

Listening and Talking with Children and Young People

Workshop output

Following is the collated output from the workshop session of the *Listening and Talking with Children and Young People* forum. It has been edited to remove duplication and to improve clarity only.

a) List the techniques used in current practice to promote effective communication with children in care.

- Arrange outings.
- Drop in.
- Use mentors (paid and unpaid) for outings and social events.
- Arrange mentoring between peers.
- Help communicate feelings using techniques like play therapy, sand play or art therapy.
- Help communicate feelings using narrative techniques (emotion cards, sharing stories together)
- Use child leading technique (writing, drawing).
- Use the life domain tool.
- Use cultural tools and cultural consultants.
- Learn how you can get into the moment.
- Use a holistic approach.
- Develop child communication skills with organisation staff.
- Set up and use procedures and protocols to share information as needed.
- Use therapeutic work oriented around the family.
- Plan for a suitable physical environment and support person.
- Build a long term relationship to develop trust.
- Make use of group work and programs – leads to a variety of ways and topics.
- Be inclusive.
- Work within systems to promote the inclusion of the voice of young people.
- Take the opportunities presented by car conversations or walking which can work with teenagers and children. Although you may need to acknowledge that children with disabilities may find car travel frightening.
- Use the cone of silence, defined by children.
- Practice reflective listening and communication, working together on problem solving and repeat what they have said to confirm your understanding.
- Don't say you know how they feel (because you don't).
- Educate other professionals and advocate for the rights of children with them.
- Maintain regular communication to strengthen the relationship, for example by giving the child a phone call if you are not able to drop in.
- Keep appointments with children and at the appointment ensure that you give them your undivided attention.
- Focus on the child and not the behaviour.
- Use age appropriate processes such as connecting with the carer when working with younger children.
- Be at the child's level physically and verbally. Getting to the child's level physically can help at an emotional level.

- Remain open and honest always.
- Give children the opportunity to talk to the worker by themselves.
- Celebrate progress with, for example, an outing.
- Employ group work making use of peers.
- Do something fun. Use play, for example, kicking a football. Do fun things with the child one on one, based on what the child says they want to do.
- Limit the use of jargon and 'over the top' words. Be yourself and not someone else or who you think they want you to be.
- Open the communication on a level the young person can understand.
- Work in a child's identified environment, for example in a tree or in a car.
- Get the child to take the lead. For example, a young person can give a school tour to the counsellor or take the lead in the discussions.
- Allow and feel comfortable with silences and get the child to feel comfortable with silence.
- Invite and welcome young people with activities such as cooking which will enable connection.
- Use food. For example, cook meals with the young people, take the out for coffee or a milkshake – away from the office or usual environment.
- Use questionnaires sent out to young people in advance of their Annual Reviews.
- Conduct house meetings with the young people around any issues they want to bring to the table.

b) Be innovative and think outside the square and list what else we could or should be doing to communicate effectively with children in care.

- Support workers with high quality supervision and acknowledging emotional toll.
- Get people together in forums like this. Fund the release of other members of our teams.
- Get interdisciplinary teams together.
- Approach conversations to gain a shared understanding of working.
- Coordinate case management. Challenge services to examine policy and procedures to shift the culture to be truly child centred.
- Create a structured buddy system for families thereby building social capital.
- Resource innovation with time, money and skills.
- Build relationships with children – be authentic.
- Build NGO and Government relationships- share information.
- Be playful in communication with children and workers
 - Keeping in real.
 - Honouring silence.
 - Cultural silence and communication.
- Practice informing policy –
 - conscious use of language.
 - give young people and children a voice in organisations.
- Network responsively with other agencies
- Use a light and fun-filled approach. Remember what it was like to be a child and access your inner child. empathise.
- Make time to spend with children – prioritise.
- Children and young people are experts in their own lives – let them lead.
- Establish empowerment programmes for children and young people.
- Go to the client – outreach.

- Use electronic media such as email, text or messaging to maintain contacts.
- Use video or telephone conferencing for children in remote areas.
- Make sure teams are consistent in their approach.
- Maintain constant and regular communication with your client.
- Consult more with children around case direction and case planning.
- Strengthen relationships and communication with workers within agencies and collaborate more effectively.
- Ensure agency processes are transparent and working towards the same objectives.
- Respect and value individuality as all children come with different backgrounds.
- Be curious – show interest in the child themselves, not just what's happening.
- Give children permission to fidget and do other things whilst engaging in therapy.
- Do not be in a rush to get to the underlying issues.
- Don't be too strict during therapy - allow for play and tangents.
- Use car time, cooking, meals and outings for conversations.
- Develop diverse groups for and with young people – for example a young mum's group.
- Involve young people in case conferencing and decisions about their affairs.
- Use questionnaires.
- Make use of other young people to engage with young people – for example in camps, talking circles and campfires.

c) Identify how you will share the learning from today with others at your workplace.

- Take the ideas back to team meetings.
- Inform other team leaders so they can share with workers at meetings.
- Set up training for parents and carers on this topic.
- Photocopy and disseminate the articles received today.
- Publish the information in the staff newsletter.
- Disseminate information to students.
- Take the information back to the organisation to encourage consistency in communication and practice.
- Present the information to colleagues.
- Put it on the agenda at team meetings.
- Maintain the contacts made today with other interested parties.
- Use networks to forward information.
- Workshop the information from today in work teams.
- Inviting young people from the Office of the Guardian to be involved.
- Utilise the School Counsellor Network.
- Access counsellor chat lines to promote the ideas.
- Work with youth networks.
- Host a similar forum in the annual counsellor forum.