Child Protection: consultation with children toolkit
Introduction:

This is a toolkit that can be used by social workers with children who are subject to the child protection process. It is not necessary to complete all sections: use the parts appropriate to the child you are working with. The toolkit can be used alongside other resources such as the practitioner assessment resource pack.

Careful planning is the key to the successful involvement of children and young people in the conference process and it is important to remember that the child protection process itself can have a profound impact on the child:

“When children become subject to child protection procedures, they are dealing both with the consequences of the abuse or neglect which has led to this intervention and with the impact of the intervention itself”. (Office of the Children’s Commissioner: ‘Don’t make assumptions’: Children’s and young people’s views of the child protection system and messages for change March 2011).

In strengthening our practice to better include the wishes of young people we are working towards fulfilling our promise to the children and young people of Leeds to increase the control they have over their lives and in doing so improve the effectiveness of child protection plans and better achieve lasting change.

Child Protection Conference: a child focussed meeting

Whilst it is not always appropriate for every child to attend the child protection conference it is important that each child has the chance to have their wishes and feelings listened to and for these to be heard at the meeting. It is also vital that these wishes and feelings are carefully considered when the meeting puts together a plan.

The way that we talk to children and young people and the language that we use will affect their ability to express their feelings and feel heard. Studies that have looked at communication with children indicate that young people do not use the language of ‘risk’, but focused on what worries children had or what might make them feel a certain way, such as angry, sad or shocked. It is essential not to make assumptions or use language not used or understood by the individual child.

It is important to consider that;

“Children involved in the child protection process are likely to have talked to a range of professionals and their talk may have had profound consequences for their families, sometimes unexpected by the child. They may have good cause not to share their worries and concerns”. (Office of the Children’s Commissioner: ‘Don’t make assumptions’: Children’s and young people’s views of the child protection system and messages for change March 2011).

Practice Tips

- Children need help to exercise real choice about the nature of their involvement.
- Attendance does not equal participation
- Not attending should not mean not participating
- Children need a trusting relationship with an adult, and time to digest the process and ask questions
- Children need choices about how to participate - including the use of advocates, written messages, drawings, audio tapes: attendance at the conference needs careful planning

Ref: Young People’s Involvement in the Child Protection Process:

Involvement appropriate to age and understanding

Keeping the child in mind means being attuned to how the child is feeling and likely to be affected at every stage of social work involvement (Brandon et al 1998).
Practice tips

- Consultations with children and young people need to be well planned to ensure that key information is discussed and shared and the child wishes and feelings are ascertained.
- It is important to gain an understanding of their world view and understand what this world means them. Showing interest in getting to know them and what they think will help.
- Children and young people do not respond well to a barrage of questions, it is important to be creative in forming a relationship to promote engagement.
- Research shows that children and young people appreciate workers who listen carefully before making a judgement or offering advice.
- Young people express a desire to share their worries and find a way forward that enables them to maintain a sense of control.
- Child protection is a complex process and social workers sometimes need to take action which children and young people do not agree with in order to protect them.
- It is important to address children’s concerns about confidentiality so they understand the basis of the discussions; how it will be recorded / who it will be shared with and when?

Babies and younger children (0-5)

For babies and young children undertaking observations or interacting and play may be a more appropriate way of establishing what their feelings and understanding of the world is. Having some knowledge of the child’s key attachments; who is important to them? Who do children feel safe with?

Children (5-10)

For this age group it is not always appropriate for the child to be aware of the child protection conference. The child should be seen alone and given the chance to consider what issues are concerning them and allow them the time to think about how they see their world and to raise any issues that are worrying them.

Older children and young people (10+)

For this age group the expectation is that the child will attend their conference unless they do not wish to or it is not appropriate as attending may place them at risk of further harm or parents will not give consent. Attendance at a child protection conference needs to be managed sensitively and the child or young person included in the careful preparation and planning to maximise a positive experience for them. Young people can access an independent advocate if appropriate. It is important to prepare the child for the child protection conference and to help them think about how they can meaningfully contribute in a way that feels safe and beneficial for them.

Children and young people with additional needs

Consideration will need to be given about the young persons specific communication needs and how they can best be supported to explore and express their feelings and wishes. Numerous studies highlight the fact that disabled children are at increased risk of maltreatment. In order for the child protection system to work to redress this imbalance special efforts will need to be made to understand their world view.

Practice tips

Understanding children and young people’s views, worries and concerns will help social workers and other professionals to:

- Form an effective alliance with the child
- Help the child to see that the problems in the family are not their fault and that they are not responsible for putting them right
- Provide the professional with a different insight into the dynamics within the family
- Support more effective planning
- Whilst not losing their focus on parental maltreatment, enable them to include a broader focus on what the child or young person finds harmful

‘Don’t make assumptions’: Children’s and young people’s views of the child protection system and messages for change March 2011

References

- Office of the Children's Commissioner: ‘Don’t make assumptions’: Children’s and young people’s views of the child protection system and messages for change March 2011.
- Children and Young Persons Views of the child protection system and messages for change: Jeanette Cossar, Marion Brandon, Peter Jordan 2011.
1. Wishing Well Game

Using whatever materials you can (clean bin, wide tube, childrens’ play tunnels) set up a wishing well. Ask the child to write their thoughts, suggestions, ideas on a round piece of paper (coin) and throw it into the wishing well.

2. Faces Technique

What is this technique?
The faces technique consists of asking a child to pick from a range of different facial expressions and assigning them to members of their family/people that care for them. It is a useful method for discovering how a child perceives their family/carers. It is more likely to appeal to younger children or those at an earlier stage of development.

What do I need?
A large piece of paper, pens, crayons or pencils. For children unable or unwilling to draw, it is useful to have some pre-prepared facial expressions such as happy, laughing, angry, hatred, sad, bored, aggressive, relaxed faces etc.

What do I do?
Explain to the child that you want to know more about their family/carers and the people they live with. Show them or draw some pictures of different facial expressions and make sure they understand each expression and the emotion it relates to. For more developed children, you might use a wide range of expressions; for those at earlier stages of development, you might decide just to use two or three (i.e. happy, sad and angry).

Ask the child to draw you pictures of everyone in their family or the people they live with and then explain to the child that each family member needs to have one of the facial expressions. If they say something like ‘mummy is sad and happy’ ask if they can pick which one she is most like.

What am I looking for?
You are not only looking for which expressions the child draws but their explanation as to why - what is their thought process behind picking a particular face for one person and another face for someone else?
3. Duck Exercise
(good for younger children)

What resources do I need?
Two large pieces of paper, scissors, pencil and pens, glue/sticky tape

What do I do?
- Draw a giant duck on a piece of paper. Name the duck: ‘The duck has not got a name; what shall we call it?’ Put the names in a hat and draw one out.
- Discussion about what is wrong with the duck (it has no feathers)
- Makes feathers by drawing round your hands onto coloured card and cutting out feather shapes
- Ask the child to make a number of feathers and write on each:
  - Something that makes you happy...
  - Something that makes you sad...
  - Something you don’t like ...
  - If you had a wish what would you wish for?
- Stick the feathers on the bird
4. Simple Board Game

What resources do I need?
You need a piece of cardboard or paper (it can sometimes be useful to have a pre-prepared and laminated one for repeated use), dice and two counters.

What do I do?
The board should have squares around the outside like a ‘Monopoly’ board. There should be a “start” square and then each square should alternate with either “like” and “dislike” or “happy” and “sad”.
Show the board to the child and choose who is going to go first.
When a player lands on a square, they should give an example of something that they like or dislike or makes them feel happy or sad (depending on which version you are using). A more complex version can be devised with a greater range of emotions (with things that makes you angry, disappointed, embarrassed etc). It is important that you and the child play and give examples together. As the child gives examples, make sure you ask follow-up questions such as why, how and so on.

What am I looking for?
This is most useful as a relationship-building tool; however, think about whether it is easier for the child to give examples for one emotion over another (i.e. angry over happy). Compare the examples they give with what the majority of children might feel about them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>The best thing I have done</th>
<th>The furthest place I travelled</th>
<th>The happiest moment I had</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Something good that has happened</td>
<td>Something clever I did</td>
<td>Something exciting that happened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Something that frightened me</td>
<td>Something that I would have changed if I could</td>
<td>A dream I had</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A nice person I met</td>
<td>A new place I visited</td>
<td>Something fun I did with my mates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This exercise is for the young person and social worker to share information about what they have been doing since they last met.

The pile of cards should be placed face down on the table and answered alternately by the players. Other cards can be added.
A time when I was bored

The funniest thing I saw

Something I didn’t understand

Something I saw that I really wanted

Something that embarrassed me

Something I forgot to do

The saddest thing I saw

Something that annoyed me

Something that upset me

Something that made me cross

Something that made me panic

Something that worried me

Something I did that made me feel silly

Something that made me proud

Something that shocked me
Get to know me:

This is what I want to tell you about me:

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Important things that have happened to me.....

And how do I feel about them?
What I want to say....

About where I live:

About my family:

About school:
The Child Protection Conference (for children aged 10+ who may want to attend)

What I want to talk about at the meeting
(someone else can say these things for you)

Who I want to support me at the meeting

What I am happy with

What I would like to change

What I would like in the plan
My Future

What I would like for my future...

How I feel about my future?

worried
confused
happy
lonely
excited
angry
OK
giddy
fed up
pressured
My needs

What needs to remain the same?
What needs to change?

Where I live?

Keeping healthy?

My religion?

Who I see?

My activities?

Getting the best education?

Keeping me safe and secure?
Important people to me

Think of all the relationships that you have. Put the names of those closest to you in the inner circle, the names of the next closest people in the next circle, and so on until you have put down everyone that you want to.
The kind of person I am

Look at the following list and put a circle around the things that you agree with.

I'm bossy
I let people push me around
I lose my temper easily
I don't like people my own
I can't concentrate
I feel happy a lot
I like helping people
I like to be busy
I make people laugh
I have lots of friends

I'm noisy
I'm shy/nervous
I'm a good listener
I talk too much

I never finish anything
I lose my temper easily
I'm shy/nervous
I can't concentrate
I feel happy a lot
I like helping people
I like to be busy
I make people laugh
I have lots of friends

I'm friendly
I stick up for myself
I hate sharing things
I work hard
I am kind
I feel miserable a lot
I can't concentrate
I lose my temper easily
I don't like people my own
I can't concentrate
I feel happy a lot
I like helping people
I like to be busy
I make people laugh
I have lots of friends

I'm reliable
I'm clever
I hate sharing things
I work hard
I am kind
I feel miserable a lot
I can't concentrate
I lose my temper easily
I don't like people my own
I can't concentrate
I feel happy a lot
I like helping people
I like to be busy
I make people laugh
I have lots of friends

I'm a bully
I'm friendly
I stick up for myself
I work hard
I am kind
I feel miserable a lot
I can't concentrate
I lose my temper easily
I don't like people my own
I can't concentrate
I feel happy a lot
I like helping people
I like to be busy
I make people laugh
I have lots of friends

I'm noisy
I'm shy/nervous
I can't concentrate
I lose my temper easily
I don't like people my own
I can't concentrate
I feel happy a lot
I like helping people
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I make people laugh
I have lots of friends

I'm clever
I hate sharing things
I work hard
I am kind
I feel miserable a lot
I can't concentrate
I lose my temper easily
I don't like people my own
I can't concentrate
I feel happy a lot
I like helping people
I like to be busy
I make people laugh
I have lots of friends

I'm generous
I like meeting new people
I'm a good listener
I talk too much
I'd rather be by myself
I'm generous
I like meeting new people
I'm a good listener
I talk too much
I'd rather be by myself
I'm generous
I like meeting new people
I'm a good listener
I talk too much
I'd rather be by myself
I'm generous
This is how I see myself

(If 0 means you strongly disagree and 5 means you strongly agree... where are you on the scale?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generous</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funny</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noisy</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to talk to</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my own mind</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensible</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like myself</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get along with people</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is what I would change by waving my magic wand
This is where I would visit on my magic carpet:
A picture of my nicest day
What makes me angry, sad & happy?

I feel angry when...

I feel sad when...

I feel happiest when...
What makes me laugh?

1. 

2. 

3. 

Which makes me laugh most and why?

This is the funniest thing that has happened to me...