observation, e.g. how child comes in and leaves in relation to the caregiver, child's interactions with caregiver



Nurtured

## Early Years 'What I think tool' form

It is important that everyone feels safe.  
We all need someone who helps us to feel safe and protected from harm.  
Do you have people who keep you safe?  
» What places do you have where you feel safe?  
» Who do you feel safe with?  
» Someone who protects you from danger?  
» Someone you can tell if you are frightened or sad?  
» Who would know if you were sad?



Safe

## Early Years 'What I think tool' form

It is important that children are involved in decisions that affect them.  
Do you have  
» Someone who asks you about your day?  
» Someone who listens to you when you have something to say?  
» Someone who thinks you are special?



Respected

## Early Years 'What I think tool' form

Growing up involves learning to take good decisions and make sensible choices

Do you have

- » Someone who knows when you are behaving well?
- » Someone who helps you when you get things wrong?
- » What helpful things do you do for others?

Please comment on:

- » Understanding right from wrong and consequences
- » Understanding of nursery/school rules
- » Developing awareness of social rules



Responsible

## Early Years 'What I think tool' form

Every child should feel accepted by the group of people around them

- » Do you have friends to play with?
- » Who are your friends?
- » What do you like to do with your friends?



Included

## Early Years 'What I think tool' form

**Additional comments/ information**