

Participation in child and family social work with children:

FACILITATOR GUIDANCE

The purpose of this case study is to consider the learning from the online material and to put that into practice in a planned and thoughtful way. This activity needs careful and considered planning, and for social workers to engage with creative thinking and imagination. It also requires a commitment to meaningful engagement with the children that we work with.

For this group task, social workers are encouraged to use items often found within their homes.

These can include (but are not limited to):

- **Arts and crafts materials**
- **Different sizes of paper**
- **Old magazines / leaflets**
- **Scissors / glue / sellotape**
- **Books**
- **Children's DVDs**
- **Board Games**
- **Cameras - smartphone / digital / polaroid**
- **Printers and printing materials**
- **Playing Cards**
- **Digital apps (e.g. Minecraft, Spotify)**
- **Children!**
- **Clothing – children's / jumble / rags**



TASK ONE

You are planning to visit a 10-year-old child, Charlie, who you have never met before. You are their newly allocated social worker. Due to an incident of severe domestic violence, Charlie's father has temporarily moved out of the family home whilst further assessments take place. Charlie remains at home with their mother and is the subject of a child protection plan. Not having had a social worker previously, Charlie is unaware of processes and procedures.

Drawing on Charlie's likes and interests, their preferred method of communication, and moving beyond template-based worksheets, develop a unique and individualised resource / activity to address the following:

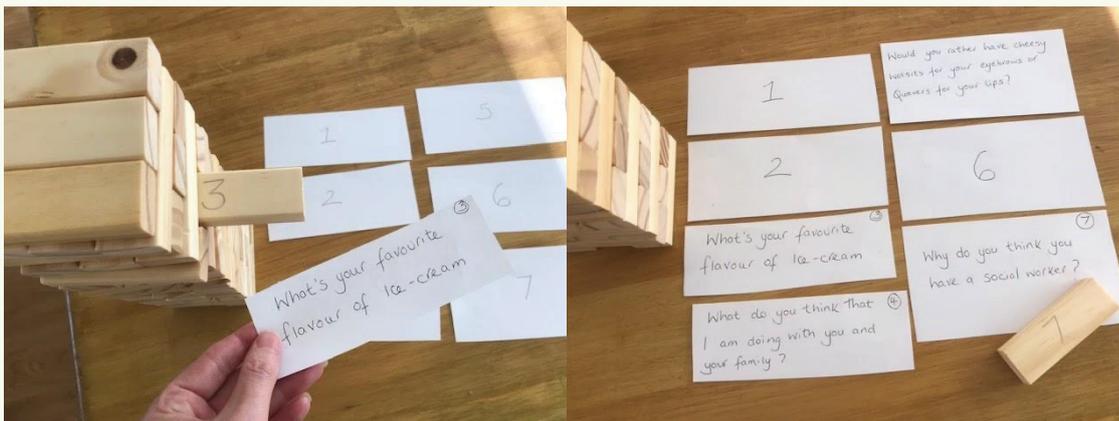
- **Who you are, what your role is and why you are visiting**
- **How Charlie can contact you, if they want or need to, outside of your visits**
- **Charlie's wishes and feelings regarding the actions taken and the services provided (s.53 Children Act, 2004)**
- **Your response to Charlie's wishes and feelings**

FACILITATOR NOTES

The child has not been given a gender, allowing the team to choose an identity for Charlie and consider the things / activities / objects that a ten-year-old child may enjoy. Social workers must initially take time to create Charlie and bring them to life, before being able to consider how Charlie may want to communicate with them. The social workers will need no longer than 10 minutes to 'create' Charlie.

As Charlie is fictitious, the team cannot co-produce resources with Charlie. However, they can certainly give much thought to what type of communication may appeal to Charlie that does not rely on verbal exchange. This can include doodling, collages, role play, photography, use of maps and community connections, sporting interests, music, poetry, voice notes, podcasts – the list is endless.

Each social worker may have their own ideas regarding the development of a bespoke, unique resource for Charlie. Consider how these ideas could be used with other children by removing the individualised aspects and replacing them with another child's unique details. An example of this is the Jenga 'getting to know you' game, where questions and responses are tailored to the child, their needs, their circumstances and the purpose of the visit.



(Example taken from Dillon, Evans and Kippen's (2022) forthcoming practice tool for Research in Practice)

As the facilitator, you should encourage the social workers to each present their ideas for resources / activities to be co-produced with Jamie. Peers can then give feedback on how to develop the idea further and make it even more participatory.

DISCUSSION POINTS COULD BE:

Asking social workers how they feel about being responsive to a child's telephone calls / requests to meet. Consider the parents' point of view – the worry they may feel as someone who should work in partnership with social workers, yet who is also the subject of child protection allegations. How powerful is the child and their view, in this regard?

How many of the team routinely leave their contact details with children? And in what manner / form? How can this be developed into a co-produced activity with children instead of a 'handing over of information'?

Here is an example below, which again features in the Dillon, Evans and Kippen (2022) forthcoming practice tool for Research in Practice. Whilst I have previously used Polaroid cameras with social workers in my Stockport project, this was created using a mini iPhone printer. It gives instant access to art and creativity.

Whilst this may seem no different to the social worker leaving a business card, the responsibility for taking the photo is passed to the child. The child can choose the pose, the facial expression or instead choose to draw a likeness of the worker. The finished product will be unique to that child. Do your social workers have access to something similar?

How can we alleviate worry around social work intervention? When thinking about a creative / individualised way of explaining yourself, your role and your reasons for being involved, consider making 'something' with Charlie that can remain with them. This resource could be further developed in between visits, with Charlie adding comments or questions that are important to them when you are not there.

Consider the shift away from wishes and feelings being something we do once, as a tick-box exercise. If we, as adults, have the right to redress and reflection (and the ability to change our opinions about things) then so do children. How can we gather wishes and feelings in between our social work statutory visits? With research telling us that the gathering of wishes and feelings often takes place in a pre-conference flurry, how can we ensure that wishes and feelings are revisited and responded to throughout our involvement with Charlie? After all, a good / bad day with friends at school, a good night's sleep or a visit to their father may affect Charlie's wishes and feelings from one day to the next. How can we keep checking back with the child?

What tools and resources are already available to social workers in order to be creative with children? Are social workers aware of these? Is it already known, for example, that they can use the camera on their work smartphone to take a photo of any resource / activity that they are doing with the child, instead of taking the resource away to 'scan into case records'? If a social worker approached you for a small amount of money for resource creation, would this be available?

The session can be closed using the following questions:

- **What have you learned from both the teaching and the activity?**
- **What 'small tweaks' can be made to your practice moving forward to encourage and embed participation?**
- **How can your team and your manager support you in making these practice changes?**

Please use these reflections as evidence of your engagement with CPD activity for your Social Work England online portfolio.



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