

Communicating with children during assessment

Training pack



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NCB promotes the voices, interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives.

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Introduction

The aim of this training pack is to improve the competence and confidence of practitioners in communicating with children during assessments of need as laid out in the *Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (Department of Health and others 2000) and the *Common Assessment Framework* (Department for Education and Skills 2004). It is primarily for use by people undertaking training and staff development activities with social workers and other child care practitioners who carry out or contribute to assessments of need. Many of the exercises contained within this pack will be useful to professionals working in settings where there is a requirement to gain an understanding of children's needs and how they might best be met, for example, in health, early years, education, Connexions and youth offending teams. The pack can also be used by managers and practitioners leading development sessions within their teams.

The pack was developed as a result of a project called Communicating with Children: A two-way process, which was funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and run by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) between 2004 and 2006. A companion guide for practitioners, entitled *Communicating with Children: A two-way process. Resource pack*, is also available and can be downloaded from the NCB website (www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support).

The NCB project was developed in response to evidence from research that, despite the relative success of the implementation of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health and others 2000), social work practitioners lacked skills and confidence in communicating effectively with children during assessments of need. The project was premised on a belief that improving practice in this area should lead to improved outcomes for children and ensure that they are properly consulted about decisions that affect their lives.

Recent research, inspections and inquiries (Cleaver and Walker 2004, Laming 2003) have highlighted the fact that children's voices and perspectives are frequently minimised or absent during assessment. A tendency by child welfare workers to rely on adult perspectives of children's needs leads potentially to decisions and plans which are not child-centred. This was only too well illustrated in the Laming Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié.

In reality, the conversations with Victoria were limited to little more than "hello, how are you?" The only 'assessment' completed involved the writing down of limited and sometimes contradictory information provided by Kouao.

(Lord Laming 2003)

Practice deficits have possibly been exacerbated in recent years by an underemphasis on communicating with children in social work (and other)

training and a general underestimating of the skills required to engage and communicate effectively with children.

The NCB project aimed to improve assessment in child care practice by working with social work managers, trainers and senior practitioners to assist them in developing a learning programme for staff in their own agencies. The individual programmes developed by participants as a result of the project reflected the specific needs of their different agencies. However, the NCB project went on to develop a demonstration training programme, to incorporate the main principles and underpinning theories from the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (Department of Health and others 2000) and draw on available research and practice experience and, occasionally, on other published training materials.

The result is a two-day training programme suitable for first-level practitioners. The training pack can be used as a stand-alone two-day training course or can be broken down into shorter development sessions. It comprises 16 sessions, six PowerPoint presentations and four handouts.

The PowerPoint presentations are available from the web (www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support) and are as follows:

- 1 What Children Tell Us: A sample of research studies
- 2 Principles and Practice in Communicating with Children
- 3 Home-made books
- 4 An Ecological Perspective on Child Development
- 5 Attachment: Attachment in the context of involving children in assessment
- 6 Analysis and Representing Children in Assessments.

The handouts include those located at the end of this pack and two available via the website www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support. These handouts are as follows.

- 1 Checklist of involving children in assessment (see end of pack)
- 2 Pedagogy: A holistic, personal approach to work with children and young people, across services. European models for practice, training, education and qualification (see website)
- 3 Building a toolkit for communicating with children (see end of pack)
- 4 Personal Communication Passports as a way of consulting and representing children with communication disabilities, to ensure consistent care (see website).

Summary of content and materials required

DAY 1		
Title of session	Activity	Materials required
Opening and icebreakers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of two icebreakers
What children tell us	Presentation – with interactive elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint slides • Interactive ideas
Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families	Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of exercise • Handouts – detail of assessment framework
Values	Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of exercise • Value statements • Rating scale for the floor
Principles & practice in communicating with children	Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint slides • Handouts giving more info
Barriers to effective communication – and solutions	Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of exercise • Checklist for involving children in assessment
Qualities and skills	Exercise – with brief presentation about how to use home-made books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of exercise • PowerPoint slides • Handout – Common Core of Skills
Ecological approach	Presentation and making an ecomap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint slides • Ecomap materials

DAY 2		
Title of session	Activity	Materials required
Assessing children's needs – the reality	Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handouts • Description of exercise • Starter bag of materials
Child development	Quiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz • Handouts
Communicating with disabled children	Video – <i>Two-Way Street</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video
Attachment theory	Presentation – with interactive elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint slides • Handouts • Description of interactive bits
Tools and techniques – having a go	Exercise to enable practising with materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample of six materials • Resource directory
Analysis and representing children's views in reports	Exercise first then presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of exercise • PowerPoint slides • Handouts
Case study	Small group looking at case study using the Practitioner's Notebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study • The Practitioner's Notebook
Action planning	Introduction and helping them to record what they will do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action planning framework

DAY ONE

Session 1: Opening and icebreakers

Aim

The icebreaker exercises below are intended to fulfil two functions. Firstly, to help participants relax and get to know each other a little. Secondly, to allow them to consider the power differential between adults and children, and to begin the process of changing attitudes that might impede good communication with children and young people.

Duration

15 minutes

Preparation

None necessary

Method

- Select one exercise for the participants from options 1, 2 and 3 in the box below. If you choose options 1 or 2, then invite the participants to form pairs. If you choose option 3, invite them to form groups of three.
- Give the participants the instructions for their task (from the box below), according to the option you chose.
- Tell participants to discuss for 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, open up for wider discussion. Ask participants if there was anything which gave them food for thought or surprised them when they had the discussion. Invite a few examples to be shared.

Option 1 In your pair: think of the last time you had a difference of opinion with a child or young person about something that they wanted to do and it was agreed that it would be done their way, not yours. (Don't count your own children.) Discuss this.

Option 2 In your group of three: ask yourself 'What do I wish I had known when I first did direct work with children?' then discuss your responses.

Option 3 In your pair: think of and discuss something you learned from a child or young person during the last month (it could have been learned from your own child, through work, or from someone you don't know, for example, in a film, on TV or in the news).

Session 2: What children tell us

Aim

To increase participants' understanding of the impact of professionals' behaviour and attitudes on the children and young people on which they are undertaking assessments.

Learning objectives

- To increase participants' knowledge about what children say about professionals who are working with them.
- To consider the skills and qualities needed to gain the respect and trust of children and young people.

Duration

30 minutes

Preparation

Check that you are familiar with the five research studies and surveys referred to in the presentation (see 'Supporting materials' below). Be conversant with the methodology used, numbers of children in the research, and the date when the research took place.

Materials required

- PowerPoint presentation 1: What children tell us (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support/).

Supporting materials

- Ian Butler and Howard Williamson (1994) *Children Speak: Children, trauma and social work*. NSPCC.
- Catherine Shaw (1998) *Remember My Messages*. Who Cares Trust.
- Judith Timms and June Thoburn (2003) *Your Shout!* NSPCC.
- Voice for the Child in Care (2004) *Start with the Child, Stay with the Child*. VCC.
- Quality Protects and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2002) *Ask Us*.

Method

- Introduce the session by saying that in recent years, as a result of the growth in research studies undertaken directly with children and young people themselves, a great deal has been learnt about young people's feelings and views about professional approaches to engaging with them.
- Point out that this body of research is invaluable as it gives practitioners plenty on which to reflect, as well as valuable pointers about their own practice.

- Run through PowerPoint presentation 1: What children tell us, from slides 1 to 5.
- Stop the presentation and invite participants to form pairs.
- Tell them 'Think about your last interaction with a child. How many of the points (listed in Slide 5) had you fulfilled?' Ask them to discuss this in their pairs.
- Invite participants to offer some of their findings as feedback.
- Ask the participants: Were you pleased or surprised about how many points you had fulfilled?
- Recommence the PowerPoint presentation, then stop with slide 9 showing.
- Ask participants: 'Think of the last time you let a child down by doing something that you knew they didn't want, or something that didn't work for them (even a simple thing like cancelling an appointment or being late).' Invite them to discuss what happened and what they could have done to prevent it.
- Reconvene the full group. Invite one or two participants to share their stories and encourage discussion of them. Reassure participants that many factors impede a professional's desire to act in the very best way and that those that shared their stories are not alone.
- Continue to the end of the PowerPoint presentation. On slide 10 make the point that disabled children have told us again and again that they want the same things as other children. On slide 11 mention that a good indication of a local authority that values young people's perspectives is one that has different mechanisms for enabling young people to contribute to the development or improvement of services, such as youth councils, or one where that consults with service user groups. Ask people to think about their own agency and whether they feel that it is a 'listening' agency. Finish off with slide 12, make the point that it might shed some light on how young people feel about workers who are trying to communicate with them and the challenges they might face.

Trainer's notes

The presentation is straightforward in providing information about what children say they want from professionals who are assessing them. To view the notes accompanying the PowerPoint presentation, select the presentation at www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support and open in 'notes' view.

Session 3: Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families

Aim

To remind or familiarise participants with the content of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health and others 2000) and the Common Assessment Framework (DfES 2004) and demonstrate the skills needed to help children and young people to understand what is happening during an assessment.

Learning objectives

- To confirm knowledge of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (most participants will be familiar with the content).
- To reflect on how assessments are explained to children and improve skills in giving information to children and young people.

Duration

45 minutes

Preparation

Refresh your knowledge of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health and others 2000) and the Common Assessment Framework (DfES 2004).

Select one of the two frameworks to cover in your session. Download and print out summaries of the framework and an illustration of the Assessment Framework triangle from the website www.everychildmatters.gov.uk or from *The Child's World: Assessing children in need* training pack (NSPCC 2000).

Prior to the session ascertain, if possible, the participants' knowledge of the framework.

Materials required

Provide printouts or photocopies of:

- the Common Assessment Framework (DfES 2004) – guidance and forms (from www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)
- the relevant pages of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health and others 2000) and a copy of the Assessment Triangle with the three dimensions shown (www.archive.official-documents.co.uk)
- the guidance on explaining assessments from page 14 and worksheets 1–4 of *Say it Your Own Way* (Hutton and Partridge 2006).

Supporting materials

Make the books or full texts of the following available for participants to refer to:

- *Common Assessment Framework* (DfES 2004)
- *Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (Department of Health and others 2000)
- *Say it Your Own Way* (Hutton and Partridge 2006).

Method

- Taking into account the prior knowledge of the participants, spend five minutes introducing the framework you selected – either the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health and others 2000) or the Common Assessment Framework (DfES 2004). Distribute summaries (see ‘Materials required’) if necessary.
- Divide participants into small groups of four.
- Invite each group to designate two participants as ‘tellers’ and two as ‘listeners’.
- Explain to the listeners that they will have to take on the role of a child or young person when listening to the tellers.
- Invite each teller to choose between the Common Assessment Framework or one of the domains from the Assessment Framework triangle (child development, parenting capacity, or family and environmental factors).
- Invite pairs of tellers to nominate themselves as ‘A’ and ‘B’. Then tell ‘A’ that they will be explaining the assessment to a listener taking the role of a child under 10.
- Inform teller ‘B’ that he will be explaining the assessment to a listener taking the role of a teenager.
- Tell the small groups that, while teller A is talking to their listener, the other two group members will take on the role of observers and take notes. The roles will then swap when teller B and their listener take over.
- Reconvene the full group. Invite the listeners – the ‘children and young people’ – to give feedback to the group on how it felt to be in their role and any insights they gained.
- Invite the observers to give feedback on what they saw and what worked or didn’t work.

Trainer’s notes

Elicit from the group the difficulties they encountered in explaining adult concepts to children and young people. Examine any different and creative approaches to providing explanations that the participants offer. Add suggestions of your own as prompts if necessary (see below).

For children under 10 years, give examples of materials or worksheets from *Say it Your Own Way* (Hutton and Partridge 2006), which offers guidance to explaining assessment (page 14, worksheets 1–4).

For teenagers, discuss what kind of approach would work best. Think of examples of assessments or judgements that teenagers make in their own lives and how these could be used as metaphors (for example, the judgements they make about their friend's family when they visit their home for the first time).

Discuss how participants could develop their own materials for use in this situation, for example, simple diagrams or picture cards. Encourage sharing of materials that participants have found helpful in their own practice.

Session 4: Values

Aim

To examine individual's attitudes to listening and valuing children's contributions to assessments.

Learning objectives

- To reflect on one's own values and attitudes to listening to children, and challenge personal prejudices.
- To use a facilitated discussion to provide an opportunity for participants to demonstrate their responses to a number of value statements by using a scaling system.

Duration

45 minutes

Preparation

Ensure that you are familiar with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Children Act 2004, the Every Child Matters agenda, and the requirements outlined in the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families (Department of Health and others 2000).

There are two alternative methods, prepare according to whether you choose to use Option 1 or 2.

Option 1

If you choose this option, make up 10 cards, each with a bold, clear number from 1 to 10.

Option 2

If you choose this option, decide what size groups are best – if 30 participants, then group of six are best; if 20, then groups of five. Choose six statements from the 'Suggested statements' box below. Write the first statement on the bottom of a flip chart sheet and number it '1'; then repeat this for each group. Then repeat this for each of the statements, numbering them '2' and so on up to '6'.

Materials required

- 10 cards and felt-tip pens or similar (for Option 1)
- Sheets of flip chart paper and pens (for Option 2)

Method

Follow either Option 1 or 2.

Option 1: Rating scale

- Lay out the numbered cards in numerical order in a line on the floor, leaving sufficient space between them for a number of people to stand clearly on one and not spill over onto the next.
- Tell participants that you are going to read out a series of statements and you will ask them to stand on the number that most accurately reflects their response: with '1' being completely disagree and '10' being completely agree.
- Read out the first statement from the 'Suggested statements' box below. Invite participants to stand by the number that reflects the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statement.
- Select one or two participants who have placed themselves at either end of the scale and ask them why they placed themselves there.
- Select someone with a position nearer the middle. Ask them what would need to change for them to be able to move to the 'completely agree' end of the scale.
- Allow sufficient time for discussion and debate amongst the group about the aspect covered in the statement before reading out the next statement.
- Repeat the process: read out each statement in turn; make sure that for every statement at least three or four people are selected and asked to give reasons for their position; allow sufficient time between reading out each statement for discussion and debate amongst the group.
- Experience has shown that this exercise generates significant and lively discussion. The aim is not to create complete agreement but to explore and debate the diversity of views in the group.

Option 2: Consequences

- Divide the full group into the predetermined smaller groups.
- Have the set of flip chart sheets (labelled 1) ready to pass to each group.
- Inform the participants that you will pass a sheet, with a statement on the bottom, round each group. Tell them that they should read the statement then write, according to their decision, 'Agree' or 'Disagree' on the top of the paper followed by a comment. They should then fold the paper over to cover their answer and pass the sheet on to the next participant.
- Tell the participants that they will be asked to repeat this for other statements.
- Distribute the flip chart sheets with statement 1 on to each group and tell them to begin.
- When the groups have finished writing on the first sheets, distribute the second set of flip chart sheets (numbered '2'). Repeat for the remaining four statements.
- When everyone has written a comment on all the prepared statements, unfold the flip chart papers and place them on the wall for the participants to read.

- Reconvene the full group. Invite comments and discussion on each of the statements and the written comments.

Trainer's notes

If Option 1 is used and time is short because of fruitful discussion over a particular point, you can reduce the number of statements. Take care, however, not to let one discussion go on for longer than 10 minutes as the group's concentration will lapse.

You may wish to keep a record of what's said. If so, it is a good idea to identify a scribe to make a note of any interesting points made by participants that highlight why they have formed a particular view.

Obvious trends, for example, most people standing in roughly the same place or agreeing with one statement, provide useful information, but so too do the views of those who stand-alone.

Suggested statements

If you can gather all the information that is required for a simple assessment it is not always necessary to actually see the child.

There is no point seeing children under five years old because they can't understand the assessment process and it is unlikely that you will get much information from them.

With disabled children it is better to talk to someone who knows them rather than work directly with the child.

Social workers have developed a lot of experience and skills in talking to children about very sensitive issues – the time it takes to talk to a child is not always recognised by managers.

Sometimes too much communication with a child during assessment is confusing and upsetting for children.

There is supposedly much more emphasis on seeing children as part of an assessment, but it's still very tokenistic. Professionals don't actually listen to, or use, the information they get from children.

Working with children when you are using an interpreter is very difficult. You have to take more time to plan sessions when you're working with children for whom English is not their first language.

Some situations are just so sensitive or horrific that it is completely inappropriate to involve children when assessing a parent's capacity to look after a child.

In an ideal world, social workers would spend more time with children when doing assessments but the strict timescales we work to just don't allow that to happen.

If you're working with a teenager who refuses to engage with you, there isn't much you can do about it. You just have to do the assessment without their input.

Note: All the statements are intended to be provocative and have been broadly drawn from comments either made or overheard by practitioners and managers.

Session 5: Principles and practice

Aim

To develop the participants' knowledge and understanding of the context for communicating with children; and underlying principles and good practice in communicating with children

Learning objectives

- To develop knowledge about legislative requirements, and underlying principles of communicating with children
- To improve communication skills by reflecting on good practice

Duration

30 minutes

Preparation

Ensure that you are familiar with the legislative guidelines and the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health 2000).

Materials required

PowerPoint presentation 2: Principles and practice in communicating with children (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support)

Supporting materials

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- *The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (DfES 2000)
- *The Victoria Climbié Enquiry* (Lord Laming 2003)
- *Making Every Child Matter*. The Commission for Social Care Inspection 2005

Method

- Show slides 1 to 7 of Presentation 2 'Principles and practice in communicating with children'.
- Pause before showing slide 8 and invite participants to form pairs to exchange stories about a successful piece of work they undertook where they communicated well with a child. Ask them to identify what it was that made it work well.
- Reconvene the full group and invite participants to some examples with the group – you only need to take two or three.
- Continue with the presentation (from slide 8).

Trainer's notes

If possible, draw on real examples from social work experience to illustrate the Good Practice slides (slides 8 to 11) of the presentation.

Session 6: Barriers to effective communication – and solutions

Aim

To explore how children experience communication with and among adult professionals and the factors that impact upon effective communication with children.

Learning objectives

- To remind participants of the importance of being critical and thorough of information provided to them by, and about, children.
- To examine what is meant by balanced and fair analysis in relation to children's information and to provide an opportunity to put it into practice.

Duration

Part 1: 30 minutes

Part 2: 30 minutes

Preparation

Photocopy instructions for the exercise.

Photocopy Handout 1: Checklist for involving children in assessment.

Note: Part 1 requires at least four participants or a group that can be divided into four.

Methods

Part 1

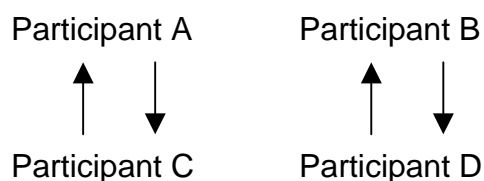
- Invite the participants to form a group or groups of four.
- Tell each group of four to sit in pairs: with one pair facing the other.
- 'Name' each participant A, B, C or D according to the diagram below.

Participant A Participant B

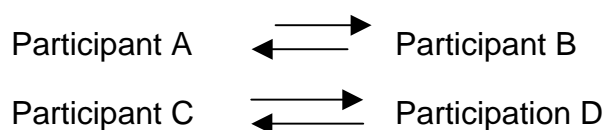
Participant C Participant D

- Invite each participant to think of an experience they have had (that they are willing to share) which was either very scary or very exciting.
- Tell the groups that they will have three minutes for A to tell C their story; while B tells D their story (that is, facing pairs).
- Invite them to tell their stories.
- After three minutes, stop them and invite C to tell A their story while D tells B theirs.

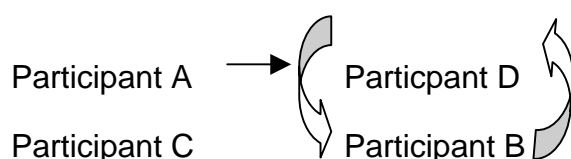
- Stop them after three minutes.



- Ask all the participants to turn their chairs round so that A now faces B and C now faces D.
- Invite A to tell B the story they just heard from C; while C tells D the story they just heard from A.
- After three minutes ask them to swap over again – so B tells A the story they just heard from D, while D tells C the story they just heard from B.



- Stop them after three minutes.
- Invite B to swap seats with D.
- Ask A to tell D the story they have just heard, which will be D's story being repeated back to them. Allow them three minutes. Repeat the storytelling so that all the participants get to hear their own story told back to them.



- Reconvene the full group and invite participants to reflect on what it was like having their own story repeated back to them. Ask, for example, was it accurate? Distorted? Were there key details missing? How did it feel to know that your story was being told to someone else when you couldn't listen to what was said? Generate discussion.
- Draw parallels with the experiences of children giving information to professionals. Stress, however, that this exercise is considerably diluted and artificial in comparison to the children's real experiences.

Part 2

- Distribute Handout 1: Checklist for involving children in assessment.
- Invite participants to form pairs.
- Ask each participant to call to mind a child who they are, or have been, involved with through their work.
- Tell each pair to take it in turns to reflect on their work with the child and identify whether they addressed all the points on the checklist in their engagement with the child.
- Reconvene the full group and ask participants to feed back on how this went. Ask: Do you think that applying the checklist might elicit more information or different information than you might otherwise provide in

an assessment or court report? Do you see any difficulties with either accessing or reporting on some of the information the checklist elicited? Encourage a general discussion amongst the participants.

Trainer's notes

Although Parts 1 and 2 are entirely separate, running both parts of the exercise together generates a greater degree of reflection and discussion.

Session 7: Qualities and skills

Aim

To gain knowledge about the qualities and skills required to communicate effectively with children and to give examples of tools and techniques that could be used.

Learning objectives

- To gain a good understanding of the skills and qualities required for effective communication with children.
- To learn about the use of stories in working with children.

Duration

1 hour

Preparation

Refresh your knowledge of the *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce* (2006), and any other descriptions of skills and qualities needed by practitioners when communicating with children you have available.

Have to hand the book *Home-made Books To Help Kids Cope* (Zeigler 1992) and understand how storytelling can be used in working with children.

Materials required

- Materials for creative work – pens, and decorative materials such as shiny paper, tissue, ribbon, coloured paper, stickers, sellotape, glue, magazines and coloured cards.
- Good quality A3 paper for the home-made books.
- Spare table for displaying completed storybooks.
- PowerPoint presentation 3: Home-made books (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support).
- *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce* 2005. Section 1: Effective communication and engagement with children, young people their parents and carers (www.dfes.gov.uk/commoncore).

Supporting materials

- *Home-made Books to Help Kids Cope* (Zeigler 1992).
- Handout 2: *Pedagogy – a holistic, personal approach to work with children and young people, across services: European models for practice, training, education and qualification* (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support).

Method

There are two elements to this session:

- **Part 1** – an exercise to identify skills and qualities.
- **Part 2** – a presentation about home-made books, followed by an exercise in how to use stories for communicating with children.

Part 1: Exercise to identify skills and qualities

- Ask participants to form groups of between four and six.
- Invite each group to come up with a creative way of presenting a 'picture' of the perfect communicator, using words or pictures. For example, a drawing, narrative, poem or rap, collage, model, or by drawing round a member of their group.
- Reconvene the full group and invite the smaller groups to present their picture to the others.
- Distribute the excerpt from section 1 of the *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge: Effective communication with children, young people, their parents and carers*.
- Run through the headings and discuss the content briefly, drawing comparisons with the skills and qualities identified by the groups. Emphasise to practitioners the importance of being familiar with the entire *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge* document.

Part 2: Home-made books and the use of stories

- Show Presentation 3: Home-made Books to Help Kids Cope.
- Ask participants to make the story of their week into a seven-page book or a cartoon. Tell them to work on finding a way to describe events and feelings from a different angle, for example, using third person narrative. Make sure that it is a story, with a beginning, middle and end. If they seem stuck, prompt them by starting with seven words, one for each day.
- Tell them they will have 15 to 20 minutes to do this.
- After the 15 or 20 minutes is up, stop them and ask for one or two volunteers to present to the group (or more if time).
- Ask participants to bring their books to a table and leave them there for others to look at over the period of the course.

Trainer's notes

If you are familiar with the roles of pedagogues in Europe, explain these to the group, comparing what they do with conventional child care roles in this country, and how the concept is gaining popularity here (see Supporting materials).

When asking people to describe their week, be clear with the participants that the product will be shared with the group. Use this to have a short discussion about confidentiality and how it feels sharing the detail of events or feelings with others.

Session 8: An ecological approach

Aim

To gain an understanding of how external factors affect children's needs and to use this perspective in assessing children.

Learning objectives

- To gain knowledge about an ecological approach.
- To understand how to develop an ecomap.

Duration

45 minutes

Preparation

Familiarise yourself with the theory underlying an ecological approach and the benefits of drawing up an ecomap.

Materials required

- PowerPoint presentation 4: An ecological perspective on child development (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support).
- Have page 92, module 1 of *The Child's World: Assessing children in need, Training and development pack* (NSPCC and University of Sheffield 2000) handy for when you draw an ecomap for the participants.
- Flip chart and paper, white board or PowerPoint slide – for showing the ecomap from *The Child's World*.

Supporting materials

- *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006) Chapter 2, 'Frameworks and Theories'.

Method

- Give PowerPoint presentation 4: An ecological perspective on child development.
- Demonstrate the use of an ecomap by drawing the one from *The Child's World* on a flip chart sheet or white board or, if preferred, make up a PowerPoint slide of it and talk it through.
- Invite participants to form groups of four.
- Ask each group to put forward a volunteer to draw an ecomap relating to a child or young person they are working with.
- Encourage the volunteers, while drawing the ecomap, to talk it through, filling in some background as they go, and inviting comment and suggestions from other group members.

- Reconvene the group. Invite feedback about the experience. Ask those who volunteered to do the exercise whether doing it in a group helped them to consider the child's relationships and networks from a different perspective. Ask others whether they were surprised by anything. Try to elicit whether people usually do ecomaps with children they are working with. Seek out two participants who have had positive experiences of using ecomaps.

DAY TWO

Session 9: Assessing children's needs – the reality

Aim

To share knowledge about the kinds of situations participants are working with, or are likely to be working with, and some tools and techniques they will need in order to be effective communicators.

Learning objectives

- To gain knowledge and better understand the factors influencing children's responses to practitioners who are assessing their needs.
- To learn about tools and resources available to assist them in communicating with children and young people.

Duration

30 minutes

Preparation

Familiarise yourself with *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006) and *Communicating with Vulnerable Children: A guide for practitioners* (Jones 2003).

Materials required

- *Communicating with Children: A two-way process. Resource pack* (available from www.ncb.org.uk/support/resources).
- Handout 3: Building a toolkit for communicating with children (a copy for each participant)
- Bags containing as many as possible of the materials outlined in Handout 3 (one for each participant)
- You may wish to put together a PowerPoint presentation drawn from *Communicating with Vulnerable children: A guide for practitioners* (Jones 2003), which contains checklists of factors influencing communication with vulnerable children. This is not essential (see 'Method').

Supporting materials

- *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006).
- *Communicating with Vulnerable Children: A guide for practitioners* (Jones 2003).

Method

- Drawing from the book *Communicating with Vulnerable Children: A guide for practitioners* by David Jones, refer to the need to have a good understanding of the determining factors behind children's responses.

Make particular reference to:

- the child's developmental stage
 - adverse experiences which may affect their response
 - racial and cultural considerations.
- **Either** use the formal PowerPoint presentation you prepared earlier.
 - **Or** take a less formal approach (which we recommend) by simply discussing and exploring the theories underlying children's responses. To do this you can use an ideas storm, that is, ask participants to call out all the different factors that might impact on how a child communicates with professionals and log all these on a flip chart sheet. Then ask which theories practitioners need to be familiar with in order to develop their understanding of these factors and log these alongside the ideas storm.
 - Draw attention to the contents of the David Jones book as an aid to understanding. Ask participants to share their knowledge of other publications they have found helpful.
 - Give each participant a bag containing a selection of materials (see Preparation, above).
 - Ask the participants to form small groups of three or four.
 - Invite each group to select one of the scenarios listed in the 'Some suggested scenarios' box below.
 - Ask each group to decide how best to approach the scenario using the contents of the bag they have been given and to be ready to give this information as feedback to the full group.

Some suggested scenarios

Scenario A: You are interviewing a 10-year-old boy about life at home. He has three younger brothers and sisters and you believe he has frequently been left in charge of his siblings. You are aware that the children may have been neglected due to their mother's mental health difficulties and a recent deterioration in her condition.

Scenario B: A 14-year-old has just been accommodated because his mother has received a custodial sentence for drug offences. She is expected to be in prison for two years. You are in the process of starting a core assessment and you are meeting him to explain what a core assessment is and to start to find out what he wants for the next couple of years.

Scenario C: You are working with a sibling group of three children (five, six and eight years old) who are on an interim care order and for whom a family group conference is planned. You are meeting with them the day before the family group conference to explain what is going to happen, help them understand the process and enable them to contribute.

Scenario D: You have completed an initial assessment for an Asian family where it is emerging that there is a history of domestic violence. It is clear that

the case is more complex, and a core assessment is required. You have already had two sessions with the children (who are aged seven and nine years) but you haven't established their trust, and whilst answering your questions politely, they are not giving much away about what life is like at home. You feel a different approach is needed.

- Reconvene the full group and invite each small group to offer feedback: ask them to tell the others about their scenario and the tools they would use to work with the child or children.
- Give participants a copy of *Communicating with Children: A two-way process. Resource pack* (Dalzell and Chamberlain 2006) and tell them about the content.
- Give participants Handout 3: Building a toolkit for communicating with children.

Trainer's notes

During the feedback, encourage participants to discuss how they can add to the bag and resource guide. Introduce the idea of both personal and team responsibility for keeping an up-to-date resource guide, and replacing and adding to the contents of the bag.

Session 10: Child development

Aim

To highlight the importance of having knowledge of children's developmental stages in order to undertake good assessments.

Learning objectives

- To gain or confirm knowledge about key stages of child development.
- To understand the influences on children's development.

Duration

30 minutes

Preparation

Review your knowledge of child development. Useful information relating to child development can be found in *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006).

Write a quiz on child development (see the examples in the 'Sample questions' box below). Additional questions can be developed from child development books such as *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006). You will need up to 20 questions.

Materials required

- Quiz sheet – see above (copy for each participant or team).
- If desired, make handouts of the key developmental stages.
- Flip chart sheets.

Supporting materials

- *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006).
- *Communicating with Vulnerable Children: A guide for practitioners* (Jones 2003).

Method

- Invite participants to form teams of approximately five. Ask the teams to give themselves a name.
- Put up flip chart sheets on the wall with the names of each team at the top.
- Distribute the quiz sheets to each team, asking them to confer on the answers and record a group answer to each question. Tell them they have up to 15 minutes to complete the quiz.
- After 15 minutes – or sooner if everyone has finished – stop the quiz and then read through the first question and the correct answer.

- Ask each team in turn to indicate whether they got the answer correct, then record the score on the flip sheet on the wall.
- Continue for each question and answer.
- Add up the scores and award a small prize to the winning team, for example a small packet of sweets.

Trainer's notes

You can choose to make this less serious by encouraging a competitive approach or putting in some fun questions to keep it lively (for example, 'At what age would you expect a person to lose interest in watching *Big Brother*-type reality shows?').

Child Development Quiz: Sample questions

True or False? *[Note to trainer, answers are in square brackets]*

Children usually have at least one milk tooth by the age of nine months.

[true]

Children can usually remember events that happened during the first year of their life.

[false]

By the age of six, the average child has a working vocabulary of around 14,000 words.

[true]

Teenagers tend to be more influenced by their peers than by adult authority.

[true]

As you give out the answers, there is scope for discussion about how much individual variance there is likely to be and the impact of a child's experience on developmental factors.

You can vary questions between those that are consistent for the vast majority of children and those that are more likely to be affected by social and environmental factors.

Session 11: Communicating with disabled children

Aim

To gain knowledge about the particular skills/techniques required to communicate effectively with disabled children.

Learning objectives

- To understand the importance of having an open and enabling attitude to communicating with children.
- To learn about communication passports.

Duration

45 minutes

Preparation

Acquire and familiarise yourself with the resource *Two-Way Street*, a video and handbook produced by Triangle.

Materials required

- *Two-Way Street* – training pack and video produced by Triangle (2001)
- Handout 4: Personal communication passports (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support).

Supporting materials

- A number of the resources outlined in the *Communicating with Children: A two-way process. Resource pack* (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support).

Method

- Introduce and show the video, *Two-Way Street*.
- Prompt a discussion about communicating with disabled children. Encourage the sharing of experiences of what has helped or hindered participants' own communication with disabled children and how they have overcome obstacles. Stress the importance of gaining an understanding of what disabled children have themselves told us about what they want from professionals who are communicating with them.
- Distribute Handout 4: Personal communication passports and explain what communication passports are.
- Draw attention to the considerable number of materials and guidance available for practitioners on communicating with disabled children and young people. Refer to the NCB *Communicating with Children: A two-way process. Resource pack* introduced in Session 9.

Trainer's notes

In the discussion, highlight the particular issues that make disabled children more vulnerable to abuse than other children and the need therefore to ensure that children have the opportunity to communicate with someone.

Session 12: Attachment theory

Aim

To gain an understanding of attachment theory and its relevance to undertaking assessments with children in need and their families.

Learning objectives

- To explore the range of factors that can impact upon the attachments between children and their carers and on children's own social, physical and emotional development.
- To understand how attachment theory can be applied within assessments of need.

Duration

30 minutes

Preparation

Read the 'Supporting materials' (below). Review both your understanding of attachment theory and critiques of how it has been applied in assessments of children.

Materials required

- PowerPoint presentation 5: Attachment theory (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support).

Supporting materials

- *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006) has a chapter outlining the most commonly used frameworks that describe emotional and social development and the influences on them.

Method

- Introduce and run through PowerPoint presentation 5: Attachment theory, stopping at various points to ask participants to supply suggested answers to the questions posed at the top of each slide. For example, on slide 4, 'How long does it last?', invite participants to supply the answers before the rest of the information is shown.
- Encourage discussion of the different points so as to make the presentation more interactive and to prompt exploration of different perspectives.

Trainer's notes

The group discussion should help to facilitate a better understanding of the importance of understanding theoretical bases underlying practice, especially the main theoretical frameworks underpinning The Framework for the

Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health and others 2000).

Session 13: Tools and techniques – having a go

Aim

To acquire knowledge about the range of resources available to assist practitioners in communicating with children.

Learning objectives

- To learn about a sample of resources available.
- To motivate participants to make use of available resources.

Duration

45 minutes

Preparation

Choose six different resource packs or materials on communicating with children (see suggestions below). Resources should preferably cover a variety of areas (see 'Trainer's notes' below). Borrow or acquire them so that you are able to take them to the session. Familiarise yourself with the content.

Materials required

A sample of six resource materials for communicating with children. Here are some suggestions:

- *Say it Your Own Way* (Hutton and Partridge 2006) – general.
- *In Safe Hands* (Myers 2001) – refugees.
- Young Minds website – mental health (or print off a range of information sheets from the site).
- *Listening to Young Children* (Lancaster 2003) – younger children.
- *Wavelength: A handbook of communication strategies for working with young people* (The Trust for the Study of Adolescence 2005) – teenagers.
- *How It Is* (Triangle 2002) – disabled children.

Supporting materials

- *Communicating with Children: A two-way process. Resource pack* (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support).

Method

- Set up your six resource materials around the room, in six different areas, with room for participants to gather around each of the materials in smaller groups.
- Ask participants to wander around the room looking at each of the materials. When it seems as if all the participants have looked at most of

the resources (after about 20 minutes) ask them to stop at the table they are currently at.

- If necessary, rearrange the groups so that there are three or four participants by each table.
- Ask for a volunteer from each group to share with their group an example of when they needed to communicate with a child they were working with. The volunteer should briefly outline the child and family background and give some information about the context within which the interview or event took place.
- Ask the participants to discuss in their groups how the materials at their table could be used to assist in communication with the child in the volunteer's case. If the materials being sampled lend themselves to it, invite the participants to set up a role-play of the example. Ask group members to share out the roles: with one participant taking the role of practitioner, another the child or young person, and the other two observers. (There may be more than one child if siblings are being interviewed.)
- After about 15 minutes, go round the groups encouraging them to share their views about the strengths of the resource they have sampled and any questions or cautions they may have about it.
- If there is time it may be possible to move the groups on to another resource and repeat the exercise.

Trainer's notes

The first half of this session is not highly structured but will give participants an opportunity to look more closely at a sample of materials. Participants may say they need more time to look at all the materials but the session is scheduled to take place before lunch, so participants will have a chance to come back and look in more depth if they choose.

Include in your sample both specialist and mainstream resources and some materials for working with very young children, disabled children and teenagers. If available, set up a computer with useful websites and allow practitioners to browse. Stress that this is only a sample and that participants are encouraged to use the resource list to acquire materials for their own organisations.

Session 14: Analysis and representing children's views

Aim

To develop skills in the analysis and representation of information gathered from children during assessments.

Learning objectives

- To examine skills and methods for analysing information.
- To develop an approach which ensures children's voices are accurately represented.

Duration

45 minutes

Preparation

Familiarise yourself with the books *Putting Analysis into Assessment* (Dalzell and Sawyer 2007) and *Child and Family Assessment in Social Work Practice* (Holland 2004).

Materials required

- PowerPoint 6: Analysis and reports (available from www.ncb.org.uk/resources/support).
- Paper and pens.
- Flip chart and pen.

Supporting materials

- *Putting Analysis into Assessment* (Dalzell and Sawyer 2007).
- *Child and Family Assessment in Social Work Practice* (Holland 2004).

Method

The session has two parts: Parts 1 and 2.

Part 1: PowerPoint presentation 6 'Analysis and reports'

- Run through the PowerPoint presentation, inviting participants to comment on whether the points ring true for them and what factors they felt might contribute to the issues raised.

Part 2: An exercise looking at how we represent children in report writing

- Invite participants to form groups of three.
- Ask each participant to write a short summary (half a page) on a recent incident, intervention or other piece of work with a child or young person.

Tell them it should be a description of what happened and include any thoughts about their understanding of why it happened.

- Tell participants to pass the paper on to the person on their left, then read the one they receive.
- Ask the participants to imagine they are a professional from another agency that is likely to be involved with the child. Ask them to write their thoughts on the same piece of paper and any questions about the event described in the summary. Encourage them to try and challenge, but also add understanding, to the summary.
- Invite participants to pass the paper on to the person on their left. Before reading the one they receive, ask them to imagine that they are the grown-up child and are reading their old case file. Ask them to write their thoughts on what was written about them.
- Within their groups, ask participants to share the information on their sheets and discuss it.
- Reconvene the group and prompt discussion – asking people what they felt like as the ‘grown-up child’. Make notes on a flip chart about their feedback.

Trainer’s notes

When giving instructions for the exercise, warn participants that the words they write will be shared with other members of the group.

Session 15: Case study using the Practitioner's notebook

Aim

To improve planning and structure when undertaking assessments.

Learning objectives

- To improve skills in planning of assessments.
- To improve skills in reflection and analysis of information gathered.

Duration

1 hour 30 minutes

Preparation

Watch the video *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006) and ensure you are familiar with the parts of the accompanying material referred to in the 'Method' below.

Materials required

- *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006)
- Sections 4–7 of *Practitioners notebook* (an accompanying training pack to *The Developing World of the Child*).

Method

- Show the video *The Developing World of the Child* (Aldgate 2006) and refer to the detailed section in the accompanying training pack that gives the circumstances of a family.
- **Either** follow the format of the training pack, allowing participants to prepare, reflect and analyse how they have worked with a child and his or her family.
- **Or** ask participants to bring in their own case study (they could be asked on Day 1 to do some preparation overnight for the session today). Ask them to make notes against the questions outlined in the *Practitioners notebook*.
- Invite feedback on the exercise from the participants and prompt discussion of their findings.

Session 16: Action planning

Aim

To consolidate what has been learned over the course and consider how this can be implemented in the participants' future practice.

Learning objectives

- To assimilate the learning from the course.
- To develop a personal action plan.

Duration

30 minutes

Preparation

Create a worksheet for participants to complete (use the questions in the box below).

Materials required

Worksheets (as above).

Method

- Give participants a worksheet to complete with the questions in the box (below).

- 1 Summarise the things you have learnt from this course, in bullet points (maximum six points).
- 2 Select three items from this list (above) and write in more detail how you plan to change your practice as a result.
- 3 Write down the barriers that might stop you making changes.
- 4 How will you make sure you that you change your practice? What measures will you put in place to ensure that you don't let things slip?

- Invite participants to share their ideas, plans, and thoughts about their answer to question 4.

Trainer's notes

Depending on how the group has worked together, encourage participants to set up peer-monitoring arrangements to ensure that plans are implemented.

Handouts

Handout 1: Checklist for involving children in assessment

- 1 **How well do you know the child and to what extent do you know their views, feelings and wishes?** This includes describing your relationship with them, how you think they perceive you, how often you have seen them and in what context, i.e. where and who else was present.
- 2 **Which adults (including professionals) know the child best** (what is their relationship like and how well placed are they to represent the child's views) **and what do they think the child's key concerns and views are?**
- 3 **What opportunities does the child have to express their views to trusted or 'safe' adults?** Do they know how to access the right people, what would be the barriers and what has been done to ensure they know where to go if they want to talk to someone?
- 4 **How has the child defined (if at all) the problems in their family or life and the effects the problems are having on them?** This includes the child's perceptions and fears; and what they themselves perceive as the primary causes of pain, distress and fear. What opportunities has the child had to explore this?
- 5 **When the child has shared information, views or feelings, in what circumstances has this occurred and what, if anything, did they want to happen?** This should only be stated if known, i.e. can be clearly demonstrated. Assumptions should not be made about a child's motivations for communicating something.
- 6 **What has been observed regarding the child's way of relating and responding to key adults, such as parents and foster carers? Does this raise concerns about attachment?** This would include describing any differences in the way the child presents with different people or in different contexts and where conclusions are being drawn about the child's attachment. The reasons for such conclusions should be clearly demonstrated.
- 7 **What is your understanding of the research evidence in relation to how this child might have been affected by the experiences they have had?** That is, what is the likely or possible impact on children who experience 'X', where X is the specific issue at hand, for example, parental alcohol misuse or domestic violence. This includes a consideration of potential harm along with resilience factors. **How far is what you know of this particular child consistent with the above?**
- 8 **What communication methods have been employed in seeking the views and feelings of the child and to what extent have these optimised the child's opportunity to contribute their views?** Would the

use of equipment, facilitators, interpreters, signs, symbols, play, story books be helpful and are the child's preferences are known?

- 9 **How confident are you that you have been able to establish the child/young person's views, wishes and feelings as far as is reasonable and possible?** This would include consideration of things that may have hindered such communication such as pressure from other adults, time limitations, language barriers or lack of trust in the child/social worker relationship. **How much sense are you able to make of the information you do have?**

Handout 3: Building a toolkit for communicating with children

Here are some suggested items to have in your bag.

- Pens, pencils, felt-tips, colouring pencils, crayons, chalk.
- Coloured paper, sticky paper, coloured sticky notes, bigger sheets of paper, small coloured notebooks.
- Glue, scissors (not too sharp), sellotape.
- Play dough and other similar material that you can make shapes out of.
- Photographs – cut outs from magazines, pictures of houses, animals, young and old people, children and photos of professions, for example, nurse, policeman, footballer. All photographs to be stuck on cards to make a set of flashcards – or you may be able to buy a set of flashcards.
- Stickers showing feelings, including happy, sad and smiley faces.
- Worksheets that focus on different subjects and feelings.
- Hand puppets, dolls or other figures such as trolls and little animals.
- Storybooks – either specialist books designed for working with children or just anything you can pick up from a children's department in any good bookshop – there are so many good children's books available, covering a huge variety of subjects.
- A selection of simple toys, for example, dinky cars, toy telephones, a magic wand (always helpful for making wishes), picnic sets.
- A make-up bag and cosmetics for older girls
- A selection of up-to-date teen magazines, which can be cut up and used to make pictures.
- Some flashcards with makaton symbols .

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Including materials/books required for the course (required materials marked with *)

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Appendix A: Agencies that participated in the Communicating with Children: A two-way process project

Representatives from the following children's services directorates of Local Authorities

Havering Council

London Borough of Newham

Derbyshire County Council

West Berkshire Council

Warwickshire County Council

Redcar and Cleveland Council

Wakefield Council

Bournemouth Borough Council

Leicester City Council

Plus participants from the independent child care organisation Herts Care

The reference group for the project

Jenny Gray, DFES

Ruth Dalzell, Family Support Manager, National Children's Bureau

Clare Chamberlain, National Children's Bureau Associate

Judith Trowell and Jean Pigott, Tavistock Clinic

Christine Lenehan, Director of the Council for Disabled Children

Ratna Dutt, Race Equality Unit

Penny Lancaster, Coram Family

Individuals and organisations providing input into the Action learning programme

Jean Pigott, Tavistock Clinic

Penny Lancaster, Coram Family.

Emma Sawyer, National Children's Bureau

Christine Lenehan, Director of the Council for Disabled Children

Lima Cairns, Durham Investing in Children programme

Triangle Services for Children

Ruth Dalzell, National Children's Bureau

Ro Gordon, NSPCC

Aminah Sumpton Husain, independent consultant

Catherine Shaw, Research and Evaluation department, National Children's Bureau

Communicating with children: A two-way process

Resource pack



Ruth Dalzell and Clare Chamberlain

NCB promotes the voices, interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives.

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Introduction

This resource booklet has been drawn up as part of a project funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and run by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) called Communicating with Children: A two-way process.

NCB worked with 10 childcare organisations, of which nine were local authority and one private, to promote effective communication with children and young people. A list of those involved can be found in Appendix A.

The project was developed in response to evidence from research that, despite the relative success of the implementation of the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, practitioners lacked skills and confidence in communicating effectively with children during assessments.

The project aimed to improve assessment in child care practice by working with social work managers, trainers and senior practitioners to assist them in developing a learning programme for staff in their own agencies.

Learning sets and seminars were held, both centrally and locally, with the aim of raising awareness, developing expertise, analysing barriers to good communication and increasing knowledge about tools and techniques.

This resource pack summarises the learning from the project and provides a description of the resources available to assist managers and practitioners. The central focus is on communication with children on an individual level, but there is some reference to participation of children and young people at a group level.

Policy context and government guidance

The legislation and policy context underpinning this need to communicate with children and young people is extensive, and a comprehensive list can be found on the Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) website www.crae.org.uk

Listed below are the essential statutory requirements relating to communicating with children and young people.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

In December 1991, the UK government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thus agreeing to follow the articles within the Convention. The Convention is an international human rights treaty that applies to all children and young people aged 17 and under. It gives children and young people a set of comprehensive rights, including the right to express and have their views taken into account on all matters that affect them (Article 12).

Children Act 2004

Section 53 of the Children Act 2004 amended the Children Act 1989 in two places: that is, for both children in need and child protection.

There is a new duty on local authorities to, so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with the child's welfare, ascertain the child's wishes and feelings and give them due consideration (having regard for the child's age and understanding).

Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families

The *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families*, published by the Department of Health (DH) in 2000, outlines the requirements for initial and core assessments of children in need.

The points below are taken directly from the document and outline clearly the expectations of practitioners.

Direct work with children is an essential part of assessment, as well as recognising their rights to be involved and consulted about matters which affect their lives. This applies to all children, including disabled children.

(DH 2000)

The document outlines five critical components in direct work with children: seeing, observing, talking, doing and engaging.

Seeing children: an assessment cannot be made without seeing the child, however young and whatever the circumstances. The more complex or unclear a situation or the greater the level of concern, the more important it will be to see the child regularly and to take note of appearance, physical condition, emotional well-being, behaviour and any changes which are occurring.

Observing children: the child's responses and interactions in different situations should be carefully observed wherever possible, alone, with siblings, with parents and/or caregivers or in school or other settings. Children may hide or suppress their feelings in situations which are difficult or unsafe for them, so it is important that general conclusions are not reached from only limited observations.

Engaging children: this involves developing a relationship with children so that they can be enabled to express their thoughts, concerns and opinions as part of the process of helping them make real choices, in a way that is age and developmentally appropriate. Children should clearly understand the parameters within which they can exercise choice. In offering children such options, adults must not abdicate their responsibilities for taking decisions about a child's welfare.

Talking to children: although this may seem an obvious part of communicating with children, it is clear from research that this is often

not done at all or not done well. It requires time, skill, confidence and careful preparation by practitioners. Issues of geographical distance, culture, language or communication needs because of impairments may require specific consideration before deciding how best to communicate with the child. Children themselves are particularly sensitive to how and when professionals talk to them and consult them. Their views must be sought before key meetings. Again, a range of opportunities for talking to children may be needed, appropriate to the child's circumstances, age and stage of development, which may include talking to the child on their own, in a family meeting or accompanied by or with the assistance of a trusted person.

Activities with children: undertaking activities with children can have a number of purposes and beneficial effects. It is important that they are activities which the child understands and enjoys, in which trust with the worker can develop and which give the child an experience of safety. They can allow positive interaction between the worker and the child to grow and enable the professional to gain a better understanding of the child's responses and needs.

(DH 2000)

Every Child Matters – the five outcomes

The Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme has been introduced by the government to provide an outcomes approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. The government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being.

Of particular relevance is 'making a positive contribution'. Achieving this outcome for children and young people requires them to engage in decision-making about their lives, and to develop self-confidence in representing their views.

Organisational context: What needs to be in place?

To support effective communication with children and young people on the front line, attention needs to be paid to building foundations at all levels of children's services departments.

It is essential that the service be based on child-centred principles, that there is commitment from managers at all levels to effective communication, and that practical considerations are given attention. The sections below indicate the basic framework that should be in place to support the development of best practice in communicating with children and young people.

Principles and values

It is likely that all children's services will have a set of their own principles and values on which the service is based. Those outlined below (partly derived from VCC and NCB 2004) give an example of the essential elements of the service principles that are required in promoting a child-centred approach to communicating with children and young people.

- Children and young people should be respected and valued. The construct of children as individuals with rights is central to effective communication – they should not be seen only as victims, or alternatively as people whose behaviour must be curbed, or as adults in the making.
- Children and young people should be given choice, control and be enabled to contribute to the decisions that are made on their behalf.
- The needs of children and young people should be put ahead of those of the agencies and adults involved with them.
- Children should be seen in the round: their interests and abilities should be included in assessments alongside their needs and wants.
- Children and young people are competent. Given time, information and explanations they can effectively contribute to their assessments and decision-making.
- All children are able to communicate their needs and wants in some way. Children with disabilities, communication needs or those who are very young should not be excluded from giving their views.
- The organisation should promote a culture in which it is assumed that all children and young people will be listened to about all decisions, both personal and public, that affect their lives (this point is taken from Kirby and others 2003).

Commitment from management within an authority

It is the responsibility of managers to provide the commitment, structures and systems necessary to facilitate good communication with children and young people. Front-line practitioners have personal responsibility to acquire the skills and competence required, but the culture, expectations and support of managers is a crucial element to the development of this competence.

Managers at all levels need to have, as essential requirements:

- the belief that children are competent – that all children are able to contribute effectively to assessment, decision-making and planning
- realistic expectations – an understanding of the time it takes to communicate effectively with children and young people
- a commitment to prioritising communication with children – to make sure that time is allocated for workers to be with children and young people. This means putting this activity above other competing priorities, including paperwork and meeting deadlines that conflict with this
- an understanding of the importance of developing trust and a strong working relationship, and the realisation that this takes time
- practical resources – a commitment to, for example, provision of good venues, materials, efficient technology and refreshments for children
- to be aware of the importance of providing such essential services as interpreters and advocates.

Finally, managers are very influential in the culture of organisations. Those organisations that are committed to collective participation and active involvement of children and young people in activities and service development will be more likely to promote good communication at an individual level.

A child-centred approach across the whole organisation is essential.

Practical considerations

- Venues are important, so a room that is set up with toys, craft materials and storybooks, for example, will assist practitioners in creating a rapport with younger children.
- For teenagers, an office venue is less likely to be as important. It is worth noting that some young people have said that their best conversations with social workers took place in the car, when they were being driven from one place to another.
- Use of interpreters is essential for some children, particularly unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The availability of trained interpreters is essential to good communication.
- Communication aids for children and young people who are not able to use speech can be helpful.

- Children and young people respond well to new technologies and conversation can be helped along by using computer games and programs, the internet, mobile phone texting and so on.
- Thought should go into the timing of meetings with children, for example, avoiding clashes with activities that they have planned or favourite TV programmes. Children and young people have spoken frequently about social workers being late, or not turning up at all, and the negative impact this has on establishing a trusting relationship.
- Be alert to use of language – keep it simple, and take time to learn about modern slang and phrases.

Building up individual and team resources

Every practitioner needs skill, confidence and easy access to materials to ensure that the dialogue they have with children and young people is a meaningful one.

Skills

The skills required have recently been drawn up by a consortium of government and voluntary sector agencies and published as the *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce* (DfES 2005).

The skills required include those of:

- active listening
- empathising with the point of view of children and young people
- developing trusting relationships with children and young people
- understanding non-verbal communication (body language and tone)
- building a rapport
- explaining, summarising and providing information
- giving feedback in a clear way
- understanding and explaining the boundaries of confidentiality.

Toolkit

It is useful to have a bag containing a few toys, coloured pencils, pens, coloured paper, flash cards, felt tips, children's books, play dough, magazines, make-up and so on. Worksheets, happy/sad faces and similar tools to encourage talk about feelings are also useful. If possible, a camera and laptop are also good resources to have readily available.

It may be that there are not the resources for every individual to have a full toolkit but, as a minimum for good practice, these materials should be available for every team.

Say it Your Own Way, a comprehensive guide with associated materials (up to 70 worksheets) published by Barnardo's (2006), brings together a number of tools and techniques to use in undertaking assessments.

Learning from others

Teams will have members with differing levels of skill and experience. Using the expertise of other team members, being encouraged to observe practitioners and asking advice and guidance, are all essential to building a resource within the team.

Similarly the expertise, experience and knowledge of other professionals, such as youth workers, psychologists and foster carers, can provide new and creative ideas and help less-experienced practitioners develop confidence.

Every team should provide materials and a list of sources of advice and guidance for communicating with children and young people.

What's out there to help: Resources available

Table 1: General

The resources listed below are examples of general guidance, advice and practical tools to promote good communication with children and young people.

Publication/website	Description	Contact	Useful for
<p><i>The Developing World of the Child</i></p> <p>Jane Aldgate (ed)</p> <p>(2005) NSPCC/DfES</p>	<p>A book and training pack for practitioners. Includes chapters on child development theories; communicating with children; and planning, interventions and outcomes in children's services. Looks at the developing world of the child, examining genetic and biological influences alongside individual psychological, interpersonal, familial, educational and wider community domains.</p>	<p>Book is published by Jessica Kingsley, London</p> <p>Pack is available from NSPCC.</p> <p>www.nspcc.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>Say it Your Own Way: Including children's voices in assessment. A guide and resources</i></p> <p>Angela Hutton and Kate Partridge</p>	<p>A guide to good practice in communicating with children. Includes advice about planning, activities, explaining assessments to children, and building a toolkit.</p> <p>There is a CD-ROM with 70 different worksheets covering a range of different subjects, for example, home, feelings, keeping safe, school,</p>	<p>Barnardo's</p> <p>www.barnardos.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p>

(2006) Barnardo's/DfES	and bullying. The worksheets can be printed and used by practitioners.		
<i>The Child's World: Assessing children in need</i> (2000) DH, NSPCC and University of Sheffield	A training and development pack consisting of a video, training materials and a reader. Introduced in 2000 to assist with implementation of the Assessment Framework. Modules 3 and 4 contain exercises and ideas for communicating with children, as well as underpinning theory such as attachment and loss, and theories of child development.	NSPCC Tel: 0116 234 7200 www.nspcc.org.uk	Good practice guidance Practical tools
'Integrated Children's System' on the DfES website	Provides a list of publications, training packs, etc. that promote the involvement of children. Some of those on the list also appear in this table. Produced in 2002/03.	www.ecm.gov.uk/socialcare/ics	Good practice guidance
<i>Turning Points: A resource pack for communicating with children</i> (1997) NSPCC/Chailey Heritage/DH	A comprehensive set of materials for promoting good communication with children. Provides different modules looking at values, principles and good practice guidance; theories; key times in children's lives (turning points); a variety of practical tools and approaches; and a long list of resources and where to obtain them.	NSPCC Tel: 0116 234 7200 www.nspcc.org.uk	Good practice guidance Practical tools
<i>Communicating with Vulnerable Children</i> David Jones	This book provides grounding in child development theories, and includes guidance and practical examples to assist practitioners in communicating with children. It focuses on how	www.rcpsych.ac.uk	Good practice guidance

(2003) Gaskell	to work with children who have had adverse experiences and provides advice on how to work sensitively with children who have been abused.		
<i>Children and Decision Making: Toolbox and training pack</i> Thomas, N, Phillipson J, O'Kane, C and Davies, E (1999) Children in Wales	Focuses on looked after children's participation in decision making. The pack includes a summary of the research, tools for direct work with children, training materials and a guide for use	Children in Wales www.childreninwales.org.uk Tel: 029 2034 2434 Pavilion Publishing Tel: 01273 623222	Practical tools
<i>Using Storytelling as a Therapeutic Tool</i> Margot Sunderland and Nicky Armstrong	One of a series of books providing examples of exercises and ideas for communicating with children. The storybooks are listed in the Booklist at the end of this pack.	Speechmark publishing 01869 244644 www.speechmark.net	Practical tools
<i>Homemade Books to Help Kids Cope</i> Robert Ziegler (1992) Magination Press	A guide to helping parents and professionals create personalised books for children. The book gives ideas and advice about how to use stories to help children describe their experiences and deal with difficult situations.	Smallwood Publishing Charlton House Dour Street Dover, Kent CT16 1ED Tel: 01304 226700	Practical tools
Participation Works	Participation Works is an online gateway,	www.participationworks.org.uk	Good practice

<p>website</p>	<p>providing information about involving children and young people in decision-making.</p> <p>The gateway has been developed by a partnership of non-government organisations that are working together to develop a more strategic and long-term approach to participation.</p> <p>The website provides a wealth of information about individual and collective participation and signposts where you can find out more.</p>		<p>guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>Total Respect Training Pack</i></p> <p>Children's Rights and Advocacy Organisation</p> <p>(2000) CROA</p>	<p>A training pack that focuses on improving participation of children and young people in care. It covers collective and individual participation, and provides ideas and activities to help workers improve their understanding and skills in involving children and young people in aspects of their lives.</p>	<p>CROA</p> <p>Tel: 01773 820100</p> <p>www.croa.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p> <p>Main focus is on collective participation</p>
<p><i>Moving On Up</i></p> <p>Red Rose Chain theatre and film company</p> <p>(2001) Red Rose Chain</p>	<p>A video resource pack that looks at growing up in care from a young person's perspective. The pack contains a film; clips highlighting particular issues, for example, review meetings; a documentary; guidance material; and exercises.</p> <p>The resource is designed to inspire young people and professionals to work together to</p>	<p>Red Rose Chain</p> <p>Tel: 01473 723804</p> <p>info@redrosechain.co.uk</p>	<p>Practical tools</p>

	improve services and raise aspirations for young people in care		
Mind, Body and Soul website The Health Development Agency	This website is designed to give information to young people about various health matters, including drugs, alcohol, sexual health and emotional well-being. Whilst the site is mainly targeted at young people, there is a teachers' page as well as scenarios and games that could be used to help discussions with young people.	www.mindbodysoul.gov.uk	Practical tools
<i>Ready Steady Change</i> Children's Rights Alliance for England (2005) CRAE	A comprehensive set of training exercises and tools to increase children's and young people's effective participation in decision-making. The materials support a training course, which is strongly based on children's rights and has a component for assisting practitioners to develop communication skills for working with children and young people.	CRAE Tel: 020 7278 8222 www.crae.org.uk	Good practice guidance Practical tools
<i>Empowering Children and Young People: Training manual promoting involvement in decision making</i> Phil Treseder (1997) Save the Children	A manual to help professionals empower children so that they can contribute to the decisions that affect them, as individuals and as a group, and at unit, local and national levels. Contains checklists and exercises that can be photocopied.	Save the Children Publications Tel: 020 7012 6400 www.savethechildren.org.uk	Good practice guidance Practical tools

<p><i>In Safe Hands</i> (2001) Save the Children/Refugee Council</p>	<p>A resource pack for working with refugee children and young people. Includes a video, good practice guidance and suggested activities. Covers a good range of subjects including language, identity and racism, and how to work with children who have experience of war and conflict.</p>	<p>Save the Children Publications Tel: 020 7012 6400 www.savethechildren.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance Practical tools</p>
<p><i>A Child's Journey through Placement</i> Vera Fahlberg (1994) BAAF</p>	<p>Provides detailed knowledge about the experiences of children in placement. Mainly good practice guidance but some practical suggestions and a good section on life-story work.</p>	<p>www.baaf.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p>
<p><i>SpeakEasy</i> CD-ROM Bridget Betts (2004) BAAF</p>	<p>An interactive computer programme to help children in care with planning and decision making. The six key themes covered are: My review; Where I live; My health; My education; In touch; Future plans.</p>	<p>www.baaf.org.uk</p>	<p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>Life Story Work</i> Tony Ryan and Rodger Walker (2003) BAAF</p>	<p>A guide about life-story work, it's purpose and the processes involved. The guide provides a detailed step-by-step approach, covering all the components needed to create a life-story book</p>	<p>www.baaf.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance Practical tools</p>

NSPCC Publications	<p>NSPCC have produced a number of guides and books that can be used in direct work with children and young people. Examples of titles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Happy Children, Sad Children</i> – <i>Worried? Need to Talk?</i> – <i>Listening to Children: A guide for parents and carers.</i> 	www.nspcc.org.uk	Practical tools
YoungMinds website	<p>This is generally a useful website when working with children and young people who may have mental health needs. The 'info centre' is particularly useful and gathers together all of the YoungMinds information resources on key topics, for example, eating disorders, self-harm, bullying, and attachment.</p> <p>A recent report called 'Minority Voices' outlines the views of black and minority ethnic young people about mental health services.</p>	www.youngminds.org.uk	Practical tools
Barnardo's publications and games	<p>Barnardo's have produced a number of publications, games and resources for practitioners to use with children. Titles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>All About Me</i> (a game) – <i>Memory Store</i> – <i>Maybe Another Day</i> – <i>Selina's Story</i> – <i>HIV and Your Family.</i> 	www.barnardos.gov.uk	Practical tools

<p><i>Creative Therapy with Children and Adolescents</i></p> <p>Hobday, A and Ollier, K</p> <p>(1998) Impact Publishers</p>	<p>Provides over 100 activities that can be used in working with children and adolescents. The activities are designed to be used as tools to supplement a variety of therapeutic approaches, and can be tailored to each child's needs.</p>	<p>www.impactpublishers.com</p>	<p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>Helping Children When They Must Move</i></p> <p>Vera Fahlberg</p> <p>(1981) BAAF</p>	<p>Good practice guidance for children moving placement.</p>	<p>www.baaf.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p>
<p><i>Filling in the Blanks: A guided look at growing up adopted</i></p> <p>Susan Gabel, BAAF</p> <p>(1998) Perspectives Press</p>	<p>Guidance for work with children who are adopted.</p>	<p>www.baaf.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p>

<p><i>Bruce's Story</i> Maureen Thorn Children's Society</p>	<p>Designed to help children moving to new families. Contains photocopyable sheets.</p>	<p>www.thechildrenssociety.org</p>	<p>Good practice guidance Practical tools</p>
<p><i>Helping Children Build Self-esteem</i> Deborah Plummer (2001) Jessica Kingsley</p>	<p>Activities book and photocopyable sheets.</p>	<p>Jessica Kingsley publications</p>	<p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>In My Shoes</i> Liza Bingley-Miller Child and Family Training Services</p>	<p>A computer package designed to help children and learning-disabled adults to communicate about potentially distressing experiences. The program uses sound, speech and video to provide a structure for interviews, and enables details of the interview sessions to be recorded</p>	<p>Child and Family Training Services PO Box 4205 W1A 6YD www.inmyshoes.org.uk/</p>	<p>Practical tools</p>

Table 2: Younger children

Publication/website	Description	Contact	Useful for
<p><i>Listening to Young Children</i></p> <p>Y. Penny Lancaster</p> <p>(2003) Open University Press</p>	<p>A resource pack that uses the arts to enable children under the age of eight to express their views and feelings, and supports parents and practitioners to develop skills in communicating with young children. There is a CD-ROM, reader and practitioner handbook. Good practice guide and activities</p>	<p>www.openup.co.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>My Turn to Talk</i></p> <p>Claire Lanyon and Ruth Sinclair</p> <p>(2005) National Children's Bureau</p>	<p>A guide for helping young people in care, aged 11 or under, to have a say about how they are looked after. It focuses on decision-making, education plans, reviews, and children's rights. It can be used by young people on their own or while working alongside practitioners.</p>	<p>Central Books</p> <p>Tel: 0845 458 9910</p> <p>ncb@centralbooks.com</p>	<p>Practical tool</p>
<p><i>Birth to Three Matters: A framework for supporting children in their earliest years</i></p> <p>(2002) DfES</p>	<p>Guidance for practitioners and other professionals involved in the delivery and planning of services to children aged between birth and three years. Has four sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A strong child – A skilful communicator 	<p>Sure Start, early years and childcare unit, DfES</p> <p>Tel: 020 7273 5739</p> <p>http://www.surestart.gov.uk/</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools – more limited</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A competent learner – A healthy child. <p>The pack contains CD, video and cards.</p>		
<p><i>Decide and Do: Involving younger children in decisions about their care</i></p> <p>Michelle Foster</p> <p>(2000) Save the Children</p>	<p>A booklet designed to help practitioners to develop and create opportunities for looked after children under 12 years of age to participate in decisions affecting them.</p> <p>Includes examples of methods and activities.</p>	<p>Save the Children Publications</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach</i></p> <p>Alison Clark and Peter Moss</p> <p>(2001) National Children's Bureau</p>	<p>The Mosaic Approach is a multi-method approach in which children's own photographs, tours and maps can be joined to talking and observing to gain a deeper understanding of children's perspectives on their early childhood settings. This report describes the approach and how it can be used.</p>	<p>Central Books</p> <p>Tel: 0845 458 9910</p> <p>ncb@centralbooks.com</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p>
<p><i>This is me!</i></p> <p>Hannah Roberts</p> <p>(2001) Pavilion</p>	<p>An activity pack designed to help children build self-confidence and self-management skills. It is aimed at children between 7 and 12 years old who have had difficult experiences and/or have experienced significant harm.</p>	<p>www.pavpub.com</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p>

	Contains 80 photocopiable sheets and guidance notes for their use.		
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Table 3: Adolescents

Publication/website	Description	Contact	Useful for
<p><i>My Turn to Talk</i></p> <p>Claire Lanyon and Ruth Sinclair</p> <p>(2005) National Children's Bureau</p>	<p>A guide to help young people in care, aged 12 and over, have a say about how they are looked after. It focuses on decision making, education plans, reviews, and children's rights. It can be used by young people on their own or while working alongside practitioners.</p>	<p>Central Books</p> <p>Tel: 0845 458 9910</p> <p>ncb@centralbooks.com</p>	<p>Practical tool</p>
<p><i>Looking Glass: A positive communication workbook</i></p> <p>Lynda Regan, Sally Jones, Carole Pelling</p> <p>(2002) NSPCC, City of Salford and Barnardo's</p>	<p>Provides guidance and practical ideas on building a positive relationship with young women (although parts of it could be used with young men). Developed with contributions from young women in residential care. Provides a specific programme including: getting to know the young person; feelings; identity; friendships and relationships; and making informed choices</p>	<p>Russell House Publishing</p> <p>Tel: 01927 443948</p> <p>help@russellhouse.co.uk</p>	<p>Practical tools</p> <p>Includes worksheets and exercises</p>
<p><i>Getting Through: Young people and communication</i> (1998)</p>	<p>Both these publications are resources, which have been developed to assist practitioners working with young people.</p>	<p>www.studyofadolescence.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p>

<p><i>Wavelength: A handbook of communication strategies for working with young people</i> (2005)</p> <p>Trust for the Study of Adolescence</p>	<p>The first provides a video and training materials.</p> <p>The second describes techniques designed to assist communication with young people.</p>		<p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>All the Right Connections: A resource handbook for personal advisers, mentors and other Connexions workers</i></p> <p>Vanessa Rogers</p> <p>(2002) National Youth Agency</p>	<p>This book aims to help practitioners to build effective and positive relationships with young people aged 13 to 19.</p> <p>Comprises five sections and includes over 60 activities on engaging young people, exploring the issues of individual support, group work and reviewing. It enables practitioners to plan sessions that enable young people to reflect on their needs, set targets and acknowledge successes.</p>	<p>www.nya.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p> <p>The NYA website is a useful source of ideas about working with young people</p>
<p><i>Exploring Feelings: A resource handbook for work with young people aged 9 to 13</i></p> <p>Vanessa Rogers</p> <p>(2001) National Youth</p>	<p>This diverse collection of activities, worksheets and team-building games has been put together in response to the increased demand to work with young people aged 9 to 13 who are considered to be at risk of exclusion or disaffection. Tackling issues including bullying, offending behaviour, peer pressure and keeping safe, <i>Exploring</i></p>	<p>www.nya.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p>

Agency	<i>Feelings</i> offers practical activities in an easy-to-use format.		
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Table 4: Disabled Children

Publication/website	Description	Contact	Useful for
<i>Getting it Right</i> Triangle (2003)	A practice guide for involving disabled children in assessment, planning and review processes. It has practical ideas for making initial contact with children, working directly with children, observing children respectfully and representing their views.	Tel: 01273 413141 www.triangle-services.co.uk	Good practice guidance Practical tools
<i>Two-Way Street</i> Triangle (2001)	A training video and handbook about communicating with disabled children and young people. The video is aimed at helping professionals, and the handbook gives information, guidance and details on the main communication systems in current use in the UK.	Tel: 01273 413141 www.triangle-services.co.uk	Good practice guidance Practical tools
<i>How it is</i> Triangle (2002) NSPCC/Triangle	An image vocabulary for children about feelings, rights, personal care, and sexuality. There are 380 images that are designed to be used as a flexible, child-centred resource to support children in communicating about their feelings, bodies, rights and basic needs.	www.howitis.org.uk Tel: 01273 413141 www.triangle-services.co.uk	Good practice guidance Practical tools
<i>I'll Go First: The planning and review toolkit for use with</i>	A resource pack providing wipe-clean boards, illustrations, and simple sentences, on which children's views can be recorded. Each board has	www.thechildrenssociety.org	Good practice guidance

<p><i>children with disabilities</i></p> <p>Lucy Kirkbride</p> <p>(1999) Children's Society, DH and DfES</p>	<p>a different theme, for example, going away from home, likes and dislikes, going home. There are stickers, Makaton translations and an accompanying good practice guide.</p>		<p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>A Lot to Say</i></p> <p>Jenny Morris</p> <p>(2002) Scope</p>	<p>This publication offers advice and information to practitioners working with children with communication impairments. It is aimed at professionals who are not specialists, but who have responsibilities to assess the needs and seek the views of children in this group</p>	<p>www.scope.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p>
<p>The Call Centre website</p>	<p>The CALL Centre (Communication Aids for Language and Learning) provides specialist expertise in technology for children who have speech, communication and/or writing difficulties.</p> <p>On this website you will find information, guidance and resources on how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can make a major impact on the education of children and people with disabilities or special educational and communication needs. There is a section providing a template for communication passports, which is very useful.</p>	<p>www.callcentrescotland.org.uk</p>	<p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>Bridging the Gap: Child protection work with</i></p>	<p>A report based on investigation of child protection concerns involving multiply disabled children,</p>	<p>NSPCC</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p>

<p><i>children with multiple disabilities</i></p> <p>Marchant, R and Page, M</p> <p>(1993) NSPCC</p>	<p>most of whom, communicated without speech. It takes the reader through the stages of an investigation and considers how to plan formal interviews.</p>	<p>Tel: 0116 234 7200</p> <p>www.nspcc.org.uk</p>	
<p>'Interviewing disabled children' by Marchant, R and Page, M</p> <p>in <i>Perspectives on the Memorandum</i></p> <p>Jones and Westcott (eds) (1993) Arena</p>	<p>This chapter is based on experience of Memorandum interviews with children with a wide range of communication impairments, and provides guidance about the planning of such interviews. Key issues in the use of Memorandum interviews with disabled children are considered.</p>	<p>Arena Publishing</p> <p>Tel: 020 8240 1001</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p>
<p><i>Safe in Your Hands</i></p> <p>(1998) National Deaf Children's Society and NSPCC</p>	<p>A joint publication between NDCS and NSPCC, this pack provides advice about how to recognise and respond to the abuse of deaf children. There is a section focusing on the skills and tools needed to prevent abuse and what resources are available.</p>	<p>www.ndcs.org.uk</p> <p>or</p> <p>www.nspcc.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>The NDCS website is useful for advice about communicating with deaf children</p>
<p><i>Onwards and Upwards: Involving disabled</i></p>	<p>A training manual for practitioners to promote the involvement of disabled children and young</p>	<p>www.childreninScotland.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p>

<p><i>children and young people in decision-making</i></p> <p>Griffiths, J and others</p> <p>(1999) Children in Scotland</p>	<p>people in decisions that affect them. There are sections on why children should be involved, what that means, and how such involvement may be facilitated</p>		
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Table 5: Analysis and record keeping

Publication/website	Description	Contact	Useful for
<p><i>Putting Analysis into Assessment</i></p> <p>Dalzell, R and Sawyer, E</p> <p>(2007) National Children's Bureau</p>	<p>A practical resource pack, intended to provide tools and ideas to enhance analytical thinking by those undertaking assessments of children in need. To be published early 2007.</p>	<p>www.ncb.org.uk</p>	<p>Good practice guidance</p> <p>Practical tools</p>
<p><i>Write Enough</i></p> <p>Walker, S, Shemmings, D and Cleaver, H</p> <p>(2003) DfES</p>	<p><i>Write Enough</i> is an interactive training pack, published by DfES to support good practice in recording in children's services. In addition to a range of exercises, <i>Write Enough</i> contains key messages from research, SSI inspections, Inquiry reports and best practice that are suitable for all practitioners working in children's services who are required to keep records.</p>	<p>www.writeenough.org.uk</p>	<p>Developing recording skills</p>
<p><i>Making Sense of Children's Drawings</i></p> <p>Angela Anning</p> <p>(2004) Open University Press</p>	<p>This book explores how young children learn to draw and provides advice on how to make sense of children's drawings</p>	<p>http://mcgraw-hill.co.uk/openup</p>	<p>Practical tools</p>

<i>Observing Harry</i> Cath Arnold (2003) Open University Press	This book follows a child's development, by use of a video diary of his behaviour, from the age of eight months to five years. It offers theories to understand his behaviour and explains how observation can be used to assess children's development.	http://mcgraw-hill.co.uk/openup	Practical tools
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Booklist

Listed below are children's books, which can be used to assist with communication. It is also worth visiting a children's book department as there is now a wealth of children's books available on the high street, covering lots of subjects such as feelings, sadness and loss.

Author	Title of book	Publisher
Althea	My Two Families	Black
Angel, Ann	Real for Sure Sister	Perspectives Press
Elliot, Michelle	The Willow Street Kids	Macmillan Children's
Elliot, Michelle	It's OK To Say No	Peter Haddock
Elliot, Michelle	Feeling Happy, Feeling Safe	Hodder Children's
Havill, Juanita	Jamaica Tag Along	Mammoth
Jenkin-Pearce, S	Rosie and the Pavement Bears	Red Fox
Mason, Micheline	Nothing Special	Working Press
Melonie, B	Beginnings and Endings With Lifetimes in Between	Paper Tiger
Morgan, Lynda	Daniel and his Therapist: The story of an abused boy	Papers Inc

Simeon, L	The Streetwise Kid	Blackie Children's Books
Striker, S	The Anti Colouring Book	Hippo
A series of books by Margot Sunderland and Nicky Armstrong	Helping Children with Fear: Teenie Weenie in a too big world Helping Children who Think they are Worthless: Ruby and the rubbish bin Helping Children with Loss: The day the sea went out and never came back Helping Children who are Anxious or Obsessional: Willy and the wobbly house Helping Children who Yearn for Someone they Love: The frog who longed for the moon to smile Helping Children Pursue their Hopes and Dreams: A pea called Mildred	Speechmark publishing
Wilhelm, H	A Cool Kid Like Me	Hodder
Wilhelm, H	I'll Always Love You	Hodder
Williams, M	Cool Cats, Calm Kids	Impact
Wilson, Jacqueline	The Story of Tracy Beaker (and a number of other titles)	Yearling
Wright, B R	My New Mom and Me	Raintree

References

Department of Health and others (2000) *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*. London: HMSO.

Voice for the Child in Care (2004) *Start With the Child, Stay With the Child: A blueprint for a child-centred approach to children and young people in care*. London: VCC.

Kirby, P and others (2003) *Building a Culture of Participation*. Nottingham: DfES.

DfES (2005) *Common Core of Skills and Knowledge for the Children's Workforce* (see the website www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/delivering-services/commoncore)

Hutton, A and Partridge, K (2006) *Say it Your Own Way*. Barnardo's and DfES

What Children Tell Us

A sample of research studies

Studies to find out what children say

- Children Speak – Butler and Williamson, 1994
- Your Shout! – Judith Timms and June Thoburn, NSPCC, 2003
- Remember My Messages – Catherine Shaw, Who Cares Trust, 1998
- Start with the Child, Stay with the Child – Voice for the Child in Care, 2004
- Ask Us – Department of Health and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, a project to find out the views of disabled children, 2002
- Local surveys

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National Children's Bureau 2006

Butler and Williamson (1994) – Who do children talk to about their problems?

- Many young people had no trust in other people and the majority would talk first to someone within the family network
- Over a quarter said they would talk to a friend
- A significant number had no trust in adult professionals

'They don't really listen. And then they don't believe you'

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National Children's Bureau 2006

Butler and Williamson – Young people's view of social workers

- Lack of understanding
'They don't know nothing about what it's really like for you'
- Impose their own views
'They twist the story, then sort it out their way'
- Doubts about confidentiality
'They spread things around: the whole world knows'
- Trivialise or overreact
'Just because I put on a friendly face they don't realise I want them to be serious with me'

Communicating with Children ©
National Children's Bureau 2006

Butler and Williamson – What do children want from professionals?

- Good listener – *'not like a robot'*
- Available – *'not at lunch, off sick, on training'*
- Non-judgemental and non-directive – *'advice should be 'maybe' not 'you must' – give you choices'*
- Humour – *'someone you can have a laugh with'*
- Straight talking – *'not always what you want to hear'*
- Trust and confidentiality – *'consult before you spread things on'*

Communicating with Children ©
National Children's Bureau 2006

Timms and Thoburn (2003) – What do children think of the court process?

- 66% said they had someone helpful to talk to through the process
- 42% said they felt listened to in court
- 55% did not get the chance to speak to the judge, and 21% would have liked to
- When asked who was helpful, social workers received the most responses (30%)

'I would like social workers to be a bit more alert and to hear what foster carers have to say and when they put down a time to come and see you they must try to make the effort and come'

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Shaw (1998) – What do children say about being in care?

- 49% said coming into care was confusing and scary, and 31% said it would have been easier if they had had more information
- 47% said they had a lot of say in decisions about seeing their social workers
- Although 30% described themselves as lonely, 70% said they felt happy most of the time
- Having access to 'someone special' to talk to was strongly associated with a generally positive state of mind

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Voice for the Child in Care (2004) – Relationships with professionals

- Young people said they would like to see professionals who are:
- reliable
 - keep promises
 - provide practical help
 - take time to listen, and to respond
 - see their lives in the round, not just the problems

'I would have liked them to sit down with me and have a conversation for more than 15 minutes. Instead of telling me what they were going to do with my life, find out a bit more about me'

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Voice for the Child in Care – Reviews

Children and young people said they feel they are not involved in the conversation at reviews, it goes on around them, and is about them, but it doesn't engage them

'I was sitting in a room with about 15 people, all talking about me like they knew me. I'd never met any of them!'

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Ask Us (2002) – Views of disabled children

- We want what other children want
- We want to do what other children do
- We want to go where other children go
- We want to be respected

We want to feel the same 'buzz' that other children feel

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Local information

- Surveys, group work
- Benefits in finding out what children in your area think
- The process itself raises awareness
- Involve practitioners and managers and YOUNG PEOPLE

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'I feel social workers come and go a bit quick. I don't care anymore. My latest social worker, I've already been told he's only temporary. If you know someone isn't going to be around, you don't bother talking to them'

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Principles and Practice in Communicating With Children

Communicating with Children ©
National Children's Bureau 2006

Communicating with children in assessments

- Why do it?
- Context / background
- Benefits
- Good practice
- Cautions

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Who says we have to involve children?

- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004
- The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need (2000)
- S11 Guidance (2005)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006)

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Who says...? (cont)

- Every Child Matters agenda
- The context of consumer rights
- Local policy
- My manager
- My professional standards

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Messages from inquiries

- Communicating with children protects them
- Laming found evidence of no, or limited, conversations with Victoria Climbié

'In reality, the conversations with Victoria were limited to little more than "hello, how are you?" The only 'assessment' completed involved the writing down of limited and sometimes contradictory information provided by Kouao'

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Messages from inspections

'The National Assessment Framework for Children in Need is well understood in almost all councils. The majority of assessments of children and their families are satisfactory. A significant minority do not include children and families sufficiently or incorporate all key information.'

From 'Making Every Child Matter' CSCI (2005)

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But also from CSCI

'We see some excellent assessments that:

- *fully involve the child and their parents and take their views into account*
- *make full use of information from the range of agencies involved with the child and family and link it together effectively*
- *take account of cultural issues and influences, using the skills of specialist staff where appropriate*

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But also from CSCI (cont)

- *assemble a holistic picture of the child in their family, that weighs the significance of information from all sources to determine the nature and extent of risk to them*
- *use that information and exercise skilled professional judgement about the issues to be addressed and needs to be met.'*

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Involving children works

- Children feel listened to, taken seriously, and this helps them to deal with difficult situations
- When children are involved in decision-making and planning, the plans are more likely to be successful
- Services developed with the influence of children and young people are more likely to meet their needs

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Good practice 1: Build competence

- By providing information so that children and young people can contribute meaningfully
- By giving time and explanations so that they can properly understand the issues and the process
- By being clear about what will be discussed, and the likely consequences. Be straight about the boundaries of confidentiality
- By giving access to independent advocacy services if required

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Good practice 2: Practical considerations

- Pay attention to venues and who will be present. Children should be involved in deciding who, when and where
- Provide interpreters if required
- Think about what tools and techniques you will use. Preparation and planning
- Think about the use of new technologies

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Good practice 3: Create the right culture

- Children are more likely to talk to people they know and trust – it takes time to build trust
- Feedback and discuss the outcomes, what happened
- Follow up – do what you said you would do
- Be flexible in response to what children and young people say

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Good practice 4 : Child-led assessments

- Start with what is important to the child
- Go at the child's pace – gradually build a picture of their needs
- Attend to positives as well as negatives
- Forms / tick boxes / checklists don't always work well for children

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Children's responses

- Developmental considerations – children's understanding at different ages, adolescents' willingness to engage (but don't forget individual differences)
- Cultural differences
- Adverse events affecting children's responses

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Cautions

- Sensitivity to children's plans / schedules
- Don't let children down – be reliable, honest and accountable
- Support carers to support the child involved
- Involve other trusted adults outside the family
- Don't just talk – try other methods

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Home-made Books

Material drawn from:

*Homemade Books to Help Kids Cope:
An easy to learn technique for parents
and professionals*

Author: Robert G Ziegler, MD
Magination Press, Washington, 1992
ISBN: 0-945354-50-9

Introduction

- The value of writing stories with children
- Helping children deal with different situations
- Valuable for parents, carers and professionals
- Useful with all ages of children

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Three types of books

- Books to describe situations
- Books to define feelings
- Books to make general and empathetic statements

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National Children's Bureau 2006

Books to describe a situation

- A natural way to prepare for change and transitions
- A helpful way to introduce new ideas
- Helps parents and carers too – gives them time to reflect
- Unique messages
- Repeating and reinforcing messages

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Books to define feelings

- Feelings – a large part of a child's experience
- Describing a behaviour enables a child to identify and understand feelings
- Helpful for children in visualising feelings
- Helps children to accept feelings about a situation
- Acknowledge the challenge to adult ability to accept feelings

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Books to make an empathetic statement

- Natural and conformable way to get a little distance
- Helps a child to get and keep a sense of perspective
- Finding a generally empathetic statement (qualified by 'sometimes')

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Benefits

- A tangible sense of involvement with a child
- Building understanding between adult and child
- Increasing acceptance
- Creating grounds for further dialogue
- Focusing on relationships

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Tools and techniques for making books

- Drawing
 - Draw the pictures yourself
 - Child draws the pictures
 - Do it together
- Scrapbook
- Cut and paste from magazines
- Use photos

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Tools and techniques

- Computers
- Borders, illustrations, clip art
- Adding in text
- Draw, paint programmes, desktop publishing
- Import photos and cartoons
- Computer-based book can include animations, etc.

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National Children's Bureau 2006

Materials for paper books

- Paper – different colours sizes and types
- Pencils, felt pens, gel pens
- Scrap materials – magazines, catalogues
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Photos
- Hole punches, staples

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Some situations when it's useful for professionals

- Introducing yourself as new worker
- Explaining why you are there
- Reflecting on situations and events
- Introducing change, e.g. new baby, change of school or placement
- Exploring behaviour issues
- Preparing for court

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Finally

'In creating a book about a difficult experience, the child is able to develop mastery and control by putting words to affectively charged situations, one of the first steps in changing behaviour...'

Madeline Steinberg, Psy.D.
Harvard Medical School at the Cambridge Hospital

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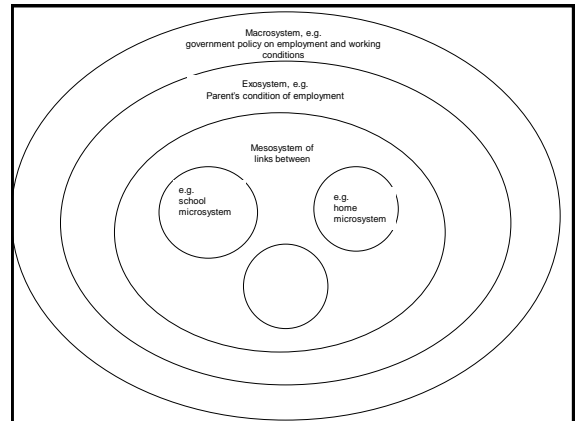
An Ecological Perspective on Child Development

Ecological approach

- What does it mean?
- Why is it important?
- How does it apply to practice?

It is a holistic perspective which focuses on the ways in which children's developmental needs, the capacity of their parents to respond appropriately to those needs and wider environmental factors interact with one another over time.

NSPCC and University of Sheffield (2000) *The Child's World: Assessing children in need* p.41



'Whether parents can perform effectively in child-rearing roles within the family depends on the role demands, stresses and supports emanating from other settings...

...Parent's evaluations of their own capacity to function, as well as their view of the child, are related to such external factors as flexibility of job schedules, adequacy of childcare arrangements, the presence of friends or neighbours who can help out in large of small emergencies, the quality of health and social services and neighbourhood safety.'

Bronfenbrenner (1979)

'We have to confront the constant tendency to regress to the individualisation of social problems'

Smale and others (1994) *Negotiating Care in the Community*

Societal attitudes

'The challenges they (parents) face in bringing up their child are as much to do with the attitudes of society towards disability as they are to do with the child's particular impairment...'

...It takes exceptional parenting to compensate adequately for the discriminating pressures inherent in our society'

(Middleton 1998)

Family and environment factors: The third side of the triangle

- Family history and functioning
- Wider family
- Housing
- Employment
- Income
- Family's social integration
- Community resources (inc. universal services)

'Even in the most barren social landscape there are likely to be at least some resources and supports which can be tapped into'

Daniel, Gilligan and others (1999) *Child Development for Child Care and Protection Workers*. p.303

Attachment

Attachment in the context
of involving children in
assessment

What is attachment?

- Theory of personality development in the context of close relationships (Howe 1999)
- An affectionate bond between two individuals that endures through time and space and serves to join them emotionally (Kennel 1976)

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What does it provide?

- Safe base
- Balance between trust and autonomy
- Psychological development
- Physical development
- Cognitive development
- Conscience development
- Identity

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How long does it last?

Shifted and renegotiated through life:

- Infant...
- Toddler...
- Child...
- Adolescent...
- Independence...
- Parenthood...
- Care of elders

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Why of interest to children's professions?

- Why close relationships matter
- How the quality influences development
- Assessing relationships – children's state and parents' ability to care
- Quality and character of relationships
- Improving parent and child relationships
- Parents' own experiences
- Extended family – relevance for kinship care

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What are attachment behaviours?

- Bring child in close proximity to caregiver
- Maximise care and protection
- Evolutionary – increase survival chances
- Doesn't automatically mean healthy bond
- Give information about nature of attachment – behaviours and responses
- Relevant to developmental stage

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Patterns of attachment

- Secure
- Ambivalent
- Avoidant
- Disorganised
- Combinations of the above
- Unattached

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Care giving

Care giving behaviours reinforce good attachment or compound attachment. Optimum behaviours on the left and cause for concern on the right.

- Sensitive ----- Not attuned
- Acceptance ----- Rejection
- Cooperation ----- Interference
- Accessibility ----- Ignoring

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Attachment – cultural issues

- Basic concepts are same universally
- Aspects vary across cultures
- Attachment figures affected by family structure
- Long-term separations
- Family networks and connections vital
- Asylum seeking children – effects of separation.

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Effects of lack of attachment

- Difficulty relating normally
- Difficulty growing socially, maintaining relationships
- Difficulty caring for others
- Egocentric, impulsive, babyish,
- Difficulties with rules and laws
- Lack of trust – highly defended

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Separation and loss

- Separation involves fear which needs to be mastered; and loss involves grief which needs to be expressed (Aldgate & Simmonds 1990)
- Grief is the process through which one passes in order to recover from loss (Fahlberg 1994)

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Stages of grief

(taken from *On Death and Dying* by Kubler-Ross, 1969)

- Shock
- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Sadness/despair
- Resolution

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Stages of withdrawal

(taken from *A Child's Journey Through
Placement* by Fahlberg, 1994)

- Protest
- Despair
- Quiet withdrawal

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Analysis and Representing Children in Assessments

Analysing information

- Assessment Framework supports systematic information gathering
- The challenge is to bridge the gap between gathering data and using it to analyse, make judgements, plan, intervene and review

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How do we represent children in assessments?

- Research, inspections and inquiries indicate that children's voices are absent or minimised during assessment
- Focus on parents rather than the child
- Use of language in reports

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Ways in which children's voices are silenced

- By not reporting what was said
- Children are minor characters in the narrative
- More weight is given to adult views when there are differences of opinion or conflicting accounts
- Presupposing what they might say
- Descriptions of children being limited only to how they respond or relate to their parents
- Presenting their voices as untrustworthy

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Examples from coastal cities study: Child's views

(from *Child and Family Assessment in Social Work Practice* by Holland)

'Elizabeth presents as whimsical and materialistic and may not be impressed by the current accommodation ... It is clear that Elizabeth has changed her mind on a number of occasions'

Communicating with Children ©
National Children's Bureau 2006

Examples from coastal cities study: Child's views

'Paul has remained consistent in his expressed wish to have Mr Taylor return home ... Paul presents as a very sensible child who I feel would not hesitate to voice any feelings of unease'

Communicating with Children ©
National Children's Bureau 2006

Examples from coastal cities study: Developmental milestones

'Aaron knows and immediately turns to his own name and babbles loudly and incessantly and imitates adults' playful vocalisation with gleeful enthusiasm'

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Good practice in analysis

- Acknowledge what you don't know about the child – describe gaps and limitations
- Put the information you have got in context – child development, race and culture, recent events
- Consult widely
- Consider language
- Summarise

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Benefits of summaries in the case file

(from *Write Enough* by Walker, Shemmings, Cleaver (2003) www.writeenough.org.uk)

- frees workers from the laborious task of hunting for information hidden deep in the file
- helps with the process of reviewing the work
- helps clarify the purpose of visits
- can be 'cut and pasted' into longer reports, e.g. child protection conferences, court reports
- helps workers become familiar with a new case quickly
- enables supervision to be more helpful to the worker

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Checklist

(From *Putting Analysis into Assessment* by Dalzell and Sawyer 2007)

- How well do I know the child?
- Which adults know the child best and what do they think?
- How has the child defined the problems in their family life and the effect on them?
- Under what circumstances did the child express their views or feelings? What has occurred and what did he or she want to happen?

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Checklist (cont)

(From *Putting Analysis into Assessment* by Dalzell and Sawyer)

- What has been observed regarding the child's way of relating and responding to adults? (Consider attachment)
- What do I know about research in relation to the experiences the child has had?
- What communication methods have I used?
- How confident am I that I have been able to establish the child's views, wishes and feelings?

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The Developing World of the Child

(Aldgate and others 2006)

A series of steps:

- Chronology and genogram
- The visit
- Reflecting on the meeting
- Analysing what you have seen and heard
- Planning

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The Developing World of the Child (cont)

- Gather positive and negative data
- Weigh relative significance
- Assessment of current situation
- Assessment of future circumstances
- Prospects for change
- Plan – roles and responsibilities, timescales, who will notice changes, date of review

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Pedagogy – a holistic, personal approach to work with children and young people, across services

European models for practice, training, education and qualification

Pat Petrie, Janet Boddy, Claire Cameron, Ellen Heptinstall,
Susan McQuail, Antonia Simon, and Valerie Wigfall

Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London

Today, provision for children and young people is developing rapidly at the level of policy, organisation, training, education, and qualification.

Much of the research carried out at the Thomas Coram Research Unit is about the children's and young people's sector. It includes studies of the experience of children and parents and their use of care, education, leisure and health services. Work has been undertaken on staffing issues: the daily practice of staff, their training, education and qualification, their recruitment and retention. These studies have often been carried out cross nationally, especially looking at European models of provision and staffing.

Recent studies, since 2000, have concentrated on what, in continental Europe, is often called 'pedagogy', a distinctive way of working with children and the basis for policy development. A strong focus of our research for the Department of Health has been on children in the residential care system in five European countries. Research findings have been presented at three national seminars for senior academics, influential representatives of the voluntary sector and members of government departments. This paper draws on the research and on the views expressed during the seminars.

Why consider pedagogy?

This is an appropriate time to look at what pedagogy might have to offer children's services in England, because it seems to make a good fit with policy developments. Until recently, local and national policy in England, was mostly based on clear boundaries between the fields of education, childcare and social care. These divisions were apparent at many levels: conceptual, professional, organisational and in relation to training and education. However, over the last seven years there has been an administrative reorganisation of responsibility for children's services and a shift in how we envisage provision for children and young people:

- Childcare (for working parents) and social care (for children 'at risk' or 'in need') have moved from the Department of Health to the Department for Education and Skills. As a result, most matters concerning children, whether early years and childcare, out-of-school care, child protection or schooling are now the remit of Education, with structural links to other departments.
- A Minister of Children was appointed in 2003.
- Recent government policy, culminating in the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters', has emphasised that services for children – child welfare, childcare, education, health – should work more closely, and that the different occupations involved should be more interconnected.

- New integrated organisational structures such as Children's Trusts, and local authority Children's Departments, to replace education and children's social services, are either envisaged or have already been brought into being.
- More comprehensive forms of provision have been planned and legislated for, including Children's Centres and Extended Schools.
- There is a newly formed DfES Unit, looking at the workforce across the children's sector.
- Since the Children Act, 1989 and the UK becoming a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, there is an increasing emphasis on listening to children – currently most apparent in initiatives such as Quality Protects, Choice Protects and in the appointment of a Children's Commissioner.

This is a time when the borders and relations between different types of services are changing, workforce issues are to the fore, and there is a desire to find new approaches. Not least, children are being seen as people in their own right, rather than problems to be managed. With these changing directions comes the opportunity to seek fresh options and to identify the best possibilities for realising government's intentions. One model for work in the children's sector is that of pedagogy, with workers, whatever their job titles, seen primarily as pedagogues.

What is pedagogy?

In England, we do not often use the term 'pedagogy' except in the context of the classroom and formal education. Our European neighbours often apply it to a much broader set of services, covering for example, childcare and early years, youth work, family support services, secure units for young offenders, residential care and play work. A consideration of pedagogic policy and practice in continental Europe could help to clarify the challenges and opportunities inherent in the developing English situation.

As used in continental Europe, the word 'pedagogy' relates to the overall support for children's development. In pedagogy, care and education meet. To put it another way, pedagogy is 'education' in the broadest sense of that word. Indeed, in French and other languages with a Latin base (such as Italian and Spanish) words like '*éducation*' convey this broader sense and are interchangeable with pedagogy as used in Germanic and Nordic countries.

Parents are sometimes referred to as the first pedagogues, but pedagogy is also a foundation concept that informs many sorts of services, providing a distinctive approach to practice, training and policy. In continental Europe, the use of the terms '*éducation*' and 'pedagogy' imply work with the *whole* child: body, mind, feelings, spirit and creativity. Crucially, the child is seen as a social being, connected to others and at the same time with their own distinctive experiences and knowledge.

In Sweden, the employment of pedagogues in schools has been central to recent educational reforms. Policy addresses the whole child, rather than the child conceived in narrow educational terms. Around one third of school heads have a background in pedagogy, rather than teaching.

(Cohen, Moss, Petrie and Wallace, in press)

What is meant by *social* pedagogy?

Social pedagogy is sometimes used to mean pedagogy conducted on behalf of society, rather than the more private pedagogy performed by parents. But it can also denote work with more vulnerable groups in society. Different countries have different emphases and use slightly different terms.



In the countries which we studied, a pedagogic system could be identified. The system's components consisted of policy and practice, theory and research and the training and education of the work force, with each component feeding into, and drawing from, the others.

'Pedagogic theory is specially about relationships, child rearing relationships'
 (Dutch academic, interviewed as part of TCRU's Social Pedagogy Study, Petrie et al 2003, Petrie et al, forthcoming.)

The research identified the following key principles of pedagogic practice:

- a focus on the child as a whole person, and support for the child's overall development;
- the practitioner should see herself/himself, as a person, in relationship with the child or young person;
- while they are together, children and staff are seen as inhabiting the same life space, not as existing in separate, hierarchical domains;
- as professionals, pedagogues are encouraged to constantly reflect on their work and to bring both theoretical understandings and self-knowledge to the process;
- pedagogues are also practical; their training prepares them to share in many aspects of children's daily lives, such as preparing meals and snacks, or making music and building kites;
- when working in group settings, children's associative life is seen as an important resource: workers should foster and make use of the group.
- pedagogy builds on an understanding of children's rights that is not limited to procedural matters or legislated requirements;
- there is an emphasis on team work and on valuing the contributions of other people: families, community and other professionals;

The work of the pedagogue is essentially personal. The students and staff interviewed for the research, often spoke of the work of the pedagogue in terms of the human person: head, hands and heart – all three being essential for the work of pedagogy. The personal, relational approach is emphasised in students' training and education where fostering sound pedagogic values and attitudes is seen as at least as important as the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

'When you are holding a person in your hand, you are holding a bit of his life in your hand.'
 (Principal, Danish training college, interviewed as part of TCRU's Social Pedagogy Study, Petrie et al 2003, Petrie et al, forthcoming.)

Pedagogic principles derive from a highly developed professional training and education, and relate to social policy that is conceived in terms of pedagogy; for example pedagogic principles can be brought to bear in cases where children are also a concern for youth justice systems.

Education, training and qualification

Some of those working directly with children have undertaken pedagogic studies in the last years of secondary school or colleges or in further education. These courses are not seen as an adequate qualification and many who have taken them go on to degrees in pedagogy, after working in the field.

Would-be pedagogues usually prepare for pedagogic work in universities and colleges, where first degrees take around 3 or 4 years. Courses involve the following:

- as an aid to becoming reflective practitioners, students take a range of theoretical subjects in the behavioural and social sciences;
- students are introduced to the skills needed for their work such as group work, working with conflict and challenging behaviour, and teamwork (which is much emphasised);
- students take courses in creative and practical subjects, such as art, drama, woodwork, music or gardening - interests and skills that they will bring to their work as media through which they can relate to children. Arts and practical subjects are also valued for their general therapeutic effect: they can help the children to enjoy life and feel good about themselves;
- there are often optional study modules and practice placements for specific settings, such as work with disabled children or in residential care.
- in some countries pedagogic courses are there as specialist options for work with adults (for example in mental health settings)

'It is a job where every day you must ask questions about yourself and your practice right to the end of your professional life.'

(French pedagogue working in a residential home, interviewed as part of TCRU's Social Pedagogy Study, Petrie et al 2003, Petrie et al, forthcoming.)

In Germany, the Netherlands and Flanders, some students take an initial five-year course, including practice, resulting in the equivalent of an English masters degree. This prepares students for further academic work, for research and development posts in government and voluntary organisations, for management jobs, and consultancy and advisory positions in a range of provision. But some of those qualified in this way choose to work directly with children.

Once in employment, people with a background in pedagogy can have a variety of job titles relating to the work they undertake.

Since 1992, Danish pedagogues training for work in, for example, nurseries, out-of-school services, adult services, and children's residential homes have a common education, with optional specialisms.

Petrie et al 2003, Petrie et al, forthcoming

Whatever the setting, educational, health, youth services, social services or nurseries, pedagogues usually work alongside other professionals and share the general aims of the establishment, but they bring their own distinctive principles, understandings and skills to bear.

What could a pedagogic approach offer England?

The possible benefits of a taking a pedagogic approach are to be found in the realms of policy development, training and workforce issues and with regard to the experience of children, directly.

Policy

- a. Pedagogy is an overarching concept that could bring greater coherence to children's services, as expressed in, e.g., *Every Child Matters*.
- b. Pedagogy could also provide a framework for discussing aims for children and young people in society as a whole.
- c. Many recent service developments sit well in a pedagogic framework. Full Service Schools and Children's Centres are pedagogic provision in that they aim to support children's over-all development. They are both sites in which pedagogues could bring their own expertise and values for work alongside other professionals, such as nurses and teachers.

The research showed that, in England, children in residential care have more severe and disturbed backgrounds than in the other countries studied. Yet the training and education of staff in England is at a much lower level than in those countries.

Training, education and the children's workforce

- a. Pedagogy degrees and careers are highly popular in the European countries studied, even though pedagogues are not especially well paid. Establishing pedagogy courses in this country could produce a well-equipped, flexible and stable workforce.
- b. The breadth of pedagogic training qualifies staff for direct work with children and young people across a wide range of childcare, educational and welfare services. Whether in established or developing services the key pedagogic principals would hold, with workers sharing common values, theoretic understandings, skills and practice principles.
- c. As well as their broader training, pedagogues can take specialist options such as those which would further the objectives of Quality Protects and Choice Protects. For example, the development of a trained body of pedagogues could meet the policy objectives for a professional workforce, trained in the skills and understandings required for residential settings. Pedagogical approaches may also have something to offer in the training of foster parents.
- d. Positioning work in the children's sector as pedagogy can provide a framework for rationalising existing qualifications and allowing for career development within the sector.
- e. European Community legislation allows the freedom to work throughout EC member states. Adopting a pedagogic approach would allow for a greater harmonisation of professional training and practice with that of other European countries.

Children and parents

The research found that pedagogy, as practiced in the countries studied, had the potential to serve several aspects of government policy.

- a. Pedagogy has the potential for an inclusive, normalising approach, with the main focus on children as children, but allowing for some children, at some times, to have additional needs. This normalising approach fits well with government's aims for both looked-after children, disabled children and children with special needs.
- b. While child protection issues are treated with all due seriousness, pedagogic approaches are child-focused, rather than procedure focused. Procedures are a necessary part of the work, but are not its basis. The professionalism of the worker, transparency of practice, a commitment to team work and accountability to others in the team, are seen as the best guarantee of child safety.
- c. Pedagogues think in terms both of the individual child and of the group of children or young people. This allows for richer, more productive work with children, whether in play schemes, the nursery or a residential home.
- d. Because they have some training in artistic and practical pursuits, workers can offer children activities that can enhance children's self esteem.
- e. Above all, pedagogy takes a holistic view of children and respects them as fellow human beings, each with a unique point of view and a distinctive contribution to make to whatever task is in hand. This stance would promote policy that requires the voice of the child to be heard and for children and young people to play their part in, e.g., devising care plans.
- f. Working with parents has a high place in government policy, through objectives for children in care, to Sure Start, and to the Youth Justice System. Pedagogues see parents as partners, with whom they can dialogue about the development and well-being of individual children, as well as providing advice and counselling on parenting.

Problems regarding pedagogy

1. Sectional training interests may be threatened by the introduction of a more generalist approach.

A survey across training settings in England revealed wide interest in European models of training, and some centres already had exchanges with pedagogic training establishments in Europe. There would also be the need to develop specialist training as optional or post qualifying courses.

2. Without publicly funded training opportunities of the duration and comprehensiveness of those to be found in Europe, a profession comparable to that of the pedagogue cannot be developed.

Government policy is to increase the number of graduates, generally, and to make good staff shortages in childcare, early education and social care. These are settings that need the stimulation of new approaches. The European experience is that pedagogy degrees and careers are popular options.

3. There is no academic field defined as pedagogy (as used in this paper) in English universities.

Subjects studied in European departments of pedagogy are available in universities in this country, and research is undertaken that elsewhere would be seen as contributing to pedagogic theory. Also, existing courses are often influenced by pedagogic ideas (for example, the Masters Degree in Residential Care at the University of Strathclyde). In addition, there are across the country, first degrees in fields such as Early Years, Child Development, and Educational Studies that are theoretically relevant, although they do not have the practice placements, artistic or practical components, and the explicit base in pedagogic principles (see above), typical of pedagogy courses in Europe.

There are also first degree courses which are much closer to pedagogy, such as the BA in Informal Education at the George Williams College, London/University of Canterbury (a preparation for work in a variety of settings, including residential homes and youth work), and the BA in Curative Education at the University of Aberdeen (a four year course leading to work with children and adults with complex needs).

4. The terms *pedagogy* can be mystifying for English language speakers and the Oxford English Dictionary allows for three ways of pronouncing it!

This is true – although using a soft *g* as in psychology may have a more English ring! There are existing alternatives, such as social education (but this may suggest lessons in citizenship). On the other hand, the relative strangeness of ‘pedagogy’ is one of its advantages, inviting enquiry, encouraging new thinking and suggesting new opportunities.

Pedagogy for children’s services in England: possible starting points

It is perhaps impossible to achieve, not to say undesirable to attempt, the transfer of whole systems of training, qualification and practice from one country to another. Nevertheless the research points to ways in which pedagogy, as a model, fits policy concerns for children, and the development of training and services in England. Currently, while these are areas that present many problems, there is also much evidence of a political will to effect change in how society serves its children and young people.

The following points need consideration:

1. Which existing course and qualifications are closest to those relating to pedagogy? In what ways do courses need to develop so as to educate students in the values, understandings and skills of pedagogy?
2. What would be needed to stimulate the development of a pilot degree in pedagogy?
3. How best to utilise ‘pedagogy’ as a framework for discussing the place of children and young people in society, addressing basic questions:
 - what do we want for our children?
 - what is a good childhood?
 - what relationship would we wish to promote between children and children, and children and adults?

These are pedagogic questions that cut across narrower professional interests and should accompany the various administrative reorganisations that are envisaged for children’s services and education.

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A first report on Social Pedagogy in Europe (Petrie, Boddy, Cameron, Heptinstall and McQuail, 2003) has been submitted to the Department of Health/Department for Education and Skills, and a report on the second phase is forthcoming. 'Working with Children in Care: European Perspectives', covering both phases of the research, will be published with the Open University Press in 2006. The work was directed by Professor Pat Petrie, and the research team includes Janet Boddy, Claire Cameron, Ellen Heptinstall, Susan McQuail, Antonia Simon, Valerie Wigfall, and research associates in universities in continental Europe. Please address enquiries arising from this paper to p.petrie@ioe.ac.uk

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Personal Communication Passports as a way of consulting and representing children with communication disabilities, to ensure consistent care

Sally Millar & Stuart Aitken, *Communication Aids for Language and Learning (CALL) Centre, University of Edinburgh (and in collaboration with Sense Scotland)(1997)*

Some communication difficulties in children may be easily identified because they are accompanied by physical or sensory disabilities, or second language learning issues, while others are more 'invisible' (for example, delayed/disordered speech and language development, language comprehension difficulties, dyspraxia, dyslexia, social interaction difficulties etc). All have profound effects on learning and education, self-esteem and personal/social relationships. Communication disabilities and their implications can easily be missed in children in disrupted circumstances.

Personal Communication Passports

Personal Communication Passports provide a practical and child-centred approach to passing on key information (rather than it being locked away in a cabinet in 'confidential records'). A Passport is a way of supporting a vulnerable young person with communication difficulties across transitions, drawing together complex information (including the child's own views, as much as possible) and distilling it into a clear, positive and accessible format. This helps staff and conversation partners to get to know the child with communication disabilities and to interact/respond consistently in order to help the child make sense of events and to 'get the best' out of what communication abilities they do have. A Passport is a vital tool in 'joined-up' inter-agency planning and working, partnership with families, and is an excellent a way of implementing and recording consultation with, and participation of, the young person. Passports aim to support children with complex communication difficulties who cannot easily speak for themselves, by:

- presenting them positively as individuals, not as a set of 'problems' or disabilities
- drawing together information from past and present, from many people who know the child, and from different contexts
- describing the child's most effective means of communication
- presenting information in an attractive easy to understand way
- describing the child's most effective means of communication, so that others can be better communication partners.



Passport booklets (or cards, folding pockets, wall charts etc) present information about the child in an accessible way that assumes no prior knowledge and is simple, clear, direct, honest, specific and detailed (and, hopefully, fun). Passports are a special way of sorting information. They don't contain *all* the information about a child but a synthesis of *key* information to help other people to help the child to 'be the best he/she can be', on a day-to-day basis.

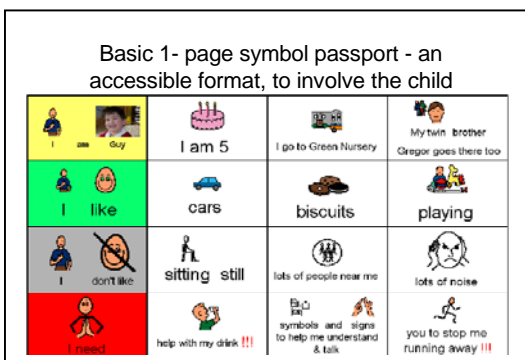
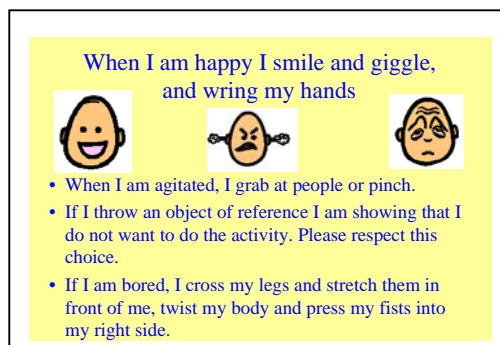
The Passport belongs to *the child* – not to staff or family (though they may help him or her to use it appropriately, and update it). Passports are especially important at times of transition, when new people come into the child's life and information may not be



passed on. They are also helpful when new or temporary staff/volunteers meet the child, helping them quickly to acquire key information, or for introducing a child to a new foster family. The process of creating a Passport can help in the process of assessing children and their needs (and in identifying gaps in assessment).

Evaluation at Sense Scotland

At Sense Scotland, Passports were found to be valuable in many service settings: residential short breaks (respite); holidays; summer activities; day activities; and support. Residential care and support staff are often young and inexperienced in specialist work with children with communication difficulties and complex support needs. There can be a comparatively high turnover of staff. There are both high demands on staff and little time for staff training once the mandatory sessions (for example, on moving and assisting; epilepsy awareness/administration of medication; child protection, first aid, CALM etc.) are delivered. On an evaluation exercise, Passports scored more highly with both parents and staff than 'traditional' information collection and record keeping methods, on: effectiveness, accuracy of information, and personalisation. Passports were



agreed to be the preferred method of recording child information.

Passports should not be just a list of likes and dislikes, or a photo album of people and activities. They should include more powerful information about communication, eg. 'How to tell when I'm showing you what I like and dislike'; 'How to help me



make my own choices'.

Passports can show the details of how to use a child's communication system, as opposed to simply 'Jan uses a communication book'.

With regard to vision – rather than having lots of

- I need lots of time to work out what my eyes are seeing – one thing at a time works best.
- I see objects but I can't make sense of pictures, photos or symbols.
- You need to think very carefully about where I sit. I am distracted by lots of things, especially by people's faces or by bright light (for example, from the window).
- Please make sure that the background on which you show me things is uncluttered and contrasts well.

information about visual acuity scores, visual field and contrast scores documented in reports which staff often to not understand, a Passport can record what you need to know to work with the child.

Passports as a tool for consulting

Passports can be very useful when seeking the views of a child with complex communication support needs (and in recording those views so they are not 'lost'). They help by giving guidance to others about, for example, the best way of asking questions in the right way; or giving information to help others understand how the child feels – whether happy or not. A template for a Consulting Passport is one of the resources to be found on the Listening to Children 2004 CD (Aitken S & Millar S, 2004).

More information about Communication Passports (including templates) and 'Listening to Children' can be found on www.callcentrescotland.org.uk

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