

Audience Groups 1-6 (Working Together 2010)

Methods Pairs, small groups and large group discussion

Preparation

As an alternative to asking participants to consider children that they know, you could make use of the family case studies as the basis for consideration of community issues. Ensure that there are sufficient copies of the handout on aspects of the community for participants.

Links to Common Core

Common Core 2 Child and young person development (knowledge: understand context). Know and recognise the child or young person's position in a family or caring network, as well as a wider social context, and appreciate the diversity of these networks.

Childhood Neglect: Improving Outcomes for Children

Learning Outcomes

To assess family and environmental factors that may affect a child and parenting capacity.

Process

Ask participants to work in pairs and to think about neglected children they know and discuss the following:

- what do they know about the children's experience of community, and how this might assist or hinder their development
- whether they think that assessment to date has adequately captured an understanding of the child's level of integration within their community
- note what additional information it would be helpful to have.

Merge pairs to form small groups and provide them with copies of the Table: Aspects of Community, which accompanies this exercise. This sets out aspects of communities and identifies issues for parents and for children. Ask them to:

- consider ways in which this assessment shows how integrated the child and family are within the community
- identify which agencies, disciplines and practitioners could assist with improving understanding of the impact of how the family's integration in their community impacts on the child's development and the parents' capacity
- discuss ways in which plans can incorporate attention to strengthening the community's contribution to a child's development.

Continued ↘

Time

Total : 1 hour

Pairs 15 minutes

Small groups 30 minutes

Plenary 15 minutes

Assessing the child
in their community

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Process Continued ↘

The plenary could cover a wide range of issues because the experiences of individual children can be quite different. For example, some neglected children may spend a lot of unsupervised time out in their local community, others may have very little external contact. Some may face bullying and danger in their community, others may gather with peer groups that provide protection.

Increasingly children inhabit 'virtual' communities through social media, but neglected children may have less access to the technology and lack the skills to access virtual networks. This may fuel feelings of isolation from the peer community. Schools are also communities and neglected children frequently have patchy attendance and poor social integration within schools.

All these situations can pose challenges to healthy development and a sense of wellbeing. Assessment, therefore, must pay attention to aspects of social integration within the community. Information can be gathered by visiting the child's local community with them, asking them to take pictures on their phones, observing them in various settings, speaking to family, extended family, community learning and development workers, youth workers, community police officer, housing officers and youth groups and many other ways. The key point is to ensure that participants are convinced of the benefits of understanding the community in which a child and their family live and how it is having an impact on their issues.