NSPCC

Keeping our Children Safe

Getting in touch with children’s needs

Module 1

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR
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Introductory session
Why are we doing this course?

Aim
• To introduce participants to each other and to explain the reasons for doing the sessions.

Objectives
• To know more about the participants and make them feel able to participate.
• To communicate the reason for running the sessions.
• To find out expectations and concerns.

Duration
60 minutes

Equipment
For this session you will need:
• Flipchart paper
• Marker pens
• Sticky tape

Method
• Large group work
• Input

Preparation
This first session is very important, as it sets the tone for later sessions. People will be able to get to know each other and learn about the purpose of the group, why they are there, the sessions you are going to run and the timescale. You will be able to agree with the group how you will all work together.

Ensure that you have selected the sessions from each of the three modules. You should ensure that members of the group are introduced to each other properly, even if they already know each other. The aim of this session is to make everyone feel comfortable when talking about looking after children, as they may not have talked about children in this way before.

Read through the session notes on the following page prior to the training, so that you know what you are going to do.

Write the following bullet points onto a piece of flipchart paper and display this during the session:
• listen to others
• speak one at a time
• ask each other questions if you don’t understand
• maintain confidentiality
• respect privacy
• address concerns about a child emerging during sessions
• check that language is commonly understood
• support each other.

It is also a good idea to write up and display a list of useful telephone numbers in the room, including contact details of relevant national and local organisations that might be of help to participants, such as the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000. If you like, you could also produce this list on paper and distribute it to the members of your group.
Session notes for facilitators

Welcoming participants
Welcome the participants and thank them for coming. Introduce yourself and briefly summarise your role in the project, your experience of working with children and families, and your interest in safeguarding children. Invite participants to share their name, including what it means or whether they had a “family name” or nickname as a child, and to say with which children they currently come into contact and why.

Allow 20 minutes for this part of the session

Setting the context
1. You should tell the participants why you are running the sessions.

Start by stating the overall aim of the sessions:
To provide an opportunity to talk about children’s care in our community, acknowledge and celebrate practices that promote wellbeing, identify practices that may cause harm and what action to take.
Module 1: Getting in touch with children's needs

2 Use the following notes as a guide to your introduction to the course:

A Make a positive statement about children's wellbeing by saying that the majority of people are aware that children and young people in general in our country are currently safe, secure and well looked after.

B You should say that this is also true of the majority of children from black and minority ethnic communities. Children are recognised for educational, social and cultural achievements. They are doing well in sports and the arts, and the majority enjoy good health.

C However, you should also say that children from black and minority ethnic communities continue to be overrepresented among children in need. These children come to the attention of the helping services for a number of reasons. They may be victims of racist bullying, accidents, abusive care, suicide, self-harm, abuse by strangers or crime, including internet crime.

D You should then explain that sometimes children come to the notice of support services because certain traditional childcare practices are harmful to their development. Explain that you will be running a programme of sessions over the next few hours/days/weeks to discuss the many ways children are looked after and to consider whether these are harmful or helpful to children's wellbeing.

E Say that you will begin by getting everyone in the group to look at what it was like when they were children and to what extent this has informed the way they think about and act towards children in their community.

F You will then consider together whether certain traditional practices are harmful or helpful to children.

G You will share what the law says about looking after children, what is regarded as child abuse in a cultural context and what steps the law allows to protect children.

H Finally, you will look at the roles and responsibilities of people involved in protecting children and sources of support for parents and carers.

Allow 15 minutes for this part of the session.
Then, invite members of the group to share any worries that they have about the sessions. List these on a flipchart as they are called out.

People may share concerns about what will happen to any worrying information they share, who may be informed, and the length and timing of sessions.

Say you will be addressing all these things when you consider the framework for working together later.

*Allow 10 minutes for this part of the session*

Introduce the working agreement using the notes on the following page.

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**EMOTIONAL ALERT**

Begin by explaining that the topics you will be discussing in these sessions can be very sensitive and can bring out strong feelings. Talking about children’s care arrangements and experiences of harm can trigger childhood memories, which may not be positive for some people. For this reason, you should ensure that everyone feels able to take part in the exercises and the discussions that follow.
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Working agreement

Go through the working agreement on the flipchart, referring to the notes under each heading, and invite the group to comment, question and/or agree each point.

- Listen to others – everyone should listen when another person is speaking and everybody should get a chance to speak and contribute.
- Speak one at a time – when one person is speaking, no one should try to speak over them or cut them off. Wait until that person has finished before responding. If an interpreter is helping with communication, wait for everyone to understand what has been said.
- Ask questions if you don’t understand – everyone should make sure they understand what someone is trying to say. Rather than make assumptions or jump to conclusions, they should ask questions to clarify their understanding before responding.
- Maintain confidentiality – everyone should keep any personal information shared during the training confidential and not tell others who are not in the room on the day. This is particularly important when participants may be connected through others outside the group.
- Respect privacy – some people will be uncomfortable talking about personal experiences. Respect each other’s privacy and do not probe for details or push for more information. Ensure that everyone feels comfortable to participate without needing to disclose personal information.
- Address concerns about a child emerging during sessions – if anyone expresses a concern about a child or young person, you should make sure that help is sought for that child. This may be via the NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000 or by contacting children’s social care. If your organisation has a safeguarding policy, ensure that you are familiar with it and tell the group that you will need to follow procedures if information suggests possible harm to a child. Ensure the group is aware of your list of national and local organisations able to offer help.
- Check that language is commonly understood – someone may say something where the meaning is not clear, particularly if there are language differences. To ensure everyone in the group has a common understanding, they should check or question the meaning of anything that is unclear to them before responding. It is OK to ask questions about anything.
- Support each other – keeping to this working agreement will allow everyone to participate. Members of the group can offer each other support by listening carefully, sharing knowledge and recognising that everyone has different opinions, experiences and lifestyles.

Place the working agreement where everyone can see it. Put it up every time you run a session and always begin by reminding people of what has been agreed.

Allow 15 minutes for this part of the session

You are now ready to begin your first session.
Session 1.1

Aim
• To enable participants to get in touch with the way they were looked after as children and understand how this has influenced their current views about childcare.

Objective
• To describe personal experiences of being children and the impact of these experiences on their current thinking.

Duration
70 minutes

Equipment
• Flipchart paper
• Pens

Methods
• Individual
• Large group

Preparation
Read through the session notes on the following page prior to the training, so that you know what you are going to do.

This session is about facilitating your group to think about what it was like when they were growing up. Be mindful that this session may trigger painful memories for some people, so warn them about this at the start of the activity. If you notice anyone getting upset or if someone tells you about a difficult experience, follow the guidance in the working agreement under Emotional Alert.

Flipchart preparation
Write the following questions onto the flipchart prior to the session.

My childhood
• What did I enjoy the most?
• How did I get into trouble?
• What was expected of me?
• What did I dislike the most?
• What was helpful or unhelpful?
• What would I repeat with my children?

Note: The group may ask what you mean by ‘childhood’. Different cultures have different definitions of the age of a child. Advise that in the UK a child is someone 0-18 years.
As soon as everyone who wants to share has had an opportunity to do so, invite everyone back to the whole group and use the following questions to facilitate a discussion:

• What is the meaning of childhood?
• Is childhood different now?
• Has it changed in the participants’ countries of origin, in the UK or overseas?
• Are any childcare practices today similar to those experienced by participants as children?
• Is the environment in which children grow up different today?
• How do we treat our children today?

When facilitating the discussion, look out for attitudes and practices that have remained the same over time. Highlight those that are helpful to children’s development and note those that may not be. Explain that you will be looking more closely at this in later sessions.

Allow 30 minutes for discussion and closing the exercise

Finish the session by considering the key learning points below.

Key learning points

• The way we were looked after as children informs the way we will look after our own children.
• We may carry on practices that felt good when we were children.
• We may also continue practices that may be harmful for children’s development because we believe that is the way it has always been done or that “it didn’t do me any harm”.

This exercise has been adapted from Keeping Children Safe – a Toolkit for Child Protection, produced by the Keeping Children Safe Coalition.
Session 1.2

Aim
• To enable participants to think about children in their community, how they see them, and what they expect of children.

Objectives
• To identify how children are perceived in the community.
• To describe how what we think of children affects how we look after them.

Duration
60 minutes

Equipment
• Flipchart paper – enough for three pieces for each small group
• Pens
• Sticky tape or removable adhesive

Methods
• Individual work
• Large group discussion

Preparation
Read through the session notes on the following page prior to the training, so that you know what you are going to do.

Write the following headings onto pieces of flipchart paper (one heading per sheet) and give a set of three to each small group:
• words that are used to describe children in my community
• key stages in a child’s life that we celebrate
• how my community expects children to behave.
Session notes for facilitators

1. Introduce this exercise by saying that you are going to spend some time with the group thinking about how children are seen in the community.

If members come from different ethnic and cultural groups, explain that every culture is different in the way it views its children and young people.

This session is designed to get individuals to consider how the way in which children are seen in a community impacts on the way in which they are treated. It also reminds individuals that there are cultures within cultures and not everyone within a particular culture thinks the same way. Tell the group that you will look at this more closely with them in later sessions.

2. Divide everyone into three smaller groups, giving each group a set of flipchart sheets with headings written on them—see preparation.

3. Invite each group to agree their top five answers under each heading and to record them on the flipchart paper.

Allow 30 minutes for this

4. Once all the groups have finished, stick their flipchart sheets onto the wall or lay them on the floor or on a table where everyone can see them. Facilitate a short discussion using the following questions:

• What do you notice about the words that are used to describe children?
• What do they say about how the community views children?
• Do the words differ for girls and boys?
• How might the way we think about children affect the way we care for them?

Allow 30 minutes for this

5. Finish the session by considering the key learning points below.

Key learning points
• The way we view children in our community affects the way we look after their welfare.
• This influences our thoughts and feelings about childcare practices and whether people should change how they treat children.

This exercise has been adapted from Keeping Children Safe – a Toolkit for Child Protection, produced by the Keeping Children Safe Coalition.
Session 1.3

Aim
• To explore changing childcare practices through different generations

Objective
• To find out how childcare practices have changed in your group’s community

Duration
45 minutes

Equipment
• Flipchart paper
• Marker pens

Method
• Word storm
• Working in pairs

Preparation
Read through the session notes on the following page prior to the training, so that you know what you are going to do.

Write the following questions in a grid on a piece of flipchart paper as shown below, leaving plenty of room to make notes under each question during the session:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did our parents/elders look after us as children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do we look after children?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do children expect today?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session notes for facilitators

1. Introduce this session by saying that you are going to consider with the group whether the way children are looked after has changed through the generations. Explain that you are going to do this by considering childcare from three generational perspectives:
   - Our grandparents/elders.
   - As parents/carers/adults ourselves today.
   - Our children today.

Display the grid that you have prepared on the flipchart. Ask participants to consider the questions and to respond to each question in turn.

As you facilitate input for each section, invite the group to state any differences in treatment for girls, boys and disabled children.

Allow 20 minutes for this

2. Once you have responses to all three questions, invite participants to work with a partner. Ask them to identify three things that they do with their children that are the same as they experienced as children and three that are different today. Get them to consider whether their actions have changed because of their children’s expectations or if there are other reasons. They can either look at the work that was done on the flipchart or share their own views.

Allow 10 minutes for this

3. Invite each pair to feed back one thing that is similar and one that is different. List these in two columns on the flipchart as they are called out. As people call out, watch out for things that are similar today as they were before and, once everyone has contributed, invite them to feedback briefly on what keeps these going.

Allow 15 minutes for this

4. Finish the session by reviewing the key learning points below.

Key learning points

- Childcare practices are bound to change from one generation to the next, but some practices remain the same. These can be positive as well as negative to children’s wellbeing.

- How children are treated is influenced by many factors, including ideas informed by culture, tradition, experience and education about what is best for children.

This exercise has been adapted from Keeping Children Safe – a Toolkit for Child Protection, produced by the Keeping Children Safe Coalition.
Session 1.4
Connecting to children’s needs

Aim
• To connect with children’s needs through thinking about all the opportunities they have to take part in activities, their capacity to recover from difficulties, what makes children a target of harm and what helps in keeping them safe.

Objectives
• To describe what children need to reach their maximum development potential.
• To identify factors that promote children’s ability to manage difficult experiences.
• To state things about the child and the environment that can lead to harm.
• To describe factors that keep children safe from harm.

Duration
60 minutes

Equipment
• Flipchart paper
• Collection of drawing materials, such as pens, crayons, and so on

Methods
• Small group work
• Large group discussion
• Input

Preparation
Read through the session notes on the following page prior to the training, so that you know what you are going to do. There are two options for this activity.

Option one
Write the following headings onto four separate pieces of flipchart paper (one heading per sheet and one sheet for each small group):
• Opportunity
• Vulnerability
• Resilience
• Protection
To help you to explain these concepts during the training and what each involves, you may find it useful to make notes on the flipchart or paper.
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Introduce the session by saying that you are going to spend some time with the group looking at four areas that impact on children’s development and survival:

• **Opportunity** – the chances and choices a child may have to learn about, experience and do the things that can help with their development.

• **Vulnerability** – all the things about the child and/or the place in which they live that would make them more likely to be harmed.

• **Resilience** – all the things that make a child able to cope, even though they have had difficult experiences.

• **Protection** – all the ways in which a child could be kept safe from harm.

These four areas will need careful explanation. Spend enough time to do this carefully. People are likely to be aware that all these aspects are important for their children’s growth and development, but have never seen them put in these four categories before.

Explain more fully what each concept means:

• **Opportunity** – all the experiences that a child can have that will help to promote their healthy physical, emotional and psychological development; in other words, identifying all the conditions in which a child can grow, develop and thrive. An example would be regular health checks (either by the health visitor or doctor), going to school, living in a caring family environment, engaging in activities that make the child feel good about themselves including online activities, and so on.

• **Vulnerability** – all the things within the child and in the environment that can lead to someone harming or taking advantage of them. A good way to explain this would be to get the group to consider what would make a child the target of abuse. Examples include things that are external or “outside” the child (such as domestic violence, poverty, risks associated with the online world or something which is happening in the environment in which the child is living like gang crime or drug dealing) or something “inside” the child (such as having a disability or poor feelings about themselves, being a refugee, not speaking English or looking different).

• **Resilience** – this is the capacity to bounce back or survive despite having difficult experiences. There is something in the child that allows them to make sense of what is happening to them, which in turn allows them to continue with their emotional, physical and psychological development. Explain to the group that a child with resilience has inner strength or capacity to develop this. An example would be a child who knows how to overcome difficulties, or a child who feels sure about the love of a parent or someone else important to them, has someone to speak to, is listened to and has good friends.

• **Protection** – these are all the ways in which we can provide protection for children who might be at risk of harm, specifically abuse. For example, sources of protection can be the child themselves, people or places. They can include protection from risks linked to the digital world. An example would be an alert community and/or educating children about sources of harm and sources of support.

Allow about 15 minutes for this explanation

You will help the group by writing your explanations onto the flipchart and displaying them while doing the exercise.
Divide everyone into four small groups. Give each group some drawing materials and a piece of flipchart paper with one of the four headings written at the top, ensuring each group is working on a different area. Ask each group to identify things against each heading:
- Opportunities – draw what children need to promote their development.
- Resilience – draw what helps children continue to cope and continue to develop in the face of difficult experiences.
- Vulnerability – draw what makes children targets of abuse.
- Protection – draw what provides protection from abuse.

Some participants may become anxious about drawing. Explain that you are not looking at their ability to draw, but giving them an opportunity to use material usually used by children and allowing them to communicate using a different medium. If people resist, use option two.

Allow 25 minutes for this

Ask each of the four groups to share their work and invite the others to add, comment or question the group that is presenting. Once the sharing is completed, invite everyone to think about things that affect children’s vulnerability and protection. Facilitate discussion by using the following questions:
- What things affecting vulnerability have you noticed in your community?
- How can you be alert to harmful practices?

Draw the session to a close by saying that you will look more closely in later sessions at what constitutes harm to children and what gets in the way of doing the right thing. Finish the session by considering the key learning points on the following page.

Allow 20 minutes for this
Option two

Explain the concepts using the notes above and display the explanation around the room in the same way. Break into small groups giving each small group a pre-prepared flipchart with a grid as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Vulnerability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resilience</th>
<th>Protection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ask each group to choose someone who likes to draw. Invite the others to facilitate the drawing by giving examples for each of the four concepts. Follow the same timing and feedback process as option one.

Key learning points

- All children, regardless of their background, need age-appropriate opportunities to grow and develop to their maximum. These include education (both in school and in their community), access to health services, leisure, play, and appropriate care and attention from their caregivers. These days they also include access to the online world at a level appropriate to their age and development.

- Some children are more vulnerable to inappropriate care and abuse. Examples of things affecting vulnerability include age (younger children may be more vulnerable), disability, parental problems like mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, poverty and closed communities, where traditional practices that are harmful continue without challenge.

- Some children continue to grow and develop despite having difficult experiences. For example, knowing that they are loved by the people who care for them, feeling happy with who they are, achieving or being successful at things all help children to develop the strengths to survive and manage life experiences.

- All children need to be safeguarded from harm. Keeping children safe is everyone’s responsibility. This can only happen if everyone remains alert to whether children are being harmed and shares their concerns so that the harm can be prevented.
Session 1.5

**Aim**
- To identify the range of things children should be doing at different ages and stages of development.

**Objectives**
- To describe key stages in a child’s growth within a cultural context.
- To identify how these might differ for disabled children.

**Duration**
65 minutes

**Equipment**
- Flipchart paper
- Pens

**Method**
- Small and large group work

**Preparation**
Read through the session notes on the following page prior to the training, so that you know what you are going to do. Prepare three pieces of flipchart paper, each with a different heading as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Need from Carers</th>
<th>Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>0–5 years</strong></td>
<td>What do children need from carers?</td>
<td>What should they be doing at this age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6–12 years</strong></td>
<td>What do children need from carers?</td>
<td>What should they be doing at this age?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12–18 years</strong></td>
<td>What do children need from carers?</td>
<td>What should they be doing at this age?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Session notes for facilitators

1. Introduce this session by saying that you are going to spend some time with the group thinking about what children need at different ages and stages of their growth. Although every child is unique and will develop at their own pace, they should broadly achieve certain things at certain ages.

2. Divide everyone into three small groups. Give each group one of the three sheets of flipchart paper on which you have written the age bands at the top:
   - 0–5 years
   - 6–11 years
   - 12–18 years

What do children need?
Ask each group to write under this column heading what children need from their carers to do what they would be expected to do at this age and to continue their growth.

What should they be doing at this age? Ask each group to list under this column heading all the things that a carer would see or hear a child doing at that age.

As the age bands are quite wide, ask people to start by listing behaviours that begin at the lower age of the band allocated to them.

Ask the groups also to identify differences and similarities for disabled children

Allow 20 minutes for this

3. Invite volunteers to share their group’s work.

4. As facilitator, look out for attitudes towards disabled children’s needs. Do you notice over-protection or neglect?

Allow 20 minutes for this

5. Finish the session by considering the key learning points below.

   In general, what do children need?
   - All children need carers who put their needs first.
   - All children need love and attention so they feel secure and stable.
   - Not achieving their maximum growth can leave children vulnerable to abuse and people taking advantage of them.
   - Although children can be abused at any age, they are more vulnerable to abuse at certain stages of development:
     - **Infancy** because babies cannot communicate their needs.
     - **Toddler stage** because it’s a testing time for parents.
     - **Adolescence** because children push the boundaries, which leads to conflict.

Key learning points
Together we can help children who’ve been abused to rebuild their lives. Together we can protect children at risk. And, together, we can find the best ways of preventing child abuse from ever happening.

We change the law. We visit schools across the country, helping children understand what abuse is. And, through our Childline service, we give young people a voice when no one else will listen.

But all this is only possible with your support. Every pound you raise, every petition you sign, every minute of your time, will help make sure we can fight for every childhood.

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