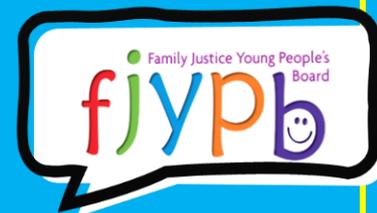


VOICE OF THE CHILD

2021 Live Webinars: Summary



The Family Justice Young People's Board (FJYPB) held their second series of Voice of the Child Live Webinars during July 2021.

The theme of the webinars was:
COMMUNICATION with children and young people involved in the family courts.

The webinars, hosted via Microsoft Teams and led by FJYPB members, focused on:

- Exploring best methods and practice for all family justice professionals.
- Exploring how all family justice professionals can best represent the voice of the child in family courts.



Over 180 people attended each of these webinars, with representatives from across the family justice sector. Our goal was to bring together the key professionals in the world of family justice to focus on communicating effectively with children and young people involved in the family courts.

- Our third webinar: **Empowering your voice: How to use it and how to achieve changes** (held via Zoom) was aimed at children and young people who are part of their local Children in Care Council. Our focus was on sharing the incredible work of those young people and suggesting some areas of work that they could be involved in and challenges they could set their local authority.

KEY MESSAGES

"Language is not only about how you speak to a child or young person. It is also about how you share information that is in writing about the child. This should be clear and understandable. Everyone benefits from clear language no matter your role in family court proceedings".

"Communication is not just about how you talk to a child, it is about every interaction you have with them including any information you give them".

"My file is a record of my journey. It's important to me that you record an accurate account of this significant chapter in my life".

"Don't be weird, nervous or apologetic about asking me about my diversity. You may make me feel ashamed about who I am".

"It is really important that all the information you share with a child or young person is done so in their first language".

WEBINAR 1:

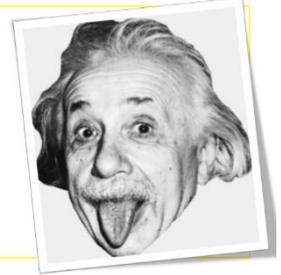
COMMUNICATION with children and young people involved in the family courts.

Exploring best methods and practice for all family justice professionals.

- The use of clear and understandable language was highlighted by the FJYPB and they stressed the importance to all professionals to use clear language when speaking to and sharing key information with a child or young person.
- FJYPB members also focused on how children and young people are communicated with by professionals about their diversity and how it is recorded.

If you can't say it simply, then you don't understand it well enough.

Albert Einstein



Comments from attendees:

“Children need to be heard and professionals to write as though the child/young person is looking over their shoulder”.

“It was a very powerful and informative webinar, it has given me lots to think about to improve quality of practice in my services, particularly around diversity and communication”.

“Remains essential that we establish and maintain strong connections with children and young people via regular communication and that our communication is centred around their unique needs, circumstances and experiences. We need to be adaptable, inclusive and truly listen”.

WEBINAR 2:

COMMUNICATION with children and young people involved in the family courts.

Exploring how all family justice professionals can best represent the voice of the child in family courts.

Members reminded professionals that they have the right to request access to their files in the future. They urged professionals to think about the recordings they make on the file and the reports they produce, imagining that the child is reading these later in life and needing to understand this significant chapter in their lives.

Messages from the FJYPB

- I need your help TO BE MY VOICE WHEN I CAN'T SPEAK DIRECTLY.
- To be my voice in court, with my family and others that are involved with me.
- To support me to share my wishes and feelings with you and others.
- To be creative in how you work with me and make sure you meet my needs.
- Ask me where I will feel comfortable to meet with you and when is a good time for us to meet, don't assume I can fit in with you.
- Be aware of why I may not feel comfortable talking about certain things straight away and that there could be many reasons for this. For example, I might have spoken to a lot of professionals about this before you so might not want to share this again right away or I might just not be ready.
- Check with me what information I have shared with you and might not want to share with my family or others. For example, I might share with you details about my sexuality, gender identity or religion but I might not be ready to share this with other people yet.



Comments from attendees:

“Be aware of the spaces and environments you use to talk to children and young people”.

“There is no one size fits all, respect young people like you would want to be respected, consider your language and how you record things”.

“The vital importance of communicating with the child – not just in the present but for the future as well”.

WEBINAR 3:

Empowering your voice: How to use it and how to achieve changes.

For members of local Children in Care Councils.

During this webinar members of the FJYPB and Children in Care Councils focused on:

- Communication between the Children in Care Councils and with their local authorities and other local agencies.
- Sharing the good practices already happening with Children in Care Councils and the FJYPB.
- How the voices of children and young people are heard in local authorities and how they can be more involved in development of practice, policy and services.

Some brilliant ideas were shared during the webinar. For example: one local authority invites their Children in Care Council on a quarterly basis to chair their development meetings. The young people are able to raise key issues, review progress and set challenges to their local authority. Other Children in Care Councils use their group as a social hub and enjoy the opportunity to spend time with other children and young people with similar experiences as their own.

WEBINARS FEEDBACK

We are once again very proud to have planned and delivered our Voice of the Child live webinars.

The feedback from our attendees at each of these has been overwhelming and we thank all of those who joined us.

The most powerful and memorable aspects to each of our webinars were the ‘In My Shoes’ from members who shared their personal journey through the family courts and how communication affected their experience.



Comments from attendees:

“All members were really amazing in getting their voice across and very confident in sharing what we need to do as professionals. Really made me question my practice and how I/the organisation can put the advice into practice”.

“Keep on doing the extraordinary work that keeps us grounded in good practice when working with children and their families”.

“Whenever I hear, read or see anything from the FJYPB it always makes me stop and think. There’s no doubt that the board has a positive impact on my practice”.

IMPACT

The webinar allowed the FJYPB to raise key messages and highlight challenges with COMMUNICATION during their family court proceedings.

We asked our attendees to reflect on what they would take forward following attendance at the webinar:

“Think about how we share and act on the feedback we receive from children about how we work with them”.

“Sharing more of myself and taking the time to help the child or young person to feel able to share more with me before we start the ‘business’ part of the discussion”.

“Encourage staff to ask children and young people how they want to communicate with us and support staff to have the knowledge and confidence to ask questions about diversity”.

“I will be more confident in discovering what makes a child unique. It’s their right to be heard”.

“Be very much more mindful about how my words and work impacts on children and young people”.

“To keep in mind when I am recording on file that the child may wish to see their file in the future”.

NEXT STEPS



- To release a video to our stakeholders and on our webpage that includes all our key messages and challenges.
- Review the webinars with the FJYPB members to celebrate our achievements and reflect on learning and feedback.
- Begin planning for Voice of the Child 2022 where we are hoping that Covid-19 restrictions allow us to host this event in person.

