4.2. Ability to communicate with children/young people of differing ages, developmental level and background

■	An ability to draw on knowledge of the ways that developmental differences usually manifest, in relation to the child/young person's:
	■ language
	■ thinking and understanding
	■ expression of affect
	■ behaviour
■	An ability to draw on knowledge that engagement and contact take place through:
	■ speech and conversation
	■ behaviour

Knowledge of the impact of development on the child/young person's understanding of, and participation in, clinical work

■	An ability to draw on knowledge of attachment theory and its implications for engagement
■	An ability to draw on knowledge that:
	■ developmental differences change across childhood and adolescence
	■ children/young people vary widely in their clinical presentation and adjustment
■	An ability to draw on knowledge that younger children will have a more concrete and egocentric understanding of:
	■ their own mental state
	■ the mental states of others
	■ interpersonal situations
■	An ability to draw on knowledge that younger children may have only a rudimentary understanding of the purpose of clinical contact
■	An ability to draw on knowledge that children/young people show a wide-range of behaviours in interview that can complicate the clinical process, and:
	■ that behaviour can vary widely within a single session (e.g. from withdrawn to restless or oppositional)
■	An ability to understand that children/young people's behaviour is a form of communication
■	An ability to reflect on the meaning of the behaviour(s) and their relation to the past and present

- An ability to draw on knowledge that children/young people often find it difficult to put their concerns and feelings into words, and an awareness:
  - that children/young people may need support to share concerns and feelings
  - that younger children use fewer, simpler words
  - that short replies (e.g. 'I don't know' or shrugs) are very common in child interviewing
- An ability to draw on knowledge that children/young people will have difficulty understanding questions not tailored to their level
- An ability to draw on knowledge that using leading, multiple and double questions can be confusing for a child/young person

Providing developmentally appropriate information about the session(s)

- An ability to provide developmentally appropriate information about the session(s) in order to reduce anxiety and increase trust in the practitioner, and to discuss:
  - the aim of the session(s)
  - how the practitioner will manage confidentiality and its limits
  - how and what information will be shared with the parents/carers and other agencies

Ability to engage with the child/young person's perspective

- An ability to draw on knowledge that children/young people often need to have spent some time with the practitioner before feeling able to express themselves, and:
  - an ability to be patient and persistent in helping the child/young person express themselves
- An ability to draw on knowledge of the language, attitudes, behaviours and interests of children/young people of a similar age to the child/young person
- An ability to show interest in the child as a person
- An ability to show 'neutrality' when faced with problematic behaviour
- An ability to stay close to the child/young person's language, emotional state and developmental capacities

Choosing developmentally appropriate activities to help engagement

- An ability to draw on knowledge that because some children/young people may find it difficult to engage with the practitioner in more formal settings (such as an interview room), alternative settings or adjustments may be considered
- An ability to engage younger children by observing and commenting on their behaviour with a variety of creative activities

- An ability to help the child/young person communicate and engage with the practitioner by using a diverse range of creative activities (e.g. art and drama, or vocational activities)
- An ability to engage children/young people by using technologies that they are familiar with (e.g. texts, email diary, etc.)

Ability to help the child/young person express themselves verbally

- An ability to help the child/young person express themselves by 'scaffolding' communication:
  - 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 talk about
- An ability to use scales to help the child/young person communicate
  - analogue scales (e.g. '1–10'; 'little, medium, lots' etc.)
  - visual scales (e.g. smiley or sad faces)
- An ability to encourage the child/young person by thinking aloud for them (e.g. 'I wonder if …?')
- An ability to normalise the child/young person's experience (e.g. 'Children often think that… ')
- An ability to invite the child/ young person to offer an opinion (e.g. 'Do you think that …?')
- An ability to go back to easier topics if the child/young person becomes distressed or anxious
- An ability to move between trivial and clinically relevant issues, to moderate distress or anxiety

Engaging the child/young person when the parents/carers is present

- When children/young people and parents/carers are seen together, an ability to set out the parameters of the meeting, in particular to ensure that the child/young person is aware:
  - that everyone will have the opportunity to talk and for their point of view to be heard
  - that the practitioner understands that the child/young person may have a different point of view from their parents/carers, and that the practitioner is interested in hearing it
- An ability to repeat and re-phrase important interview content for the child/ young person
- An ability to explain to the child/young person the content and purpose of any assessment procedures that are given to parents/carers (e.g. consent forms, rating scales)