

Ability to communicate with children and young people of differing ages and developmental levels

An ability to draw on knowledge of the ways in which developmental differences usually manifest themselves, in relation to children's and young people's:

language

thinking and understanding

expression of affect

behaviour

Knowledge of the impact of development on children's or young people's understanding and participation

An ability to draw on knowledge that children and young people will have a more concrete and self-centred understanding of:

themselves

the ways that other people think and feel

interpersonal situations

An ability to draw on knowledge that children and young people may have difficulty putting their concerns and feelings into words, and an awareness that:

they may need support to share concerns and feelings

short replies (such as 'I don't know' and shrugs) are common when talking to children and young people

An ability to draw on knowledge that using leading, multiple and double questions can be confusing for children and young people (and result in potentially misleading answers)

Providing developmentally appropriate information about any meetings about a child or young person's care

An ability to provide developmentally appropriate information about the meeting in order to reduce anxiety and increase trust in the practitioner, and to discuss:

the aim of the meeting

how the practitioner will manage confidentiality and its limits

how and what information will be shared with the family/carer and other agencies

Ability to engage with the perspectives of children and young people

An ability to draw on knowledge that children and young people often need to have spent some time with a practitioner before feeling able to express themselves
an ability to show patience and persistence in helping a child or young person to express themselves
An ability to draw on knowledge of the language, attitudes, behaviours and interests of children and young people of comparable age
An ability to show interest in a child or young person as an individual
An ability to show 'neutrality' in relation to problematic behaviour
An ability to stay in tune with a child's or young person's language, emotional state and developmental capacities

Choosing developmentally appropriate activities to aid engagement

An ability to draw on knowledge that some children and young people may find it difficult to engage with the practitioner in particular settings (e.g. a formal 1:1 interview room), so alternative settings or adjustments to the setting may need to be considered
An ability to engage children and young people by using technologies that they are familiar with (e.g. text messaging)

Ability to help children and young people express themselves verbally

An ability to 'scaffold' conversation to help a child's or young person's understanding and communication by:
keeping ideas concrete
using simple words (and few of them)
breaking down questions into component parts
moving from less to more difficult questions
moving from less to more difficult topics
letting them express some positives first
giving them choices about what they speak about
An ability to use rating scales to help a child or young person communicate (e.g. rating their feelings using an analogue scale of 1 to 10)
An ability to encourage a child or young person by thinking aloud for them (e.g. 'I wonder if...')
An ability to normalise a child or young person's experience (e.g. 'Children/young people often think that...')
An ability to help a child or young person offer an opinion (e.g. 'Do you think that...?')
An ability to move back to easier topics if a child or young person becomes distressed or anxious
An ability to move between 'trivial' and relevant issues in order to moderate distress or anxiety

Engaging a child or young person when families or carers are present

When children or young people and families or carers are seen together, an ability to set out the parameters of the meeting, in particular to ensure that the child or young person is aware that:

all parties will be given an opportunity to talk and to have their point of view heard
the practitioner understands that they may have a different point of view from their family/carers, and that they are interested in hearing this

An ability to repeat and re-phrase important interview content for a child or young person