

# Unlocking Children's Rights

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## Module 3: Communication Skills

This project is co-funded by the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme of the European Union



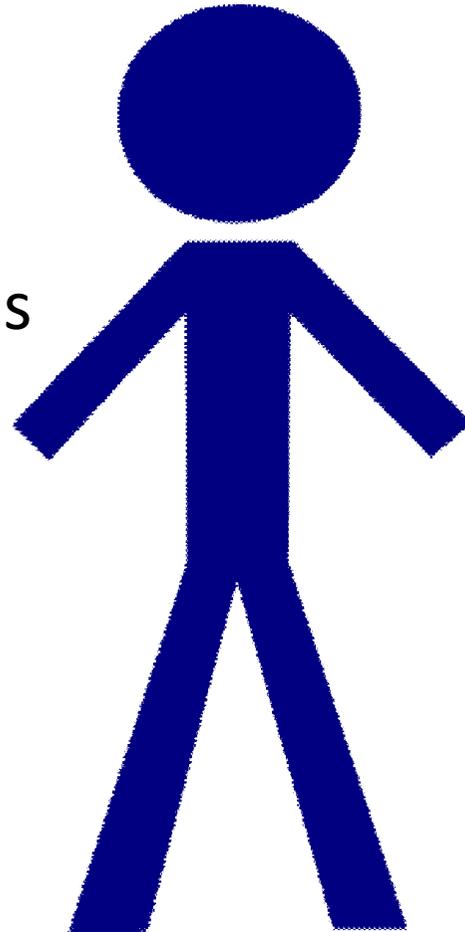
Additional funding has been provided by the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust

# What are the benefits of positive communication?

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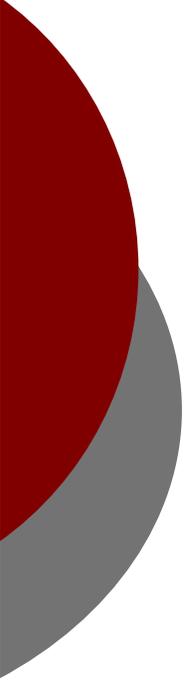
## Child

- Empowering
- Better outcomes and a right/better result
- Mutual respect



## Professional

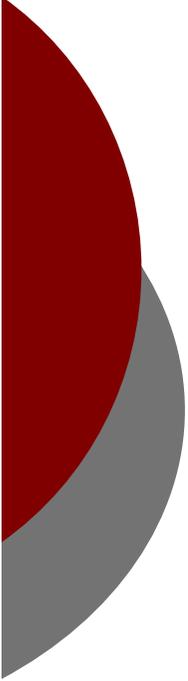
- Better outcomes and a right/better result
- Encourages positive relationship
- Mutual respect



## Why should professionals communicate with children?

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- The right of the child to be heard/ to participate (in international and domestic law)
- Leads to better outcomes (justice/ truth)
- Part of the professional role



# When should professionals communicate with children?

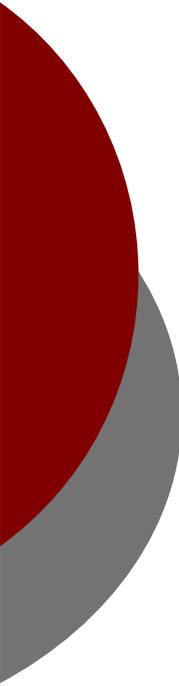
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- When do children normally get the opportunity to speak in your professional context?
- If you were a child, would you want to speak at other times?
- What opportunities should be provided?

# Circles of influence

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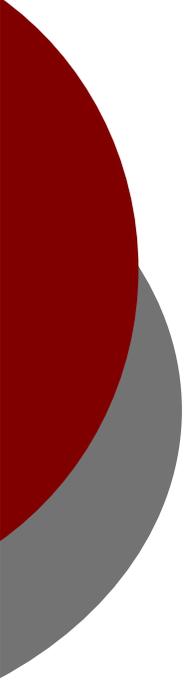




# Where should communication take place?

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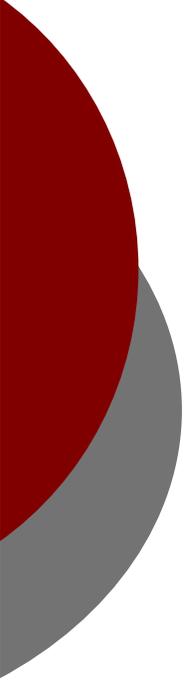
- What makes a communication environment friendly to children?
  - Safe
  - Clean
  - Ventilated
- What makes a communication environment unfriendly for children?
  - Drab and dank
  - Dirty
  - Public



# What should professionals **do** with the information provided?

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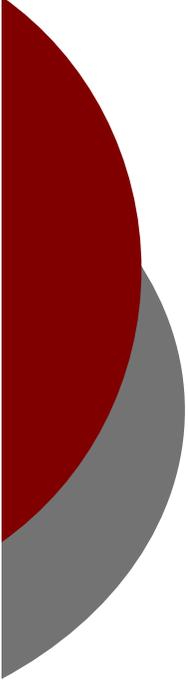
- Legal obligations/ responsibilities to disclose?
- Can confidentiality be offered?
- Is the communication public?
- Is the age of consent relevant?



# Obstacles and challenges to communication

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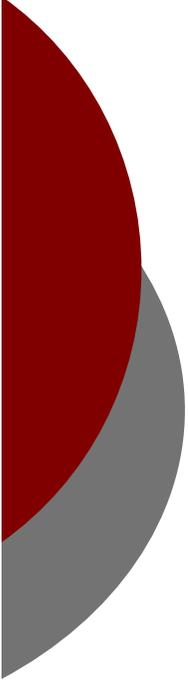
- Language barriers
- Fear, anxiety or mistrust by the child
- Lack of confidence by professional and child
- Individual differences in communication
- Environmental factors
- Others?



# How to overcome communication obstacles

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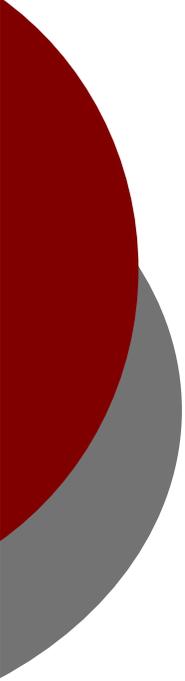
- Planning
- Preparation
- Alternative communication techniques
- Building confidence
- Practice



# Making communication more child-friendly: Dos and Don'ts

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1. Which of these tips are most important to the children you work with and why?
2. Which of these tips do you use most at the moment? Is it effective? Why?
3. Which of these tips do you now use? Why?
4. Which tips are best/worst for older children, younger children, children with disabilities, or children with special needs?
5. Do you have any additions?

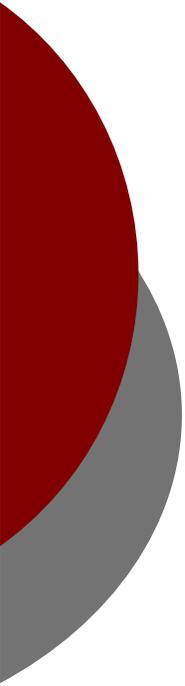


# Children displaying challenging behaviours

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1. What happens to us when we are faced with the behaviour?
  2. Why do you think we respond or react in this way?
  3. What steps can we take to facilitate the communication?
- \* Think about what you have learnt in the course so far!

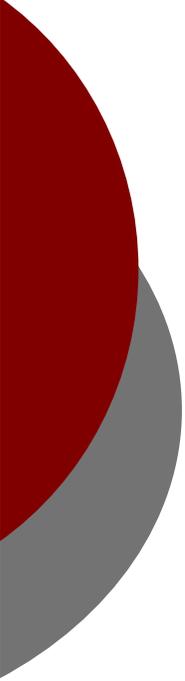




# What happens to us? How do we feel?

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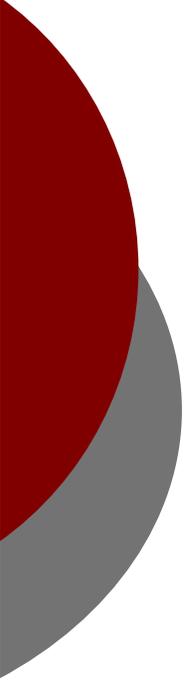
- Frustrated
- Despairing
- Feel less committed/ care less
- Annoyed
- Under pressure/ anxious
- Incompetent or useless
- Angry
- Scared
- Give up
- Feel uncomfortable



# Why do we react/respond in this way?

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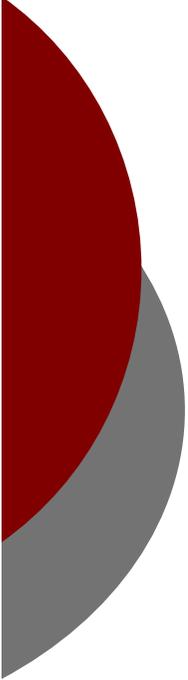
- We want to help
- They won't respond how we want or need them to
- We have to do the work for our job
- We want to 'get through' to them
- They won't listen
- Felt disrespected or underappreciated
- Felt threatened/ scared



## Immediate steps you may take

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- Remaining calm (breathe!)
- Time out/ break
- Drink and/or food
- Calm tone of voice
- Open body language
- Keep good emotional/physical boundaries
- Be clear about the facts
- Other?

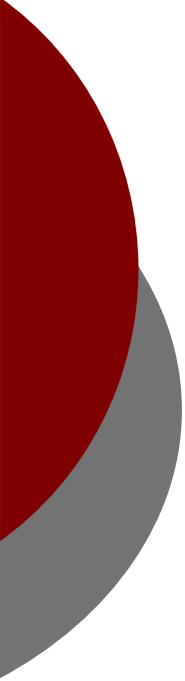


# Are there any obstacles to the communication?

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## **Consider:**

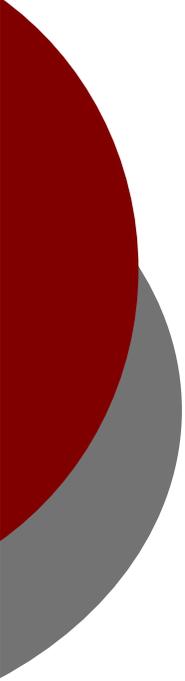
- Environment/ location
- Presence of relevant support persons
- Body language
- Language, tone and approach
- Using aids or props to facilitate communication
- Provision of information
- Developmental factors specific to the child that may be affecting his/her behaviour or communication?
- Whether to make a child protection referral
- Other?



# Communicating with adolescent children and young people

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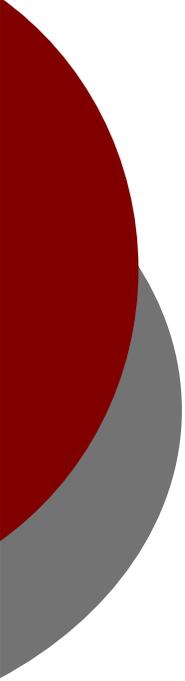
- Key phrases
  - Be respectful
  - Don't be patronising
  - Don't treat us all the same
  - Listen
  - Get to know me
  - Don't assume you know me



# Alternative communication methods

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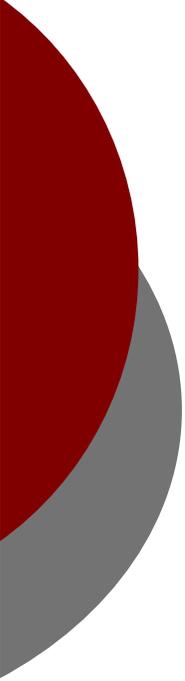
- Interpreters/ Facilitators
- Signs and Symbols
  - Makaton signs and symbols (internationally recognised hand signs) <https://www.makaton.org/>
- Picture Communication Systems
  - <http://www.pecs-unitedkingdom.com/>
- Creative communication tool-kits



# Using objects to represent people

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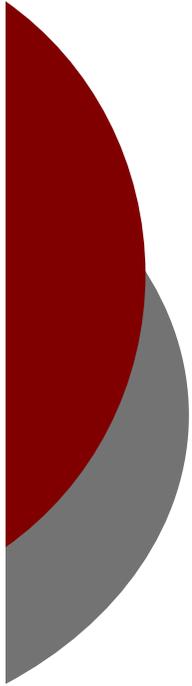
- Children can be asked to choose toys, buttons or stones to represent themselves, family members, pets, professionals etc.
- The child could be asked to use these objects to:
  - Show who is important to them (using distances between the objects);
  - Re-enact past or current events etc.



## Creative play

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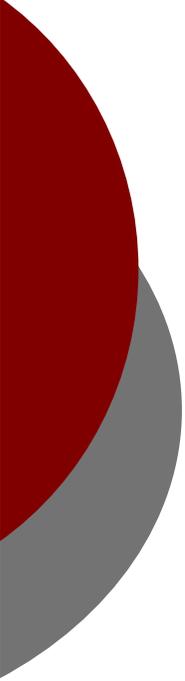
- Communication through play materials to describe things the child cannot or does not want to express verbally
- Children can draw family and school pictures, make models, make feelings masks etc.



## Using a play object

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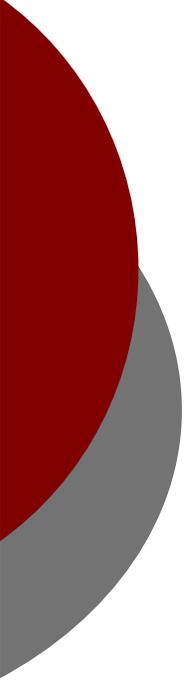
- Can be used to talk to a small child about what they think or feel (e.g. puppet or small toy)
- Can be used to help distract a child and make the child feel at ease



# Stories, rhymes and poems

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- Children can create their own stories
  - E.g. What do you want your new foster carer to know about you?
- Children can write poems/rhymes about their feelings
- Story books on specific subjects can be useful when explaining difficult concepts (e.g. death; adoption etc.)



# Visual aids and IT

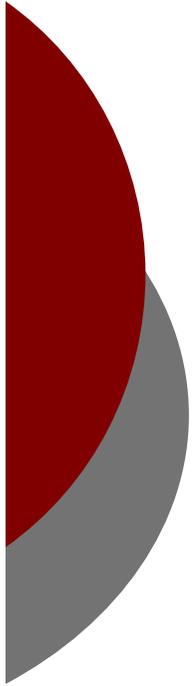
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- Visual aids to express feelings
  - E.g. cards with pictures of home, school, special events
  - Images of happy, sad, angry faces etc. to express feelings
- Use of tablets and computers to present own information to professionals about issues affecting them

# Circles of influence

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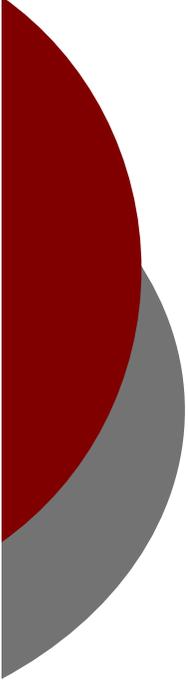




## Toolkit materials

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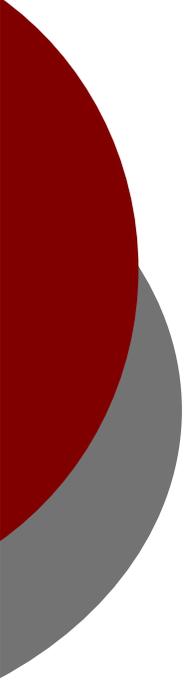
- Toys (e.g. dolls and small figures; dolls house furniture; puppets)
- Buttons and stones (various sizes, shapes and colours)
- Paper, drawing books
- Pens, pencils, crayons and other stationary
- Stickers (e.g. gold stars)
- Certificates
- Books on related issues
- Poems and rhymes
- Computer, Laptop, tablet, smart phone



# Planning for communication case study

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Age	10	14	17	12
Background	Lives with mother; father abandoned many years ago	Lives with two fathers	Homeless	Lives in care
Reason for communication	Child is accused of an offence	Child is alleging an offence	Child is unaccompanied migrant	Working out where the child should live
Additional factors	Deaf	Does not speak national/ official language as a first language	Physical disabilities	Behavioural disabilities



# Planning for communication exercise

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- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Who?
- How?