

**Audience** Groups 2-6 (Working Together 2010)

**Methods** Small group activity and large group discussion

### Preparation

You may want to ask participants to write their key messages on a flip chart. Given that scenarios are provided from the case study families you may find it helpful to play a selection of the audios of the children's stories as a reminder to keep children at the centre by hearing their voices.

### Links to Common Core

**Common Core 5** Multi-agency working (skills: communication and teamwork). Work in a team context, forging and sustaining relationships across agencies and respecting the contribution of others working with children, young people and families.

**Common Core 5** Multi-agency working (skills: assertiveness). Be proactive, initiate necessary action and be able and prepared to put forward your own judgments.

## Childhood Neglect: Improving Outcomes for Children

### Learning Outcomes

To meet a child's developmental needs and support strengths.

### Process

The aim of this exercise is to encourage participants to consider ways in which they can keep a focus on the child over a period of intervention.

Split the participants into groups of 4-6.

Ask the groups to consider families where there has been active involvement as a result of child neglect for at least six months and discuss the following questions. Scenarios are also provided, based upon the case study families, as a prompt to discussion.

1. Identify and list the range of ways in which you can ensure that each child in the family is kept at the centre of your attention.
2. Consider the formal processes such as supervision, reviews and core group meetings.
3. Consider, also, the nature of your contact with each child and their parents and the nature of the intervention.
4. Note how you monitor the short and longer term outcomes for each child in the family.

Continued ↘

### Time

Total : 45 minutes

Small group discussion 30 mins

Large group feedback 15 mins

**Keeping the child  
at the centre**

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## **Process** Continued ▾

Bring the groups together to identify key messages.

In discussion it is helpful to consider that after some months of intervention the focus can often move towards the needs of the parents, especially if there are a series of crises and events in the parents' lives that demand attention. It is also possible to make assumptions that the support and monitoring being provided for parents is having a positive effect on the child or children's lives – this is a dangerous assumption. Although the formal review process should ensure a focus on the child, it is important, also, for all the practitioners involved with the family to ensure that they keep reflecting on whether their intervention is making a positive enough difference to the child or children's lives. It can be re-iterated that:

- children need interventions which enhance secure base, self-esteem and self-efficacy
- children need caregivers who can help them understand and control their feelings effectively
- there is a risk that parents can repeat their own experiences of neglectful care, but that having the opportunity to reflect upon the impact of their experiences can help break the cycle.

Some suggestions as to how practitioners can keep the child at the centre could include:

- engaging the child in conversation during home visits: sometimes speaking with the child alone or using other appropriate methods of communication
- taking time to establish a rapport with the child by asking about school, friends hobbies
- undertaking direct work with child
- observing the child interacting with carers and looking for signs of emotional warmth, child looking to carer for approval/reaction, fear or anxiety and so on
- engaging the whole family in positive social activity to enable the worker to observe and influence family dynamics
- scheduling visits when child will be at home
- asking about whereabouts of child when not present
- communicating with other agencies in contact with child
- taking note of physical appearance
- taking note of general demeanour
- setting child focused outcomes for the work, for example, 'to improve Jake's physical health'
- setting clear dates to review the impact of the interventions on the life of the child
- when reviewing, considering the impact of support to parents on the life of the child
- not becoming distracted by the parent's complex needs and considering the effects of parental problems or difficulties upon the child.

**Keeping the child  
at the centre**

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